

MP2502



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ranier Community Building

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

"Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943"

2. Location

Street & number: 2099 Spruce Street

City or town: Ranier State: Minnesota County: Koochiching

Not For Publication: n/a Vicinity: n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

		<u>4.10.18</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Amy Spong, Deputy SHPO</u>		Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

5/21/2018
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/city hall, jail, fire station

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium, dance hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE/auditorium, dance hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stucco

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Ranier Community Building is a one-story, concrete block building sheathed in white stucco on the northwest corner of Spruce Street and Pine Street in the center of Ranier, Minnesota. The city partnered with the Works Progress Administration in 1939 to construct this multi-purpose municipal building to house the city hall, fire department, jail, and a large hall for community events. The building has a hipped roof with four protruding gabled bays. The two bays facing Spruce Street originally housed the entrances to the city offices and the assembly hall. The original entrance to the hall has been closed and two window openings converted to doors. The assembly hall and stage are unchanged, and the original iron bars are still in place in the jail. Overall the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as an example of federal support for municipal construction during the Great Depression.

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Narrative Description

With the support of the Works Progress Administration, the city of Ranier built its Community Building in 1939 at the northwest corner of Spruce Street and Pine Street. The primary or east facade faces Spruce Street and is set back about 65 feet from the sidewalk which runs along the street curb. The south facade is set back about 40 feet from Pine Street which has no sidewalks.

Exterior

Largely cruciform in shape, this one-story, concrete block building is sheathed in white stucco and has a combination cross-gable/hip roof covered with asphalt shingles. It rests on a concrete foundation and features four protruding gabled bays of varying dimensions. Two of these bays mark either end of the primary (east) facade, while one is at the south end of the rear (west) facade. The last is centered at the south side. Each gable is filled with lap siding.

The primary (east) facade is composed of a central 54-foot wall bookended by the two east-facing gabled bays mentioned above (Photo #1, 2, 7). Because the gabled bay on the north end originally held the main entrance to the auditorium, the Works Progress Administration plaque is embedded in the wall just to the right of this door opening (Photo #3). This bay is about 13 feet wide and projects just over one foot from the main facade. Originally, there was a wood double door with eight-light windows reached by three steps. This opening now is filled with white stucco to enclose the handicapped accessible restroom which was added later.

The gabled bay at the south end is about 15 feet wide and protrudes about seven feet from the main facade (Photo #1). It has a single doorway, also originally reached by three steps, which provided access to the city council meeting room which was later converted into the city administrator's office. The original wood door featuring a nine-light window has been replaced by a single glass pane metal door which meets current building and fire codes. There are two window openings on the south side of the bay which originally held paired eight-light casement windows over concrete sills. Today the lower halves of the openings are closed to provide more accessible workspace for the city's two administrative employees; a single-light, metal-framed window fills the upper half.

The expanse of the east facade between these two bays originally had four large window openings which brought natural light into the assembly hall. Each was originally filled with a set of three eight-light, wood, casement windows topped by a multi-light transom. The windows in the two central openings have been replaced by metal-framed windows which are comparable except that they are single-paned. The northern and southern window openings have been changed to doorways, with one single glass door meeting fire codes flanked by a glass sidelight and topped by a transom window similar to the original. There was also a single door tucked into the corner created by the southern bay which has been closed with stucco.

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To make the building handicapped accessible, the two three-step stairways have been removed and a paving stone patio built all along the front facade at the same grade as the floor of the building. This patio extends about 20 feet from the building and is surrounded by a low, metal fence. It is reached by sidewalks that slope gently from the two doorways down to the sidewalk along Spruce Street.

The south-facing gabled bay which defines the interior space of a small garage originally intended to house the firefighting equipment is about 19 ½ feet wide and protrudes 28 feet from the south side of the building (Photo #4). The gabled end of this bay has a garage door that lifts overhead as well as a pedestrian door. Both the east and west facades of the garage have a single window opening filled with a pair of eight-light, wood casement windows. The original windows are in place.

The west-facing gabled bay that defines the space originally occupied by the jail is about 19 feet wide and protrudes about 20 feet from the west facade (Photo #4). Unlike the other bays, the entrance is not in the gabled end, but rather a single door on its south side reached by three concrete steps. These steps and their original metal handrails are still in place. There are also two single window openings with iron bars on this facade. There are two more barred window openings on the west side. There are no windows on the north side of the jail but there is a single door at the corner where the bay emerges from the west facade. This door opens to the stairwell connecting the first floor and the partial basement.

The remaining part of the rear facade is a flat wall running about 55 feet north of the west-facing bay (Photo #5). This wall contains four window openings that match the original openings in the east facade, all of which were originally filled with sets of three eight-light, wood casement windows topped by multi-light transoms. These window openings are unchanged but the windows have been replaced by comparable metal-framed windows which are single-paned. A single door at the northern end of the east facade provides access to the kitchen. It is reached by three concrete steps. The original steps are in place, as is the original metal handrail.

The north facade is a flat wall extending 34 feet. There are no doors on this facade, but three windows (Photo #6). Centered on the western half of this facade is a set of three windows that allow natural light to enter the kitchen in the northwest corner of the building. These windows have replacement metal-framed windows. The eastern half of this facade has two window openings which likely once held the same kind of paired, eight-light, wood windows that appear elsewhere. They allowed natural light into the vestibule and the cloakroom. As noted below, these areas are now the men's and women's restrooms. In order to allow for privacy, the easterly window opening has been filled with stucco and the westerly one reduced to a smaller single pane window.

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Interior

The core of the building is a large rectangular space that houses a large assembly hall with a proscenium stage at the south end and a kitchen and two restrooms at the northern end (Photos # 8, 9). The hall is about 43 feet long and 32 feet wide. The floor of the hall is the original polished hardwood. The ceiling is plastered and painted.¹ The walls are also plastered and painted, and the original wood sills, baseboard, and chair rails are in place. The east and west walls each have four sets of window openings noted above. The northerly and southerly openings on the east facade have been changed into doorways that provide the main access to the hall.

At the northwest corner of the hall there is a kitchen accessed by a single door and also by a large serving window. The kitchen, about 13 feet wide and 11 feet deep, has cabinets, appliances, a sink, green countertops, and a linoleum floor. The remaining part of the northern end of the room was originally the main entryway and a cloakroom. This area is now occupied by the two handicapped accessible bathrooms.

The stage at the southern end of the hall is about 18 feet wide and 12 feet deep and two feet high. It has the same original hardwood flooring as the main hall (Photo #8). The rectangular proscenium is sheathed in a board and batten style, as is the wall at the rear of the stage. On the east side of the stage, there is a narrow hallway that leads to the city office. On the west side of the stage there is a narrow hallway that leads to the garage, the former jail, and a stairway to the basement. Both hallways also allow access to the rear of the stage via three-step wood staircases.

The city office accessed via the east hallway is a room housed in the gabled bay at the south end of the east facade (Photo #10). The room, which was originally intended for city council meetings, is about 13 feet wide and 16 feet deep. A 10 by 4 foot vault is built into the southwest corner of the room with 6 inch concrete walls and a steel door with a combination lock. The northwest corner of the room has a 4 by 4 foot closet. The room was constructed with plaster walls and wood floors. In 1980 the city remodeled this space to serve as the office of the city administrator and deputy city clerk.² In order to allow for more wall space, the lower halves of the two windows on the south wall were enclosed. The plaster walls were covered with an imitation wood paneling which is glued over the plaster. The windows were framed with new millwork. A service counter separating the public part of the room from the office area was

¹ After the building opened, the city informed the architect that there were numerous complaints about the assembly hall's acoustics. The city blamed the smooth plastered ceiling. The architect responded that installing acoustical material to the ceiling would have exceeded the budget, and that in any case, he had not noticed any problem when he had appeared at the dedication ceremony, even while a band was playing. Nevertheless, the city insisted on a reduction of his fees. Letter from J. S. Greer, Village Clerk to Thomas J. Shefchik, July 2, 1940; Letter from Thomas J. Shefchik to J. S. Greer, July 30, 1940; Letter from J. S. Greer to Thomas J. Shefchik, November 27, 1940, all in the possession of the City of Ranier.

² By the 1950s, the city council was holding its meetings in the assembly hall. See Figure #5. This is still true today. The city administrator sets up tables, chairs, and a public address system for each meeting of the council.

