

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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NAME: Stark County Courthouse

LOCATION: Third Street North, Bounded West by Sims Avenue and East by First Avenue East, Dickinson, North Dakota 38, Stark County 089.

OWNER: Stark County, Dickinson, North Dakota

ACREAGE: 2.065 Acres

VBD: Block 25 of the Original Township Plat of Dickinson

UTM: Zone 13, Easting = 668855, Northing = 5194250; Dickinson, N. Dak. Quad.

DESCRIPTION: The main portion of the Stark County courthouse is a three-story structure with a flat roof. From each corner projects a one-story wing, also with flat roof. The replacement of the original 8-paned windows with fixed reflective glass and aluminum upper and lower transom windows in 1979, along with the installation of new doors with bronze glazing and aluminum frames in 1979, constitute the major alterations of the original building. Steel supports the building through use in piers, floor beams and ceiling joists. Hebron faced brick forms the outside walls and is backed up by Dickinson brick and tile. Light buff face brick is laid in courses with mortar of the same color. Buff shade limestone, quarried in Indiana, comprises the building's base course and all stone trim on the exterior. Terrazzo serves as the flooring material in public traffic spaces. The walls in the main lobby are covered with yellow Kasota stone from Mankato Minnesota, and are trimmed with Cardiff Green marble from Maryland. The corridors and main stairway have wall wainscoting of Kasota stone with Cardiff Green trim. The stair rails, trim in the lobby, and door bucks in the lobby are of solid bronze. The courtroom is finished in black walnut. Birch serves as the wood for interior doors and trim throughout the building. Carved stone spandrels decorate the area above the windows and doors on the front facade's first floor. Five of these depict figures representative of various trades. Other spandrels exhibit abstract designs. The words "Stark County" appear on the small walls which enclose the entranceway court, above which sit two decorative lamps with petal motif. The site also contains a two-vehicle garage located in the parking lot behind the courthouse.

SIGNIFICANCE: Date: 1936-37

Architect: William F. Kurke
Contractor: S.W. Jonason Company

The Stark County courthouse is historically significant for its role as the center of county government. The expenditure on the building, \$213,000, represented almost one-half of a Dickinson building boom in the mid-1930's. This construction gave encouraging signs to the local population that the hardest part of the Depression had ended. The PWA funding and willingness of county voters to accept nearly \$100,000 in bonded indebtedness represent dramatic efforts to relieve the effects of the economic strain. These factors gave the building a heightened historic importance.

It also derives significance from its architectural styling. Dickinson is one of only two southwestern North Dakota county seats (Mott, the other) whose courthouses display an Art Deco styling. Dickinson's ranks as the more decorative of the two, due in part to the influence of architect Kurke. Kurke was a prolific designer, and while many of his buildings appear in eastern North Dakota, he also designed the Dickinson High

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School building. The building is visually striking and has managed to avoid the need for recent additions. Its impressive exterior and historic importance make it exceptionally eligible for listing on the National Register.

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NORTH DAKOTA COUNTY COURTHOUSES TR
Adams, et. al. counties

Less-than-50-year-old courthouses: Ranson County Courthouse
Renville County Courthouse
Sheridan County Courthouse
Stark County Courthouse
Walsh County Courthouse

North Dakota has demonstrated through both its survey methodology and findings, and its discussion of exceptional significance of the courthouses within their historic context that the five courthouses that are less than fifty years old should be accepted as part of the State's thematic submission of courthouse nominations. The survey revealed a historical and architectural cohesiveness to courthouses constructed between 1929 and 1940, and a logical historical and architectural break in courthouse design and construction after 1940. The State's Art Deco and Art Moderne courthouses possess exceptional significance to their communities and to the State in the areas of architecture and history. Architecturally, they have among the most sophisticated designs, impressive materials, and retained integrity of the State's courthouses. Additionally, they are extremely impressive examples of their styles in sparsely populated areas (approximately 9 persons per square mile) where such accomplished designs might not be expected. Historically, the courthouses represent exceptional tenacity and confidence in rural communities hard hit by the Depression through the citizens' willingness to commit themselves to the construction of unusually expensive courthouses.