

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0678155

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RECEIVED MAR 14 1979

DATE ENTERED APR 20 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
 Ravalli County Courthouse  
 AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
 225 Bedford Street  
 CITY, TOWN  
 Hamilton  
 STATE  
 Montana  
 VICINITY OF  
 30  
 COUNTY  
 Ravalli  
 CODE  
 081  
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
 Western  
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
 County of Ravalli  
 STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
 Hamilton  
 STATE  
 Montana  
 VICINITY OF

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
 Ravalli County Courthouse  
 STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
 Hamilton  
 STATE  
 Montana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
 Montana Historic Sites inventory: John DeHaas, Jr.

DATE  
 June 14, 1975  
 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
 SURVEY RECORDS  
 Montana Department Fish and Game

CITY, TOWN  
 Helena  
 STATE  
 Montana

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The stately brick courthouse stands on the west half of Block 44 in Hamilton, Montana, a site donated to the county by the Anaconda Copper Mining Company in 1900. Essentially the structure is a nearly square mass, 62 ft x 72 ft. It has a centrally located front entry (to the north) that projects out from the building and a rear entry situated opposite. Four stepped-out brick pavillions mark the corners and are all capped by twin pediments except for the northwest pavillion which sponsors a single tower. This tower and projecting porch provide the only irregular modeling in an otherwise abstract container that is further disciplined by a generally unbroken hip roof.

The superstructure rests on an uncoursed stone rubble basement that rises a few feet above grade. The basement can be entered directly by two passages located on the northeast basement wall. The two story elevation above is built of well-fired dark reddish brown brick laid in common bond. To mark the transition from the stone base and the common bond superstructure, there is a starter course of brick headers which outline the perimeter of the building. The bricks for the building were furnished by the Anaconda Mining Company.

The upper two stories follow a standardized wall format that changes only subtly on each of the four walls. Two pavillions (stepped-out one brick stretcher distance) enclose a center wall mass. Single alligned windows establish each floor level in the pavillions, while four windows penetrate the wall surface on each floor of the central block. The windows on the central wall mass reflect a predetermined architectural hierarchy which acknowledges the second story as the major floor of the court house.

Square openings at the basement level are stretched, visually, on the first floor into elongated one-over-one sash windows. A fixed transom window is inserted above the sash windows to accomodate the substantial ceiling height of the first floor. Stone window sills rest on a brick stringcourse, while, above, paired stringcourses enclose flat brick relieving "arches" over each first story window.

The second story window program changes from a reticulated to an arcuated format, though the window allignment is generally the same as the first story. The square openings at the basement level serve as an approximate module for the sash window above which double the "cadence". The second story windows divide the one-over-one window configuration in half by inserting a muntin and produce paired double hung windows. Change occurs also in the transom windows of the second story which become half-round windows bisected by a mullion; thus, the wall surface is opened up at the top floor to a greater degree and the pace is quickened by pushing the windows closer together and uniting them visually by pronounce brick arches. The arches "collide" and spring from shared pilaster strips set between each of the windows. The end arches receive their counter stress from the wall mass and terminate on a corbelled out brick string course. The monumental emphasis provided by the grouping of arched windows on the second story reflects the significance of the interior spaces--the large courtroom and judge's chamber. Again, the floor level is defined by the stringcourses which run directly below the window sills and rest on the crest of the window arches above.

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The central wall mass is terminated by a wooden "Federal Style" cornice line. An article of May 11, 1900 in Western News (Hamilton, Montana) stated, however, that the building was to have a galvanized iron cornice and a tin roof. Today, in addition to the wooden cornice the hip roof has wooden shingles which are in need of repair. The roof ridge lines are accented with terricotta tile.

The main elevation, then, asserts its four-square massiveness by stressing the horizontal movement of the stone base, series of stringcourses, window bands, cornice line and low hip roof which wrap around the building and tie it down as a unified mass. The horizontality is opposed only subtly by the end pavillions whose vertical statement is reinforced by terminating them with paired pediments which force the eye upward. Three small bricked-in lancet arches fill in the interior space of the pediment.

The isolated tower to the northwest intentionally disrupts the classic horizontality and order of the structure; the tower's irregular statement associates it philosophically--not aesthetically--with the picturesque sensibilities of the previous century. As was traditional of Richardson's towers, this upright shift in composition is employed to suggest the vertical movement through the courthouse provided by the stairtowers within.

