

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

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

For NPS use only

received **NOV 21 1983**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Cass County Court House, Jail, and Sheriff's house

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

S. 9th St. between S. 2nd and 3rd Aves.

street & number Ninth Street S. between Second and Third Aves. S  not for publication

city, town Fargo  vicinity of NA

state North Dakota code 38 county Cass code 017

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>MA</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Cass County Commission; Attn: County Auditor, Cass County Court House

street & number P. O. Box 2806

city, town Fargo  vicinity of NA state North Dakota 58108

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cass County Court House, Register of Deeds

street & number P. O. Box 2806

city, town Fargo state North Dakota 58108

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Summer, 1982 NRHP Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Summer, 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of North Dakota

city, town Bismarck state North Dakota 58505

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Cass County Courthouse, Jail, and Sheriff's house are situated on Block 25, Original Townsite of Fargo, North Dakota. The entire block is county property. Block 25 is bounded by 10th and 9th Streets South on the west and east, and by 2nd and 3rd Avenues South on the north and south. The Court House faces east on 9th St. S. and the building occupies the entire eastern portion of the block. The sheriff's house faces west on 10th St. S., with the jail located in the middle on a N-S axis (See map 1).

Built in 1904-06, the Court House is of fireproof construction. Exclusive of the north wing built in 1982, the building measures 70 x 109'. It is a Revival style with Renaissance Revival details with a central clock tower in French Second Empire style. The Court House is faced with Port Wing<sup>1</sup> brown sandstone and stands three stories high, including the raised basement. Walls are faced in smooth stone with a rusticated stone foundation. Belt courses delineate the foundation and each story. Window treatment varies, as is common with Renaissance Revival buildings. Windows on the third floor facades are decorated with detached arches above the window lintels. Basement windows terminate in round-headed arches. The modified hipped roof of the Court House with corner towers slightly projecting from the walls is cement asbestos.

The principal design elements focus on the east (front) facade. The front doors on 9th Street S. are surrounded by a slightly projecting entrance 2½ stories tall terminating in a fully pedimented gabled roof. At the first story, the doors are recessed in a semi-circular arch, which, with the sill course, forms a palladian motif flanked by a pair of free standing polished granite Roman Ionic columns on each side of the doors. At the apex of the arch is a large stone keystone, and, on the north, an escutcheon bearing the date "1904" in stone. The palladian motif is echoed at the second floor with Corinthian columns, two sets of fluted pilasters supporting the stone bracketed frieze, and a keystoned rounded arch over the central window. The window is recessed behind a stone balustrade. The frieze below the pedimented central gable is carved with stone letters declaring "Cass County." The pediment is dentilled and inset with foliated decoration. At the apex of the roof is a 2 story clock tower topped with a cupola. Clock faces on the tower point in the four cardinal directions. The roof is domed. The tower is decorated with free-standing and engaged fluted columns and pilasters.

The interior of the Court House is remarkably intact, considering the functional nature of the building. The 1904-06 Court House was built with as little wood as possible in keeping with its fireproof construction. Corridor floors are mosaic tile. Office floors are maple, and the remainder of the wood in the building is quarter-sawn oak. Wainscoting in the corridors and counter tops in the county offices are faced with pink Tennessee marble. The original use of the building accommodated all the county offices with jury rooms and bailiff's rooms in the attic. Each set of offices was decorated differently and each had its own vault.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Cass County Court House Has Been Completed. . . ". Fargo Forum, July 23, 1906, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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From the time the Court House was formally occupied in July, 1906, the building was criticized as being too small and lacking an elevator. An elevator was subsequently installed at the center of the rotunda under the clock tower. This necessitated enclosing a circular opening, approximately 18' in diameter, between the second and third floors at the center of the octagonally-shaped rotunda. The rotunda vaulting on the third floor is now covered with a lowered ceiling. Otherwise, the rotunda, with its corner niches with keystone arches, fluted Corinthian engaged pilasters, Italian mosaic floors in meander pattern, cornice moldings, and elaborately scrolled cast iron stairway balusters are intact.

