

**WILLA CATHER THEMATIC GROUP:**

**WT07-100, Continued**

Cather mentions the church in A Lost Lady.

"He could remember the very first time he ever saw Mrs. Forrester, when he was a little boy. He had been loitering in front of the Episcopal church one Sunday morning, when a low carriage drove up to the door. Ben Keezer was on the front seat, and on the back seat was a lady, alone, in a black silk dress all puffs and ruffles, and a black hat, carrying a parasol with a carved ivory handle. As the carriage stopped she lifted her dress to alight; out of a swirl of foamy white petticoats she thrust a black, shiny slipper. She stepped lightly to the ground and with a nod to the driver went into the church. The little boy followed her through the open door, saw her enter a pew and kneel. He was proud now that at the first moment he had recognized her as belonging to a different world from any he had ever known." ( A Lost Lady, pg. 42).

Architecturally, Grace Protestant Episopal Church is a chaste Gothic Revival building that satisfies, in a restrained manner, the requirements of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Historically, Grace Church represents a parish church type that is free of several canonical requirements of the Ecclesiological movement: south porch, bell cote, transept, etc. At the sacrifice of overt picturesqueness, the building captures a moment when American builders and churchpeople felt free to modify as local conditions necessitated while still returning to traditional medieval forms in both worhsip and church building.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage: Less than one  
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540920/N4437715

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 23-24, Block 6, Original Town of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

**WT07-104**

1. NAME: Webster County Courthouse

2. LOCATION: 225 West 6th Street

81000379

4. OWNER: Webster County Commissioners

ADDRESS: Webster County Courthouse, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: The Webster County Courthouse was built in 1914 by the Towles Company of Onawa, Iowa to the drawings and specifications of architect W. F. Gernandt of Omaha. The structure, a vitrified brick edifice of three stories, is designed along Second Renaissance Revival lines. Trimmed in stone, with a stone foundation, the symmetrical rectangular building features central projecting pavilions at each of its two side ends and a front, south facade which projects slightly across its entire width from the main block of the building. A high parapet above the wall cornice slopes upward slightly toward the center of each facade (photo #37).

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WT07-104, Continued

The facades are highly articulated while the individual motifs remain simple and un-elaborated. The low limestone foundation, exposed below the watertable, and the brick basement walls, are rusticated. Two-story brick pilasters, which rise from above the basement walls, support round arches and en-frame the second and third floor windows. Stone drip moldings and keystones enhance these arches. A simple dentilled and block modillion wall cornice, and a dentilled coping which caps the slightly projecting facade, complete the decorative treatment of the main facade. The main entrance pavilion of the south facade repeats the form and detail of the cornice and parapet of the main block.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The Webster County Courthouse, though built after Cather's removal from Red Cloud, is significant to the major theme of the nomination as well as to the ethnic sub-theme. This courthouse is the setting for the immigrant trials in One of Ours:

"One bright June day Mr. Wheeler parked his car in a line of motors before the new pressed-brick Court house in Frankfort. The Court house stood in an open square, surrounded by a grove of cotton-woods. The lawn was freshly cut, and the flower beds were blooming. When Mr. Wheeler entered the courtroom upstairs, it was already half-full of farmers and townspeople, talking in low tones while the summer flies buzzed in and out of the open windows. The Judge, a one-armed man, with white hair and side-whiskers, sat at this desk, writing with his left hand. He was an old settler in Frankfort county, but from his frock-coat and courtly manners you might have thought he had come from Kentucky yesterday instead of thirty years ago. He was to hear this morning a charge of disloyalty brought against two German farmers. One of the accused was August Yoeder, the Wheelers' nearest neighbor, and the other was Troilus Oberlies, a rich German from the northern part of the county. (One of Ours, pp. 204-205).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than ten acre  
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540820/N4437800

Verbal Boundary Description: Approximate center of block 12, Original Town of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

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81-379

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Webster County Courthouse  
other names/site number WT07-104

