

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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NAME: Sheridan County Courthouse

LOCATION: 215 East Second Street, McClusky, North Dakota 038, Sheridan County 083.

OWNER: Sheridan County, McClusky, North Dakota.

ACREAGE: 1.559 Acre

VBD (LEGAL): Lots 1-9 and 16-24, Block 8, Original Townsite Plat of McClusky.

UTM: Zone 14, Easting = 391500, Northing = 5259790; McClusky, N. Dak. Quad.

DESCRIPTION: The Sheridan County courthouse is a four floor, 52'x 88', steel reinforced concrete structure. Concrete forms the exterior walls and the flat slab roof. A decorative pattern highlights the parapet and the lintel level of the uppermost windows. The building assumes a five-bay composition; the middle three bays extend slightly beyond the front and roof planes of the outer bays. The freize reads "SHERIDAN COUNTY COURT HOUSE." The spandrels carry simple vertical lines. The courtroom has two overhead lights which show some Moderne influence. Behind the judge's bench is a painting of the idealized character Justice. In addition to the courthouse, the site contains a satellite receiving dish, equipment shed, large water tower, memorial vault, and marker. The courthouse has had no visible alterations.

SIGNIFICANCE: Date: 1938-40

Architect: Ira Rush

Contractor: P.H. Schwarts, supervisor

The Sheridan County courthouse is significant for providing a stabilizing influence upon political activities on the local and county levels. Historically, the presence of a substantial courthouse building has reduced or eliminated one basis for rivalries over the location of the county seat among the few towns in the county. Two facts associated with the erection of this courthouse enabled McClusky to legitimize its claim to continue as the county seat. First, the expected longevity of the resulting structure eliminated the need for a new building for many years. Secondly, the depletion of all county building funds precluded future construction for many years. Citizens in nearby Goodrich, agitators for relocation of the seat to their town since county incorporation in 1908, laid to their arguments to rest partially as a response to the long term investment which the courthouse represented.

This building, McClusky's second permanent courthouse, is also significant for its architectural expression. A windshield survey of McClusky reveals that the building is atypical stylistically and the largest Art Deco building by far. Interview with local residents suggest that it is the largest Art Deco building in the county. Its very simple lines and relative lack of decorative ornament both on the exterior and in its courtroom resulted from economic considerations and possibly signals a change in attitudes toward courthouse design. Also, the local newspaper reported it to be the only state WPA project constructed totally of monolithic concrete. In both the architectural and political history of the county the building is immensely important. That importance suggests the building is exceptionally eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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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.