This stairtower required minor design changes to the pavillion which serves as its base. A band of narrow rectangular windows light the lower stairs into the basement. Unlike the square-headed windows placed at the first story on the other pavillions, the first story windows on the stairtower utilize a window band of five arched openings (barely visible behind the entrance porch of the attached photo), with every other window being "blind". On the west side of the tower, there are five rectangular windows below and five arched openings above on the upper landing treated in the same way. The tower rises two stories above the roof. The first story is square and contains two narrow square headed sash windows on the north and west side. On each corner of the tower are square pilasters which are corbelled out at the top. Three brick tiers form capitols; the corbelling continues around the tower forming a frieze-like band. A wooden projecting cornice intervenes on the next tier between another frieze-like brick band similar to the one below the cornice. On each of the four corner "capitols" are placed wooden finials composed of a ball, shaft, and podium.

Above the square tower rises a brick octagonal drum; four faces of the drum are narrower than the other four where they align with the corner of the square corners below--thus serving as a niche for the finial of the square tower. Each corner of the drum has a pilaster and frieze arrangement similar to the square tower and capped by a wooden cornice as below. A dome roof (composed of a wooden frame) follows the octagonal shape of the drum. An open circular cupola, resembling the monument of Lysicrates, tops the tower and designates the structure as an important community facility as was traditional in Colonial buildings. A flag pole is centered above the cupola.

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Projecting from an otherwise unbroken hip roof is a square brick chimney whose crest is corbelled out, and a wooden rectangular cupola with wooden louvres for ventilation. Both protrusions are placed immediately west of the roof ridge.

The building faces north. The entrance was functionally expressed, originally, by a monumental projecting portico of brick featuring a large semi-circular arched opening with a pronounced keystone. The arched entry and side arches rested upon brick pillars. Granite steps led to the elevated first floor level. It appears that during the 1930's the original entry was replaced with a brick enclosed porch. The present entry makes use of architectural features of its own time: a parapet facade that disguises the gable porch roof and glass block windows (as side lights on either side of the inset door and large rectangular windows on either side of the entry porch wall.) This newer addition, in what might be termed "W.P.A. governmental style", does match the original brick and bonding technique adequately. While it is unfortunate that the original entrance was removed, the present structure does not severely compromise the overall architectural integrity of the superstructure whose scale and artistic presence overpowers it. Traces of the original entrance which rose to the base of the second story, can be read on the brick work immediately above and behind the present entrance. This entrance and a new structure to the east whose brick wall intersects the first story center line of the courthouse wall, are the only non-period structural intrusions on the exterior. In 1974 the county erected a new courthouse to the east, on the other half of the lot on a site once occupied by a school house. However, some offices and the courtroom of the old building are still in use. The jail, an isolated structure built at the same time as the courthouse, is situated to the rear of the old courthouse and has been torn down.

One enters the courthouse through the north porch into the main hall on the first floor which divides the building in half and extends, uninterrupted, to the south entrance (that faced the jail structure). The floor of the hall and portico were to be of tile according to a series of articles in The Western News (1899-1901). Interior woodwork throughout is of white pine and tamarack finished in a dark natural finish, while the stairs are of hardwood, similarly finished. The other floors are of pine and fir. The interior walls are plastered. Bids were accepted for wood-slat Venetian blinds but if these were installed they are no longer present.

The building was electrified from the beginning and much of this is in need of replacement.

The same series of Western News articles state that the building would be steam heated, "using a direct-indirect radiation" system similar to that used on the university campus, Missoula (where A. J. Gibson, the architect, had previously worked). An engineering evaluation of the system done recently revealed an old gravity one-pipe air vent steam system using cast iron radiators. The boiler is an old tube type boiler originally fired with wood (and possibly coal). The boiler is now gas-fired.

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Originally, a pipe coil unit provided ventilation in the court room. All major rooms were ventilated by ducts built into the walls and leading to chambers in the attic by a shaft extending up to the roof. The chambers in the attic were heated with indirect radiation. The full heating and ventilation system is still intact.

