

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92001862 Date Listed: 2/10/93

McCook County Courthouse McCook SOUTH DAKOTA
Property Name: County: State:

County Courthouses of South Dakota MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

fn Autumn Hlee 2/23/93
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

No level of significance was indicated in the state/federal agency certification section. In consultation with the South Dakota SHPO, locally has been checked as the level of significance. The text indicates stone trimmings. In the description section, stone has been added as a building material.

The nomination is officially amended to include this information.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

13006

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

DEC 20 1992

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: MC COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Other names/site number: _____

2. Location

Street & number: ESSEX AVENUE not for publication

City or town: SALEM vicinity

State: SOUTH DAKOTA Code: SD County: MC COOK Code: 087 Zip code: 57058

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 12/17/92

State or Federal agency and bureau: South Dakota SHPO

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of the Keeper: _____ Date of Action: _____

State or Federal agency and bureau: _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper: Patrick Ardus Date of Action: 2/10/93

MC COOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Name of Property

MC COOK COUNTY, S.D.

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF S.D.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

ART DECO

MODERNE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1934-40

Significant Dates

1934

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Kings & Dixon

Builder: Huron Construction Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:

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Narrative Description:

The McCook County Courthouse stands in the center of a square block in Salem, South Dakota. The site is located just to the north of the main commercial district. The Courthouse faces south; Main Street borders the eastern side of the block. The courthouse square is landscaped with many mature deciduous trees.

The Courthouse exhibits the design features of the Art Deco style which enjoyed widespread use for public and commercial buildings in the United States between 1925 and 1940. The vertical emphasis of the facade created by the strips of windows with spandrel panels and the stylized geometric motif topping the piers separating the windows are defining features of the style.

The Courthouse is three stories in height. Exterior walls are concrete clad with brick. All facades are symmetrical around the center bays--seven bays on the front and back facades and five bays on the sides.

The slightly projecting ground floor topped by a concrete string course hints at the appearance that the upper two floors of the building rest on a raised foundation or pedestal (the building has a true basement). Windows on the ground floor are treated as holes punched into the facade. The front and rear entries are located at this level. The front entry is enframed by a slightly projecting stone surround. Raised letters in a recessed panel over the entry read "McCook County." The original aluminum doors with sidelights remain in place. A metal grill at the base of the lite in each door spells out "COURTHOUSE." The exterior stairs rise between low, projecting concrete rails. Art Deco style metal lamp standards with fluting and etched panes rise from the rail. A small woodframe addition covers the rear entry.

The second and third floor window openings are flanked by slightly projecting brick piers; the piers are topped with stone caps with a stylized geometric motif. Polished aluminum spandrel panels separate the second and third floor windows. The panels carry a geometric design in four planes. All windows in the building have been replaced with smaller casement units topped with infill panels.

The interior plan of the courthouse is laid out in the commonly used cruciform plan of the 1930s. The south leg of the cross houses the entrance vestibule, the north leg houses the double return stair, and the east and west legs access the offices of the major county functions located at each corner of the building.

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The interior of the courthouse is elaborately decorated in an Art Deco-style motif combining marble, ornamental plaster, aluminum, and chrome. Corridors are lined with pink marble juxtaposed with a dark green marble base and cap molding. The slab doors are enframed with the same dark green marble and a slightly recessed U-shaped crown rising from the wainscot molding; the crown steps up over the center of the door providing an area for room function lettering. Three wide bands stepping upward from the walls create a rectangular sunken panel in corridor ceilings. Ornamental plaster moldings create a ceiling cornice at the first and third floors. Floors are bordered with terrazzo and are finished with large square tiles of contrasting color.

Metal work in the building is fashioned in the Art Deco style. The balustrades around the well between the second and third floors and along the stairs are polished chrome with an aluminum rail. Newel posts are cast aluminum. Chrome grills cover the radiator recesses in the vestibule and at the stair landings. Many original chrome light fixtures remain throughout the building.

