



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

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 Red Willow County Courthouse
other names/site number RW05-016

2. Location

street & number NW cor Norris Ave & East E St N/A not for publication
city, town McCook N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Red Willow code 145 zip code 69001

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</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 _____ May 14, 1990
Signature of certifying official _____ Date
Nebraska State Historical Society

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. *Beth Boland* *7/5/90*
 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:)

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 stone

roof asphalt

other _____

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

1926-40

Significant Dates

1926-27

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Evans, Marcus L.

Bell, Percy M.

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.

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Built in 1926-27, the Red Willow County Courthouse is a fine, unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, Classical Revival stylistic influence, provision for fireproof storage, and the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof and designed by an architect. It is one of six stone-faced County Citadels built between 1917 and 1930 across the state, an important subgroup of the property type. The courthouse and jail (contributing) are considered one property, rather than a district, since they constitute a "small group of functionally and historically related buildings."

The Red Willow County Courthouse is a three-story rectangular building that also has partial attic space tucked behind the parapet. The rusticated stone gives the appearance of a raised basement, but entrances, on the south and east facades, are at grade. The building is faced with Bedford limestone on three sides, and the rear or west facade is faced with grey brick.

A prominent entry pavilion on the east facade identifies the principal entrance, and there is a secondary entrance on the south facade. A series of imposing elements focus attention on the centered main entrance. These include four massive fluted engaged columns, a broad and prominent cornice, and the door surround. Large scale rosettes, triglyphs, and mutules adorn the cornice above the Doric engaged columns. Pairs of original rectangular double-hung windows are located between the engaged columns, and have decorated panels between the second and third stories.

At the deeply recessed entry, acroteria are placed above a heavy lintel which has consoles ending in triglyphs, a characteristic ornament of the Doric order. Original metal and glass wall lights adorned with tiny acroteria flank the doorway. Like the doorway, windows at the first floor level are deeply recessed (and have voussoirs), further contributing to the impression of solidity and strength. The moulded cornice, lacking rosettes and triglyphs, continues around the other facades, a unifying feature along with the water table, parapet, window treatment, and rustication.

Bays consisting of two sets of paired rectangular windows flank the principal centered entrance, with three similar bays on the north and

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south facades of the 70x100' building. The floorplan is T-shaped, and vault placement is variable. County offices occupy the first and second stories with judicial uses on the third story. The attic space is used for storage.

The courthouse is an excellent example of the County Citadel courthouse exhibiting Classical Revival stylistic elements. These include the symmetric arrangement, monumental proportions, smooth stone surface, prominent columns, unadorned parapet, rusticated and ashlar finish, and such classical elements as acroteria, fluted Doric columns, rosettes, and triglyphs.

Exterior alterations are limited to a new sloping concrete sidewalk at the east entrance and metal railing to allow access by the handicapped. Window frames and doors are original. An historic photograph at the Nebraska State Historical Society reveals how little the property has changed. Interior modifications are relatively unintrusive and include some modernized and remodeled rooms, acoustical tile ceilings and fluorescent lighting.

Among the notable interior elements are three art glass panels on the stair landing, including

a personification of the Goddess of Justice...a fitting final impression for the observer to take with him as he leaves this building, dedicated to the calm administration of justice among mankind, a monument to the progressive citizenship of Red Willow County.¹

Other windows have panels symbolizing the importance of agriculture in the county and the frontier experience.

Costly materials adorn the interior: grey marble for staircases, railings, mopboards, and wainscoting, plasterwork of rectangular paneled engaged columns with egg-and-dart courses and a centered triglyph for capitals, and very dark woodwork. In the third floor district courtroom heavy moulded semi-circular pediments have cornice returns and consoles and are placed above five doors and three windows. There is attractive wood paneling on all walls, and the judge's bench has Ionic pilasters and a pair of unusual Art Deco table lamps. The effect is rich and distinctive.

¹Formal dedication program, p. 6.

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The Red Willow County Courthouse is wedged into a quarter block site which it shares with the former county jail and sheriff's residence. Now housing the county health department, the jail was built at the same time as the courthouse but does not continue its stone facing. The two-story jail is flat-roofed, rectangular, and faced with light buff-colored brick. Smooth stone trim outlines the one-story porch and its stepped parapet, forms a continuous lintel for upper windows, and is also used for the water table, moulded cornice, and coping. Brick porch columns are battered, which convey the serious nature and use of the building. A garage is original and attached to the rear, and there appear to be no notable alterations to the jail.