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installed, along with some cabinets. The original vault and closet located along the west wall were retained.

The hallway west of the stage leads to the small garage in the south-facing gabled bay discussed above. Originally for the fire department, it today functions as the equipment room for the city's Public Works Department. Also accessed by this hallway is the stairwell to the partial basement which houses mechanicals and serves as a storage center for city files. The stairwell also provides access to the former jail in the gabled bay which extends west from the southern end of the rectangular core of the building. The jail has a main room and two holding cells. One wall of each cell is made of iron bars that include a cell door made of iron bars (Photo #11). All the original ironwork is in place. Today the main room and cells are used by the city's Public Works Department.

Integrity

The Ranier Community Building has been used exclusively as the city's all-purpose municipal center from 1939 until the present time. Since there have been no additions, the building's footprint, profile and massing have not been altered. As explained in Section 8, Ranier has opted to outsource its law enforcement and fire protection services. The city's Public Works Department now uses the former jail and the garage where the fire equipment was once stored. These areas are essentially unchanged. For example, the barred windows and the iron bars of the jail cells are still in place. The city also decided to convert the city council room into an office by adding imitation wood paneling, new millwork, a service counter, and some cabinets. The lower halves of the two windows on the south facade were enclosed as part of this project.

More changes resulted from the fact that the building had no plumbing when constructed. In 1954, the city built two small restrooms in the western half of the original cloakroom using water pumped from the Rainy River. The toilets were originally connected to a septic tank. In 1961, Ranier built a municipal water and sewer system. Subsequently, the restrooms were connected to the water and sewer systems, and the kitchen was upgraded with a sink and appliances.

The most important changes came with efforts to make the building accessible to the handicapped. In 1992, the gabled bay on the north end was again remodeled so that the existing restrooms could be enlarged to meet ADA requirements. The original wood door on the gabled bay was removed and its opening filled with white stucco which now provides the east wall of the men's restroom. The window opening on the northeast side of the building was altered to provide privacy for the men's restroom. The original width of the window remains; the alteration covered around 2/3 of the vertical length of the window. To compensate for the closing of the door in the gabled bay, two of the four window openings on the front (east) facade were converted to doors. Each doorway is a single glass doors meeting fire codes flanked by a glass sidelight and topped by a transom window similar to the original. There was also a single door tucked into the corner created by the southern bay that has been closed with stucco.

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The 1992 project also made the entire building handicapped accessible by adding a wood deck along the front facade that was reached by a ramp. Recently, the city improved this system by replacing the deck with a paving stone patio at the floor level that is reached by ramps. This patio extends about 20 feet from the building and is surrounded by a low metal fence. It is reached by sidewalks that slope gently from the building down to the sidewalk along Spruce Street, taking advantage of the fact that the building is set back 65 feet from the sidewalk.

Although there have been changes, the Ranier Community Building retains its ability to convey its historical significance. Its location is unchanged, and in fact, the small town in which it is located has changed very little over the decades. The immediate setting has been somewhat altered by the three large trees in the front yard, a spruce flanked by two firs, and by the patio along the front facade that replaced the three step stairways to the original entrances (Photo #7). There were two sidewalks connecting these stairways to the sidewalk along Spruce Street when the building opened in 1939. The two existing sidewalks from the patio to the street are in the same location but have a slightly steeper slope. The patio does not impede the view of the original facade, and in any case, both the patio and the trees can be removed.

The original design of the building itself has not been significantly altered. The character defining features, including the white stucco facades and the four gabled bays with the upper portions filled with lap siding, look very much as they did in 1939. The construction of two handicapped accessible restrooms led to the closing of one of two entrances on the east facade and the conversion of two window openings. However, the new doors have the same width as the original window openings and maintain the original pattern of four equally spaced openings in the east facade.³

The materials and workmanship of the exterior are largely unchanged. The building is still sheathed in its original stucco and the gables are still filled with the original lap siding. The windows on the front and rear facades which allow natural light in to the assembly hall have been replaced with compatible metal windows. Original wood doors have also been replaced. However, the original eight-light paired casement windows on the east and west facades of the garage are still in place, and the iron bars are still in place on the jail window openings. On the north and south facades, a few window openings have been altered.

³ In this respect, the changes in this building are very much like those in two other multi-purpose government buildings built by the WPA in Minnesota. In the Hokah Municipal Building, a pedestrian door was changed to a window and a fire house door was replaced by a pedestrian door and two windows with the remaining space filled with vinyl siding. See Greg Gaut, "Hokah Municipal Building," *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, June 5, 2014. A similar change was made to the Bigfork Village Hall when the city ended fire service and rented the original fire house wing of the building to the VFW. The fire house garage door was changed to a pedestrian door with the space filled by vinyl siding. See Debra Kellner, "Bigfork Village Hall" *National Register of Historic Places Form*, January 2012. In the Ranier Community Building, the original front entrance was filled with stucco that matches the stucco used throughout the exterior.

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The original design, materials, and workmanship of the interior are intact. The heart of the building is the assembly hall with its proscenium stage. The floor, ceiling, and millwork are all original. The garage for the fire equipment and the jail are now used for other city functions but they have not been altered. The jail still has its two original jail cells made of iron bars. The iron bars are still in the jail windows. The walls of the former council room are currently obscured by wall paneling which can be removed. The original closet and vault are still in place and used by the city administrator and clerk.

The building's physical features convey a feeling of the 1930s when it was built. The property as it exists today is closely associated with the efforts of small towns to partner with the Works Progress Administration to provide a multi-use community building that would function both as the seat of municipal government and as the venue for most of the town's recreational and social events. Its association with these events is unbroken because the building continues to serve as both the city hall as well as the all-purpose community center.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1939-1968

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Shevchik, Thomas J., Architect (Duluth, Minnesota)
Skolby, Carl, WPA project superintendent

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Ranier Community Building is locally significant under **Criterion A** in the area of Politics/Government and Entertainment/Recreation as a distinctive example of a local partnership with the Works Progress Administration to provide a modern multi-use public building to meet a small town's need for a city office, fire station, jail, and community hall. The WPA-supported construction of the building not only delivered short-term unemployment relief during the Depression, but also provided the community with a civic center that has served as the focus of its political and social life. The building continues to serve as the center of government and as the primary venue for social events in Ranier. The period of significance begins in 1939 with the construction of the building and continues to 1968, as the passage of fifty years is the minimum threshold for considering the eligibility of a property for the National Register. The property is related to the statewide historical context of "Northern Minnesota Lumbering 1870-1930s" and "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943."

Narrative Statement of Significance

Railroads, Lumbermen and the birth of Ranier

The Rainy River, which flows from its origins in Rainy Lake westward for 85 miles to Lake of the Woods, forms part of the international boundary between the United States and Canada. Burial mounds on both banks of the Rainy River provide evidence that the river was of great importance to Native Americans as far back as the early Woodland Tradition. In the early 1700s, the first French and British fur traders interacted with Ojibwe bands living along the river. By the early 1800s, the river was a prime fur trade route. At the falls just downstream from Rainy Lake, trading posts were set up on the northern side at Fort Frances, Ontario and on the southern side at a settlement called Koochiching. A century later, these falls would supply the power for a massive lumber processing center, and the town on the southern bank would become International Falls. Because the area was hard to reach and had a short growing season, European-Americans only began to migrate to the region toward the end of the 19th century, and then only in very small numbers.⁴

Around 1900, the Canadian Northern Railway reached Fort Frances, which was connected to Koochiching by ferry. This spurred further immigration to the United States side of the river, as did the opening of the area to homesteading in 1902. More significantly, the great white pine forests to the south which had supplied timber to the lumber companies in Winona, Stillwater and Minneapolis had been exhausted. It now made economic sense to invest in the harvesting of

⁴ Hiram M. Drache, *Koochiching: Pioneering Along the Rainy River* (Danville, Ill: Interstate, 1983), p 7. There was a short lived interest in gold and other precious metals in the 1890s which encouraged some migration.

