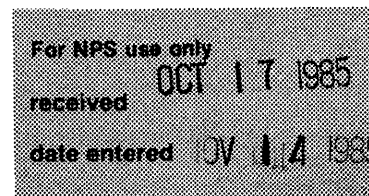


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NAME: Steele County Courthouse

LOCATION: Washington Avenue, bounded east and west by unnamed alleys, Finley,
North Dakota 038, Steele County 091

OWNER: Steele County, Finley, North Dakota

ACREAGE: 2.410 Acres

VBD (LEGAL): Lots 4 and 5, Block 1, and the east 40' of Lots 7-12 and all of Lots 1-6,
Block 2, Quanbeck's Addition to the Townsite of Finley

UTM: Zone 14, Easting = 587500, Northing = 5262780; Finley, N. Dak. Quad

DESCRIPTION: The Steele County courthouse is a three story, flat roofed structure situated at the north end of Finley. The 89'x 64' building is supported by load bearing hollow tile brick, and has an exterior of pressed brick and Indiana limestone. The decorative and compositional schemes adhere to Classical revival styling as commonly practiced in the state from 1900-1930. A limestone-faced base and brick cornice enclose the body of the courthouse, which contains limestone pillars and pilasters. Spandrels between the columns are highlighted by a pattern made by projecting brick headers or by an eight-spoked square. The frieze reads, "STEELE COUNTY COURT HOUSE."

Interior decoration includes floral medallions in the vestibule, terrazzo floors, and the stairway and column bases sheathed in marble. The high ceilings of the third floor halls and courtroom have not been disturbed.

Installation of aluminum frame glass doors and replacement of third floor window transoms on the sides and back of the building with brick constitute the major alterations to the building. The site also contains non significant structures, a log cabin and storage shed, which have been added to the site at various dates.

SIGNIFICANCE: Date: 1925

Architect: Braseth and Houkom
Contractor: T. Ostby and Son

The Steele County Courthouse is significant because of its importance to the county as a center of government and depository of official records. The construction of the courthouse laid to rest county rumblings that proposed a disorganization and absorption of Steele county by those surrounding it. A faction at Hope, formerly rivals for the county seat, had blocked bond issues targeted for courthouse construction to further that position. Commissioners drew money from other county accounts to raise the building fund from \$36,000 to \$85,000. Litigation by the Hope faction to stop this transfer of funds was unsuccessful. The erection of the courthouse extinguished their efforts, and Steele county has continued in existence since.

It also possess architectural significance by virtue of its styling. Of the seven courthouses constructed in North Dakota during the 1920's, county buildings in Finley and Valley City exhibit the purest expression of Classical styling. Simple lines and straightforward composition contribute to the elegance of both edifices. Both are in excellent condition and show little alteration when compared with their

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contemporaries. The firm of Braseth and Houkom designed a few public buildings in eastern North Dakota. Today their work is not recognized beyond this, perhaps their largest production and a handfull of smaller projects.

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