

INTENSIVE SURVEY FORM Historic Preservation Division State Historical Society of Wisconsin

City, Village or Town: Superior	County: Douglas	Surveyor: R. Somerville, D. Filipowicz, L. Garfield	Date: 8-9/81	Street			
Street Address: 1313 Belknap Street		Legal Description: Lots 5-28, Block 270, W. Sup. 13th Div.	Acreage: 1.9				
Current Name & Use: Douglas County Courthouse		Current Owner: County of Douglas Attn: Raymond Somerville, County Clerk			Number		
Film Roll No.	Affix Contact Prints	Current Owner's Address: 1313 Belknap Street, Superior, WI 54880					
Negative No.		Special Features Not Visible In Photographs:  Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No					
Facade Orient.							
Original Name & Use: 2 Douglas County Courthouse & Jail	Source: N/A	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source	Town	
Dates of Construction: 1918-1919	Source: A						Range
Architect and/or Builder: Royer & Radcliff	Source: A						
3 <b>Architectural Significance</b> <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 <b>Historical Significance</b> <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	
Statement of Architectural Significance: Description: The Douglas County Courthouse is a monumental Neoclassical structure, distinguished on the exterior by a colossal Ionic colonnade and, on the interior, by a multi-storied central light court faced in Pavanazza marble. Supported by a steel frame and faced on the exterior with cut Bedford limestone, the building rises from a rusticated first story punctuated with deeply set round headed windows which alternate with rectangular openings (including the main entries). The second and third stories, separated from the (over)		Statement of Historical Significance: When Douglas County outgrew its original 1871 courthouse in the early 20th century, attempts to build a new structure faced an unusual obstacle. The legislative act creating the county in 1854 specified the exact site of the county seat and later attempts to remove the courthouse to a more central location within Superior were sidetracked by that law (most notably in 1887 when the state legislature upheld the original statutes). By the early years of this century, the county was forced to rent offices in the city's business district in order to alleviate overcrowding in the aging building. But in 1916, the state legislature finally agreed to allow the County Board to hold a referendum on the issue, and in November of that year the (over)					Map Name
Sources of Information (Reference to Above) Official Souvenir, New Douglas Co. Courthouse, W. J. Leader, County Clerk, 1920, n.p.		6 <b>District Classification</b> District Name: _____ <input type="radio"/> Pivotal <input type="radio"/> Contributing <input type="radio"/> Non-Contributing Initials: _____ Date: _____					Map Code
Representation in Previous Surveys: <input type="radio"/> HABS <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> WRL <input type="radio"/> Local Landmark <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: WIHP		8 <b>Eligibility for the National Register</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> Eligible <input type="radio"/> Not Eligible <input type="radio"/> Unknown local Initials: DHF Date: 10/81					

### Historical Statement (cont.):

voters overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of a new site. Immediately purchasing an entire block in the center of Superior, the County Board selected the plan of local architect E. S. Radcliffe and Urbana, Illinois architect J. M. Royer from among 30 submissions by architects across the country. When completed in 1919, the building had cost \$600,000.<sup>A</sup> Although a city-county governmental complex, built in 1970, now houses the sheriff and jail, and although the old jail has been refurbished into a county social services annex, the Douglas County Courthouse remains the center of county government.

### Architectural Statement (cont.):

rusticated base by a projecting stone molding, are united on the front and side facades by columns and pilasters which rise through both stories to the cornice. A wide colonnade of engaged Ionic columns dominates the front facade, while projecting corner units anchor the building on either side. Pilasters on the corner units echo the rhythm of the colonnade and continue around both sides of the building (although there are no pilasters on the rear facade). The spandrels which separate the second and third floors are recessed behind the pilasters and columns, and large expanses of window (now altered and diminished in size) fill the intercolumnation. Crowning the building, the entablature is composed of a denticulated and strongly profiled cornice above a frieze upon which is inscribed the "Douglas County Court House" as well as several panels with appropriate aphorisms ("The Cause of Freedom is the Cause of God," and the like) framed by carved wreaths. On the parapet, two large panels feature griffins and shields. The main entries to the building, on the front and side facades, are surrounded by stone architraves with entablatures and feature heavy copper doors (one has been removed on the front facade) with ornamental panels and transoms.

The dignified restraint of the exterior leads to an interior space as monumental in character but more elaborate in ornament. Three floors of offices and courtrooms are organized around a multi-storied light court in the center of the building, with balconies on the upper stories overlooking the space. The balconies of the central court are supported by massive concrete piers, faced in marble, which rise to a full entablature at the third floor, ornamented with decorative triglyphs and metopes on the frieze and a pronounced cornice. At either end of the court, double stairs leading to a single flight rise between the floors. Encased with marble, the stairways are ornamented with metal spoke-like panels between the marble rails. The floors of the lobby feature a variegated tile surface, and the walls of all three stories (as well as the entry vestibules and the corridors leading off the light court) are wainscotted in the same marble. A variety of decorative panels, moldings, and inlays enrich the walls. Illuminating the interior court, leaded glass skylights, ornamented with stained glass, are set within the panelled ceiling, with decorative bosses at the intersection of the ribs. Although the public spaces remain almost entirely intact, the offices have dropped ceilings and other modifications over the last two years.

Immediately to the south of the Courthouse, the jail and sheriff's residence is a rectangular brick building with cut stone trim and subsidiary wings. The full entablature on the building echoes that of the Courthouse, and the original entry (now bricked in) is surrounded by a stone frame surmounted with an ornamental balcony. Gutted in 1975, the interior of the jail was completely rebuilt to accommodate the expanding social service functions of the county government, and a connecting second-story walkway connects the building with the courthouse. Situated on a spacious courthouse lawn in the center of Superior, the site of the Douglas County Courthouse measures 300 feet wide on Belknap Street and 295 feet deep on Hammond and Cumming avenues.

(continued)

DOUGLAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Intensive Survey - Continuation Sheet

Architectural Statement (cont.):

Significance: An imposing and elaborate example of the Neoclassical style, the Douglas County Courthouse was hailed as the "finest Court House in the Northwest" at the time of its completion in 1918, and is clearly among the most monumental buildings in the county. The dignified exterior of Bedford limestone, dominated by the Ionic colonnade, and the lavish interior light court, finished in polished marble, are testaments to the skill and craftsmanship employed in the construction. Just as importantly, the building employs the full range of symbolic conventions associated with public architecture during the period. The classical facade is both restrained and impressive, a self-conscious symbol of civic strength and virtues, while the interior provides a grandiose public space for the enjoyment of the citizens. Designed by Superior architect E. S. Radcliffe and his co-partner J. M. Royer of Urbana, Illinois, the building commands an entire block in the center of the City of Superior and is an important visual landmark.

Connected to the courthouse to the North by a second-story bridge (a recent addition), the Douglas County Jail likewise represents the Neoclassical period of construction. Like all but one of the other nominated detached jails it was also the residence of the county sheriff, and therefore represents that specific type of construction.