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the ample but remote timber resources of the border region. The entrepreneur who exploited this opportunity was Edward W. Backus, a successful Minneapolis lumberman who determined that if he could harness the water power of Koochiching Falls, he could control the lumber resources of the region. He soon had cashed out of his Minneapolis operations and with his partner William F. Brooks, focused entirely on building a dam, power station, saw mill, and a paper mill at the falls at Koochiching. The Backus-Brooks Company finished the dam in 1908, began producing electricity in 1909, completed the paper mill in 1910, and opened the saw mill in 1911. It also bought pinelands throughout the area to furnish timber to his mills.⁵ In 1909, the village of Koochiching was incorporated as the city of International Falls.⁶

Backus-Brooks Co. needed rail connections to ship its paper and other products to urban markets across the country. In 1907, railroads arrived from two directions. Backus was involved directly in the building of the Minnesota and International Railway which acquired a line already linking Brainerd and Bemidji, and then continued the line north to International Falls. The Northern Pacific owned controlling stock in this railroad and took it over completely in 1941.⁷

Meanwhile, the Duluth, Virginia and Rainy Lake Railway, which had established a line from Virginia to Cook, changed its name in 1905 to the more ambitious Duluth, Rainy Lake and Winnipeg and pushed on to Rainy River. Apparently because the owners of this railroad could not come to terms with Backus, they decided to cross the Rainy River at the narrow passage about three miles east of International Falls where the river first leaves Rainy Lake, the site of the city of Ranier. The company developing the railroad bought the land on the United States side from homesteader John Holler, the first settler there, and had extended its tracks to the bank of the river by the end of 1907. Meanwhile, it was building an international bridge to Fort Frances, one section of which is the drawbridge that still operates today.

Although there was already a small settlement near the bridge site, the arrival of the railroad led to the founding of Ranier. The railroad surveyed the town site and gave the town its name, and the development of an international rail crossing attracted more settlers. The first passenger train crossed the bridge into Fort Frances, Ontario on April 28, 1908.⁸ In that same month, Ranier

⁵ *History of Koochiching County* (International Falls, MN: Koochiching County Historical Society, 1983), p. 11-13; R. Newell Searle, *Saving Quetico-Superior: A Land Set Apart* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1977), p. 34-41.

⁶ Warren Upham, *Minnesota Place Names*, 3rd (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001), p. 283.

⁷ Richard Prosser, *Rails to the North Star* (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, 1966), p. 36, 147; Schmidt, Andrew et al. "Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956." *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, p. 132. Hiram Drache, *Taming the Wilderness: The Northern Border Country, 1910-1939* (Danville, IL: Interstate Publishing, 1992), p. 136-141. Today the Burlington Northern Railroad owns the line.

⁸ In 1912, this railroad became the Duluth, Winnipeg, & Pacific Railroad. Later the Canadian Northern Railway bought the line and the bridge at Ranier. Today the D, W, & P is operated as a subsidiary of the Canadian National Railway. Drache (1992), p. 147-148; Prosser, p. 43, 48; Schmidt, 32-34.

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was incorporated. Meanwhile, a post office was established and the railroad built a depot. Soon there were homes, a few hotels, several saloons, the first church, and about 200 residents.⁹

After the Duluth, Rainy Lake and Winnipeg reached Ranier, Backus-Brooks Co. built the Minnesota, Dakota and Western Railway, an east-west line south of International Falls, to connect its Minnesota and International line to the Duluth, Rainy Lake and Winnipeg. This allowed the company to ship its products either southwest to Brainerd or southeast towards Duluth, the Twin Cities, and beyond. They also constructed a second international bridge over the Rainy River linking downtown International Falls with downtown Fort Frances.¹⁰

The promise of economic development led to the birth of a new county. Until 1906 the Rainy River border country was part of Itasca County, the county seat of which was in Grand Rapids, located 130 miles from International Falls (but much farther for a traveler using existing rail lines). Citizens petitioned to hold a referendum in which the proposal for a new county was passed overwhelmingly. A large chunk of northern Itasca County became Koochiching County with International Falls as the county seat. Of Minnesota's 87 counties, Koochiching is the second youngest, following only neighboring Lake of the Woods, which was organized in 1922.¹¹ The new county was also the second largest and one of the most sparsely settled in the state. The population peaked in the 1960 census at just over 18,000.

Ranier from lumber boom to the Great Depression

Because International Falls was the location of a big paper mill as well as a bridge that carried rail, automobile, truck and pedestrian traffic across the border to Canada, it became the largest town in Koochiching County. Lacking an industrial base, Ranier stayed a small town, although it was also an important rail crossing point for international trade. Today, the drawbridge built at Ranier in 1907 handles more railroad cars coming from Canada than any other crossing on the U.S.-Canada border.¹² Although Ranier was in some respects overshadowed by its larger neighbor, it developed its own unique identity and an independent spirit.

The early Ranier officials included a mayor, three councilmembers (trustees), a treasurer, a clerk, two Justices of the Peace, and two constables. The council dealt with a variety of concerns, including saloon licenses, ferry licenses, a telephone franchise, construction and maintenance of

⁹ *History of Koochiching County*, p. 43. The first entry in the journal book containing the minutes of the city of Ranier records the first election of city officials on April 10, 1908 (held by the City of Ranier).

¹⁰ Drache (1992), p. 143-144; Schmidt, p. 119-120.

¹¹ *History of Koochiching County*, p. 7.

¹² Tourists may think of International Falls as the main crossing point, but Ranier's border crossing handles more rail traffic than any other crossing, primarily containers from China coming through the Port Rupert port in British Columbia and oil from the Canadian tar-sands fields, bound for Chicago and beyond along Canadian National's network. This traffic has caused headaches for the citizens of Ranier. Adam Betz, "Surge in rail traffic derails daily life in Ranier, MN," *Star Tribune*, June 20, 2015; John Myers, "Busiest border rail crossing rattles Ranier, Minnesota," *Grand Forks Herald*, May 10, 2015.

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a city dock, sidewalks, streetlights, and the tendency of the railroad to block the road, cutting the town in two. Ranier, like many other small Minnesota towns, did not have a governmental office building in its early years. The village council met at “the Ferguson and Malloy Hardware store” at first, and through the 1920s, at a variety of commercial establishments (for example, “at Davis’s store”).¹³ The village clerk performed his or her duties from home.

One of the council’s first acts was to build a wood framed fire hall (12 by 24 feet) and purchase some fire equipment. The fire hall had an attached room (7 by 12 feet) that served as a jail. Within a year the state had condemned the jail as a fire trap. After much discussion, the city built a more substantial jail in 1914 and sold the original building. The volunteer fire department apparently then stored its meager equipment in rented or donated space.¹⁴

In the second year of its existence, Ranier hosted its first Independence Day celebration. Crowds from surrounding towns came for sporting events, a dance, and fireworks, all hosted by Mayor E. A. Bergerson. Music was supplied by the Koochiching Band from International Falls. According to the International Falls newspapers, many residents of that city ferried up the Rainy River on July 4, 1909 for the event which was considered a great success.¹⁵

In the early days, Ranier had a reputation as a rough place where lumberjacks came to drink, carouse, and get into trouble. Among the first businesses in Ranier were saloons, and at its first meeting the city council authorized six saloon licenses, a considerable number for a town whose population was at that point not more than 250.¹⁶ Alcohol and its regulation led to tension and even violence, sometimes involving city officials.¹⁷ After Koochiching County went “dry” in 1916, three years before Prohibition, the town hosted many “blind pigs,” as unlicensed liquor establishments were called. In April of that year, the county sheriff made a number of arrests in Ranier. Then in October, the mayor of Ranier and city council members arrested every “blind pigger” in a sweep of the town, destroying the liquor. The local newspaper applauded the move, noting that it showed what could be accomplished if “officials want to enforce liquor laws.”¹⁸ During Prohibition, the railroad line across the border also made Ranier a lively arena for liquor

¹³ The issues with which the council dealt and the places they met are collated from the minutes of the city council from 1908 to 1924 which are held by the city. Minutes from meetings in the late 1920s have not been found.

¹⁴ Minutes, May 25, 1908, April 26, 1909, August 10, 1914.

¹⁵ “Ranier Celebration a Success,” *International Falls Echo*, July 8, 1909, p. 1; “Independence Day Fittingly Observed,” *International Falls Press*, July 8, 1909, p. 1.

¹⁶ Minutes, April 13, 1908.

¹⁷ In 1913, hotel operator Fred Couture, who had served as mayor in 1912, died after a fist fight started by a man angry that Couture had testified before a grand jury about saloons and brothels in Ranier. The man was indicted for manslaughter, and Ed Ek, the sitting mayor at the time, was indicted for aiding him. The charges were later dismissed on a technicality. “Fred Couture Passes Away,” *International Falls Press*, July 24, 1913, p. 1, 2; “District Court has Adjourned,” *International Falls Press*, August 28, 1913, p. 1.