The courthouse site shares the block with houses, and it is located at one end of McCook's commercial area. Notable public or semi-public buildings are neighbors to the courthouse, including the former library, post office, and a church built in 1927. Norris Avenue is brick, which contributes to the courthouse surroundings.

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The Red Willow 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 a focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in the county. It is a fine example of public architecture and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse.

As a good example of the County Citadel Property Type, 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 Classical Revival stylistic influence. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

The Period of Significance is 1923, when construction began, to 1940, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Red Willow 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.

Red Willow County is located in the west end of the southern tier of counties, and its south boundary is also the state line between Nebraska and Kansas. The Republican River traverses the county, which is located in a productive agricultural region. Settlement dates from the early 1870s, and the county was established in 1873. An election to select the county seat was held that same year, and Indianola won the honor. The Lincoln Land Company, a real estate arm of the railroad, built a small frame building and made it available for a courthouse.

These temporary quarters were replaced in 1880 with another courthouse in Indianola, the same year rail connections arrived in the county. The railroad made known its plans for locating a division point with roundhouse and other repair shops in the county. Communities competed for this important economic contribution, with Fairview the winner.

With the status of a railroad division point, Fairview, which was renamed McCook, grew rapidly and were soon the largest town in the county. Residents now set their eye on the county seat designation, which they finally acquired in 1896 after numerous petitions, counter petitions, and court tests.

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McCook residents built a courthouse on the present site which served the county until 1927. Efforts to obtain a new courthouse dated from December 1925 when county commissioners determined that petitions calling for a vote on courthouse bonds were in order. They decided to call for an election on the matter, as the law provided, and also selected Marcus L. Evans to be architect for the courthouse.² Evans, who practiced in Hastings, had been hired the previous fall to report on the condition of the existing courthouse. He found many structural problems and determined that the building was "deteriorating rapidly and becoming very dangerous."

The commissioners carefully looked into courthouse designs from other counties. They received replies from 18 county clerks in Nebraska as well as adjoining states regarding recently built courthouses. From this, they concluded that between \$225,000 and \$250,000 would be necessary to build a proper facility. Thus, the commissioners determined that the proposed bond issue would be for \$235,000.

The bond issue passed, and on January 27, 1926 the county commissioners voted to raze the existing courthouse and re-use the site. They planned to use quarters in the Federal Building during construction. On April 23, 1926 bids were opened for the courthouse and for the sheriff's residence and jail. Percy M. Bell was the architect for the jail, according to the dedication program and commissioner's records. Fred Swanson of McCook received the contract to be general contractor for the project.

Construction proceeded through the summer of 1926 and into 1927. Progress was such that cornerstone-laying ceremonies were held August 24, 1926. On April 29, 1927 the county chose among 31 bids for the janitorship of the new courthouse, an indication that construction was essentially complete. There is no mention in county records of a formal acceptance of the building, but the architect and all the contractors received what appear to be final payments on May 4, 1927. Formal dedication ceremonies of the completed courthouse and jail were held May 25, 1927.

²Evans also designed the Saline County Courthouse during this period.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet, section 9, page 1.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing
(36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A	1 4	3 6 1 6 4 0	4 4 5 1 2 3 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

[] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Barbara Beving Long, consultant
organization	Four Mile Research Co. date January 2, 1990
street & number	3140 Easton Boulevard telephone (515) 266-4964
city or town	Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50317

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-1042.
Tracings. Red Willow County Courthouse. Marcus L. Evans.
Formal Dedication. Red Willow County Court House. May 25, 1927.
Red Willow County. Commissioners Records. Books 2 and 5.
"Red Willow County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. McCook. 1921, 1929.
McCook Daily Gazette. "McCook's Golden Anniversary Souvenir Edition." n.d.
-----. Centennial Edition. 1882-1982.
Morris, Gene O. McCook's First One Hundred Years. McCook: High Plains Historical Society. 1982.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, the Red Willow County Courthouse, occupies lots 7-12 of block 4 of the Original Plat of McCook and is roughly 125x150' in size.

Boundary Justification

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