

PH 0679771

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 9 1976
DATE ENTERED	DEC 12 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME** \*  
 HISTORIC  \*  
 Roberts County Courthouse  
 AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
 SD 10

CITY, TOWN  
 Sisseton

STATE  
 South Dakota

VICINITY OF  
 CODE  
 046

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
 No. 1

COUNTY  
 Roberts

CODE  
 109

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
 Roberts County

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
 Sisseton

VICINITY OF  
 STATE  
 South Dakota

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
 Roberts County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
 Sisseton

STATE  
 South Dakota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
 South Dakota Historic Sites Survey

DATE  
 June, 1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
 SURVEY RECORDS  
 Historical Preservation Center

CITY, TOWN  
 Vermillion

STATE  
 South Dakota

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Roberts County Courthouse is a two story brick building constructed in the Renaissance Revival style. The dome is covered with terneplate and painted gold. Renaissance openings in the dome have keystones and are protected by a balustrade. Pediments on each wall are decorated with dentils and circular windows. All of the windows are rectangular with keystones. The second story windows have lugsills, while a stringcourse under the first story windows surrounds the building. A cutstone foundation supports the courthouse.

The front (west) facade is decorated with circular windows encased in carved stone wreaths. Plain pediments appear atop keystoned windows. The main entrance is enclosed in a two story arch, which also has a keystone.

The courthouse is in good condition. It is the only building on the whole block. Both it and its surroundings are well maintained.

# 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

1902

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Roberts County Courthouse is a good example of the Renaissance Revival style of architecture built on the prairie around the turn of the century. Since its construction in 1902, the courthouse has been an important public building in Roberts County, an outstanding architectural feature in Sisseton, and a prominent landmark in the Coteau des Prairies. It has been remodeled slightly, but no additions have marred its original integrity. Over the years, different windows and doors have been installed to eliminate drafts in the cold weather. During the summer, the courthouse is partially cooled with electric fans installed in the ceilings of offices. The interior of the building remains much as it was when constructed.

The courthouse is important for another reason: it is the result of a typically Western county seat dispute which began in 1883 and lasted until a permanent courthouse was constructed in Sisseton 19 years later. Travare was the county seat from 1883, when the county was established, until 1885. In 1884, Wilmot forced a vote on the issue, and Travare won. The election was taken to court and was decided in favor of Travare. As was common in the West, Wilmot proponents gathered arms to steal the county seat from Travare while it was celebrating the victory. The county records were loaded into a sleigh at the back door and taken to Wilmot, where new officials were elected. The issue, hidden in an appropriation bill, went before the territorial legislature in Bismarck. The bill passed, and Wilmot legally retained the county seat for a few years.

On April 15, 1892, the Sisseton Indian Reservation was opened for settlement and the town of Sisseton was founded. Again, the county seat question went to the voters, a majority of whom voted for Sisseton. But the Supreme Court of South Dakota ruled that a majority of all votes cast should decide the election. In 1898, when the question again rose, Sisseton received a majority. The Wilmot advocates proposed that Sisseton pay them \$1,000 for their county seat expenses and the issue would not be raised again. The proposal was accepted. Teams were rigged to fetch the county records, however, Wilmot proponents requested a temporary injunction restraining the transfer until the legality of the election had been decided by the courts. Knowing how long the issue could be tied up in the court, the Sisseton men decided to remove the records at night without alerting the Wilmot townspeople. In 1900, a third and final election decided the question overwhelmingly in favor of Sisseton.

The Roberts County Courthouse now rests permanently upon an entire block in Sisseton, South Dakota. The block is surrounded by retaining walls and the grounds are covered with large shade trees. From miles away, travelers are welcomed to Sisseton by the shining dome of the Roberts County Courthouse.