The utilization of interior spaces is as follows: Part of the basement contains the boiler rooms and storage rooms and part of the area provides a crawl space. The first floor contained the offices for the County Clerk and Treasurer and has large fireproof vaults still being used. The second floor has a large courtroom and judge's chamber which are still much as they were in 1901 when the building was first occupied. Western News points out that rooms were provided on the second story for the attorneys as well as for prisoners, jury rooms and quarters for the clerk of the court. The focal point of the interior space is the courtroom which is well lit by the large second story windows on the north and east. The courtroom space rises to a maximum height of eighteen feet and has a large cove and wood cornice.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES **1900-01** BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Charles Stabern/A. J. Gibson**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ravalli County Courthouse embodies the distinctive characteristics of a stylistic type and qualifies for National Register nomination under Criteria "C". Completed in 1901, the court house displays a successful merger of Romanesque and classical elements; this interesting stylistic amalgam reflects the drift of taste away from the predominantly medieval inspiration of the progressive nineteenth-century picturesque architecture (eg. Richardsonian Romanesque), toward the predominance of classicistic inspiration for early twentieth-century academicism inspired by such civic structures as the Boston Public Library (1888-95). The Ravalli County Courthouse, then, represents the stylistic watershed for public architecture that confronted the turn of the century; its picturesque modeling of the stairtower and entrance porch and its use of Romanesque arches link it with waning nineteenth-century vogue for medieval inspired public architecture that allowed for a free wheeling individualism in design. Present also, however, are smooth surfaces, a generally abstract form, and palazzo-like discipline of the whole which is reflective of Renaissance Beaux-Arts academicism which would be the main impetus in American architecture from the nineties through the thirties. This dicotomy of thought--a type of stylistic identity crisis--is vividly reflected in the handling of design features from classical pediments punctuated by gothic lancet arches, to medieval arches pierced by classical "Diocletian" windows. Both the classical pediment and the medieval arch vie for attention within the larger feature of the end pavillion, yet significantly, neither is given the ability to overpower the total conception by the architect, A. J. Gibson. Gibson, the architect of the Richardsonian inspired main hall (University of Montana) would soon resolve this stylistic dilemma in projects such as the Missoula County Courthouse (1908-10), Marcus Daly Mansion, Hamilton, MT., and the Bass Mansion (1908), Stevensville--all in the classical mode.

The Ravalli County Courthouse, then, then is a significant indicator of pivitol stylistic changes taking place within the artistic oeuvre of a noted Montana architect as well as an index of the eventual supremacy of classicism on a national scale.

The courthouse is significant both symbolically and historically to Ravalli County. The Ravalli County Courthouse assumes local significance as the hub of political activity in the area. Ravalli County was created in 1893, and Stevensville was designated its county seat. An election in 1898 resulted in moving it to Hamilton, where a local opera house housed the county offices.

At a special meeting on October 31, 1900, the Ravalli Board of County Commissioners made arrangements for rental quarters for the following year but

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Western News (newspaper), Hamilton, MT., Nov. 1, 1899, March 7, 1900, May 11, Aug. 1, 1900, March 13, 1901  
Ravalli County Commissioners Log  
Montana Genesis, The Stevensville Historical Society, Missoula, MT. 1971, pp. 34-58  
Inventory of the County Archives of Montana, W.P.A. 1938

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5165 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 11 719160 5124920  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_

F \_\_\_\_\_

G \_\_\_\_\_

H \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fredric L. Que, Susan Curtis, John DeHaas, Jr.

May 1, 1976/Feb. 26, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Edited by Kingston Heath, Architectural Historian

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

225 North Roberts

TELEPHONE

449-4584

CITY OR TOWN

Helena

STATE

Montana

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*[Signature]*

TITLE

DATE

3/4/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4.20.79

ATTEST: *[Signature]*  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4.20.79

KEEPER OF REGISTRATION

m. No. 10 300a  
v. 10 74)

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also decided that permanent offices should be constructed. They resolved to seek a site and obtain proposals for a new courthouse at a cost not to exceed \$10,000. However, when they met December 11, 1899, they voted to submit to the voters a bond issue of \$20,000 for the new building. The election was held February 20, 1900, and the bond issue passed by a vote of 518-144. The Anaconda Copper Mining Company donated the west half of Block 44 for the building.

In March, 1900, the County Commissioners issued a call for "competitive plans" for the courthouse, with the cost of the structure not to exceed \$20,000. A. J. Gibson of Missoula was duly selected as the architect and the plans were submitted for competitive bids. The first bids came in too high and the bids were re-advertised. On September 3, 1900, Charles Stabern, of Helena, Montana, was given the contract for the construction of the new courthouse for a price of \$19,750. By February, 1901, the Commissioners were calling for bids for furniture and fittings for the new offices, including Venetian blinds.

This structure is the most significant architectural and symbolic representation, then, of the shift in the county seat from Stevensville to Hamilton in 1898. With the coeval structure of the county jail slated for demolition, the courthouse alone will stand for the statement of prosperity and stability which the 1900 County Courthouse building program represented.