

1 City, Village or Town: Ellsworth	County: Pierce	Surveyor: D. Filipowicz	Date: 4/81 10/81	Street Number	
Street Address: 411 W. Main Street		Legal Description: Outlot 110 of the Assessor's Plot of the Village of Ellsworth	Acreage: approx. 2.5		
Current Name & Use: Pierce County Court House		Current Owner: County of Pierce; Attn: David Sorenson, County Clerk			
Film Roll No.	Affix Contact Prints				
Negative No.				Current Owner's Address: 411 W. Main Street, Ellsworth, WI 54011	
Facade Orient.				Special Features Not Visible In Photographs: see Description of interior, Architectural Statement, Item 3.	
Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No					

2 Original Name & Use: Pierce County Courthouse	Source A	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source	Town Range
Dates of Construction: 1905	Source A					
Architect and/or Builder: Buechner & Orth, St. Paul	Source A, E					

3 <u>Architectural Significance</u> <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input checked="" type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input type="radio"/> Is a visual landmark in the area <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> None.	4 <u>Historical Significance</u> <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with lives of significant persons <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with significant historical events <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with development of a locality <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input checked="" type="radio"/> None.	Section Map Name
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Statement of Architectural Significance:
Description: The Pierce County Court House stands removed from the streetscape at the crest of a block-wide hillside on Main Street in Ellsworth. The hexagonal dome, with alternating multi-paned "Georgian" windows and Ionic columns, is set within a square balustrade on the flat roof. A low closed stone parapet rises above the painted wood cornice above the two-story stone walls. The rusticated red sandstone raised basement is cut by regularly-spaced three-quarter-size windows, corresponding to
 (over)

Statement of Historical Significance:
 Prior to legislative action in 1853, Pierce County was part of larger St. Croix County, which also included the future county of Polk. At the time that the separate counties were established, it was stipulated that the seat (originally at Prescott) might be changed by popular vote;^C in 1861, citizens exercised the option by moving the government to Ellsworth, a more central location than either Prescott or candidate River Falls. The first courthouse in Ellsworth proved "unfit for the purpose and a new one was built by private subscription at which the courts were held for several years."^D The decision to erect a jail resulted in erection of another county courthouse as well. By the turn of the century, the existing 1870 building seemed
 (over)

- 5** Sources of Information (Reference to Above)
- A** Cornerstone.
- B** Eau Claire Leader Telegram, October 10, 1979
- C** (over)
- D** History of the St. Croix Valley, Augustus B. Easton, H.C. Cooper, Jr. & Co., Chicago, 1909, pp. 496-501.
- E** Pierce County Herald, Dec. 29, 1904.

6 District Classification
 District Name: _____
 Pivotal Contributing Non-Contributing
 Initials: _____ Date: _____

7 Representation in Previous Surveys: HABS NRHP WRL Local Landmark
 Other: WIHP

8 Eligibility for the National Register
 Eligible Not Eligible Unknown
 Initials: DHF Date: 10/81

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 shell-shaped 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.

Significance: 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, ed., from Pierce County's Heritage, Pierce County Historical Society, 1971.