The courtroom ceiling is finished with the same wide border bands creating a sunken panel as in the corridors. The walls in the room are lined with a wood wainscotting. An ornamental plaster cornice in a stylized geometric motif encircles the room at the ceiling. The original furnishings remain in-place

The architectural integrity of the exterior of the McCook County Courthouse has been diminished by the replacement of the original windows with smaller units and the addition of a small vestibule over the back entrance. The building retains almost complete interior architectural integrity from the time of its construction and is an impressive example of interior Art Deco design.

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Narrative Statement of Significance:

The McCook County Courthouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criteria "A" and "C." The building is historically significant for its role as the symbolic and functional seat of government for McCook County. Since the building's construction, it has housed virtually all of the county's administrative, operational, and judicial functions, while simultaneously serving as the official repository for county records. The courthouse is the most important single physical element in the historic and contemporary governance of McCook County, and is an important local visual reminder of the importance of county government.

The McCook County courthouse is architecturally significant as a representative example of twentieth-century public and institutional architecture in South Dakota. The building's utilization of Art Deco design elements is typical of state courthouses constructed during the 1930s. The building is a well-designed and executed example of the form, and the courthouse is among the largest and most visually striking examples of architecture in Salem and McCook County.

Historical Narrative:

McCook County was among the many Dakota counties created by the territory's 1873 legislative session. The county's government was established in 1878, with the seat of government initially located at Cameron, the first community in the county. Secondary sources describe the county's first courthouse as being a 12 by 14 foot building in Cameron, donated by a local resident. The Cameron townsite faded away quickly, however, and an 1880 county election moved the county seat to Bridgewater, where a small courthouse was reportedly built.¹

Typical of many South Dakota counties, McCook County's history includes stories of a "county seat war." The origins of McCook's county seat disagreement are obscure, but the controversy apparently arose from a claim to the county seat by the town of Salem--a claim that was not recognized by the Bridgeport citizenry. Action replaced negotiation one night in 1882 when:

. . . a group of Salem men stole the records and the safe one night. They got into the courthouse through the back door which had conveniently been left unlocked by a Salem sympathizer who worked in the courthouse. The records were hidden in various places including a barn and a backroom in the post office . . . in Salem. One story says that some angry Bridgewater men came to Salem one day to find the records. The Salem people treated them nicely, took them to the backroom of the postoffice, and gave them a little cider to drink.

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They promised the Bridgewater citizens that they would do their best to find the records but of course they were not located until the territorial convention of 1882 established Salem as the county seat.²

Once the county seat issue was settled, an interim courthouse was established on the ground floor of the schoolhouse in Salem. Within two years, however, the county built a two-room courthouse on the site of the current building. This small structure was greatly enlarged in 1893, resulting in a courthouse that was both large and well-detailed. McCook County's 1893 courthouse was a two-story wood-framed building, with stone foundation and brick veneer walls. The building was composed of a central rectangular mass with a gable roof, flanked by gabled wings to both the east and west. An ornate, octagonal cupola marked the center of the building's roofline. Both wings included covered entry porches supported by square brick columns. Additional detailing included large corbeled chimneys, quoins, pilasters with floral capitals, and a bracketed cornice with dentil molding below. The building's primary facade was completely symmetrical. The building was a handsome example of a nineteenth-century South Dakota courthouse.³

The McCook County commissioners felt that their courthouse was showing its age by the 1920s, and they responded by establishing a "Court House Building Fund." The revenue from an additional annual property tax levy was deposited in the fund, which was hoped to eventually contain enough money to finance the construction of a new courthouse. By 1933 the county's courthouse fund had grown to over \$105,000.00, and it was decided to proceed with construction of a new building. The timing of this decision was also probably influenced by the availability of Federal financial and technical assistance through various New Deal programs.⁴

To comply with South Dakota law, county commissioners arranged for the circulation of voter petitions requesting that the county issue bonds for courthouse construction. (Bonding was still necessary despite the existence of the Building Fund, since much of the Fund's money was tied up in investments and loans to local farmers.) These petitions were received on September 22, 1933, and were found to contain sufficient signatures to allow for the issuance of bonds without holding a bond election. Consequently, the commissioners announced that \$80,000.00 in courthouse bonds would be offered for sale that October 30. The sale, however, failed to attract any offerors, and the bonds were ultimately purchased by the Federal government to allow the project to proceed.⁵

