

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAR 12 1979
DATE ENTERED APR 19 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

Custer County Courthouse and Jail (CU05-56)

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square, Main Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Broken Bow

— VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Nebraska

CODE
031

COUNTY
Custer

CODE
041

3 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	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<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:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Board of County Commissioners

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square, Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Broken Bow

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Custer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square, Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Broken Bow

STATE

Nebraska

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Preservation in Nebraska

DATE

1971

— FEDERAL STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Custer County Courthouse and Jail occupy a spacious, two-acre square in Broken Bow, Nebraska (1970 pop., 3,743). The town's principal street serves as the square's southern boundary and buildings in the square's vicinity include businesses, churches, and residences.

The courthouse faces east toward Tenth Street and is deeply set back from that route (see photo #1). A rectangular Neo-classical edifice of two stories over a raised basement, the courthouse has a structural frame of steel protected with concrete, and its walls are constructed of buff brick with limestone and terra cotta trim. On the main facade's center is a distyle in antis portico that is approached by a flight of fifteen steps flanked by two-tiered, stone-coped antepodia (see photo #2). The inside surfaces of the portico's piers are treated with terra cotta pilasters that faithfully repeat the bases, fluting, and angular volutes of the two Roman Ionic columns. The entrance treatment is reminiscent of a Palladian motif and the second level of the wall behind the portico is surrounded by stone trim. The building's name is inscribed on the denticulated frieze and the cornice is treated with ornamental antefixae. Adorning the portico's piers are shallow stone niches embellished with classical motifs, a treatment repeated on pilaster strips at all corners of the building.

The raised portion of the basement is scored with stone bands, and separating the basement from the first floor is a continuous watertable. Access to the subfloor is by entrances on the outside of the antepodia. Continuous around the courthouse's apex is a stoned-coped parapet that is slightly pedimented on the sides.

Windows of the main (east) facade are arranged in groups of four-- these openings being separated by engaged Tuscan columns. Window compositions are unified by terra cotta sills below and by projecting brickwork on all other sides. The end walls are identical and their fenestration is akin to the main facade's, excepting the substitution of coupled windows. Several windows on the south and west have been filled with brick, and most other windows have had their original muntins and sash changed and panels inserted into the upper portions. Windows that have retained their original features are those on the north and south serving vaults (see floor plan and photo #7).

The rear of the courthouse (photo #5) is asymmetrically fenestrated, but is related to other sides through the use of identical stone trim. An enclosed passage of brick construction near the southwest corner links the courthouse with the jail (see photo #3). The 1914 Custer County Jail is a T-shaped, two-story subordinate structure in harmony with the courthouse through the use of the same construction materials and of similar proportions and ornamentation. The stem of this building (photo #5) has a symmetrical facade crowned by a shaped parapet. The centered entrance is enhanced by a flat, shallow hood supported by consoles, and the stem's ends terminate with pseudo-piers treated with terra cotta classical embellishment at parapet level. Presently, this section is used as offices by the Nebraska State

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Probation Department and the Veterans Administration. The lateral section, starker in appearance, is the jail facility (see photos 3 and 4). Ornamentation here is void, save for stone bands and molding. Iron bars have been removed from all windows of the jail and the openings are now blocked by metal panels. Also, windows of the jail's south wall have been substantially lengthened and a small, gable-roofed garage has been appended on the west side.

In the northwest corner of the square is the County Welfare Office, a building of recent construction (see photo #6). Openings span the front of this one-story brick building covered with a hipped roof. The structure does not deter serious attention from the courthouse and jail.

The plan of the courthouse's first floor presents a formal arrangement that has been spared subdivision and harmful alterations (see floor plan). The corridor is floored with ceramic tile and the staircase is of cast iron with marble treads. Oak chair rails and marble baseboards are throughout this level, and transomed doors have been retained between major and private offices. Other original features intact include steel vault doors and wooden cabinets in the county clerk's office. The original wood and glass double doors of the principal entrance have been removed and substituted with steel and glass components.

The second floor of the courthouse accommodates a county courtroom and a district courtroom and two judges' offices. Both courtrooms have been fundamentally remodeled and a skylight in the eastern end of the corridor is presently covered. Housed in the basement are offices of the county board of supervisors, county surveyor, extension agent, and education superintendent. Flooring in the basement is of concrete and high chair rails of pine have been retained. Extensive remodeling has occurred in this level, however.

