

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>
COUNTY: <b>Bayfield</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>DEC 27 1974</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Old Bayfield County Courthouse**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Bayfield County Courthouse**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Washington Street between 4th and 5th streets**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Bayfield**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**Seventh**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **54814** COUNTY: **Bayfield** CODE: **007**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>presently unused</u>

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**McCarty Machinery Sales**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**5 South Sixth Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Bayfield**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **54814**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Bayfield County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**117 E. Fifth Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Washburn**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **54891**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Wisconsin Historic and Architectural Sites Inventory**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1974**  Federal  State  County  Local

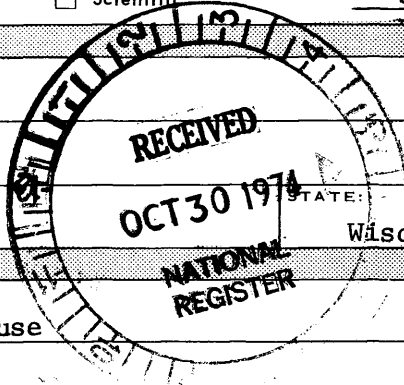
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**State Historical Society of Wisconsin**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Madison**

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **53706**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved     Original Site

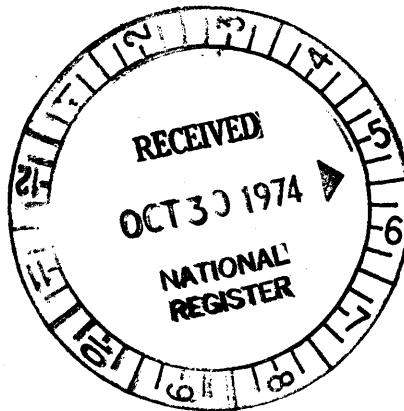
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bayfield County Courthouse is a two-story structure with basement and attic constructed of local rock-faced brownstone ashlar. Stylistically it is Neo-classical Revival with influences of the Richardsonian Romanesque.

The stonework, except that used in trim, is heavily rusticated. The main facade is five bays wide with three central bays set forward and marked by a pediment. The building is divided horizontally by a smooth finished course of stone at the first, second, and attic floor levels. The main entrance is surrounded by a rectangular frame constructed of alternating blocks of smooth and rock-faced stone. Within this frame is an arch of smooth-faced stone capped with a sculptured keystone. The windows of both stories are set in the center of each bay. Those on the ground floor have segmental arches and smooth stone sills. The windows of the central bay have no framing, but those in the end bays have smooth stone frames. All the windows are arched with smooth stone and have sculpted keystones. The second story windows have the same ornamentation those on the first, but they are taller, and their arches are semicircular. Smooth pilasters extend between the courses marking the second and attic levels. They are placed between the bays and at the corners of the building. The pediment contains a small circular window framed with smooth stone above which is the inscription "Bayfield." Chimneys stand on either side of the pediment.

The scheme of the main facade is carried around to the sides, but the width is reduced to three bays. The side entrances are less monumental than the main entrance, and they are distinguished only by a recessed arch.

The original staircases to the building's entrances are no longer extant, and the interior has been modified to adapt it to the varied functions the building has had.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1883

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)<br><u>Local history</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bayfield County Courthouse at Bayfield stands as a reminder of the days when Bayfield was the county seat. The removal of the seat in 1892 to Washburn was <sup>possibly</sup> the most exciting and one of the more deceptive county seat removals in Wisconsin's history.

When Bayfield County was organized in 1866, Bayfield, the largest community, became the county seat. The original courthouse was a wooden frame structure which was destroyed by fire in 1883 along with most of the county records. A prominent architect from Madison, John Nader, who held the office of Surveyor for the City of Madison from 1876-1880 and 1884-1887 and is known for designing Madison's St. Patrick's Church in 1888, was commissioned to build a new courthouse in the town square. The building was to be an expression of civic pride and an advertisement for local brownstone granite. The structure was completed in 1884 at a cost of about \$30,000. Architecturally, the courthouse is important as an example of the use of brownstone in a Neo-Classical Revival building.

The same year the Bayfield courthouse was started, the town of Washburn was founded. It became a booming lumber town, and by 1892 it was much larger than Bayfield. Accompanying Washburn's growth was a movement to make it the county seat. At the town election of 1892 a committee was appointed to hire a lawyer to effect the change. At the time there was some question about the legality of a change, for in 1873-4 an attempted county seat change in Barron county had been declared illegal. The committee hired H.H. Hayden of Eau Claire as its attorney.

Questionable activities began when petitions were circulated to property owners throughout the county. When additional signatures supporting the change were needed a plot of ground was divided into 25' lots which were sold for \$1.00 each. When funds ran low, a parcel of land owned by Washburn supporters was sold to the town for \$3,000, and the money was subsequently appropriated to the campaign.

A county-wide election was scheduled, and the conflict came to a head in the town of Iron River. As part of a local fair, there was a woman's popularity contest. There were two leading contenders -- one supporting Bayfield, and the other supporting Washburn. The contest became a symbol for the upcoming election, and to guarantee victory Washburn supporters descended upon Iron River spending freely and making friends with the local population. The woman supporting Washburn won the contest, and in the county election the people of Iron River, who had been wined and dined by the people of Washburn, remembered their friends and Washburn won the election by 500 votes.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bayfield County Press, 1883 editions

Manuscript describing removal of county seat from Bayfield, by Charles M. Sheridan, Washburn, Wi. Manuscript in possession of author.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"			
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

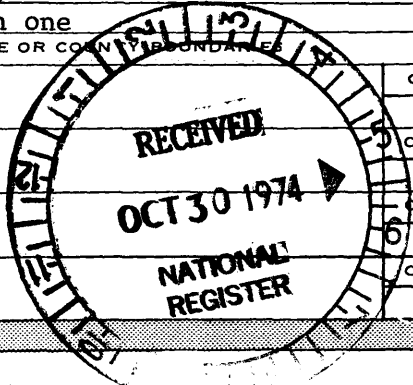
UTM Zone 15:  
5,186,470 N  
666,300 E

H/B  
OK

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than one

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Richard L. Cleary, Preservation Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION: State Historical Society of Wisconsin      DATE: 24 Sept. 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: Madison      STATE: Wisconsin 53706      CODE: 55

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: James Morton Smith  
James Morton Smith

Title: Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date: Oct. 23, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

AR Mortensen  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 12/27/74

ATTEST:  
W. P. ...  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: DEC 26 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Wisconsin
COUNTY	Bayfield
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	DEC 27 1974

(Number all entries)

Old Bayfield County Courthouse

8.

Immediately after the election was made official by a gubernatorial proclamation, the town of Washburn dispatched a caravan to Bayfield to move the county records. A last minute injunction sought by Bayfield supporters failed when the county clerk, who had to be served the injunction to put it into effect, briefly disappeared. The courthouse was taken over by Washburn supporters until all records and furnishings had been loaded onto the caravan and the building was abandoned.

No permanent use has ever been found for the old courthouse. It has served as a school, as a German P.O.W. camp during World War II, and it is presently partially used for storage.