Minor alterations have occurred to the Court House. All offices have been repainted many times. The west entry exterior doors have been replaced by new glass and aluminum. Original plate glass windows have been replaced by insulated glass and black metal frames throughout the building. The clock tower is currently undergoing stabilization.

The largest change to the Court House is the addition of the north wing - completed in 1982 by the Fargo architectural firm of Clark, Holman, and Moorhead. This addition is fireproof, of steel frame construction and concrete slab with masonry walls. The north addition is faced in dark red/brown brick with cast stone trim, a close match to the original brownstone. It is an excellent example of a sensitively designed addition and retains the massing, roof shape, proportions, window openings, and feeling of the original Court House design.

The sheriff's house and jail on the west half of Block 25 were completed in 1913. The present Court House is Cass County's third court house. A fire in 1903 took the second court house, but did not burn the sheriff's house and jail. These buildings were kept in use on their original site until replaced in 1913 by the present facilities. Both of these buildings are of fireproof construction and are faced in Port Wing brown sandstone to match the Court House. The sheriff's house is a 2½ story square Cube with pyramidal roof, open rafters, and hipped-roof dormers. The front facade of the house is symmetrical and has an unroofed front porch. The rear of the sheriff's house is connected by a one story brownstone-faced passageway to the jail. This feature is original. The exterior of the sheriff's house shows no visible changes, except the aluminum storm windows. It is currently surrounded by a wooden stockade fence.

The jail is a rectangular 2½ story structure situated between the Court House and sheriff's house. It has a low hipped roof, raised parapet, dentilled cornice, and a running course forming a stone frieze below the cornice ending at the corners with decorative escutcheons. The jail is constructed of concrete block and, like the other two buildings, is fireproof and faced in brown sandstone. Many of the original jail windows have been replaced with glass block. At the east end of the jail, sandwiched between it and the Court House, is a newer, post-1958, concrete block addition and a

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bridge connecting the jail to the Court House. A two-stall brick garage is attached to the north facade of the jail, and dates to before 1958, according to the Sanborn map of that date. The upper part of the jail chimney has been removed (including the frieze), and replaced with brick. Bulkhead lights have been added to the north side of the jail. A wire fenced exercise yard is located in the el on the northwest side of the jail formed by the jail and sheriff's house. The exterior integrity of the jail and sheriff's house is excellent. Since the changes to the jail are largely to the rear of both the sheriff's house and the Court House, they are not visually intrusive.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1904-06; 1913      **Builder/Architect** Charles E. Bell

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The 1904-06 Cass County Court House is significant architecturally as Fargo's premier example of Renaissance Revival style architecture. Compared to many upper midwest court houses of similar age, its integrity is excellent. The jail and sheriff's house, connected to the Court House by enclosed walkways, are compatible related county buildings on the same block dating from 1913. These buildings have served the governmental functions of Cass County since their construction. All three structures were the work of Charles E. Bell, whose practice extended from Montana to Minnesota. They constitute an important element in the corpus of his work.

In partnership with Kent, Bell designed the Montana State Capitol in 1898, and several county court houses in that state. The competition for the present (third) Cass County Court House was fierce. The first court house was sold and eventually razed; the second burned on November 17, 1903. Bell was listed as living in Helena, Montana, when the Cass County Commissioners announced their choice of architect in March, 1905. Designs of prominent Fargo architects (such as the Hancock Brothers, Milton E. Beebe, and William C. Albrant) along with plans by Minnesota architects, were rejected in favor of Bell's Renaissance Revival design.<sup>3</sup>

By the time construction of the Cass County Court House was under way in 1904, Bell had moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, forming a partnership (from 1904-07) with Menno S. Detweiler. While the Court House was being built, Bell and Detweiler designed the Grant County Court House (1904-05) in Elbow Lake, Minnesota, and also the Martin County Court House in Fairmount, Minnesota,<sup>4</sup> which is on the National Register. In subsequent partnerships and alone, Bell practiced into the 1920s in Minnesota, designing many residences in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

The 1982 north wing of the Cass County Court House, designed by Clark, Holman, and Moorhead of Fargo, received the 1982 North Dakota State Design Award from the N. D. Chapter of the A.I.A.