#### 2. Location

street & number 225 W. 6th Ave. N/A not for publication  
city, town Red Cloud N/A vicinity  
state Nebraska code NE county Webster code 181 zip code 68970

#### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of Nebraska  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

#### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

James A. Benson Signature of certifying official November 17, 1989 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau  
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See cont. sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) documentation on a previously-listed property Patrick Andrus Signature of the Keeper 1/10/90 Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions) Government/courthouse  
Government/correctional facility  
Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) Government/courthouse  
Government/correctional facility

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions) Renaissance  
Other: Second Renaissance Revival  
Materials (enter categories from instructions) foundation stone  
walls brick  
roof other  
other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) Politics/government  
Architecture  
Period of Significance 1914-39  
Significant Dates N/A  
1914 . 1887

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A  
Architect/Builder Gernandt, William F.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 8, page 1.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

[X] See continuation sheet, section 9, page 1.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
  - Other state agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 2 acres

UTM References

A	1   4	5   4   0   8   2   0	4   4   3   7   8   0   0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title                      **Barbara Beving Long, consultant**  
organization                    **Four Mile Research Co. date August 17, 1989**  
street & number                **3140 Easton Boulevard telephone (515) 266-4964**  
city or town                      **Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50317**

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Built in 1914, the Webster County Courthouse is a good, largely unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, 2nd Renaissance Revival stylistic influence, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: prominent raised basement and designed by an architect. The property is an interesting example of one of the ten Nebraska courthouses William F. Gernandt designed during an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Dawson County Courthouse built in 1913-14. The courthouse is part of the Willa Cather Thematic Group National Register Nomination.

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The Webster County Courthouse is rectangular and consists of two stories upon a prominent raised basement. This basement is "rusticated" brick and also Bedford limestone, which forms a low base-within-a-base. The stone portion of the basement also forms a continuous sill for the ground floor windows. Limestone is used effectively for trim, (such as the shaped first floor window lintels), and contrasts well with the brownish brick ("goldenrod brick" from Sunderland Brothers of Omaha) of the wall surface.

The architect has expanded upon a form he used for his Dawson County Courthouse, stone-trimmed brick arcades between pilasters. For the Webster County Courthouse the arcades have become the dominant design feature, and arcaded pavilions occur on the south, east, and west facades. The round-arched brick arcades trimmed in stone spring from stone capitals of relatively simple brick pilasters. The arcade consists of eight arches on the main facade, and three on the sides where it projects more from the wall surface than does the main arcade. Tall and slightly arched parapets have a dentiled stone course that follows this arched shape. Below is a metal cornice featuring mutules with a row of dentils below. The forms further call attention to the arcades.

Gernandt has also added new fanciful effects. Two rows consisting of four brick stretchers form "keystones" for ground floor windows. Second story sills feature a row of guttae below, an unorthodox use of this element. And the stone keystones of the arcade pierce a stone moulding and have unusual round tops (which echo the arch of the arcade). Mutules, dentils, and guttae, all squarish shapes, are used freely and almost interchangeably to enliven the surface. The one-story projecting entry porch is also an unusual feature, for it is rather small and

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enclosed, and the two doors are separated rather than a single set of double doors.

The building displays elements of the 2nd Renaissance Revival style, including a rusticated ground floor, moulded courses, arcades, and dentils. The courthouse lacks the distinct horizontal divisions of typical examples, although the water table and other courses do provide some horizontal elements, and the window treatment is different on each level.

The 63x75' building was designed to have one primary entrance on the south facade, and secondary entrances on the east and west sides that open directly on the ground floor level. The rear or north facade continues the materials and treatment of the other facades, but in a simplified manner, and there are no arcades.

At the entry foyer, steps lead down to the ground floor or up to the first floor corridor. County offices are arranged off the lobby. Vaults so large they are referred to as "Record Rooms" on the blueprints are located in three corners of the building. A smaller vault intended for the county attorney is located adjacent to the southwest corner of the building. On the second floor the district courtroom occupies much of the north end of the building.