Included in the nomination is the entire two-acre courthouse square. The small garage appended to the jail and the County Welfare Office in the square's northwest corner are constructions of late, yet are not so intrusive as to cause exclusion and severance of the total square which is successful in the proper disjunction between county governmental affairs and other activities of the town.

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"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1911-12, 1914

BUILDER/ARCHITECTJohn Latenser

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Custer County Courthouse and Jail attain architectural significance as being a fine interpretation of Neo-Classicism. Built in 1911-12 and 1914 respectively, the courthouse and jail were designed by an Omaha architect, John Latenser, who was careful to create a harmony between the two buildings without causing them to be counterparts. Latenser obviously did not feel confined by stylistic tenets; in the Custer Courthouse he modified classicism with a flair, even rendering it a feeling of the Prairie style. Also, the courthouse ranks as one of central Nebraska's earliest fireproof structures, a fact that aroused considerable pride among county residents when it was completed.

Custer County, formed in 1887, covers 2,592 square miles in central Nebraska. The earliest settlements occurred in 1877 and much of Custer's early history revolves around trouble between cowboy inhabitants and incoming farmers (Sheldon, Semi-Centennial History of Nebraska, p. 194). Broken Bow had been platted five years before the county's formation; the first courthouse there was a one-story, L-shaped log building replaced several years later by a two-and-one-half-story Richardsonian building of brick construction. The brick courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1910 and a proposed levy to finance a new courthouse and jail on the same site was approved by Custer County voters in January, 1911 (The Custer County Chief, December 29, 1912). John Latenser of Omaha, who had previously designed a public high school building in Broken Bow, was called upon to provide plans and specifications for a fireproof courthouse and to oversee the building's satisfactory completion.

Latenser (1858-1936) was a native of Liechtenstein who had attended the Technical School in Stuttgart, Germany, before emigrating to the United States where he worked in Chicago and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, before settling in Omaha (Lincoln State Journal, December 7, 1936, p. 1).

The architect provided that the courthouse building have a structural frame of steel covered with concrete. Also, the floors are concrete, the staircase is cast iron, and window frames and muntins were of steel. The county commissioners recognized the additional costs of fireproof materials, but felt that any measures should be taken to prevent the loss of another courthouse. Construction of the new building was carried out by the company of George E. Shaul of Seneca, Kansas.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 2

99° 38' 33"
99° 38' 29"

41° 24' 09"
99° 38' 32"

QUADRANGLE NAME Broken Bow, Nebr.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A			

B			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The courthouse square in Broken Bow; bounded on the north by Eleventh Street, on the east by D Street, on the south by Tenth, and on the west by E Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

DATE

February, 1979

TELEPHONE

402/471-3270

STATE

Nebraska

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

Marvin B. Knott

2/26/79

TITLE Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

John Charles Manning

DATE

4.19.79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

William H. Rinaldram

DATE

4.19.79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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When completed, the courthouse met with approval from the local press. On August 9, 1912, following the building's completion, The Custer County Chief reported: "Many were the expressions of delight that Custer County had such a beautiful, commodious, and substantial building. The fact that the building is absolutely fire proof seemed a great source of satisfaction, and the commodious vaults, ample to protect the records of every office for a great many years to come, were admired by everyone..." And on December 27, 1912, in reviewing events of the year, the same newspaper claimed: "The completion of the new courthouse this past summer has added an improvement that not only Broken Bow, but Custer County as well is very proud of. It is a magnificent building, modern in every way, and the \$75,000 which went into the building and equipment has been judiciously expended" (p.1).

Around 1912, Broken Bow was a bustling small town that appeared to have great potential for growth. World War I halted expansion though, and Broken Bow's population at the present scarcely numbers 1,500 more than in 1912. A contract for the jail's construction was not awarded until April, 1914 -- Latenser being paid \$200 for furnishing plans and specifications. Due to an unavoidable delay in obtaining materials during war times, the small, T-shaped building was not completed until November of that same year (Custer County Board of Supervisors Minutes, pp. 368, 398).

The courthouse square is bordered by mature trees near the sidewalks, and the courthouse is enhanced through its being deeply set back from Tenth Street--the route it faces. Exterior alterations have been limited to the installation of new door and window components in the courthouse, and to the appendage of a tile garage to the jail and lengthening of windows in the jail's confinement section. Also, a small county building has been erected in the square's north-west corner. Neither alterations nor recent constructions afford a serious compromise with the architectural merits of the two-building complex. Due to the reciprocal nature between structures and site, the full acreage of the courthouse square is necessary for inclusion.

