Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

NAME				
HISTORIC	Benson County Cour	thouse		
AND/OR COMMON				
LOCATION				
STREET & NUMBER	B Avenue (Post Off	ice Box 193)	NOT FOR PUBLICATION	
CITY, TOWN	Minnewaukan		CONGRESSIONAL DISTR	ICT
STATE	North Dakota	CODE 38	COUNTY Benson	code 005
CLASSIFICA	TION			•
CATEGORY		v STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE
DISTRICT Xbuilding(s) Structure Site OBJECT	X PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH PUBLIC ACQUISITION IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED	X_OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS ACCESSIBLE XYES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO	AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT X.GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY	MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENC RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:
OWNER OF	PROPERTY			Ĺ
NAME	Benson County			, i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i
STREET & NUMBER	Benson County Cour	thouse, Post Offic	e Box 193	
CITY, TOWN	Minnewaukan	VICINITY OF	state North Dako	ta 58351
LOCATION	OF LEGAL DESCR	IPTION		
COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEEDS; ET	^c Benson County Cour	thouse		
STREET & NUMBER	Post Office Box 19	3		
CITY, TOWN	Minnewaukan		state North Dako	ta 58351
	FATION IN EXIST North Dakota Histo			
DATE	1976	FEDERAL	STATECOUNTYLOCAL	
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	State Historical S Liberty Memorial B	ociety of North Da		
CITY, TOWN	Bismarck		STATE North Dako	ta 58505

7 DESCRIPTION

CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK (DNE
EXCELLENT	DETERIORATED	UNALTERED	X_ORIGINAL	SITE
-X.GOOD	RUINS	XALTERED	MOVED	DATE
FAIR	UNEXPOSED			

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Benson County Courthouse, a 2-story structure with attic and raised basement, projects a ponderous, fortress-like visual impact. Its image is chiefly derived from battered stone foundation walls; contrasting materials for upper walls (brown brick) and structural trim (stone water table, sills and lintels, and belt course); and a massive square facade (north elevation) tower with battlemented parapet, pyramidal roof, and cupola. The multi-hipped, wooden-shingled roof volumes of the main structure carry hipped and gabled dormers, secondary cupolas, and chimneys with corbeling and stone caps. The exterior was sandblasted and tuckpointed in the 1960s, and in the 1950s the original 1 over 1, double-hung windows (some with transoms) were filled with glass blocks. The large window on the north face of the tower, illuminating the stairwell and bearing on its extrados the legend <u>Benson County</u>, was also thus treated and the rise of its arched heading sealed with bricks.

The principal entrance to the courthouse is at the east end of the facade and is articulated by a 1-story recessed porch with corners marked by pairs of stone columns and brick piers. On the interior, west of the entrance, is a particularly handsome example of the divided form of stairway with paneled dado, closed stringer, turned balusters, and columnar newels with stop-fluting. Additional wood trim throughout the building includes paneled doors, baseboards, wainscoting, and picture moldings. An ornate wooden mantelpiece with back mirror and colored tile surround is the focal point of the county commissioners' meeting room. The fittings in the 42 by 42-foot courtroom are carved and paneled wood (judge's bench, lawyers' railing, and jury box). The ceiling of the courtroom consists of stamped metal rectangles with friezes, separated by beams sheathed in metal stamped in wreath designs. A number of offices have similar but less elaborate ceiling treatments, and walls in the building are plastered, although some have been covered with plywood paneling.

One of two changes which have occurred in the floor plan of the courthouse was the 1976 partitioning of portions of the courtroom to provide welfare offices. The other was the conversion of the basement jail to a sheriff's office several years ago when it was decided to incarcerate Benson County prisoners in the jail at Devils Lake in adjacent Ramsey County. The former sheriff's residential quarters in the basement are now lived in by the deputy sheriff.

The Benson County Courthouse occupies a 300 by 300-foot block planted in grass, trees, and border hedge. The property is located in a residential neighborhood two blocks south of the Minnewaukan business district. A curved drive approaches a paved parking lot and an entrance on the east elevation, and at the rear (south) is a stuccoed garage with wood-shingled roof, as well as a smaller outbuilding.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AF	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	XARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
X_1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY INVENTION	XPOLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
SPECIFIC DAT	ES 1900	BUILDER/ARCI	HITECT Lord & Company	(Builder)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benson County Courthouse, seat of its county's government during all the years of the present century, is architecturally significant for its incorporation of the design principles of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. One of the last major public buildings in North Dakota to express the Picturesque aesthetic of the nineteenth century prior to the onset of Academic Revivalism, the structure has, despite some modifications, retained its original character to a remarkable degree. Unlike some of its contemporaries, it is fortunate in having an apparently secure future since there are no plans for its replacement.