Interior features are relatively simple and include painted brick wainscoting with plaster above, metal banisters and simple newels for the stairs, terrazzo flooring on the first and second floors, and large single pane transoms over some doors. The courtroom has original woodwork, including a curving bar between spectators and the court and jury box. The wood screen behind the judge's bench has pilasters with triglyphs and guttae.

Interior changes include: modern wood paneling and lowered ceilings with flush fluorescent lighting. Courtroom spectator seating is now rows of chairs rather than pews or opera seats. There are few exterior alterations: one main entry door no longer opens and the other is a modern replacement, and there are replacement windows with opaque panels.

The courthouse is centered on a full courthouse square about two blocks from Red Cloud's commercial district and it is surrounded by dwellings. The area at the north or back of the courthouse is now a parking lot, and a rather large storage building is also north of the building on the square. Built c. 1960, the storage facility is one-story, has a hipped roof and garage doors, and is constructed of concrete block (a noncontributing building for this nomination).

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A number of deciduous trees adorn the ample south lawn. A long concrete walk leads directly to the south entry steps where it curves nicely around to walks leading to the east and west entrances. On the northeast corner of the courthouse square is the jail/jailer's quarters built in 1887. The jailer's house is two-story, has a multiple hipped roof, and exhibits Italianate or Victorian stylistic influences (simple brackets on painted metal cornice, soft stone sills, additional gables with a wood sunburst pattern on them, and semi-circular arched 2/2 windows). A small shed-roofed porch is tucked between two wings. Attached to the rear of the quarters is the jail section, which is still in use. It is rectangular, has long narrow windows, a hipped roof, and is one and one-half stories high. Built of brick, the entire facility has been stuccoed and a soft stone rubble foundation has been painted. A fenced exercise yard is located off the jail. Despite the changes, the building is a contributing element for this nomination, for it offers a glimpse of late nineteenth century law enforcement facilities, a rarity in the state.



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The Webster County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and also historically significant (Criterion A) for its association with politics and local government. The property derives its historic significance as the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Webster County. It is a good example of public architecture in the community and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse.

As a fine example of the County Citadel, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), has a rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, and 2nd Renaissance Revival stylistic influence. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

The property is an interesting example of one of the ten Nebraska courthouses William F. Gernandt designed during an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Dawson County Courthouse built in 1913-14, and represents the evolution of Gernandt's courthouse designs.

The Period of Significance is 1914, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Webster County Courthouse is being nominated as an example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska (County Citadel) of the Context, County Government in Nebraska, 1854-1941, from the Multiple Property Submission, County Courthouses of Nebraska.

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Webster County is located in the southern tier of the state in the fertile Republican River valley, some 150 miles west of the Missouri River. Area settlement dated from 1870, and efforts at county organization occurred soon thereafter. Acting on a petition from area residents, the governor proclaimed Webster County to be established in 1871. On April 19, 1871, an election was held to select officers and the county seat.

Only one county seat site was voted on, and the 45 votes it received was a unanimous decision. The east half of the northeast quarter of Section

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2, Township 1, Range 11 (part of the holdings of Silas Garber<sup>1</sup> and present Red Cloud) was thus selected to be county seat. Garber's rude dugout house initially doubled as the courthouse.

In 1878 the county built its first courthouse on the present courthouse square, a wood frame building with the jail located in the basement. The Burlington Railroad paid for its construction, in exchange for having all taxes forgiven that the company owed from before 1877.

The basement level jail in the courthouse proved inadequate, and in November 1886 county residents voted a tax levy for a separate jail. On January 13, 1887, a new jail committee was appointed, according to county records, and the jail was constructed that year.

By 1913 Webster County residents were prepared to replace the aging 1878 courthouse with a more substantial edifice. On August 13th they submitted a petition calling for a three-year tax levy of four mills to help fund a new courthouse. The county board agreed with the proposal and took steps to acquire courthouse plans and specifications.

