

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **JUN 23 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic City Hall and Auditorium *H* Hartington Municipal Building (CD07-1)

and/or common City Auditorium

2. Location

street & number 101 North Broadway NA not for publication

city, town Hartington NA vicinity of

state Nebraska code 031 county Cedar code 027

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 City of Hartington

street & number NA

city, town Hartington NA vicinity of state Nebraska

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cedar County Courthouse - Recorder's Office

street & number 101 South Broadway

city, town Hartington state Nebraska

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date On-going 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hartington City Auditorium is located in Hartington, Cedar County, Nebraska. The 75' x 130' rectangular brick structure was constructed in 1922-23 and designed by William L. Steele, a Sioux City architect. The building exemplifies the Prairie style of architecture also incorporating design characteristics of the Romanesque Revival style, evident in the round arched window and door openings and brick buttresses. Structural and historical integrity has been preserved except for exterior alterations made to the south facade where the lower level windows have been closed up and an additional entry installed. New glass doors have replaced the originals on the west. Minor interior alterations have occurred due to modernizations made over the years.

Hartington, Nebraska (1983 population: 1730) is the county seat of Cedar county - 150 miles north of Lincoln, the capitol city. The auditorium is located on Broadway Avenue, Hartington's "main" street in the center of town.

The Hartington Municipal Building is a rectangular-shaped brick structure with a flat roof and lower level walkout on the south facade. The entire building is trimmed in stone. The main portion of the building is two stories in height and is cross-shaped in plan with one story wings incorporated in the building design at all four corners. The front (west) facade features four round arched door openings separated by brick buttresses. Concentric brick arches crown the double door entries with transoms of divided panes. Stone trim outlines the arched openings. Stairs on the north and south provide access to the raised entry. A brick balconet is located directly above the entries and is visually supported by stone brackets. Stone copings and brick corbelling further adorn the balconet. Fenestration above the balconet consists of five double-hung windows with six-over-six pane arrangement. The entire main portion of the auditorium is encircled with a horizontal band of brick corbelling. Stone copings cap the roof lines of all building masses. The south facade displays corbeled brick pilasters with stone copings interspaced with industrial sash windows. The one story wings flanking the front (west) entry feature tall, narrow round arched window openings with concentric brick arched window hoods, stone lugsills, and a stone belt course running horizontally at the springing of the arch. Brick pilasters, similar in design to those on the south facade, divide the window openings. The southeast wing served as facilities for the fire department and displays double garage doors and rectangular window openings with round arched transoms, concentric brick arched hoods, brick pilasters, stone copings and a corbeled stringcourse. Exterior chimneys are located on the north and south facades of the front main portion of the building.

The auditorium's orientation on the northeast corner of the intersection results in the south and west serving as the "main" facades with the north and east facades devoid of ornamentation. Fenestration on the north facade is similar to that of the south.

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Exterior alterations have occurred including the addition of an entry on the south facade and the enclosure of lower level window openings. New glass doors were installed in the front (west) entries.

Entry into the west (front) facade is through the grand entrance lobby. The round arched theme is repeated in the interior space where round arched door openings and round arched massive wooden double doors are found in the vestibule area. Natural oak is used in the woodwork. The old city office is located in the southwest corner of this level. The main auditorium is sixty feet wide and features a hardwood floor and stage located on the east. The auditorium is supplied with natural lighting from the north and south. Originally over 1,000 opera chairs were purchased from a firm in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Scenery was ordered and set up for the stage. Room was made for a pipe organ which was never purchased.

Construction of the Hartington City Auditorium began in the spring of 1922 and was completed in 1923. William L. Steele served as the architect with the contract for erection let to the Guarantee Construction Company of Sioux City. The auditorium was officially opened and dedicated January 30, 1923.

The building is strongly influenced by Mr. Steele's former employment with Louis H. Sullivan and his associations with the Chicago office of Purcell and Elmslie on such prior projects as the Woodbury County Courthouse in Sioux City, Iowa. Many of the architectural features used in the Hartington Municipal Building are evident in the design of the courthouse.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Recreation/Entertainment
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1922–1923 **Builder/Architect** William Steele

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hartington Municipal Building is architecturally significant as a representation of the Prairie style of architecture, which achieved some popularity in Nebraska during the early 20th century. The auditorium was designed by Architect William Steele, who formerly worked under the employment of Louis H. Sullivan. In a local context, the auditorium stands as a progressive building for the community, in lieu of the influence of the classically-oriented City Beautiful movement which was popular during this time in other cities. The building has played a regionally important recreational, entertainment and educational role in the Hartington community, serving various functions such as for musical and theatrical events, basketball games, social programs, and graduation ceremonies.

Architecturally significant, the Hartington Municipal Building is an outstanding representation of the Prairie style in Nebraska, incorporating design elements of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture. The Prairie style was popular in the Midwest region beginning in 1900 and lasting until the first World War. Most buildings constructed in the Prairie style were residences, but banks, schools, churches and recreational buildings are also found (Panek, 1976, p. 38-1). Low hipped rooflines are evident on earlier examples with the flat roof incorporated into later examples. Brick and frame are common construction materials with surfaces articulated in such a way as to enhance horizontality (Panek, 1976, p. 38-2). The Prairie style reflected the flat terrain of the midwestern prairies with architectural designs giving the viewer a sense of cohesiveness between building and landscape (Brooks, 1972, p. 3). Formal influences on the Praire style of architecture include the English Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century, the commercial architecture of Chicago, and the shingle style, with lesser influences derived from Japanese architecture, and the Beaux-Arts.

