

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)

Beaux Arts

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof other

other stone

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 [x] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [x] A [] B [x] C [] D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [] A [] B [] C [] D [] E [] F [] G

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1913-39

Significant Dates

1913-14

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rose and Peterson

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 2 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>15</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>10</u>	B	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing
C	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	D	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone Easting Northing		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		
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Built in 1913-14, the Box Butte County Courthouse is an excellent, largely unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, Beaux Arts 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, ground level entry and appearance of a raised basement, and designed by an architect. The courthouse has some unusual features rarely seen on Nebraska courthouses, including a series of roaring animal's heads along the cornice, a stained glass skylight, and a two-story circular open well in the hallway.

The Box Butte County Courthouse in Alliance is a three-story compact block festooned with distinctive classically inspired ornamentation. Entrances at either end are tucked beneath pairs of massive engaged columns in slightly projecting pavilions. The entries open directly onto the first floor, but the rusticated stone gives the effect of a raised basement. The west facade is the primary entrance and the door on the east side was intended to act as the back door. There are no entrances on the south and north sides, which have smaller pavilions with two engaged columns rather than four.

An uncommon feature is an unusually large foyer which therefore decreases the size of the inner hall. Across from the foyer are attractive stairs leading to the second floor, where offices of county government (such as clerk and treasurer) are located. The ground level has the county courtroom, library, school superintendent, veterans affairs office, and restrooms. The top floor is the location of the district courtroom and related offices.

Elements of the Beaux Arts style displayed here include the pronounced cornice, large engaged columns, rusticated basement, and prominent ornamental detail. Of particular note are the dozens of roaring animal's heads along the prominent cornice and the Corinthian engaged columns that are only fluted for half the shaft. Light tan speckled brick contrasts well with limestone trim and further enriches the already active surface.

Interior treatment is similarly rich and varied: marble wainscotting, ceramic tile, golden oak woodwork, ornate plaster details (egg-and-dart courses, foliated consoles), wrought iron stairs and railings, distinctive light fixtures, and a particularly effective stained glass skylight. The latter lights the two-story well of the inner hall, which, in turn,

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highlights a mosaic tile seal of the Great State of Nebraska on the first floor. The small size of the inner hall effectively concentrates attention upon the seal and moves the eye up the light well to the Art Nouveau stained glass skylight.

The courthouse was centered on a half block just north of downtown Alliance, as shown on a 1920 Sanborn fire insurance map. However, county use now occupies the full block. In 1975-77 the Regional Law Enforcement Center was added to the rear of the courthouse, replacing dwellings. Despite its size, the addition is not intrusive, for the slightly sloping terrain, use of tan brick, and low scale mitigate potential visual harm. In addition, the law center is stepped back from the courthouse, and it does not visually intrude upon the significant features of the courthouse. Other exterior changes are minimal: metal storm windows and awnings. Most interior features remain unchanged, although the courtroom has a new ceiling and light fixtures and an exit door has been added at the staircase landing.

Red brick streets lead past the courthouse from the nearby commercial area. Attractive curving paths connect the courthouse with the corners of the site. The only objects are a small flagpole at the front sidewalk and simple brick and granite plaque "To honor those who have worn the uniform of these United States in time of conflict" at the southwest corner of the site. Numerous deciduous and evergreen trees dot the courthouse block, including a row of tall evergreens across the main facade. The latter make photographing difficult. For this nomination the flagpole was not counted and the veterans memorial is a noncontributing element due to its recent (but undetermined) construction date.

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The Box Butte 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 Box Butte County. It is an excellent 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 Beaux Arts 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 Period of Significance is 1913, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Box Butte 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.

Named for a box-shaped lone hill or butte, Box Butte County is located in the northwest corner of Nebraska in a high plains region, one county east of the Wyoming state line. In 1887 the county was established, and Nonpareil was named the county seat. Residents of other communities came to feel their towns were the equal of Nonpareil, and county seat wars raged in the late 1880s and into the 1890s.

The circumstances behind Alliance becoming county seat of the county illustrate the influence and power of railroads in directing settlement. Nonpareil was the original county seat, but the railroad bypassed it in 1889. The Lincoln Land and Loan Company, an offshoot of the Burlington Railroad, established the rail stops of Alliance and Hemingford. Officials from the land and railroad companies apparently decided to award Alliance the rail repair shops and see to it that Hemingford became the county seat, thus increasing land values and settlement in both their communities.

Alliance residents did not agree with this division of the spoils and worked to capture the county seat designation. In the face of determined

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Alliance opposition, three elections in 1890 were necessary before Hemingford won over Nonpareil and Alliance. Alliance supporters claimed foul and schemed to physically remove county records from Nonpareil, on the theory that possession is 9/10s of the law. They then hoped to convince a judge that the election had been improperly tabulated.

The railroad company thwarted these plans, however, by providing a trainload of "detectives and special agents," according to a local history. The mere threat of this trainload, which could reach Nonpareil much more quickly than could Alliance supporters traveling the roads, stilled talk of an armed takeover, and the county seat was moved quietly to Hemingford. The land company financed construction of a two-story 45x54' courthouse there.

With continued settlement in Alliance, that community arranged for yet another county seat election, in 1899. This time, Alliance was the winner. Rather than waste a perfectly good courthouse, the Hemingford edifice was hoisted onto a railroad car and moved to Alliance that same year. The move was so unusual that commemorative photographs, plates, spoons, and ash trays were available for sale to county residents.

After passage of the Kinkaid Act in 1904, settlement increased markedly in Box Butte County as settlers claimed 640-acre homesteads in the region. By 1912 residents were prepared to replace the original courthouse with a more substantial edifice and passed a \$75,000 bond issue to underwrite construction costs.

The Kansas City, Kansas architectural firm of Rose and Peterson was selected to design the courthouse. The firm also designed the Burt County Courthouse in Tekamah, Nebraska, which was built in 1916-17. No Kansas courthouses by them are listed in a Kansas State Historical Society catalog of the state's older courthouses, and no other information is known about them.¹

R.A. Matthews of Grand Junction, Colorado was the contractor for the project. Construction proceeded smoothly, and the Odd Fellows oversaw laying of the cornerstone in November of 1913. The courthouse was dedicated in December 1914 with suitably patriotic speeches.

¹Julie Wortman and David Johnson, "Legacies: Kansas' Older County Courthouses." Kansas State Historical Society, 1981.

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

Schellenberg, James A. Conflict Between Communities. American County Seat Wars. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987.

Phillips, Anna and Ball, Vilma. History of Box Butte County, Nebraska.... Hemingford, Ne: By the Authors, 1939.

Bruce, Willa. "Box Butte County. Controversial and Mobile Courthouses." NeSHPO files. 1987.

Box Butte County. Commissioners' Records.

Alliance, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1909, 1920.

Cornerstone. Box Butte Courthouse.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Box Butte County Courthouse, occupies lots 22 and 23 of County Addition and all lots in Block 3 of the Original Town of Box Butte.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the half city block that has historically been associated with the property and the adjoining half city block that contains the courthouse addition. Together, the two halves now comprise the courthouse square.