¹⁸ “Wholesale Arrest of Blind Piggers,” *International Falls Press*, April 6, 1916, p. 1; “Bootleggers Raided by Ranier Council,” *International Falls Press*, September 21, 1916, p. 1

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smuggling from Canada, and the town was sometimes referred to by its nickname "Little Chicago."¹⁹

Ranier, however, was more than a place to drink. Its location was ideal for commercial fishing and some of the local fishermen organized a hatchery. This eventually became a State Fish Hatchery, which in the 1930s was the largest in the state, spawning 1 million walleye pike each season.²⁰ In 1909, School District #4, which included Ranier and International Falls, built a two-story, eight-room, frame school house in Ranier.²¹ There was even an attempt to link International Falls to Ranier by streetcar. In 1917, the American Traction Company began service from International Falls to Ranier. It did not prove to be economically viable, and only lasted a few years.²² The population peaked at 262 in the 1960 census, fell to 145 by 2010, and in the last few years has increased to 593 due to annexation of abutting neighborhoods.

The town's location as the main access to Rainy Lake from the United States side also made it an attractive tourist destination. Already in 1909, the Commercial Club of International Falls had published a brochure hyping Ranier as a "summer resort." In 1910, for example, Charles Comiskey, the owner of the Chicago White Sox, came to Ranier to hunt, and according to the news report, drink.²³ The 1940 Chapin Blue Network Tourist Guide for the area advised tourists that Ranier "offers scenic excursions, fishing trips, cabins, boats, motors, tackle, in short— everything necessary to a complete outing."²⁴ Tourists bought their gas and supplies at Henry Erickson's Old Trading Post and George and Clara Finstad's Auto Marine Shop on the waterfront in Ranier. Finstad's still stands and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.²⁵

Edward Backus himself likely passed through Ranier to reach his summer home on Red Sucker Island on Rainy Lake. About a half mile away, the environmentalist Ernest Oberholtzer settled on Mallard Island.²⁶ They most likely had their boats serviced and stored over the winter at-

¹⁹ Drache (1992), p. 206, 211, 216, 221; *History of Koochiching County*, p. 44.

²⁰ *The WPA Guide to Minnesota* (New York: Viking, 1938. Reprint: St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), p. 349.

²¹ Drache (1983), p. 290, 292.

²² Drache (1992), p. 175.

²³ "Town's Head Aches; Comiskey Called," *International Falls Press*, October 20, 1910. Comiskey was traveling in October because 1910 was one of the years in which his White Sox did not play in the World Series. He had built the original Comiskey Park on Chicago's south side in that year.

²⁴ Earl V. Chapin, *Minnesota's Border Route: Minnesota State Highway 11* (Chapin's blue network tourist guides #4, 1940). Available in MHS archives.

²⁵ Dennis Gimmestad, "Finstad's Auto Marine Shop, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, 1982.

²⁶ Britta Bloomberg, "Oberholtzer Historic District, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, 2000. The historic district includes a series of structures on Mallard Island and two other islands which Oberholtzer owned.

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places like Finstad's.²⁷ They were neighbors and social acquaintances until the mid-1920s when Oberholtzer became the leader of a movement which successfully blocked Backus' plan to build a series of power and storage dams in the Rainy Lake watershed. The movement that Oberholtzer began led eventually to the creation of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Voyageurs' National Park.²⁸

Ultimately, however, Ranier's fortunes were tied to the regional economy, which boomed in the decade after World War I. This was the heyday of the daily newspaper, and Americans consumed about 150 pounds of newsprint per capita. The Backus-Brooks Co. was the fourth largest newsprint manufacturer in the country. They also pioneered a method of making insulation board from waste screenings and the by-products of paper pulp. They created the Insulite Company to produce this product in 1916.

This rapid expansion fueled by easy credit led to oversupply, and the paper companies began to feel the pinch in the late 1920s. When the Great Depression hit, the Backus-Brooks paper mill in International Falls operated only part time, and their plant in Fort Frances was closed. By 1931, Backus-Brook Company, which had borrowed heavily to finance its expansion, could not meet its debt payments and lost control of its paper mill company to receivership.²⁹ The paper mill's problems had a ripple effect on other local business, and many workers in International Falls and Ranier were underemployed or out of work. As happened also in the Iron Range communities, local government's tax revenues shrunk drastically, and local governments looked to the federal government for help.

In March 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt took office and quickly began the New Deal, a series of federal interventions intended to blunt the impact of the Depression and revitalize the economy. In the first "hundred days," a series of initiatives was passed, including the Federal Emergency Relief Act to support the states, the National Industrial Recovery Act to stabilize prices, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act to bolster farms and farm prices.

The New Deal also created a number of job-creation programs geared to the development of public works projects in cooperation with the states and local communities. All of these programs had an impact in northern Minnesota. The first of these to make a difference was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which put young unemployed men to work on reforestation, soil conservation, and park improvements. Already by the summer of 1933, the CCC's military-like camps were employing 275,000 men, and by 1935, a half of million were in the camps.

²⁷ A 1961 Visitor's Guide to International Falls out by the International Falls Chamber of Commerce features advertisement from the Finstad and Erickson businesses in Ranier. At MHS archives

²⁸ This story is told in R. Newell Searle, *Saving Quetico-Superior: A Land Set Apart* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1977).

²⁹ Searle, p. 93.

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The Public Works Administration was also created by executive order during the “hundred days” in 1933, but it took longer to get its projects in motion.³⁰ The PWA did not directly employ workers, but gave grants and loans to federal agencies and states and their subdivisions to fund major projects built by private contractors. Nationwide, it eventually funded 34,500 public works projects, including city halls, schools, sewage treatment plants, dams, bridges, and the like. In Minnesota, the PWA funded 666 federal and non-federal projects, including such major works as the Minneapolis Armory and Dam 5-A on the Mississippi near Winona.³¹

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration, an agency designed to provide massive unemployment relief by directly hiring the unemployed to build public works or work in service projects in such fields as adult education, recreation, and public art. The WPA acted as general contractor of building projects and put a high priority on employing as many unemployed workers as possible. As a result, WPA projects tended to be smaller and less complex than PWA projects which were completed by established construction firms. Like the PWA, the WPA required that a local governmental unit share the cost of the project. By the time it ended in 1943, the WPA had helped build 1,324 new public buildings in Minnesota, as well as many bridges, roads, culverts, sidewalks, swimming pools, stadiums, sewage and water treatment plants, three new airports, among many other things.³²

Political leaders in Koochiching County took advantage of the various New Deal programs. Beginning in the summer of 1933, there were numerous CCC camps in state and national forests in the county.³³ International Falls received PWA assistance to build the Edward W. Backus Junior High School in 1936, and a new public library and a municipal building in 1939.³⁴ The city mobilized WPA help for various infrastructure projects. The New Deal’s Resettlement Program helped resettle homesteaders who were stranded on non-productive land in the county.

A community building for every need

Ranier also took advantage of WPA assistance. The WPA helped the city repair and expand its municipal dock but the town’s biggest need was for a building to house city services and provide a gathering place for community events. As noted above, the city had no facilities at that time beyond a small jail. The council met at commercial establishments. The equipment of the volunteer fire department was stored in rented or donated space. The village clerk and treasurer

³⁰ Rolf Anderson, “Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943,” *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, 1991, p. E1.

³¹ Anderson, E10.

³² Linus Glotzbach, *WPA Accomplishments: Minnesota 1935-1939* (St. Paul, Minn.: Minnesota Works Progress Administration, 1939). This work is unpaginated.

³³ Drache (1992), p. 311-316.

³⁴ The junior high school was listed on the National Register in 2004. Daniel Hoisington, “Alexander Baker School and E. W. Backus Junior High School,” *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form*, 2004.

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were part-time and worked from their homes. Besides churches, the only place for an event was a classroom in the public school.