The movement was strongest in the midwest, focusing on suburban Chicago. Two prominent figures of the Chicago School of Architecture include Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. The Hartington Municipal Building's massing and fenestration strongly suggests some of Mr. Wright's early non-residential work, as in the case of the Larkin Building (1904) (no longer extant) in Buffalo, New York. The Larkin Building was a large, industrial structure, severe in design, with ornamental features consisting of sculptured piers. Fenestration on the side facades of the Hartington building is strikingly similar to that of the Larkin building, especially in that the pilasters become more prominent than the windows between them. Plain brick wall surfaces, and simple stone copings create an overall effect of severe geometry in both buildings. The dominant vertical movement in both structures is abruptly terminated at the roof line by the stone course at the top of the heavy pylon-like projections at the corners, along the wings and central bays.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Hartington, Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	4	6	4	2	3	9	5	4	7	1	9	9	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is located on lots 16, 17, 18, Block 43, Original Town, Hartington, Cedar County, Nebraska, including all historically related real estate.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James D. Fagler, ARchitect Intern, Joni Gilkerson, Preservation Associate

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date April, 1983

street & number 1500 "R" Street telephone 402/471-3850

city or town Lincoln 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 Mervyn D. Knutt 6/9/83

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

date 7/21/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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The Hartington Municipal Building stands as a unique building style in the town of Hartington. Situated directly north of the Cedar County Courthouse, the two large brick edifices together stand as focal points and lend prominence to the downtown area of Hartington as well as to the whole town. The Hartington Municipal Building could be classified as a product of the "source" of the Prairie School of architecture, being designed by architect Steele, one of Louis Sullivan's former employees and one of his most devoted followers. The building gains greater significance due to the similarities mentioned previously in the work between architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Steele, evident in the design execution of their non-residential buildings. Due to the location of Cedar County in the extreme northeast corner of the state of Nebraska, the Hartington Auditorium, as compared to other known civic buildings in surrounding counties, stands as a progressive building in an otherwise conservative community. One might have expected the "different-looking" designs of the Prairie style to encounter opposition from a local community such as Hartington where clients may have more apt to build in a traditional manner, especially during a time when the trend of the city beautiful movement called for "classicism" in building design.

William LaBarthe Steele was born in Springfield, Illinois and received his training at the University of Illinois, graduating in 1896 with a Bachelor of Science degree in architecture and engineering. Mr. Steele was employed in the office of Louis Sullivan for three years following graduation. After a brief partnership, Steele, in 1906, opened his own office in Sioux City, quickly becoming the city's most prominent architect (Wilson & Robinson, 1977, p. 24). Steele designed numerous Prairie style buildings in Sioux City including the Woodbury County Courthouse (1916-1918), the First Congregational Church (1918), Knights of Columbus Hall, (1926) Livestock National Bank (c. 1920) and several public libraries.

In March, 1919, a petition calling for a bond election to vote \$25,000 for the erection of a new city hall was filed with the city clerk in Hartington. In November, 1920, a similar petition was filed asking the council to call another election for voting an additional \$25,000. The initial plans for the Hartington Auditorium were drawn up by William Steele in 1921. Revised plans for the building were submitted and accepted by the city council in January of 1922. The contract for the erection of the new city hall was given to the Guarantee Construction Company of Sioux City, with construction commencing in spring of 1922. Henry Mahlsted served as superintendent of construction with local labor being used. The cornerstone was laid on June 7, 1922, with dedication ceremonies taking place in January, 1923, including short speeches, local talents and a free dance for all in attendance. The Hartington Herald, February 1, 1923 states: "Hartington's handsome new city hall building was formally opened to the public on Tuesday evening with appropriate exercises. This most important event in

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the history of the city had been quite widely advertised, and was attended by thousands of people. . . The new building is one of the finest of its kind in the state. . . The new city hall building is a handsome and substantial structure, and will be a credit and an ornament to this community for many years to come." The municipal building was completed for a final cost of approximately \$65,000. On January 16, 1923 the building was officially accepted by the city council. In the Cedar County News, January 18, 1923 it states: "Intensive use of the new building, the finest of its kind in northeast Nebraska, is being planned by various organizations in the town. The gymnasium in the basement will be put to practically constant use by the various athletic teams of the town, and will also be used for dancing. The schools are planning to have some sort of an entertainment in the auditorium every month. . ." The Hartington municipal building provided facilities for numerous activities and events including county-wide eighth grade graduation ceremonies, which were held in the auditorium up until the late 1940's, basketball programs, and entertainment. The lower level originally housed the National Guard Armory, with officer's quarters, lockers, supply room, etc. The fire department was located in the southeast corner of the building. It was furnished with sleeping facilities located in the balcony that circled the armory. At present two fire trucks are stored in this area. The city office facility is located on the entry level and still contains a fireproof vault.

The Hartington Municipal Building is still used today for many of the same functions for which it was designed and built sixty years ago. Educational functions, recreational activities, and social programs continue to be held in the building.

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- Harris, Cyril M., Ph. D. Historic Architecture Sourcebook, McGraw-Hill Book Company, copyright 1977.
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June 8, 1922, p. 1, c. 8; January 25, 1923, p. 1, c. 1;
February 1, 1923, p. 1, c. 4, 5, p. 8, c. 6; January 18, 1923, p. 1, c. 2.
- The Hartington Herald, Hartington, Cedar County, Nebraska,
November 23, 1922, p. 1, c. 8; January 18, 1923, p. 1, c. 2;
February 1, 1923, p. 1, c. 1, 2; February 23, 1922, p. 1, c. 1.
- Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780 A Guide to the Styles, the M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, copyright 1969.
- Wilson, Richard Guy, Sidney K. Robinson, The Prairie School in Iowa, Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1977.