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Architectural Statement (cont.):

the windows in the stories above. The double-door (now aluminum-frame plate glass) entrance in the center of the front (south) facade is centered in a pedimented parapet in the projecting center pavilion. Heavy, bracketed wood cornices form a pediment above flat pilasters at the sides of the pavilions. Shallow carved festoons and crests decorate the pavilion above and below the stone cornice; a long inscription stone under the wooden pediment bears the building name. In the tympanum over the doorway, sculpted figures and a crest represent the state seal. Visible over (on the west) and to the sides of more recent additions, the side elevations were likewise designed with center projecting pavilions, with the same restrained stone decoration and bold wooden pediments.

A terrazzo floor with meander border, marble wainscoting, and ornamental brass railing decorate the entry and divided stair over the front door inside. The ceiling of the hexagonal lobby, with dressed limestone walls and marble wainscoting, is edged by a wide denticulated entablature, "supported" by sandstone pilasters dividing alternating shellshaped marble niches and doorways. Original glass-globed wall sconces are hung on the walls. Halls extend from the east and west ends of the rotunda. Widely-spaced turned balusters guard the second-story gallery under the dome. Outdoor scenes painted in shades of green and gray fill alternate faces of the dome; painted ribs ascend to the center hexagon with its stained-glass skylight. Recently, the original courtroom was modernized when the county board room was converted to use as a second courtroom; they are located in the east and west sides of the building on the second floor.

Additions made to the building include a three-story mauve brick stair tower (1970s) on the east end of the building, and a low one-story mauve brick jail on the west end. These do not contribute to the nomination.

When the courthouse dome developed leaks in recent years threatening the murals inside, the county rejected the idea of removing it entirely, and voted to repair it at a cost of $$135,000^{B}$. The action was an exception to the usual course of decapitation performed for the sake of economy.

<u>Significance</u>: Designed and constructed in 1905, the Pierce County Court House, with both simple NeoClassical and Beaux Arts characteristics, represents a period of construction. The severe NeoClassicism of its long facade and heavy wooden cornice and pediment is relieved by a Beaux Arts center parapet, clean wall surfaces, restrained sculptural ornament, and the Baroque dome covering the five-story hexagonal rotunda inside. The retention of the small-scale lobby and rotunda and stairway inside (with period marble, brass, and terrazzo appointments) adds to the quality of the building. The site on a hillside on Main Street in Ellsworth, facing the commercial axis, is appropriate to its preeminent local significance.

Historical Statement (cont.):

inappropriate to the image and needs of the growing county, and the present building was begun in 1905. "It is strictly a fireproof building and arranged with ample rooms for offices and vaults and is a structure in which the people generally take just civic pride."^D

Sources of Information (cont.):

C "History of Pierce County and Spring Valley, Wisconsin," Allan C. Brown, and., from Pierce County's Heritage, Pierce County Historical Society, 1971.