

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

2237

NOV 28 1989

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Dundy County Courthouse
other names/site number DN01-18

2. Location

street & number NW cor W 7th Ave & Chief St N/A not for publication
city, town Benkelman N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Dundy code 057 zip code 69021

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>2</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 H. Hanson November 17, 1989
Signature of certifying official Date

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
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other, (explain:)

Patrick Anders 1/10/90

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)

Late 19th & early 20th Century

American Movements

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof asphalt

other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide 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

1921-39

N/A

x

1921

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simmons, A.T.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 8, page 1.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet, section 9, page 1.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>14</u> <u>2</u> <u>8</u> <u>3</u> <u>19</u> <u>2</u> <u>10</u> <u>4</u> <u>14</u> <u>3</u> <u>16</u> <u>2</u> <u>15</u> <u>10</u>	B	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing
C	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	D	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <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 **November 12, 1989**
street & number **3140 Easton Boulevard** telephone **(515) 266-4964**
city or town **Des Moines** state **Iowa** zip code **50317**

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Built in 1921, the Dundy County Courthouse is an excellent, largely unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, stylistic influence from late 19th and early 20th century American movements, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: raised basement and designed by an architect. The design has a number of unusual features, such as geometric ornament and concrete canopies, not typically found on courthouses.

The Dundy County Courthouse in Benkelman is rectangular and hipped roofed and consists of two stories set upon a raised basement. Brown brick contrasts with a limited amount of limestone trim. The limestone is used for a slender water table, simple moulded cornice, coping, panels along the parapet, and geometric shapes at the corners and on the centered pavilions.

These geometric shapes--assemblages of squares and rectangles--are similar to designs found on early twentieth century commercial buildings. The geometric shapes, poured concrete entry canopies (suspended by three heavy wrought iron chains on the south facade), brick soldier courses, and decorative urns all reflect stylistic influences from late 19th and early 20th century American movements. Brick "quoin" or "rusticated" treatment at the corners of the building and the pavilions as well as the pavilions themselves and the raised basement introduce classical elements, which are freely interpreted in a modern or 20th century manner.

A distinctive feature is the curved freestanding "rusticated" brick wall before the entry. Steps lead up to it from the east and west to a small landing before the south door. Concrete urns and round lamp posts with original five-light globes effectively highlight the steps. Through these and other features--the series of stone-framed attic windows, brick patterns, limestone trim in geometric patterns--effectively draw attention to the south pavilion. Since they are simply designed, the rectangular windows with thin stone sills on the wall surface further emphasize the importance of the south entrance.

The 50x80' building has two bays of windows flanking the centered pavilions which project above the parapet line on the north and south. Three narrower bays are placed between the rusticated corner bays on the

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east and west facades. There is a secondary entrance on the east facade that opens onto the ground level. It too has a concrete canopy over it, but it is much smaller than the south facade canopy. The rear or north facade continues the materials and ornamentation of the other sides, but there is no entrance or related features (such as urns or light fixtures).

Directly across from the entry foyer are short steps up to the first floor and down to the ground floor. On the first floor is a rather small hallway that is aligned north-to-south. County offices are located off the hallway. Vaults are centered on an east-to-west alignment on either side of the hallway, with access from the related county offices. On the second floor the district courtroom occupies most of the east half of the building.

Interior elements are spare but not lacking in dignity. Notable are the golden oak woodwork throughout, white hexagonal floor tile with a three-color border pattern, simple metal balusters and newels, and simple hanging globes in the corridors. The paneled bar, jury box, judge's bench, and chair rails in the district courtroom are also golden oak and simply designed.

Alterations are minor and expected. On the exterior, windows with three-part horizontal divisions are replacements but are quite similar to the originals shown in an historic photograph. Top windows of the south pavilion are also replacements. Inside, offices and the courtroom have dropped ceilings and flush light fixtures, and stairs have new coverings. Much of the original furniture remains, including attractive benches in the spacious corridors and desks and counters in offices.

