

1 City, Village or Town: Oconto		County: Oconto	Surveyor: K. Stewart; D. Ebert D. Filipowicz	Date: 8-9/81	Street
Street Address: 300 Washington Street			Legal Description: Lots 21-24, Millage's 2nd Addition	Acreege: approx. 2	
Current Name & Use: Oconto County Courthouse		Current Owner: County of Oconto Attn: Gaylord Strehlow, County Clerk			Number
Film Roll No.	Affix Contact Prints		Current Owner's Address: 300 Washington Street		
Negative No.			Special Features Not Visible In Photographs:  None		
Facade Orient.			Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No		

2 Original Name & Use: Oconto County Courthouse	Source	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source	Town
Dates of Construction: 1891/1907, 1961, 1963, 1977	Source A/B,C					
Architect and/or Builder: Rau and Kirsch, Milwaukee (1891); Foeller & Schober, Green Bay (1907)	Source A E					

3 Architectural Significance <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input checked="" type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input checked="" type="radio"/> Is a visual landmark in the area <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> None.	4 Historical Significance <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with lives of significant persons <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with significant historical events <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with development of a locality <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input checked="" type="radio"/> None.	Section
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Statement of Architectural Significance:  Description: With its exterior altered after a 1907 fire and interior remodeled in 1963, the Oconto County Courthouse is a late Romanesque Revival shell with Neoclassical roof and cupola and "modern functional" spaces. Brick bartizans and corbel tables trim gabled pavilions on all elevations of the blond brick rectangular structure, whose two stories and attic rise from a raised (brick) basement and low cut stone foundation. Paired and tripled openings are symmetrically disposed on all elevations; belt (over)	Statement of Historical Significance: Of no extraordinary historical importance, the present Oconto County Courthouse was constructed after the frame courthouse of 1857, located at the present intersection of Collins and Parks Streets, was destroyed by fire on March 9, 1891. That event ended debate over the proposal to replace the earlier building which had been a topic of county discussion for some time. The present county courthouse square was the site of the hanging of butcher Louie Nohr on May 2, 1871. In his effort to protect the Turner Verein from intrusion by drunken revelers Nohr shot into the crowd wounding young Joseph Ruelle, a by-stander ("Hanging of Louie Nohr, May, 1871, at Oconto, Wisconsin, as related by George Merline, an eye witness.") Angry citizens snatched Nohr from his jail cell and carried him to a field where they hanged him from a twin oak.	Map Name
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5 Sources of Information (Reference to Above)	6 District Classification District Name: _____ <input type="radio"/> Pivotal <input type="radio"/> Contributing <input type="radio"/> Non-Contributing Initials: _____ Date: _____	Map Code
A Building dedication plaque.		
B "Dedication and Open House, Oconto County Courthouse," Oct. 12-13, 1963 (program)		
C Marinette Eagle-Star, Tuesday, Dec. 6, 1977.		
D Green Bay Press-Gazette, October 6, 1963.		
E Oconto Enquirer, September 13, 1907. (cont.)		

7 Representation in Previous Surveys: <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> WRL <input type="radio"/> Local Landmark <input type="radio"/> HABS <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: WIHP	8 Eligibility for the National Register <input checked="" type="radio"/> Eligible <input type="radio"/> Not Eligible <input type="radio"/> Unknown local Initials: DHF Date: 10/81
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Sources of Information (cont.)

F Oconto County Reporter, April 24, 1891; March 18, 1892.

Architectural Statement (cont.):

courses and segmental relieving arches trim the simple lintels on the first story, while brick hoodmolds, filled with diaperwork in the center and end pavilions, cover semicircular openings on the second. (The original double-hung sashes have been replaced by plate glass units with lower hoppers and upper transoms.) The center entry is recessed within a round-headed arch, framed by inscription circles with the date (1891) and an inscription stone with the name (COURT HOUSE) on the building. An elliptical medallion in the tympanum of the second-story arch overhead contains the profiles of a fish and a log, recalling the county's sustaining industries in the late nineteenth century. Terra cotta ornament and a finial trim the peak of the center gable. The more insistent medievalism of the original design (with taller pinnacles to the sides of the center pavilion, a single steep gable dormer on each half of the roof, and a thin cross-gable cupola) was compromised by the 1907 roof rebuilding. The thinner cupola was replaced by a larger (Baroque) Neoclassical cupola; fleur-de-lis finials at the ends of the ridge of the hipped roof became small domes; the single louvred peaked dormers became pairs with semicircular openings; and the roof shingles were replaced with red tiles. A larger lead statue of Justice was placed at the top. Despite the stylistic incongruity, the resultant whole is pleasingly (perhaps better) proportioned and coloristically composed.

The heterogenous interior, with its post-1907 second story and attic, was fully remodeled in 1963; the front and new end stairways were joined by well-lighted halls, and planters, beige drapes, and metal furniture decorated the functional county offices on the first floor, and the courtrooms, chambers, and law library on the second. A low jail and courthouse annex of blond brick was appended to the east end in 1960, and a second two-story-plus-basement blond brick annex (with two-story tile-roof bridge) was added to the west end in 1977. Despite the distraction of the contemporary additions, it is the 1891/1907 historic building which dominates the long landscaped block north of the Main Street business district.

Significance: With the contrasting historical statements of the original design of 1891 and alterations of 1907, the Oconto County Courthouse represents two periods of construction. The Romantic taste of the latter half of the nineteenth century is evident in the Romanesque Revival character of the earlier elevations, to which republican Neoclassical elements were added in 1907.

The Oconto Enquirer of Sept. 24, 1891 pronounced Rau & Kirsch's newly completed work "the finest and most pretentious building ever erected in Oconto County;" after remodeling by Foeller & Schrober, the statement was more apt, for, with "the dimensions of the dome... enlarged to conform to the proportions of the building" and other second story and roof-level rebuilding, the Courthouse was thought to "present a better appearance and be more modern in some respects than the old." The repairs cost \$32,000, as compared with the final construction cost of almost \$50,000 in 1892; the latter sum was more than triple the original County Board of Supervisors appropriation, and double the revised appropriation set just before ground breaking. <sup>E, F</sup> Imposing as the original building had been, then, selection and praise of the work of the well-known Green Bay firm confirmed north-east Wisconsin's awareness of the tide of modern design which had turned at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