The city council got initial approval for a multi-purpose municipal building in October 1935. At that point, however, they had only a vague idea of what they wanted and no plans or drawings. They hired Thomas J. Shefchik, a Duluth architect, to design a building, and the council approved his plans in August 1936. Almost two years then passed while Ranier worked its way through the federal application process and then waited in line for funding. Ranier's number was finally called in 1938. Shefchik provided revised plans and a WPA budget was prepared.³⁵ Excavation work was apparently done in the fall of 1938 because the building was under construction during the spring of 1939 (Figure #3). By the fall, the building was nearing completion, and on October 10, 1939, the city council met in the new building for the first time. The purpose of the meeting was to review plans for the October 18 event at which the building would be dedicated and celebrated.

On that day, the *International Falls Daily Journal* ran a front page story proclaiming that "everyone in Ranier has a 'date' tonight—a date with the village's new and attractive Community Building."³⁶ The newspaper ran several photographs which they stated made evident "all the 'homey' charm and beauty of the structure." The newspaper was particularly interested in the assembly hall and its adjacent kitchen. On the next day, the newspaper reported that nearly 400 filled the new building for the ceremony and that "hundreds" more were turned away.³⁷ They witnessed A. T. Gilbertson, the district WPA administrator from Duluth, formally present the building to C. S. Wood, the mayor of Ranier. Also among the speakers were Carl Skolby of Ranier, the project superintendent, A. H. Douglas, the WPA district engineer, and the architect Thomas Shefchik. There was entertainment from the International Falls City Band and the International Falls High School singers. Following standard procedure, a Lutheran pastor read the invocation and a Catholic priest the benediction. Representatives of the Ranier Community Club, who hosted the event, provided tours of the building.

At the beginning, the building housed the city council chambers, the fire house, and the jail. It was also the chief venue for public gatherings available to all citizens of Ranier. The newspaper thought that the assembly hall would become the "center for community activities," and that is, in fact, what happened. It was the place, for example, where citizens came together to participate in democratic government. Not only did citizens assemble to observe the city council in action, but the community building was also the town's polling place and the venue for precinct caucuses (Figure #8). In the past at least, the major political parties worked out an agreement to

³⁵ The city of Ranier and the Koochiching County Historical Society both hold copies of these revised plans, dated June 3, 1938. See Figures #1 and #2.

³⁶ "Ranier, Proud of New Village Hall, Plays Host at Dedication Tonight," *International Falls Daily Journal*, October 18, 1939, p. 1.

³⁷ "Gay Ranier Throng Dedicates Building: Nearly 400 Hear WPA, Civic Leaders at Ceremony," *International Falls Daily Journal*, October 19, 1939, p 1.

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share the city council chambers for their respective precinct caucuses. The Republicans met at 7:00 p.m. and then gave up the room to the Democrats who met at 8:00 p.m.³⁸

Local clubs made use of the hall, including the Ranier Community Club, which included among their volunteer activities the cleaning of the building, and the Ranier Woman's Club. All social events of any size were held in the assembly hall of the community, including weddings, showers, birthday parties, anniversaries, fundraisers, dances, and memorial services. In 1940, local resident June Greer celebrated her birthday with friends at the community building (Figure #6). One of those friends, Muriel Bohman, then eight, later held her wedding shower in the community building (Figure #7). Performances and entertainments were held in the assembly hall, including an annual Christmas event which functioned as a community talent show.

The importance of the Ranier Community Building to local citizens has been captured in two published books. Ranier attracted a number of outsiders, who like Ernest Oberholtzer left their urban lives to settle on Rainy Lake. After Oberholtzer, the best known is Ted Hall (1921-2003), a journalist who quit his job at *Time Magazine* to settle in Ranier and open a weekly newspaper called the *Rainy Lake Chronicle*. Local artist Gene Ritchie Monahan, a Duluth transplant, contributed sketches to the newspaper. Together they published *Drumbeat*, a collection of pieces from the newspaper, including Monahan's sketch of the community building entitled "Election Day," alongside Hall's description of citizens coming to the council chambers to vote, and to get one of Clara Finstad's "V for victory" sugar cookies (Figure #8).³⁹

More recently, local resident Bernie "Spike" Woods, who grew up in Ranier during the 1950s and 1960s, published a book of sketches depicting Ranier scenes, including the community building which he called "the hub of our little town" (Figure #9). He recalled wedding receptions, reunions, dances, and parties in the building, as well as the memorial service of his own father. He remembered attending contentious city council meetings, square dance lessons, and gun safety classes. He told the story of his stage fright while performing on the stage of the community building at the annual Christmas talent show sometime in the 1950s, a performance so bad that his older brother and father fled the building while he was on stage.⁴⁰

Adapting to changing times

In addition to city services including fire and police, citizens of Ranier also came to the Community Building to purchase alcohol, at least for a short time. When the town's only privately owned liquor store was closed in the summer of 1944, the city council voted to

³⁸ "The Quiet Cookie Caucus," *Rainy Lake Chronicle*, March 3, 1974.

³⁹ Ted Hall and Gene Ritchie Monahan, *Drumbeat* (Ranier: Rainy Lake Chronicle, 1974), p. 98-99. Ted Hall collected further pieces in *A Rainy Lake Chronicle* (Ranier: Rainy Lake Chronicle, 1989).

⁴⁰ Bernie "Spike" Woods, *Ranier, Minnesota: My Hometown: A journey back to childhood* (International Falls The Daily Journal, 2008), p. 22-23. Woods was born in 1944.

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establish a municipal liquor store.⁴¹ For a year, the municipal liquor store operated out of the cloakroom of the Community Building, which was remodeled for this purpose. In the summer of 1945, the city moved the store to another location and removed the shelves that had held the bottles for sale.⁴²

When opened in 1939, the building had no running water and no toilets.⁴³ This was the result of the fact that the city had no water mains and no sewer system. Visitors to the Community Building must have used outhouses and carried water into the building for events, either from the community well across the street at the northwest corner of Spruce and Duluth streets or directly from the Rainy River (about 100 yards west of the building). Although the city did not build water and sewer lines until 1961, local contractor Fred Lessard built two one-stall restrooms in the western half of the cloakroom in 1954. Water was pumped from the river and the waste drained to a septic tank.⁴⁴ Presumably the restrooms were connected to the city lines after 1961. At about that same time, the city remodeled the kitchen to include a sink and dishwasher. These changes greatly enhanced the comfort and convenience of citizens using the Community Building.

In 1954, the city council decided that employing its own constable and maintaining a jail that met state standards was no longer possible given Ranier's limited tax base. From that point on, the city has contracted with the Koochiching County Sheriff to provide law enforcement and corrections services for Ranier.⁴⁵ In 1969, the city made a similar decision with respect to fire protection. Until that time, Ranier had a volunteer fire department and the garage at the south end of the building held an antiquated fire wagon which was pulled by the truck of one of the volunteer firefighters. This system was well below modern standards, but the city could not support a modern fire department with its limited tax revenues. Since that time, the city council has contracted for fire protection with the Rural Fire Protection Agency, a regional consortium.⁴⁶

The Public Works Department now uses the garage to store equipment such as lawn mowers and other power tools, and the former jail for storage of other tools and supplies (although the cells

⁴¹ "Village of Ranier Launches Municipal Liquor Store Today," *International Falls Daily Journal*, July 1, 1944, p. 5.

⁴² Minutes of the Ranier City Council for August 13, 1945 (available from the Ranier city administrator). Ranier still has a municipal liquor store which is now located at 2094 Spruce Street. Profits from the store were used to put a new roof on the Community Building in 2014.

⁴³ In addition to the fact that the blueprints show no toilets or sinks, Thomas Shefchik's detailed "Specifications for Community Building at Ranier, Minnesota" contain no mention of plumbing. Also, the revised WPA "Project Proposal," dated January 12, 1939, makes no mention of plumbers or plumbing materials, although it carefully lists all trades and materials. All these documents are held by the City of Ranier.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the Ranier City Council for November 4, 1954.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Ranier City Council for August 23, 1954.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Ranier City Council for November 10, 1969.

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and the iron bars on the windows were left in place) (Photo #11). Over the years the city has increased the amount of public facilities it provides for outdoor recreation. From its base in the Community Building, the Public Works Department maintains the water distribution system, a public beach, three public docks, a public park, and in the winter, an ice skating rink with a warming house.