<sup>3</sup> Fargo Forum, 12 March, 1904, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Parabiography file on Charles E. Bell. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre.

Quadrangle name Fargo South, N. Dak.-Minn.

Quadrangle scale 7.5' Series

### UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>4</u>	<u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	<u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>5</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 25, Original Townsite, Fargo, North Dakota.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	NA	county	NA	code	NA
state	NA	code	NA	county	NA	code	NA

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Norene A. Roberts and Tom Jenkinson

organization Historical Research, Inc.

date September 12, 1983

street & number 5535 Richmond Curve

telephone (612)929-2921

city or town Minneapolis

state Minnesota 55410

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)

date November 14, 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Beth Gussena*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 10/22/83

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Atlas of Cass County, North Dakota. Section: "Review of Cass County, N.D.- 1639-1906." St. Paul: R. L. Polk. and Co. (1906), p. 98.

"Buildings Commended." Fargo Forum, July 26, 1906.

"Cass County Courthouse Destroyed." Fargo Forum, November 18, 1903, p.1.

"Cass County Courthouse Has Been Completed. . ." Fargo Forum, July 23, 1906, p. 1.

"Commissioners Accepted Architect Bell's Plans." Fargo Forum, March 12, 1904, p. 8.

"A Day Fixed for Election." Fargo Forum, December 17, 1903, p. 7.

"Didn't Talk Courthouse." Fargo Forum, December 1, 1903, p. 3.

Manuscripts # 834 and # 527 and uncatalogued Health Department photo.  
(late 1920s). North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, North Dakota State University, Fargo, N.D.

"The New Courthouse," Fargo Forum, July 31, 1906, p. 4.

"New Courthouse Plans." Fargo Forum, November 11, 1903, p. 8.

"No Decision on the Plans." Fargo Forum, March 11, 1904, p. 8.

North Dakota Illustrated. United Commercial Travellers of America. 18th Annual Session, June 8, 9, 10, 1911, Fargo, p. 50.

"Not a Unit." Fargo Forum, December 2, 1903, p. 5.

Sanborn Insurance Maps. 1905, 1910, 1916, 1922, 1958, updated in 1963 and 1970.

"Temporary Courthouse." Fargo Forum, November 19, 1903, p. 8.

