

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

2224

NOV 28 1989

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lincoln County Courthouse
other names/site number LN06-63

2. Location

street & number Dewey St bet 3rd & 4th Sts N/A not for publication
city, town North Platte N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Lincoln code 111 zip code 69101

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of Nebraska
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

James A. Hanson November 17, 1989
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See cont. sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrews 1/10/90
 See continuation sheet
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government/courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof other

other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1921-39

Significant Dates

N/A

1921-24

1931-32

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Berlinghof, George A.

Coursey, C.C.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 8, page 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Built in 1921-24 and 1931-32, the Lincoln County Courthouse is an excellent, largely unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, Beaux Arts stylistic influence, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof, prominent raised basement, and designed by an architect. The courthouse was among the most costly and longest under construction of Nebraska courthouses. It displays several features uncommon for Nebraska courthouses, especially the use of terra cotta and very prominent, raised pavilions. The courthouse is an interesting example of the work of George A. Berlinghof, an important Nebraska architect, and represents the evolution of his designs.

The Lincoln County Courthouse in North Platte is rectangular and consists of two stories set upon a raised basement. An unusual and distinguishing feature are the prominent pavilions of the east and west facades, for their entablatures rise noticeably above the roofline of the north and south facades. The entablatures have a heavy parapet of brick and terra cotta, including discs (a familiar Berlinghof motif) and an elaborate swag with vegetal forms at the center. Below is a finely wrought cornice with a series of mutules. Four pairs of colossal fluted engaged columns with composite capitals support the entablature, and centered entrances are tucked beneath. The west entrance continues the exuberant detail from above, having acroteria, dentils and egg-and-dart patterns, and a small bust of Abraham Lincoln.

Three sets of distinctive windows occur between the engaged columns. Second story windows are squared and divided by thick strips into a number of panes. A decorated surround featuring foliated detail and keystones with swags highlights these windows. The first story windows have heavy pediments with consoles and more detail. Ground floor windows continue the essentially three-part design of upper windows.

North and south facades, and also the end bays of the east and west facades, act as a foil to the elaborate pavilions. Brown brick is laid in a "rusticated" manner, as is the brick of the ground floor. The rusticated effect is achieved through seven rows of common bond alternating with one row of recessed headers. The brickwork forms an important unifying feature in the composition and contrasts effectively with the elaborate terra cotta trim.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The building exhibits features of the Beaux Arts style. These include a wealth of classical detail, grouped colossal columns, enriched surfaces, rusticated raised basement, projecting pavilions, and a grandiose quality.

Access to the 75x111' building is from an entry foyer on the west facade where ramps on either side of stairs lead down to the ground floor. Berlinghof employed a similar arrangement in his Franklin County Courthouse design (1925-26). The stairs lead up to the first floor and an east-west corridor that has county offices off it.

Original interior features include very high grey marble wainscoting, dark grey marble mopboards, terrazzo flooring with a black border, golden oak woodwork, transoms with frosted glass, plaster moulding in three patterns, and hanging light fixtures with frosted globes. The district courtroom on the second floor retains plaster beams, pilasters and moulded cornice and nine large and distinctive wall lights and six wall lights. Courtroom woodwork is very dark and features an attractive carved course along the paneled jury box, judge's bench, and the low swinging doors of the bar between the spectator and trial spaces.

Offices now have new ceilings and fluorescent fixtures. Some rooms have been rearranged somewhat and some hallway pilasters are therefore partially covered over. Metal windows, with opaque transoms in the original transom locations (on brick walls) and original strips between them (on pavilions), have replaced the original windows and are handled sensitively. West entry doors are also modern replacements.

The largest change is the long tan brick and concrete one-story addition and related alterations to the east entry area. Built c. 1967, the addition occupies most of the former courthouse lawn that extended east from the east facade of the courthouse. (Since the old courthouse was centered on the courthouse square, the present facility was built at the west end of the site.) The addition, with its complementary materials and low scale, does not visually intrude upon the significant features of the courthouse.

Several objects are located on the courthouse site. On the northwest and southwest corners of the site, respectively, are a World War I-era memorial (a smooth granite shaft with metal detail and plaques) and a small replica of the Statue of Liberty (both are contributing objects for this nomination). At the northeast corner is a small and modest hut intended for tourist information. Because of its small size and flimsy construction, the hut was not counted for this nomination. A compact commercial area surrounds the courthouse square. A jail of modern

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

construction is located across the street from the west facade and is not included in this nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

The Lincoln County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and also historically significant (Criterion A) for its association with politics and local government. The property derives its historic significance as the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Lincoln County. It is a good example of public architecture in the community and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse. The courthouse is a fine example of the work of George A. Berlinghof, an important Nebraska architect, and represents the evolution of his designs. The impressive size, mass, and ornamentation of the courthouse work together to mitigate the effect of alterations.

As a good example of the County Citadel, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), has a rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, and Beaux Arts stylistic influence. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

The Period of Significance is 1921, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. Significant dates for the building are 1921-24, the time of original construction, and 1931-32, when it was completed. The Lincoln County Courthouse is being nominated as an example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska (County Citadel) of the Context, County Government in Nebraska, 1854-1941, from the Multiple Property Submission, County Courthouses of Nebraska.