In 1980, the city clerk asked the council to create a city office in the Community Building. Prior to that time, the clerk worked from her home. The council eventually decided to spend \$4,000 to remodel the council room into an office. Paneling was applied to the plaster walls, the lower half of the windows on the south facade were enclosed, and new millwork, cabinets and a service counter installed. Since that time, residents have been able to visit a staffed office to pay water bills, rent the assembly hall, purchase a dog license, or make enquiries (Photo #10).⁴⁷

In 1992, the city hired local architect James Cowgill to make the building accessible to the handicapped.⁴⁸ His plan included the upgrading of the two small restrooms that Fred Lessard had built in 1954. In order to provide the space for the larger accessible restrooms, the city was forced to abandon the original entryway. Using the original entryway space as a restroom required closing the doorway in the northern entrance bay facing Spruce Street, and converting two of the windows on the east facade into doorways. This project also included making the building accessible by the construction of a wood deck along the front (east) facade at the level of the interior floor. This deck was reached by a long wood ramp which ran parallel to the eastern edge of the deck. Many of the original wood windows were replaced by metal windows at that time.

With a grant from the Bremer Foundation, the wood deck was replaced in 2015 with a paving stone patio surrounded by a low metal handrail. The patio is reached by two gradually sloping sidewalks running perpendicular to the building down to Spruce Street. This approach took advantage of the large lawn in front of the building and eliminated the need for the wood ramp.

The Koochiching County Historical Society has mounted a display of historic photographs of early Ranier on the walls of the assembly hall to encourage visitors to the community building to be aware of their town's history.

⁴⁷ Ranier allows resident dogs to roam freely in the town so long as they are registered and licensed. Non-resident dogs must be leashed or penned.

⁴⁸ His plans are in the possession of the City of Ranier, available from the city administrator.

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Conclusion

The Multiple Property Documentation Form for "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943" suggests that a government building constructed with the support of a New Deal agency is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A if the project was completed by the end of 1941 and if it made a significant contribution to the community by providing a new and modern facility which offered programs, amenities, or community services which were previously unavailable.⁴⁹

In 1939, the city of Ranier had no municipal buildings other than a small inadequate jail. With the assistance of the Works Progress Administration, the city built the Community Building which for the first time provided city space for city government, the volunteer fire department's equipment, the constable's office and two cell jail, and a large assembly hall with a stage and kitchen for community use. It was called the Ranier Community Building because it was a multi-use facility, not just a facility for city government.

Seventy-eight years later, the building continues to serve as the center of government and social life in the area. The space formerly used by the police and volunteer fire department are now used by the Ranier Public Works Department which provides water distribution services and maintains a variety of public recreational facilities. In 1980, the original city council room became the city office where city administrator and clerk provide direct service to citizens during daily business hours. Except for the municipal liquor store, all city functions are based in the Community Building. Throughout its entire lifespan, the building has also been the community's primary venue for all recreational and social events.

From its construction to the present time, the Ranier Community Building has been locally significant in the area of Politics/Government and Entertainment/Recreation as a distinctive example of a successful local partnership with the WPA to provide a modern multi-use public building that became, and still is, the hub of the local community. The period of significance starts with its construction in 1939 and continues to 1968, as the passage of fifty years is the minimum threshold for considering the eligibility of a property for the National Register.

⁴⁹ Anderson, F5.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Books

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International Falls Press

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Unpublished

- Anderson, Rolf T. "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1943. *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, 1991 (Available at the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office).

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Schmidt, Andrew et al. "Railroads in Minnesota, 1862-1956." *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form*, 2007 (Available at the Minnesota Historic Preservation Office).

Minutes of the Ranier City Council.

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office: Letter of Eligibility March 22, 2017
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other: Koochiching County Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): KC-RAC-007

10. Geographical Data **Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

UTM References Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15 Easting: 47482 Northing: 5384305

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10 of Block 19 of the original plat of the City of Ranier, Minnesota

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These city lots have been historically associated with the property.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Greg Gaut
organization: Historic Preservation Consultant
street & number: 1235 Yale Place #408
city or town: Minneapolis state: Minnesota zip code: 55403
e-mail GregGaut@gmail.com
telephone: 612-200-9494
date: December 14, 2017

Additional Documentation

- **Maps:** A USGS map indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Photographs**

Name of Property: Ranier Community Building

City or Vicinity: Ranier

County: Koochiching State: Minnesota

Photographer: Greg Gaut

Date Photographed: July 2017

Photo #1: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0001

Front (east) facade, camera facing northwest.

Photo #2: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0002

Front (east) facade, camera facing southwest. The WPA plaque shown in Photo #3 is near the corner of the building on the right.

Photo #3: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0003

WPA plaque mounted on front facade, near the corner with the north side.

Photo #4: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0004

South facade, showing garage and jail wings, camera facing northeast.

Photo #5: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0005

Rear (west) facade, camera facing southeast.

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Photo #6: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0006
North facade, camera facing south.

Photo #7: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0007
Front (east) facade, camera facing west, the view from across Spruce Street.

Photo #8: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0008
The assembly hall and stage, camera facing generally south.

Photo #9: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0009
The assembly hall with camera on the stage facing generally north.

Photo #10: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0010
City office with vault, camera facing northwest.

Photo #11: MN_Koochiching Co_Ranier Comm Bldg_0011
Cell with iron bars in jail, now used as equipment room for public works department, camera facing north.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 1

Historic Photos and Site Map

- Figure #1: Floor Plan (Drawing No. 2) for Ranier Community Building by Thomas Shefchik, Architect, Duluth, Revised June 3, 1938. From the archives of the City of Ranier.
- Figure #2: West and East Elevations (Drawing No. 3) for Ranier Community Building by Thomas Shefchik, Revised June 3, 1938. From the archives of the City of Ranier.
- Figure #3: The south façade in Spring 1939 before the concrete block walls were covered with stucco. Photograph from the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Society.
- Figure #4: The Ranier Community Building with WPA sign, approximately 1939. Photograph from the Minnesota Historical Society collections
- Figure #5: A late 1950s meeting of the Ranier city council in the assembly hall. The suited man in the center is Vern Larsen, probably the mayor at the time. The woman to his left at the corner of the table is Clara Finstad, owner of the boat shop added to the National Register in 1982. The two men standing on the right are Fred Lessard, the local contractor who constructed the building's first bathrooms, and earlier, had been involved with the construction of the building as a WPA engineer, and zzzhis brother Jim Lessard, a commercial fisherman. Photograph from the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Society
- Figure #6: The south façade of the community building in September 1940 at the party celebrating the seventh birthday of local resident Jane Agnes Greer (1933-2008). She is the child kneeling in the front. Muriel Bohman, age eight, is second from the left in the first row, in a white dress. Photograph from the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Society
- Figure #7: The wedding shower of Muriel Bohman (1932-2008), seen opening gifts in the assembly hall of the Community Building in about 1953 prior to her marriage to John Fred Wall. Note the piano on the stage. The camera is facing southwest in this photograph from the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Society. A much younger Muriel Bohman is pictured in Figure #6, where she wears a white dress and is second from the left in the first row.
- Figure #8: A sketch of the Ranier Community Building by Gene Ritchie Monahan illustrating Ted Hall's piece entitled "Election Day" in Ted Hall and Gene Ritchie Monahan, *Drumbeat* (Ranier: Rainy Lake Chronicle, 1974), p.98.
- Figure #9: A print from Bernie "Spike" Woods, *Ranier, Minnesota, my hometown: a journey back to childhood* (Virginia, MN: W. A. Fisher Company, 2008), p. 21. The author included many dogs in front of the Community Building because the city has no leash law.
- Figure #10: A google Earth shot of the Ranier Community Center with arrows indicating the camera direction for the exterior photos referenced on the last page of the nomination form.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building
Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 2