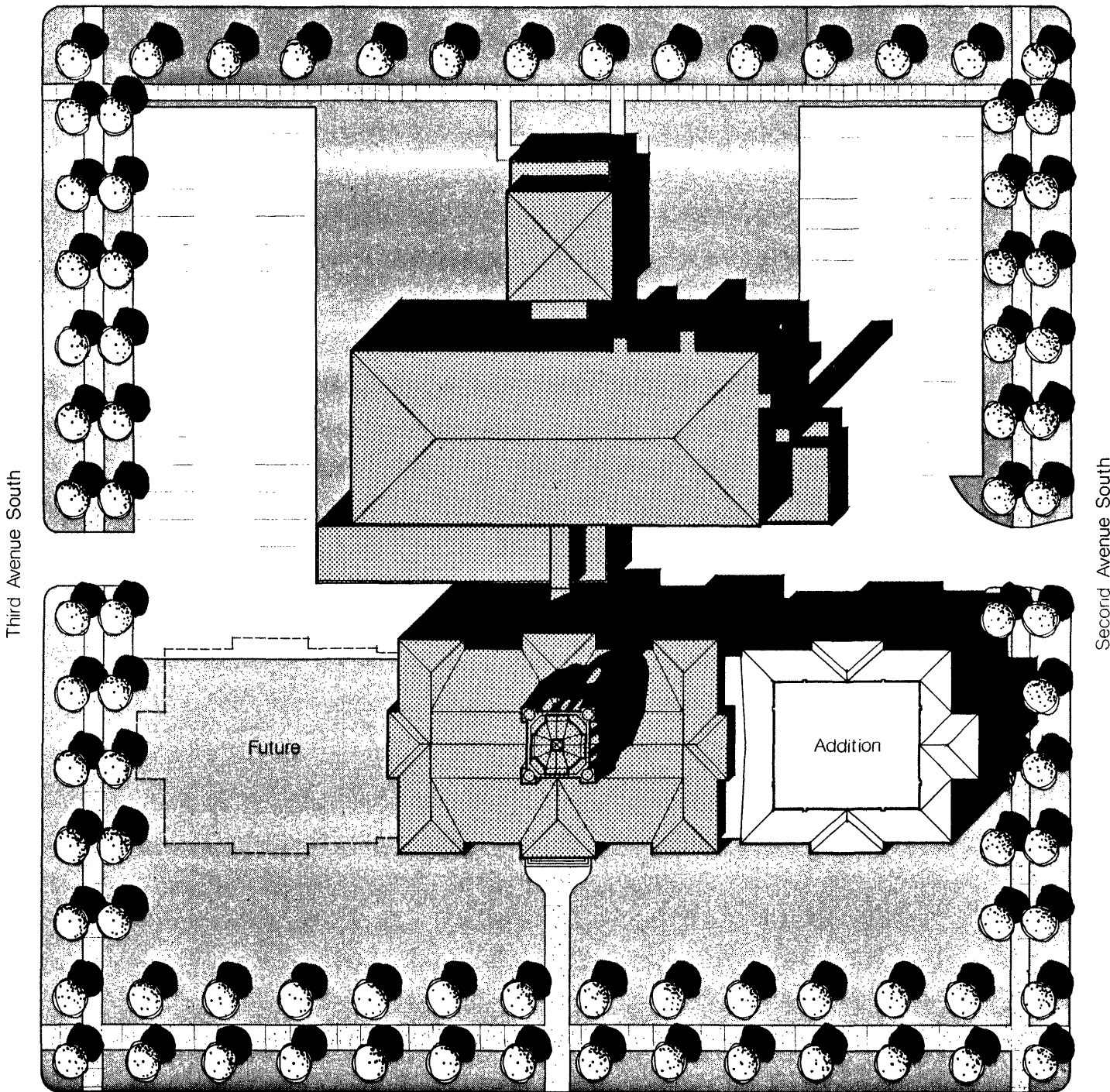
"Will Vote on Court House." Fargo Forum, December 12, 1903, p. 8.