In 1880 no white population was officially listed in the region now known as Benson County in northcentral North Dakota, but settlers began to arrive three years later with the coming of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Benson County, named for B.W. Benson, a Barnes County member of the 1883 legislature of Dakota Territory, was created in 1884 from areas belonging to DeSmet and Ramsey Counties. Minnewaukan, designated the county seat, at the beginning of that year boasted a population of less than a score, as well as two land offices, a firm of contractors and builders, a newspaper, the Pacific Hotel, a livery stable, and a saloon. The town was on Section 15, Township 153, Range 67, and had been partially platted by D.L. Wilbur, owner of the section on which it was located. Growing rapidly, despite major fires suffered in 1886 and 1895, Minnewaukan was incorporated in 1898.

Benson County officials first had offices in the town's Arlington Hotel, which was demolished in 1888 and a 1-story courthouse erected on the site. The county subsequently purchased all of block 69 of the original townsite and the present courthouse was constructed in 1900. A 1901 promotional booklet for Minnewaukan acclaimed the newly occupied building:

> There are not many counties in North Dakota that can boast of as fine a county building as Benson county, and no people could be prouder of it than the citizens of Minnewaukan. It is 90 feet long by 60 feet wide, and 96 feet to the top of the flag staff. It is solid brick and stone, and is a model in design and finish. All the rooms are furnished with dark oak furniture, while the doors, casings, stairs and finishing is a light oak. The building stands back from the street and the ground around will be improved this summer, and part of it will be broken and cultivated for shade

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lysne, Vernon. Benson County Auditor, Benson County Courthouse. Personal interview, April 25, 1977.

Maddox, Dawn. Personal inspection, April 25, 1977.

Minnewaukan Illustrated. Henry T. McPhillips, Publisher. Larimore, N.D.: Pioneer Print, 1901.

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LIST ALL S	STATES AND COUNTIES I	FOR PROPERTIE	S OVERLAPPING	STATE OR COUNTY BOU	NDARIES
STATE		CODE	COUNTY		CODE
STATE		CODE	COUNTY	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	CODE
11 FORM PRE	PARED BY Dawn Maddox, Ar	chitectural	Historian	May, 1977	
ORGANIZATION	<u> </u>	·		DATE	
	State Historica	1 Society o	f North Dako	and the second	·
STREET & NUMBER	Liberty Memoria	1 Building		telephone 701-224-2666	
CITY OR TOWN	Bismarck	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· · · · · · ·	state North Dakota	58505
12 STATE HIS	STORIC PRESEN				N
NATIC	DNAL	STATE		LOCAL X	-
hereby nominate this	ate Historic Preservation C s property for inclusion in es set forth by the Nationa	the National Re			
STATE HISTORIC PRE	SERVATION OFFICER SIGNATI	JRE TAM	es E. M	em	· · ·
	tate Historic Pres	ervation Of	ficer	DATE May 1	, 1978
FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIF	Y THAT THIS PROPERTY	watt	•	REGISTER DATE REFER OF THE NA	12/28
	LOUGUNCH	TISTONYPRE	SERVATION-	DATE 10/	Z3/78

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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trees, and walks laid out and graveled. The contractors were Lord & Co., who also had the contract for the erection of the new school house, and the building was completed about Feb. 1, 1901, and the officers occupied it about Feb. 7. The cost of the building and furnishings was about \$40,000. A view of it appears in the first part of this book.

The change from the old court house (a view of which is given in our Decoration Day parade), to the new and commodious offices of the new court house, must have been very agreeable to the officials, who had laboured under many disadvantages during past years.

(<u>Minnewaukan</u> <u>Illustrated</u>. Henry T. McPhillips, Publisher. Larimore, N.D.: Pioneer Print, 1901. Not paginated.)

The following county officials presently occupy the courthouse: judge, state attorney, sheriff, register of deeds, treasurer, auditor, superintendent of schools, public health nurse, welfare director, tax equalization director, and agricultural extension agent.