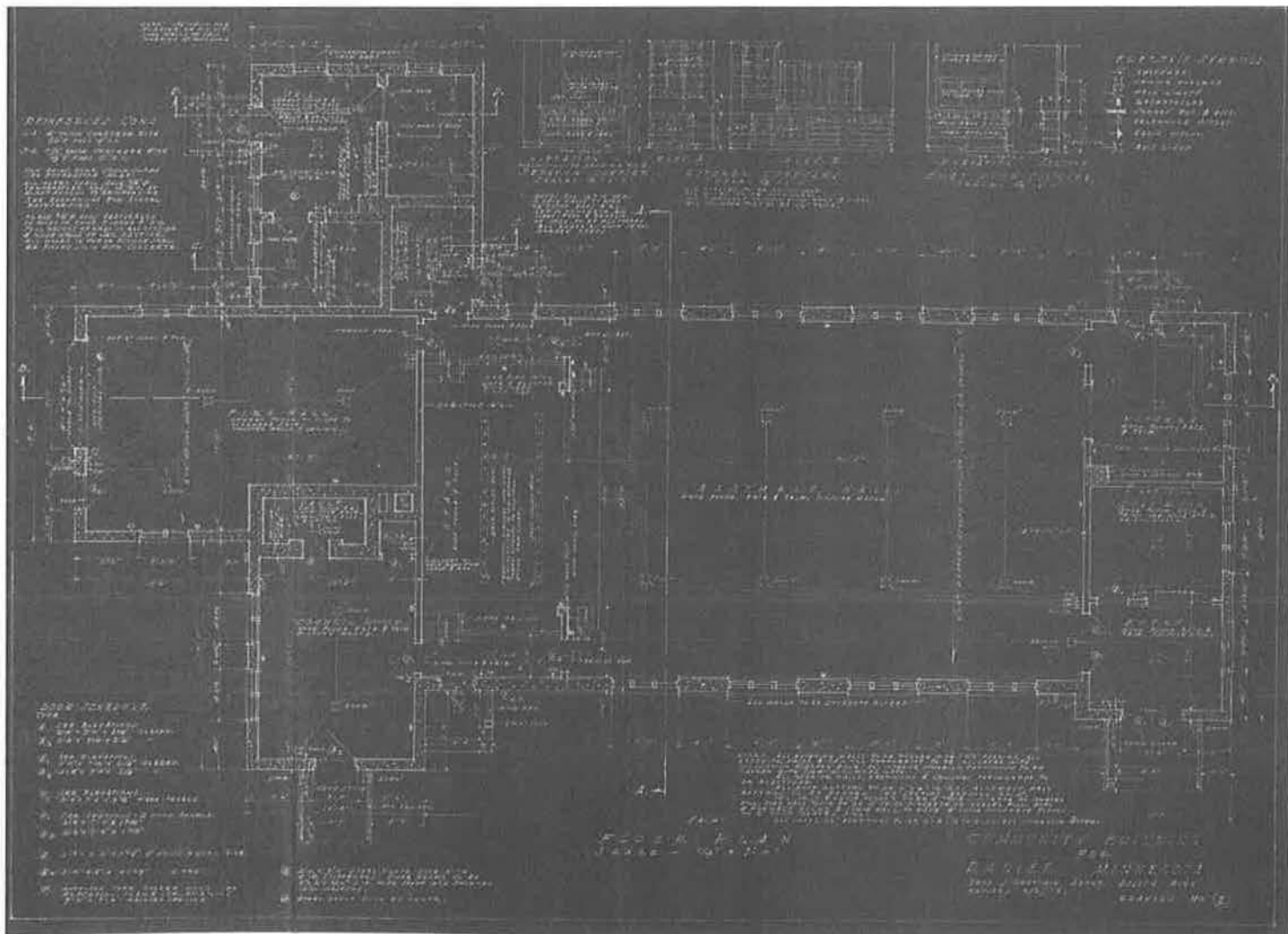


Figure #1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 3

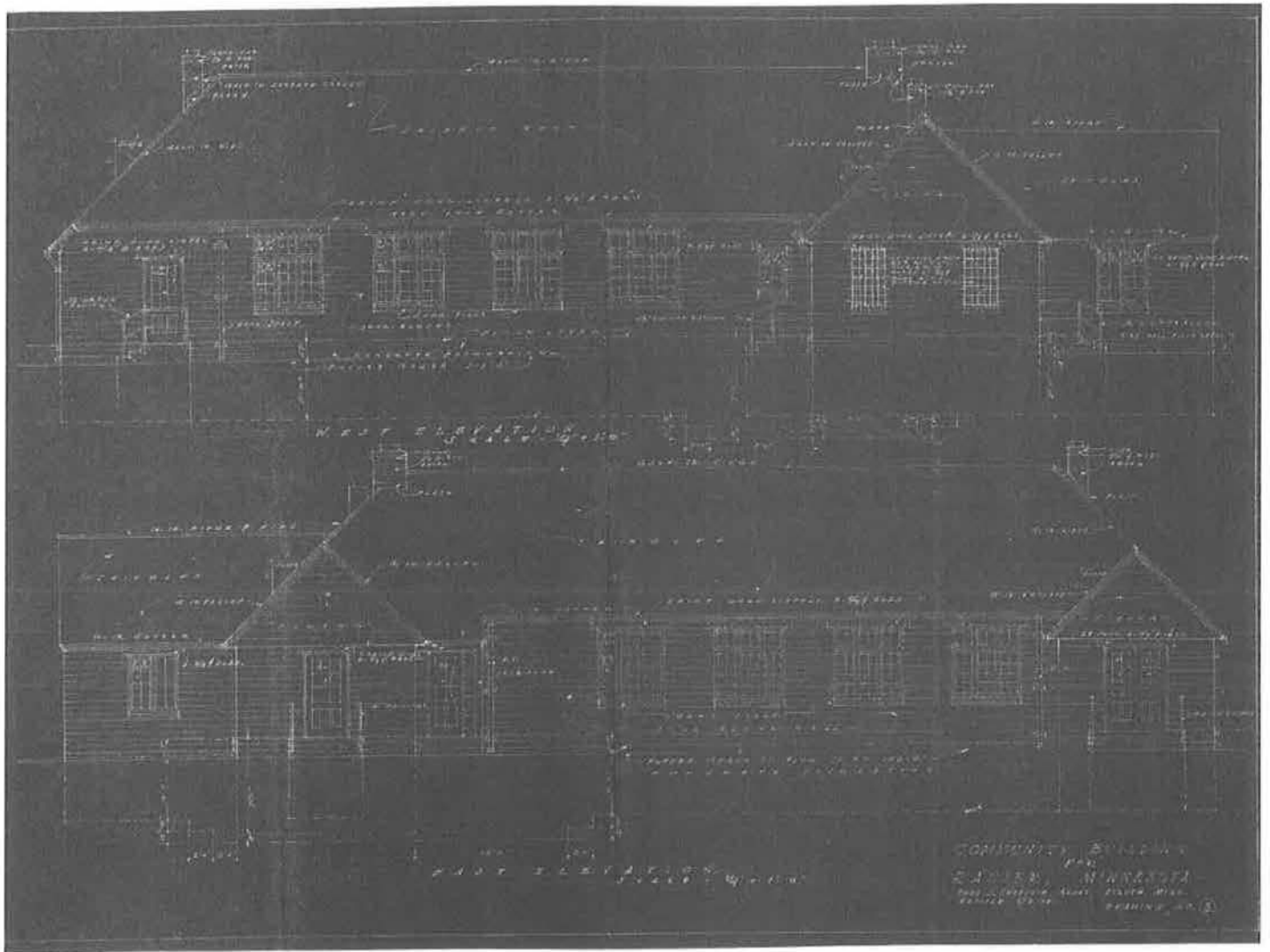


Figure #2

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 4



Spring 1937.