On October 1, 1913, the board examined various plans architects had submitted but were unable to make a decision. After several ballots the following day, William F. Gernandt received a majority of the votes and "was and is declared the architect of said Board," according to commissioners' records.

On February 25, 1914, they selected the Rowles Company of Onawa, Iowa to be general contractors, with a low bid of \$46,786. City Plumbing and Heating of Boulder, Colorado, received the plumbing and heating contract. In the early spring of 1914 the board had the old courthouse moved 120' west of the center of the courthouse block.

The county board had relied on legislation related to county government when it declared that taxes would be levied for the courthouse. But in February 1914 the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that this technique was unconstitutional in a case involving Burt County. Webster County officials notified the contractors of the problem and directed them not to spend money on the project until further notice. The board then called a special election to vote on the tax levy, and the measure passed on April 14, 1914.

With legal problems resolved, the courthouse was built over the spring

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<sup>1</sup>Garber was elected Governor of Nebraska in 1874.

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and summer of 1914. Progress was such that the cornerstone was laid on July 30. By the end of September the board was ready to buy furniture (American Furniture Company). In November they advertised for bids on the janitorship. The following month the board took steps to insure their building, further evidence of its completion, and the architect received his final payment. On December 15, it was moved and seconded that "said building be approved and accepted," and the motion carried.

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- Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
- Webster County. Commissioners' Records. Books D and E. Red Cloud, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1922.
- Tracings. Webster County Courthouse. William F. Gernandt. Clerk's office.
- "Specifications for General Contract. Webster County Courthouse, Red-Cloud, Nebraska." William F. Gernandt. Clerk's office.
- Photograph. Laying the cornerstone, July 30, 1914. Foyer of courthouse.
- Works Progress Administration. Survey of County Courthouse Records. 1936. NeSHS Archives. Webster County.
- "Commissioners Let Court-house Job." Webster County Argus. February 26, 1914.
- "Webster County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.
- "Webster County." Andreas, A.T. History of the State of Nebraska. Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1882.
- Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Adams, Clay, Webster and Nuckolls Counties. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890.

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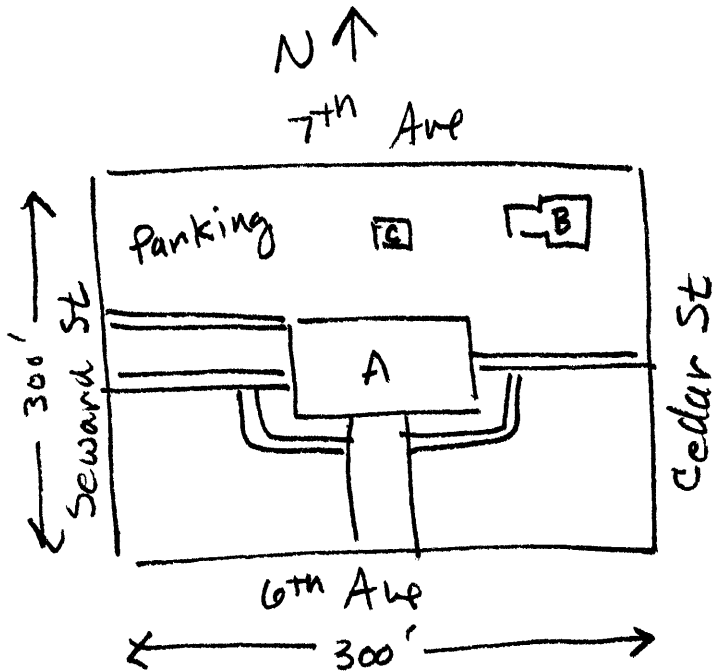
### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, Webster County Courthouse, occupies lots 1-24 of Block 12 of the Original Town of Red Cloud and is roughly 300x300' in size.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the property.

WEBSTER COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE (WT07-104)  
Redcloud, NE



Contributing Bldgs

A - Courthouse

B - Jail/Jailer's Quarters

Noncontributing Bldg

C - Storage facility

Not to scale