The Dundy County Courthouse is located in the northeast portion of a steep full block site. The courthouse square is one of the highest points in the hilly county seat of Benkelman and overlooks the commercial district. Beyond the main street are the railroad tracks, and the location of the tracks, perpendicular commercial street, and courthouse square at the other end is a typical T-town arrangement. Houses overlook the courthouse square on the west and parts of the north and south, and the remaining adjacent portions are commercial or nonresidential.

The courthouse square is bereft of commemorative objects, save a modern pink stone war memorial at the southeast corner. Concrete walks lead from the southeast and southwest corners to the building's south entrance, and there are also walks around the building. A gabled concrete block outbuilding is located unobtrusively in the northwest corner of the site, and there is parking in the north end of the site.

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Both the outbuilding and the recent memorial are noncontributing elements for this nomination.

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The Dundy County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and also historically significant (Criterion A) for its association with politics and local government. The property derives its historic significance as the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Dundy County. It is a fine example of public architecture in the community and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse.

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

The Period of Significance is 1921, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Dundy 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.

Dundy County is located in a cattle-raising area in the southwest corner of Nebraska, and its west and south boundaries are also the state line between Nebraska and Colorado and Kansas. Cattlemen first came to the area in the mid-1870s, but it was not until the 1880s that settlement began in earnest.

An important impetus to settlement was railroad construction. In 1882 the Burlington Railroad established a station just across from an existing town, Collinsville. Residents promptly moved to the railside site and changed the name from Collinsville to Benkelman. The community is located in the southeast part of the county by the Republican River.

Dundy county was organized in 1884 and Benkelman was designated temporary county seat. At the first election in the county, held that same year, the community won the designation outright. But in 1888 five rival communities sought the county seatdom, using Benkelman's location far from the center of the county as a weapon.

Benkelman boosters, in conjunction with the railroad, parried this threat

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by building a courthouse. In 1888 Benkelman residents even approved a bond issue that only taxed their precinct to underwrite the courthouse. The real estate arm of the railroad, Lincoln Land Company, donated the present courthouse square. The company recognized that town lots were more valuable in a county seat than in a former county seat. By providing a courthouse, Benkelman retained the county seat designation.

By 1920 county residents were prepared to replace the aging brick building with a more substantial edifice. On April 20, voters approved a \$40,000 bond issue. It was not until October 5, 1920, that the county selected the architect, A.T. Simmons from Bloomington, Illinois. Some ten years earlier, Simmons had designed the courthouse in adjacent Chase County. No other information is available about Simmons.

Simmons proceeded to prepare plans and specifications for the new courthouse. At the beginning of January 1921 the board reviewed his plans and accepted them. On February 28, they selected a general contractor, Mont J. Green, from Manhattan, Kansas. Elmer Martin of Stratton, Nebraska, was chosen to install the electrical wiring, and Paul Jones of Benkelman got the heating and plumbing contract.

Construction proceeded through the spring and summer of 1921. Progress was such that the cornerstone was laid June first. During construction the county continued to use the old courthouse. This building was located at the center of the courthouse square, and the present building was therefore constructed just north and east of it. By August 4, it was time to prepare notices to sell the old courthouse. The following month, the board chose a new janitor for the new building and moved in, according to county records.

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- Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
- Dundy County. Commissioners' Records. Books A, B and C.
- Benkelman, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1931.
- Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-960.
- Tracings. "Dundy Co. Court House." A.T. Simmons. Clerk's office.
- Cornerstone. Dundy County Courthouse.
- Dundy County History Book Committee. History of Dundy County, Nebraska. 1880-1987. N.p.: Curtis Media Corp., 1988.
- Dundy County Extension Council. Dundy County Heritage. Boulder: Pruett Press, c. 1976.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Dundy County Courthouse, occupies Block 45 of the Original Plat of Benkelman and is roughly 300x300' in size.

Boundary Justification

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

