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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 (The original double-hung sashes have been replaced by plate glass units with lower hoppers and upper transoms.)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. 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. Imposing as the original building had been, then, selection and praise of the work of the well-known Green Bay firm confirmed northeast Wisconsin's awareness of the tide of modern design which had turned at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

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