

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90000961

Date Listed: 7/5/90

Gosper County Courthouse  
Property Name

Gosper  
County

NE  
State

County Courthouses of Nebraska MPS  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Poland  
Signature of the Keeper

7/5/90  
Date of Action

#### Amended Items in Nomination:

Item #3, Classification:

The correct count is one contributing building.

#### DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

RECEIVED  
MAY 23 1990

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### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Gosper County Courthouse  
other names/site number GO01-001

#### 2. Location

street & number 507 Smith Ave. N/A not for publication  
city, town Elwood N/A vicinity  
state Nebraska code NE county Gosper code 073 zip code 68937

#### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>        </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
County Courthouses of Nebraska Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

#### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

James A. Thomas Signature of certifying official  
Nebraska State Historical Society  
Date May 14, 1990

State or Federal agency and bureau  
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See cont. sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet  
Beth Boland 7/5/90  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Government/courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Government/courthouse

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
walls brick

roof asphalt

other stone  
concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
 nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/government  
Architecture

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

1939-40

1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

McClure and Walker

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.

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Built in 1939, the Gosper County Courthouse is a good, unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, permanent materials, distinctive ornamentation, provision for fireproof storage, Art Deco stylistic influence, and the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, and strength. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof and designed by an architect. There are no notable objects or other buildings on the courthouse square, and neither a small utility shed nor a small commemorative tablet was counted as part of this nomination.

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The courthouse is rectangular and consists of two stories and a utilitarian basement. A slightly projecting entry pavilion on the west facade identifies the public entrance, and there are also public entrances on the secondary north and south facades. Attention is focused on the centered entrance by means of its slightly raised facade, use of stone, and recessed doorway.

The wall surface is red brick with limestone trim. A rows of bricks is recessed every nine rows, creating a horizontal banding effect that effectively unites windows. The smooth stone is used for coping, sills, foundation, and the rounded or faceted entrances. The entry pavilion features a panel with "Gosper County Court House" above the door, vertical designs at the door, and a three-part window that lights the staircase. The heavy stone door surrounds of the secondary entrances feature a small band of Art Deco stylized ornamentation and a distinctive faceted outline.

Three-bay sections are stepped forward from the corner bays, and the stepped treatment continues on the north and south sides as well. The rear or east facade is also brick-faced but with limited detail. Attractive decorated concrete stone panels separate 12-pane wood frame windows on the first and second stories. Above the second story windows are large decorative smooth stone disks.

The plan is a T-shape with the arms running the length of the long (100x55') building. Two square vaults are located near the northeast and southeast corners, and smaller squared vaults also occur at the northwest and southwest corners of the first floor. County offices occupy the first floor, with district court uses and other county offices on the second floor. The plan is very compact, giving the feel of a school rather than a courthouse; hallways and staircases are narrow, public space in the county offices is quite limited, and the district courtroom

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is similarly small in size.

The district courtroom has no wood bar between spectator seating and court uses, a highly unusual absence. The oak judicial furnishings are simple and have a repeated motif on wainscotting, the jury box, tables, and judge's bench: a course consisting of a series of small triangular shapes. Six hanging light fixtures appear original. Other original interior features include glazed tan brick wainscotting and door surrounds in halls, terrazzo flooring, interior doors having six large panes, water fountains in recessed niches, and simple ceiling lights.

The courtroom is generally unaltered, except for what may be a replacement ceiling and the addition of three ceiling fans. Exterior alterations are similarly minor: replacement doors and a well-placed concrete ramp to allow access by the handicapped at the south facade.

The courthouse is a good example of the County Citadel courthouse exhibiting Art Deco stylistic elements. These include a linear, hard-edge composition with vertical emphases, stylized decoration, stepped facade, panels between windows, and low relief.

The Gosper County Courthouse occupies a full block one block south of Elwood's modest commercial street. Houses surround the courthouse square, which has many mature deciduous and evergreen trees. The courthouse is located on the west half of the site with limited parking and considerable green space behind it. (The courthouse it replaced was centered on the site and remained there during construction.) Concrete walks lead to and between the entrances, and there is a small metal utility shed (not counted for this nomination) at the southeast corner of the building. Attractive short freestanding lamp posts grace the main entrance.

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The Gosper County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and 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 the county. It is a good example of public architecture in the county and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse. In addition, Gosper County is one of seven Nebraska counties to acquire a courthouse using federal work programs during the Great Depression of the 1930s and thus the courthouse is directly associated with the role of federal government assistance programs during this period.

As a good example of the County Citadel Property Type, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), a rectangular shape, centered entrance, and permanent materials. Elements of the design combine to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity and simplicity, also features of the County Citadel.

The Period of Significance is 1939, when construction occurred, to 1940, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Gosper 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.

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Gosper County is located in south central Nebraska, just south of the Platte River. The county was organized in 1873, although initial settlement in the area dates from 1860 when a Pony Express station was established on the south side of the Platte River.

Daviesville in the southwest part of the county was the first county seat. The community retained that standing until 1884 when a county election made the hastily platted Homerville the county seat. But with construction of the Burlington Railroad in the county beginning in 1886, there was considerable interest in moving the county seat again, to a site on the railroad.

The third and final move of the county seat occurred in 1889 when Elwood was voted county seat. Much of Homerville, including the wood frame courthouse, were physically moved to Elwood. This building served the county until a fire destroyed it in 1895, apparently an effort to cover

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financial irregularities in the county books. Its 1896 replacement served until the present courthouse was built in 1939.

Under the terms of a federal grant, the Public Works Administration provided a grant amounting to 45 percent of the building. County voters approved the issuance of \$42,000 in courthouse bonds on August 9, 1938 to complete the funding.

The following month the architects for the project, McClure & Walker from Kearney, submitted plans for the building to the county and were hired for the project. On December 30, 1928 bids were accepted for excavation, and on February 10, 1939 W.L. Phillips Sons [sic] of North Platte were selected to be general contractors. Construction began in 1939 and was completed December 1, 1939, the date the county formally accepted the building from the contractors. Formal dedication ceremonies were held November 9, 1939.

**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**

Acreege of property 1.1 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1 14</u>	<u>4 12 17 11 17 10</u>	<u>4 14 19 13 11 14 10</u>	B	<u>    </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>    </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	D	<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  
organization                Four Mile Research Co. date    January 15, 1990  
street & number            3140 Easton Boulevard telephone (515) 266-4964  
city or town                Des Moines                    state        Iowa        zip code    50317

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Works Progress Administration. Survey of County Courthouse Records. 1940.  
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Shafer, Gladys. "A Proud Heritage." 1969.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, the Gosper County Courthouse, occupies all of block 38 of the Original Town Plat of Elwood and is roughly 220x220' in size.

Boundary Justification

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