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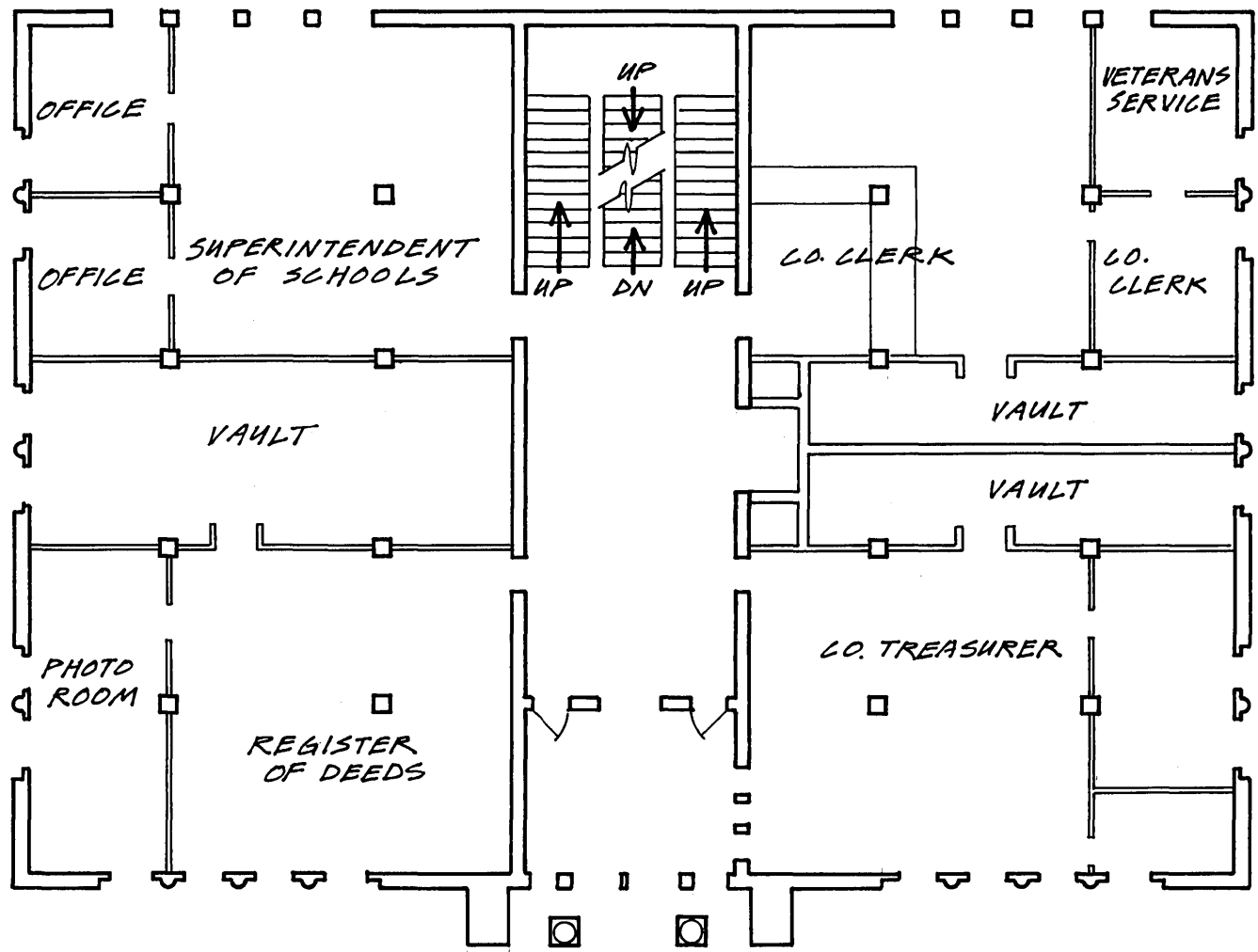
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October 9, 1914. Volume on file in Custer County Courthouse, Broken
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The Custer County Chief, Broken Bow, Nebraska, October 13, 1911.
_____ December 29, 1911.
_____ August 9, 1912.
_____ December 27, 1912.

Lincoln State Journal. Lincoln, Nebraska, December 7, 1936. Obituary
of John Latenser, p. 1.

Sheldon, A. E. Semi-Centennial History of Nebraska. Lincoln: Lemon
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→ NORTH

NO SCALE

CUSTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 C405-56 - SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM
 MAIN FLOOR PLAN

