

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

HISTORIC NAME: LeSueur County Courthouse and Jail

COUNTY: LeSueur 81000652

CURRENT NAME:

CITY/TWP.: Le Center

LEGAL DESC.: block 12 and lots 1,2,3,4,13,14,15,16, of block 13 ADDRESS: 88 South Park Avenue and Le Center 130 South Park Avenue

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| CLASSIFICATION: | CONDITION: | SIGNIFICANCE: | THEME/S: |
| Buildings <u>X</u> | Excellent _____ | Local <u>X</u> | Primary <u>Politics/Gov'n't</u> |
| Structure _____ | Good <u>X</u> | State _____ | Secondary <u>Architecture</u> |
| Object _____ | Fair _____ | National _____ | Others _____ |
| District _____ | Deteriorated _____ | | |

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes ___ No ___ Restricted X PRESENT USE: County Court house, jail and police department

VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes X No ___

OCCUPIED: Yes X No ___

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1896 and 1914 ORIGINAL USE: Courthouse, jail, & Sheriff's residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Le Sueur County ARCHITECT/BUILDER: See description

| | |
|--|---|
| OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Le Sueur County 88 South Park Avenue Le Center | ACREAGE: Less than one acre approx. <u>4</u> acres |
|--|---|

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.: Le Sueur County Historical Society Box 577 Elysian, MN 56028 | UTM REFERENCE: LeCenter Quad. |
|---|----------------------------------|

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| FORM PREPARED BY: Britta Bloomberg | 15 / 441700 / 4915050 |
| DATE: 8/80 | |

DESCRIPTION:

The LeSueur County Courthouse and Jail are centrally located in the city of LeCenter on the west edge of the principal business district. Both structures are oriented toward Park Avenue. The courthouse is situated on a spacious city block near the northwest corner of Park and Sharon Street. The jail building is located across the street on the southwest corner of the same intersection. The masonry buildings with their respective towers and spacious lots provide a dominant visual focus in the community.

LeSueur County Courthouse (1896)

The two story LeSueur County Courthouse was designed by the Chicago architect Louis M. Curry and constructed in 1896 by James Dolan and Co., contractors of Waterville. The Richardsonian structure is constructed of buff-colored brick with smooth and rusticated Kasota stone for highlighting. The building's design is basically symmetrical and features a central bay flanked by pavilions; the central tower rising two stories above the truncated hip roof is a dominant feature. The central bay features a portico supported by four rusticated stone columns and a gable end capped by a stone coping. A bank of rectilinear transomed windows are located in the second floor with the words "ERECTED A.D. 1896" inscribed in the stone lintel above the windows. The flanking pavilions feature stone corner quoins and terminate in pyramidal roofs with dormers and finials. Bands of semi-circular arched transomed windows are utilized on the second floor and rectilinear transomed windows appear on the first level. Stone capitals decorate the horizontal stone band beneath the second story arched transoms. The tower is comprised of a square base set on a pendentive, featuring bands of rectilinear transomed windows, rusticated stone balconets, wooden cornice, and an octagonal drum featuring semi-circular arched windows and a domical roof surmounted by a statue of Justice. The north, south, and west facades of the building exhibit the dominant features of the front facade, including stone banding, groups of arched and rectilinear transomed windows, and corner quoins. A wooden cornice circumvents the building above the second story.

The tower, originally one story taller, was damaged in a storm and rebuilt in 1920, according to plans of Mankato architect Albert Schippel. The courthouse was enlarged and remodeled in 1975. At that time, rectangular additions were constructed utilizing materials similar to the original on the north and south facades. The interior was completely remodeled in 1975.

JAN 15 1981

(see continuation sheet)

Description - continuedLeSueur County Jail (1914)

The two story brick LeSueur County Jail was designed by the Mankato architect Albert Schippel and constructed in 1914 by J.B. Nelson Construction Co., also of Mankato. The Building sits on a rusticated stone foundation, and smooth stone sills and lintels of the irregular rectilinear fenestration create a polychrome effect on the red brick. Dominant features of the building are the three story circular tower at the northeast corner and the red tile combination hip and gable roof. The tower features third story arched windows, continuous stone bands, and a brick corbel course, and terminates in a flared conical tile roof with hipped dormers and finial. Hipped dormers are located on the north, south, and east facades, and a three sided window bay is at the southeast corner. The rear section of the jail has a gable roof and barred windows on the first and second stories. Entrances located on the east, north, and south facades include rusticated stone rails and steps leading to a flat roofed portico.

Exterior alterations of the jail building are limited to the enclosure of the entry porticos on the north and south facades and the addition of aluminum windows. The interior has been partially remodeled but retains many original features. Constructed for use as the county jail and sheriff's residence; the building now houses the county jail and the sheriff's residence.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The LeSueur County Courthouse and Jail are significant as the seat of county government since the turn of the century and as the best representatives of the role that county government has played in the location and development of the city of LeCenter. The county seat was first located at the city of LeSueur. It remained there until 1875, although there was periodic agitation to move it to Lexington or Cleveland. In 1875, the supreme court ordered that it be moved to Cleveland, where it remained for one year. The next year it was again moved to the new town of LeSueur Center (now simply LeCenter), in a novel solution to the recurring and familiar county seat battle. LeSueur Center was platted in December 1876 at a location near the geographic center of the county by the LeSueur Center Land Company. Platted specifically as a county seat, the company's townsite focused on a courthouse square and utilized the names of the county's townships and villages as street names. Initially, the county leased a building which the company had erected for courthouse purposes. The county eventually purchased the building and used it until the present structure was constructed in 1896. The first jail was situated on the courthouse square northwest of the courthouse; the present building was constructed in 1914 when improved facilities were needed. The scale and attention to popular designs for courthouses and jails of the period mark these buildings as prominent local landmarks.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Gresham, William G., ed., History of Nicollet and LeSueur Counties, Minnesota, Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen & Co., Inc., 1916.

LeCenter, Minnesota, Formerly LeSueur Center, 75th Anniversary, 1890-1965, LeCenter, 1965.

JAN 16 1981