

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received DEC 10 1986

date entered JAN 7 1987

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

1. Name

historic Watonwan County Courthouse

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 7th St. S. and 2nd Ave. S.

N/A not for publication

city, town St. James

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota

code 22

county Watonwan

code 165

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 Watonwan County

street & number 7th St. S. and 2nd Ave. S.

city, town St. James

N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota 56081

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Watonwan County Courthouse

street & number 7th St. S. and 2nd Ave. S.

city, town St. James

state Minnesota 56081

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Minnesota Statewide Historic Sites Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985-86

federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, Fort Snelling History Center

city, town St. Paul

state Minnesota 55111

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Watonwan County Courthouse is located at Second Avenue S. and Seventh Street S. in St. James, a city of 4,000 people in central Watonwan County. The courthouse and attached sheriff's department share a full city block with parking lots and two small circa 1890 houses which stand north of the courthouse. The courthouse is located one block south of St. James' central business district, and is surrounded by commercial structures to the north and west and houses and churches to the south and east.

Watonwan County's courthouse is an elegant Romanesque Revival building designed by Mankato architect H. C. Gerlach and constructed in 1895-96 by contractor Otto Kleinschmidt of Mankato. The 60' by 120' building was constructed with a rockfaced buff colored Kasota limestone foundation and is faced with light brown St. Louis mottled pressed brick and Kasota stone trim.

The courthouse is two stories tall with a hipped roof. The assymetrical design is dominated by two towers which flank the main facade: a square three story tower with a hipped roof at the northwest corner of the building and a round two story tower with a conical roof at the northeast corner. The taller, northwest tower was originally 4 1/2 stories in height and had four clock faces at the fourth story level topped by an open arcaded belfry. The tower was shortened because of structural instability circa 1930. The tower retains a series of rounded arched windows in the third story and a stone plaque reading "Watonwan Co. Court House" between the second and third stories.

The north facade of the courthouse has a main entrance (located to the right of center) marked by a series of three buff colored limestone arches supported by short polished granite columns with stone bases and heavy, foliated limestone capitals. Recessed behind the arches is a new glass and metal entrance door and two double hung windows. Above the main entrance is a large rounded arch with foliated stone spandrels which contains a semi-circular window.

The side and rear walls of the courthouse have handsome smooth brick wall surfaces with horizontal bands of simple limestone trim. The window openings are both rectangular and rounded arched. The west facade has a wide two story rounded bay and the south (rear) facade has slightly projecting, square tower massing at each corner and in the central bay. The interior of the building is largely intact. It has fireplaces in some offices, tile floors in the corridors, and red oak wainscoting, trim, stairways, counters, and furniture.

The second floor of the courthouse, including the county courtroom, was remodelled in 1950 from plans drawn by Oscar Dyrstad. The basement, which once contained county jail cells, has also been remodelled. Alterations to the exterior of the building have included shortening the northwest tower circa 1930, installing a new roof in 1970, and installing new windows and doors. A new office addition designed by Richard Rice of Mankato was constructed on the southeast corner of the building in 1971. The new addition was enlarged in 1981 with a sheriff's department and jail portion designed by Group II of Marshall. Both of the one story, red brick additions were designed so they would not obscure any of the courthouse's principal facades. Both the historic courthouse and its more recent additions are in excellent condition.

This nomination includes one contributing building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Eppeland, Ruth. "Courts and the Courthouse of Watonwan County." Unpublished manuscript, ca. 1982.

The First 100 Years. Minnesota State Bar Association, 1983.

"H. C. Gerlach." Mankato Free Press, Special Illustrated Edition, December, 1985.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre.

Quadrangle name St. James West Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>1 5</u>	<u>3 6 9 6 12 15</u>	<u>4 18 7 10 8 16 10</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is located on all of lots 3 - 12, Block 25, in the Original Plat of the City of St. James.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Granger/Contract Historian
State Historic Preservation Office
organization Minnesota Historical Society date February 1986
street & number Fort Snelling History Center telephone (612) 726-1171
city or town St. Paul state Minnesota 55111

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Russell W. Fridley
title State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/3/86

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 1-7-87

Keeler of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration