

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse

and/or common St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 15 West Kellogg Boulevard *13 1/2 d.* N/A not for publication

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of congressional district 4th

state Minnesota code 22 county Ramsey code 123

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	agriculture
building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	museum
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	park
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	private residence
object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	religious
	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	transportation
			other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of St. Paul and Ramsey County

street & number 15 West Kellogg Boulevard

city, town St. Paul N/A vicinity of state Minnesota 55102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ramsey County Courthouse

street & number 15 West Kellogg Boulevard

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul
title and Ramsey County

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 12/80-11/82 federal state county local

depository for survey records Ramsey County Historical Society 75 West 5th Street

city, town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
		<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse is situated on the block bounded by Kellogg Boulevard, Wabasha, 4th and St. Peter Streets in Downtown St. Paul. Its two principal entrances front on Kellogg Boulevard and _____ 4th Street. It overlooks the Mississippi River, and is a prominent feature of the St. Paul skyline, particularly when viewed from the opposite (south) side of the river.

The City Hall/Courthouse bears all _____ the hallmarks of the American Perpendicular or Modernistic _____ phase of the Art Deco style as it was applied to commercial, and in this case, public skyscraper design--emphasis on verticality, geometric, angular, and polychromatic forms and ornamentation, and the use of setback.

The exterior of the twenty story City Hall/Courthouse is faced in smoothly dressed white Indiana limestone blocks, with a polished Wisconsin granite base. The windows in the building are all aligned vertically and are divided horizontally by black metal spandrels. The first through third floors form a series of steps, and from the fourth floor the building extends straight up to the seventeenth floor where there is another setback encompassing the eighteenth through twentieth floors. Atop the twentieth floor is a setback "penthouse" housing the elevator machinery. As with most Deco skyscrapers, the building does not have a classical cornice. The most lavish ornamentation on the fairly stripped down exterior of the building are the low relief carvings depicting the labor force and governmental ideals located above the 4th Street entrance and flanking the Kellogg Boulevard entrance. They were designed by Lee Lawrie who also worked on two other Art Deco masterpieces, Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol and Rockefeller Center in New York.

The City Hall/Courthouse contains some of the most sumptuous Depression Era interior public spaces remaining in the country, even though many of the offices in the building which were not intended for public use are much more utilitarian. The most stunning interior space is the Memorial Hall located inside the 4th Street entrance and dedicated to Ramsey County veterans. It is a three story dark blue marble-panelled darkly-lit hall dominated by a thirty-six foot high onyx sculpture of an American Indian known as the God of Peace and sculpted by Carl Milles. Other notable features of the building's interior include flat relief carving on the brass elevator doors in the main lobby depicting themes from Ramsey County history which were designed by Albert Stewart, and the third floor Council Chamber murals illustrating scenes from St. Paul history. The murals were painted by John Norton, an artist who worked closely with Frank Lloyd Wright and Purcell and Elmslie on various projects. The use of lighting to create dramatic effects and the use of rare woods and stones are particularly spectacular in these and other public spaces in the building.

The City Hall/Courthouse is remarkably intact and in good condition. The only alteration made to the exterior has been the recent replacement of the windows with double thermopane glass which matches the original. All of the main public spaces in the building are unchanged, although some alterations have been made to offices. The only known potential threat to the building is the possible installation of a second story Skyway link connecting this building with the City Hall Annex located across 4th Street.

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 checked="" 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/				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian				
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation				
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)				

Specific dates 1930-32 **Builder/Architect** Holabird and Root; Ellerbe and Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Builder: Foley Brothers

The St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse, built 1930-32, is significant as the center of city and county government for fifty years, as a nationally acclaimed, wonderfully sophisticated example of the Modernistic phase of the Art Deco style, as one of the few Art Deco skyscrapers in the country which is remarkably intact on both the exterior and interior, as the design of accomplished Chicago architects Holabird and Root working in conjunction with St. Paul architects Ellerbe and Company, and as a prominent fixture of the St. Paul skyline. Architectural historian David Gebhard describes the building as a "major monument of the late Zigzag Moderne--or as it was labeled at the time, the American Perpendicular Style." He also notes that in Memorial Hall, "the bringing together of theater and architecture characteristic of the 1920's is realized."

The present St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse is St. Paul's second combined city hall and county courthouse and the fourth building constructed in the city to house local and county government. In 1849 St. Paul became the capital of the new territory of Minnesota and the seat of the newly formed Ramsey County. The first governmental building in St. Paul was a Greek Revival style county courthouse built in 1850-51 on the block bounded by 4th, Cedar, 5th and Wabasha Streets. St. Paul was incorporated as a city in 1854, and the first city hall was constructed at the northeast corner of 5th and Washington Streets (present site of Landmark Center) in 1856-57 in the Neoclassical style. In 1884 a new combined city hall and courthouse was built on the site of the first courthouse. This Richardsonian Romanesque style building was designed by noted local architect Edward P. Bassford and razed in 1933.

By the late 1920's the Bassford city hall and courthouse was too small to accommodate all of the city and county offices. In 1928 a four million dollar public bond was approved for the construction of a new city hall and courthouse. Fortunately, the Stock Market crash of 1929 did not jeopardize the project since the funds had already been allocated. In 1929 an advisory commission was formed to supervise the project. The commission first purchased the building site and cleared all of the buildings with the exception of the Ramsey County Jail, an Italian Renaissance Revival building constructed in 1903 from designs by St. Paul architect Edward J. Donahue and demolished in 1980. The commission then investigated courthouses constructed recently in several major American cities and determined that they wished to appoint a nationally prominent architect to work in association with a St. Paul architect who would supervise the construction. National architects asked to appear before the commission were Harvey Corbett, Cass Gilbert, and James Gable, all from New York, and Paul Grey of Philadelphia, Albert Randolph Ross of Milwaukee, Eliel Saarinen of Detroit, and Holabird and Root of Chicago. St. Paul architects who appeared were Lambert Bassingdale, Thomas Ellerbe and Company, C.A. Haasler, William Ingemann, Clarence H. Johnston, Edwin H. Lundie, Slifer and Abrahamson, Allen H. Stem, Toltz, King, and Day, and Kenneth Worthen. Holabird and Root of Chicago and Ellerbe and Company of St. Paul were selected as the architects of the building in February of 1930. Foley Brothers of St. Paul was selected as the contractor.

(See continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Ellerbe, Thomas Farr. The Ellerbe Tradition. Minneapolis: Ellerbe, Inc., 1980.
 Gebhard, David, and Tom Martinson. A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota. Minneapolis University of Minnesota Press, 1977.
 Gipple, Scott. "Guide to Court House and City Hall." The Federation of Public Service (See continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name St. Paul East

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1-12, Block 22, St. Paul Proper.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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state	N/A	code	N/A	county	N/A	code	N/A
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Murphy, Historic Sites Survey Director

organization Ramsey County Historical Society date 10/1/1981

street & number 75 West 5th Street telephone (612) 292-0090/222-0701

city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55102

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

12/15/82

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patricia Murphy

date

2/11/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse, St. Paul, Ramse

Continuation sheet

Item number 8,9

Page 1

8. The Chicago firm of Holabird and Root had its beginnings after the great fire of Chicago (1871) when William Holabird (1854-1923) entered the office of William Le Baron Jenney, the architect/engineer of the first office building in the country to employ steel beam supports, the Home Insurance Company (1884-85). In the early 1880's Holabird began practice with Ossian C. Simons and Marin Roche. From 1883 to 1926 the firm was known as Holabird and Roche, with John Augur Holabird (1886-1963) taking his father's place and John Wellborn Root (1886-1963) becoming the other partner in the firm. John Holabird and Root both graduated from the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and Root was the son of Daniel Burnham's partner, John Wellborn Root, Sr. who died in 1891. The Holabird and Root firm has been and continues to be one of the most influential in Chicago, and their designs include St. Paul's Main Post Office (1934) a few blocks from the City Hall/Courthouse, the Rand Tower (now Dain Tower) in Minneapolis (1928-29), the Chicago Board of Trade Building (1933), and the Chrysler Building at the 1939 World's Fair held in New York.

Ellerbe and Company was founded in 1909 in St. Paul, and has an impressive history of designing commercial and public buildings throughout the state and elsewhere in the country. The founder of the firm was Franklin Ellerbe (1870-1921). He was succeeded by Thomas Farr Ellerbe (now 88 years old) in 1921 who managed the firm's affairs for nearly fifty years. Some of the firm's Art Deco style buildings include the Cardozo Furniture Company (now Bremer Tower) of 1930 and the Northern States Power Company building (now Cochrane-Bresnahan) of 1930, both located in downtown St. Paul. Winning a role in the design and construction of the City Hall/Courthouse was quite a coup for the firm, and it helped them to cement a far-reaching reputation as leading Minnesota architects.

Due to the low costs of building materials and labor during the Depression, the St. Paul City Hall/Ramsey County Courthouse cost only \$3,800,000 to construct including furnishings and art work--\$200,000 less than the original bond issue. Shortly after the building was completed in December, 1932, it was described as being "utilitarian--not decorative or monumental" which must have been in contrast to earlier Beaux Arts style governmental buildings such as Cass Gilbert's Minnesota State Capitol of 1895-1905.¹ However, today the building is recognized as a wonderfully lavish example of the Art Deco style which incorporated some of the most expensive building materials and artworks designed by nationally known artists of the period. The building was designated a St. Paul Heritage Preservation Site in 1979.

NOTES

9.

¹ David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 84.

² Scott L. Gipple, "Guide to Court House and City Hall," The Federation of Public Service Employees Year Book 1934, p. 3.

Employees Year Book, 1934.

Levin, Seth, Susan Ebner and Terry Pfoutz. "America's City Halls: The St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse." An unpublished manuscript prepared for the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, 1981.

Richter, Bonnie, ed. St. Paul Omnibus. St. Paul: Old Town Restorations, 1979. Smith, Dane. "County Courthouse: It's First Fifty Years." Ramsey County History, Vol. 17, No. 1 (October 1981).