Figure #3



Figure #4

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 5



Figure #5



Jane Hurric Birthday party

Figure #6



Figure #7

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information Page 6



Election Day

Figure #8

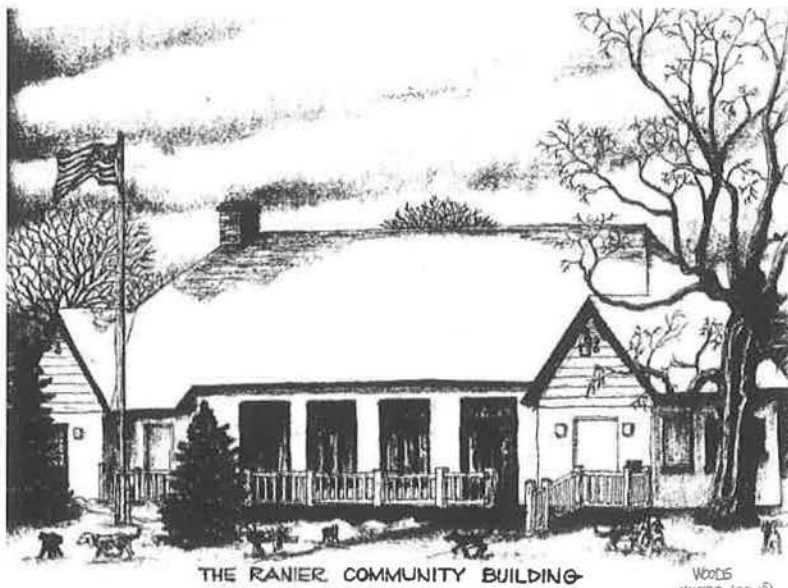


Figure #9

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Ranier Community Building

Koochiching County, Minnesota

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Information

Page 7



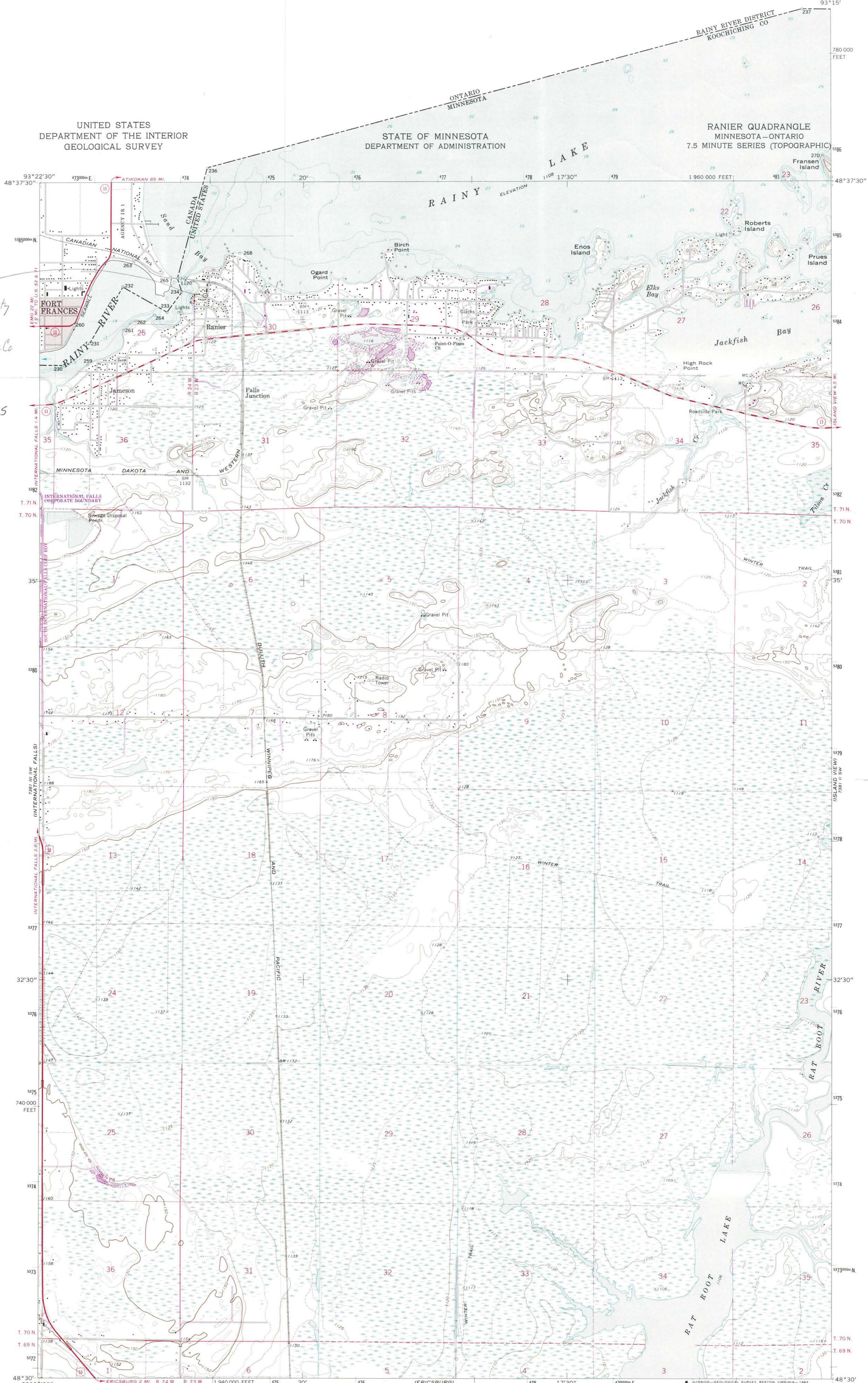
Figure #10

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

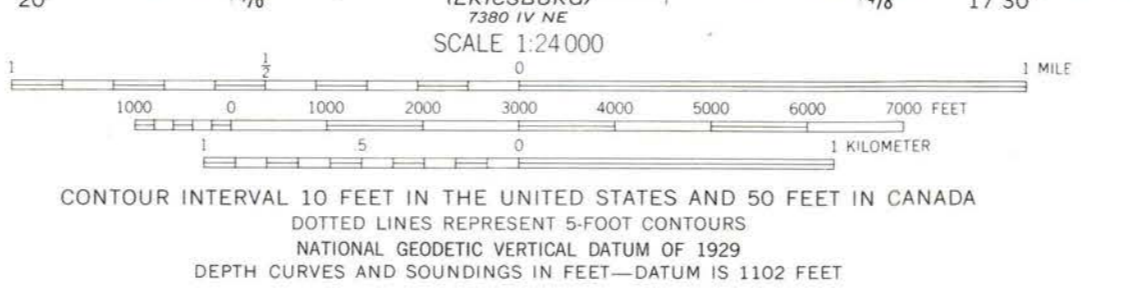
STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

RANIER QUADRANGLE
MINNESOTA-ONTARIO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Ranier Community Building
Ranier, Koochiching Co
Minnesota
UTM references
15/474282/5384305



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and International Boundary Commission
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1968. Field checked 1969
Canadian portion copied in part from advance print Fort Frances quadrangle (1:40 000) 1964, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources
Selected hydrographic data compiled from U. S. Lake Survey Chart 823 (1965). This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grid based on Minnesota coordinate system, north zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 5 meters north and 15 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, all weather, hard surface	Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface	Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

U. S. Route State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1981 and other sources
This information not field checked. Map edited 1983
1969
PHOTOREVISED 1983
DMA 7381 III SE-SERIES V872

423-D





Village Progress
Administration
Project 4286



WORKS PROGRESS
ADMINISTRATION
PROJECT
•1939•







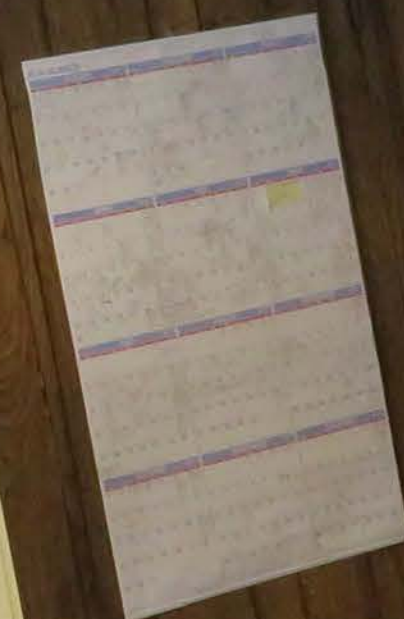




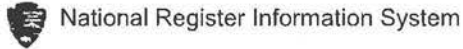




DOGS
WELCOME
CHILDREN MUST BE
ON A LEASH!







Evaluation/Return Sheet For Single/Multi Nomination

1 of 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 4/16/2018 Date of Pending List: 5/4/2018 Date of 16th Day: 5/21/2018 Date of 45th Day: 5/31/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 5/29/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Roger Reed Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2278 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

Back

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office
50 Sherburne Ave., Suite 203, St. Paul, Minnesota 55155
651-201-3287



TO: Paul Loether, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Denis P. Gardner

DATE: 4/10/2018

NAME OF PROPERTY: Ranier Community Building

COUNTY AND STATE: Koochiching County, Minnesota

SUBJECT: National Register:
 Nomination
 Multiple Property Documentation Form
 Request for determination of eligibility
 Request for removal (Reference No.)
 Nomination resubmission
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.)
 Additional documentation (Reference No.)

DOCUMENTATION:

Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
 Multiple Property Documentation Form
 Continuation Sheets
 Removal Documentation
 Photographs
 CD w/ image files
 USGS Map
 Sketch map(s)
 Correspondence
 Owner Objection
 The enclosed owner objections
 Do Do not constitute a majority of property owners

STAFF COMMENTS: