

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NOV 28 1989

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

2232

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 Pawnee County Courthouse
other names/site number PW06-54

2. Location

street & number 625 6th St. N/A not for publication
city, town Pawnee City N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Pawnee code 133 zip code 68420

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</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 November 17, 1989
Signature of certifying official Date

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. Patrick Andrus 1/10/90
 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): _____

for 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 brick

roof other

other stone

terra cotta

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)

Architecture

Politics/government

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

1911-39

1911-12

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gernandt, William F.

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.

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

Acreage of property 1.9 acres

UTM References

A 11 4 | 7 14 2 16 3 10 | 4 4 4 13 14 12 10 |
Zone Easting Northing

C | | |
Zone Easting Northing

B | | |
Zone Easting Northing

D | | |
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 November 8, 1989
street & number 3140 Easton Boulevard telephone (515) 266-4964
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Built in 1911-12, the Pawnee County Courthouse is a good, intact 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 impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof, raised basement, and designed by an architect. The property is an early example of the ten courthouses Nebraska architect William F. Gernandt designed in an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Merrick County Courthouse, built in 1911-13, and thus illustrates the evolution of Gernandt's courthouses designs.

The Pawnee County Courthouse is rectangular and consists of three stories upon a raised basement. The third story is tucked behind a tall brick parapet; attic windows in the entablature reveal its presence. The basement is ashlar limestone, and stone is also used for the massive columns and other trim, including smooth sills for the many double-hung windows. At the ground level the raised basement projects slightly to form a solid second base for the basement. A moulded water table separates the stone of the raised basement from tan brick above.

An important feature is the massive entry portico with its four colossal stone columns on the principal (north) facade and the pair of massive stone stairways leading up to the portico and the main entrance. The columns have smooth shafts that rest on particularly high pedestals; capitals are Composite. Attractive stone balustrades separate the columns. Behind the two end columns are squared pilasters. The columns support a porch having bold architectural elements (triglyphs above the capitals, a dentiled course, pediment, and two acroteria at the corners of the parapet). Original light fixtures (metal with a single globe) rest on stone-trimmed brick pedestals at the foot of the divided stairways.

These and other elements of the portico are in contrast with an otherwise unadorned entablature and parapet. A rather delicate feature of the portico are the terra cotta allegorical figures and symbols located within the triangle of the pediment. Two bearded men in togas holding a shovel and a pitchfork are flanked by women with baskets of apples and other produce and symbolize agriculture and the fertility of the county. The centered torch likely refers to the enduring nature of county government and democratic ideals.

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Double-hung windows are regularly spaced on the facades. Three windows flank the centered entrance of the north facade and have flat stone lintels and sills and also attractive brick surrounds. Above the second story windows are small simple attic windows that light the third story jail area. On the east and west facades, brick pilasters separate six bays of windows, and the effect is similar to those of Gernandt's Merrick County Courthouse.

Unlike the flat parapet of the north facade, east and west parapets continue the shape of the pilasters below them. The heavily moulded dentiled cornice of distinctive slate blue terra cotta continues around all sides of the building, a unifying feature.

The courthouse exhibits features of the Classical Revival style, such as symmetric arrangement, classical detail, monumental shapes, smooth surface finish (the raised basement), simple parapet and relatively unadorned roofline, pedimented portico, and colossal columns.

The 67x78' building was designed to have one primary entrance on the north facade, and a secondary entrance on the south, which is more than a utilitarian entry. Both have steps up to them, although the north steps are much more elaborate and imposing. The south facade continues the materials and treatment of the other facades but in a simplified manner, and the entrance is a brick surround with a terra cotta moulded lintel over double doors.

The central hallway on the first floor is cross-shaped. East and west halls are short stubs with three doors to offices or other rooms off them. Vaults of different sizes are placed in the four corners of the building. To the north is a long vestibule, and on the south are stairs to the upper floors, with the south door and steps down to the basement level behind it. The 30x47' district courtroom on the second floor runs nearly the length of the east facade.