Located in west central Nebraska, Lincoln County is the third largest county in the state. It was the scene of early white activity, for the Platte River bisects it. Mormons, gold seekers, and westward-bound settlers used the Platte River trails beginning in earnest in the late 1840s. An important boost to permanent settlement occurred in 1866 when the Union Pacific Railroad extended its line to the rail stop it had platted that year, North Platte. The county was re-organized in 1866 out of an earlier county established in 1860.

North Platte was named county seat of the newly constituted county in 1867. As the principal town in the county, an important rail terminus--eventually for three lines--and county seat, the community enjoyed an important position that was not challenged in the county.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

The first courthouse was completed in North Platte in 1876. By the early twentieth century, county residents were prepared to replace the aging brick facility on the present courthouse block with a more substantial edifice. Settlement related to passage of the Kinkaid Act had brought considerable population and related prosperity to the county, and North Platte emerged as a regional market center.

Despite the rosy economic picture, the history of construction of the present courthouse was marred by graft and greed. Embezzlement, arson, related delays, sensational trials, and prison sentences marked its construction.

In an election held in July 1919, county residents approved a special tax to fund a new courthouse. County officials may have delayed construction until they had begun to collect the taxes. Blueprints by George A. Berlinghof are dated July 31, 1921. McMichael Brothers of North Platte were selected to be general contractor on October 24, 1921.

Even in the fall of 1921, county commissioners were aware that they needed more tax money to complete and furnish the new courthouse, according to county records. By early 1922 it was apparent that the project was even more expensive than envisioned in the fall of 1921, and the county replaced terra cotta on the north and south facades with the present pressed brick and made other cost-saving changes in the plans. Nonetheless, construction had progressed sufficiently to hold cornerstone-laying ceremonies on June 22, 1922.

On December 29, 1923, the board directed contractors to cease work once the roof and window glass were in place. They made this extreme order because of "the fact of lack of funds to complete the building," according to county records. It became known that a number of county officials had stolen money from the county, although county records and newspaper articles on the subject do not detail the exact nature of the embezzlement. Much of the chicanery surrounded courthouse construction, although the county clerk had embezzled county money for 1917-20 from other sources.

Actions of the county treasurer and his deputy caused far more harm than the county clerk. On April 30, 1923, a fire was started in the old courthouse, which was adjacent to the new one under construction. Just before an audit of the county books was to begin, someone set a fire in the old courthouse. A key book that dealt with letting contracts for the new courthouse, Book 8 of the Commissioners' Records, was found to be missing, and suspicion naturally centered on the county treasurer. He and his deputy were tried and found guilty of forgery, arson, and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

embezzlement and given prison sentences late in 1923 and early 1924.

At the time of the fire, the new courthouse had no stairs, room partitions, electricity, or heating. The county board directed contractors to proceed with these fundamental construction matters, since the old courthouse was in ruins. Construction continued into 1924 and the county was able to move in that year. However, the courthouse was far from complete. Walls were bare clay tile, as shown in a series of historic photos in the clerk's office. A Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1930 noted that the building "is partly finished, some rooms have been occupied since 1925" (although county records indicate a 1924 occupation).

In 1931 county finances allowed final work to be undertaken, and North Platte architect C.C. Coursey was hired to prepare plans. On December 17, 1931, H.R. McMichael was selected as general contractor, with a bid of \$55,736. County records show that the work was completed in 1932 at a total cost of \$325,000, a record amount in the state.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

- Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
- Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-1011, M281-1010. North Platte, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1915, 1930.
- Lincoln County. Commissioners' Records. Books 9 and 10.
- Records in County Clerk's Office, including 1930s Appraisal, 1923 Release of Lien of Judgement for convicted county clerk, and letters related to various embezzlements.
- "Court House Situation Up to [Now]." North Platte Tribune. May 4, 1923.
- "Lincoln County Corner Stone Laid This Afternoon." North Platte Evening Telegraph. June 22, 1922.
- "Claims [County Treasurer] Souder Spent \$92,000 in Three Years." North Platte Evening Telegraph. December 21, 1923.
- Scrapbook with clippings about new courthouse and related courtroom proceedings. District Court Clerk's office.
- Historic photos of Lincoln County Courthouse. c. 1924. County Clerk's office.
- Elevations. Lincoln County Courthouse. George A. Berlinghof. 1921.
- Floorplans. Alterations and Completion. Lincoln County Courthouse. C.C. Coursey. November 17, 1931.
- Hatton, Mary S. "An Early History of North Platte, Nebraska." M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. 1944.
- "Lincoln County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.
- An Illustrated History of Lincoln County, Nebraska and Her People. 2 vols. Chicago: American Historical Society, 1920.
- "North Platte and Lincoln County, Nebraska--the Gateway to the Great Platte Valley." c. 1928. Illustrated pamphlet.
- Works Progress Administration. Survey of County Courthouse Records. 1936. NeSHS Archives. Lincoln County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Lincoln County Courthouse, occupies lots 1-8 in Block 145 of the Original Plat of North Platte and is roughly 260x260' in size.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the property.