Tenth Street South



Third Avenue South

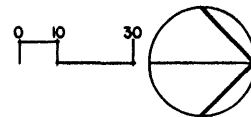
Second Avenue South

Future

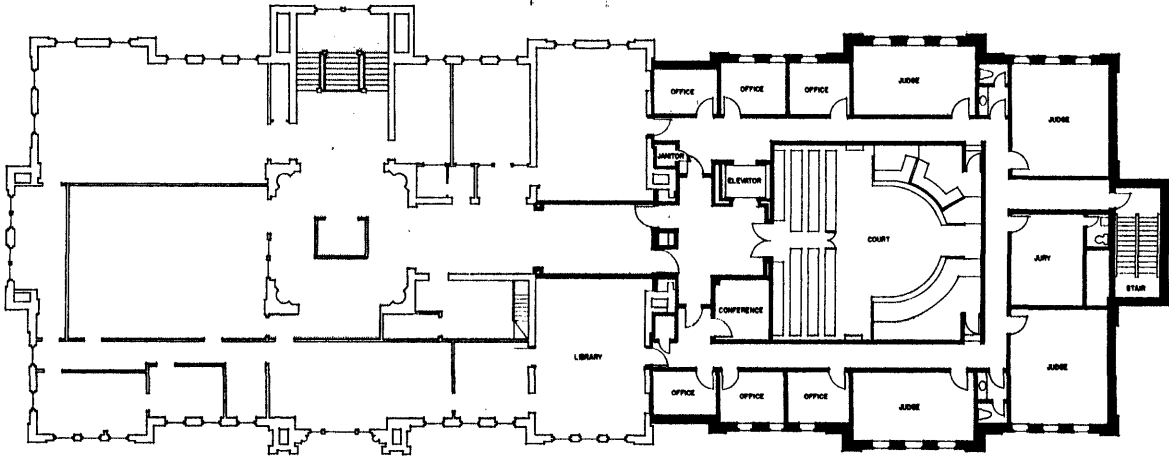
Addition

Ninth Street South

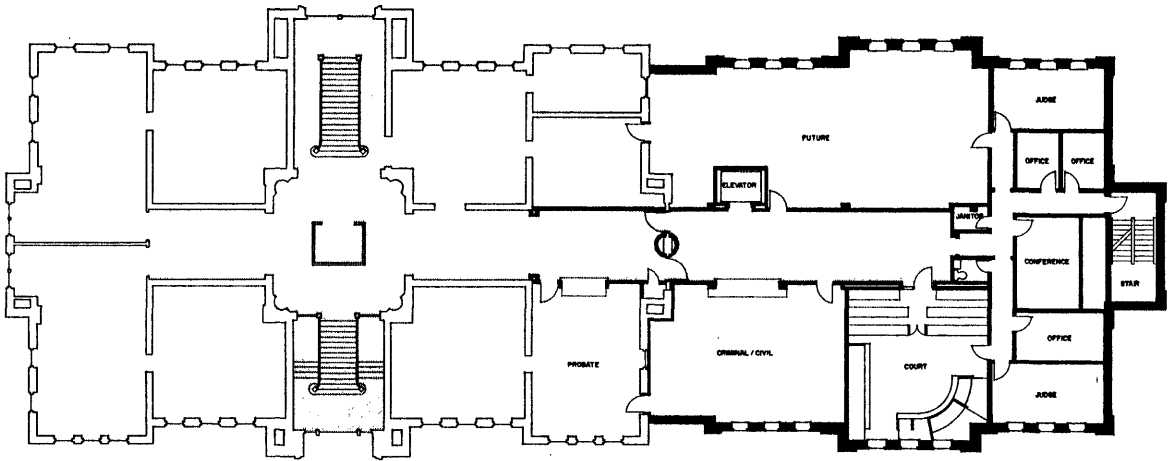
Site Plan



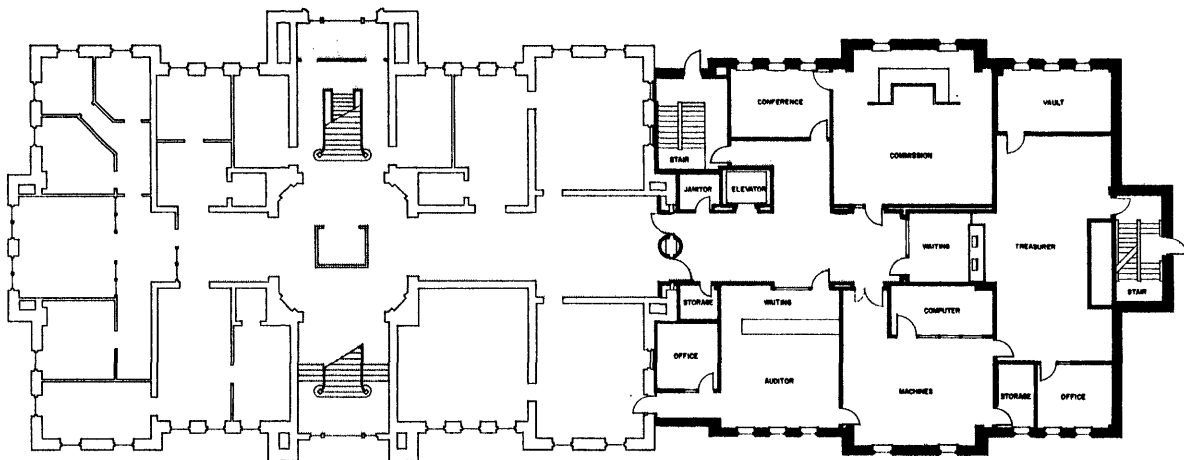
Cass County Courthouse  
Fargo, North Dakota



Third Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