Original interior features include hexagonal floor tile with a regularly spaced pattern in black, white, dark green, and rust and a border pattern, a favorite of Gernandt's (see Polk County Courthouse). Also original is a quite simple brass light fixture with tulip-shaped globes in the second floor hall. Grey mottled marble is used for the wainscoting while mopboards are marble with a dark grey and white swirling pattern. Stairs have metal balusters and newels, a fireproof feature. Oak woodwork is quite simple and is used around transoms and large top and side lights for some doors. The courtroom is quite plain, and now has a new ceiling, the principal interior change. There are no

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significant exterior changes.

The Pawnee County Courthouse exhibits features that reveal its kinship with the contemporary Merrick County courthouse, also a William F. Gernandt design. These include: Classical Revival stylistic influence, pilaster and window treatment of the east and west facades, the base-within-a-base of the raised basement, prominent entry stairs, use of triglyphs and dentils, prominent columns, high parapet to conceal an additional story, floorplan, and use of such interior elements as ceramic tile, marble detail, and metal staircases.

The courthouse is centered on a full block with a compact commercial sector facing its north and east sides. Dwellings are located across from the west facade. The courthouse square occupies a somewhat high spot in Pawnee City, and the topography drops off notably below the south facade to more residences.

A number of deciduous trees dot the site, and there are no objects other than a simple flagpole (not counted in this nomination). A wide concrete walk leads directly to the north facade, and walks surround the building and lead from east and west to the north facade as well. Historic photographs show that large round Victorian flower beds once flanked the principal walkway, which at some point also had a low hedge lining it.

Also on the courthouse square, in the southeast corner, is a modern bandshell. Now covered with vertical metal siding, the curving building has three risers that form a U-shape within the shell and is of modest design. Because of its appearance and recent construction date, the bandshell is a noncontributing element for this nomination.

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The Pawnee 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 the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Pawnee County. It is a good example of public architecture in the community 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, 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, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel. The property is an early example of the ten courthouses Nebraska architect William F. Gernandt designed in an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Merrick County Courthouse, built in 1911-13, and thus illustrates the evolution of Gernandt's courthouses designs.

The Period of Significance is 1911, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Pawnee 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.

Pawnee County is located in the southeast corner of the state, one county west of the Missouri River. Its southern boundary is also the state line between Nebraska and Kansas. With its location near the Missouri River, an important early transportation link, Pawnee was among the early counties in the state and was organized in 1856.

It required two elections before the county seat was selected in 1856. Table Rock and Tarbull and Jenkins' unnamed site were among the contenders, but an area identified only by its township and range legal description (present Pawnee City) ultimately prevailed.

Construction on the first courthouse commenced immediately after the county seat election, but was halted as quickly, likely due to financial problems related to the nationwide economic depression of 1857. The

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courthouse remained but a foundation and frame until 1860 when a storm leveled it. Finally, in 1869, the first courthouse was built on the present square.

By the turn of the century, county residents were prepared to replace the aging and poorly constructed stone building with a more substantial edifice. On November 8, 1910, voters approved an \$85,000 bond issue for a new courthouse. Fourteen architects competed for the honor of designing the Pawnee County Courthouse, an unusually large number. On February 14, 1911, the county board chose W.F. Gernandt and Company of nearby Fairbury to design the building. J.H. Genknect of Wathena, Kansas was the contractor.

During construction, county offices were moved to a former academy building in the north part of town, since the old courthouse was demolished to make way for the new in March 1911. The Masonic Lodge presided over cornerstone-laying ceremonies held October 24, 1911. County records are silent on when the courthouse was completed, but it appears that construction continued into 1912. The county was still paying rent on the former academy building in 1912 and it seems unlikely that the courthouse was completed in 1911 since the cornerstone was not laid until late in the fall.

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.

Pawnee County. Commissioners' Records. Book 6.

Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-1030, M281-1031.

Cornerstone, Pawnee County Courthouse.

Pawnee City, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1886, 1922.

Pawnee City Centennial. 1857-1957.

Edwards, Joseph L. Centennial History of Pawnee Co., Nebraska. Pawnee City: W.E. Hassler, 1876.

Souvenir Book of Pawnee County. Pawnee City: W.E. Hassler, n.d.

"Pawnee County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Pawnee County Courthouse, occupies all of Block 15 of the Original Town of Pawnee City and is roughly 310x268' in size.

Boundary Justification

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