Meanwhile, county commissioners met to select an architect for the courthouse project. They selected the Mitchell, South Dakota firm of Kings & Dixon, who had submitted a proposal in association with one Floyd Rosser of Montrose, South Dakota. Montrose is a small town in eastern McCook County, and Rosser's name may have been added to the Kings & Dixon proposal to improve the

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firm's competitive position. Rosser is not known to have worked with Kings & Dixon on any other project.⁶

The Kings & Dixon firm consisted of Floyd F. Kings (1893-1939) and Walter J. Dixon (1894-1976). Kings was the son of a prominent Mitchell contractor, who graduated from the University of Michigan school of architecture and began practicing locally in the late 1910s. Dixon was an Ohio native and a 1918 University of Michigan graduate; he moved to Mitchell and joined forces with Dixon in 1920. The two men, working both together and separately, worked in Mitchell throughout most of their professional careers and completed a number of major commissions. During the 1930s, Kings & Dixon jointly designed courthouses for Aurora, Davison, McCook, and Miner Counties, a group of well-executed Art Deco/Moderne designs.⁷

Kings & Dixon prepared two sets of specifications for the McCook County courthouse--one using brick exterior facing and one utilizing Quartzite facing. The use of Quartzite in the building had been suggested by a petition of county citizens, both for aesthetic reasons and since a quarry in western McCook County (at Spencer) supplied Quartzite building stone. Bids for the new building's construction, based on both sets of proposals, were opened on December 1, 1933. The representative of the Public Works Administration present at the opening, however, announced that none of the bids for a Quartzite building were acceptable, since their cost was "excessive compared with the bids offered on other classes of material." The lowest of the nine bids submitted for brick construction was \$75,441.00, offered by the Huron Construction Co. of Huron, South Dakota. Huron was awarded the construction contract, and contracts were also awarded for heating and plumbing, and for electrical work.⁸

Construction of the new courthouse apparently began in the spring of 1934, and continued through the remainder of the year. The county's commissioners took a strong interest in the details of the building's construction, visiting Sioux Falls to examine building materials and later carefully selecting brick, hardware, flooring, and light fixtures. New jail equipment and furniture was also ordered for the building. The contract for metal cabinetry and furniture resulted in controversy when some of the bids (including the lowest) arrived late. The furniture bids were finally readvertised following repeated communications with state and federal officials in Pierre.⁹

The new McCook County courthouse was completed in December, 1934, and formally accepted by the county on December 28. Following the move to new quarters, the old courthouse building was torn down using relief labor. The new courthouse continues in service in 1992, little-changed from its 1934 appearance.

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ENDNOTES

1. *Within These Borders ...* (Salem, South Dakota: n.p., 1976).
2. Ibid.
3. A photograph of McCook County's 1893 courthouse is on p. [4] of *Within These Borders ...*
4. "McCook County Commissioners Record," manuscript volume 6 (1929-1940), unpaginated, entry for September 22, 1933.
5. "McCook County Commissioners Record," manuscript volume 6 (1929-1940), unpaginated, entries for September 22, 1933; October 4, 1933; October 30, 1933; November 7, 1933.
6. "McCook County Commissioners Record," manuscript volume 6 (1929-1940), unpaginated, entry for September 22, 1933.
7. Dixon's obituary is found in the *Mitchell Daily Republic*, June 19, 1976, p. 2. Additional information on the pair was obtained from Polk city directories for Mitchell for the years 1907-08, 1913, 1919, 1921, 1930-31, and 1937, and from the manuscript "Davison County, South Dakota Cemetery Index: 1870-1980," located in the Mitchell Public Library.
8. "McCook County Commissioners Record," manuscript volume 6 (1929-1940), unpaginated, entries for September 22, 1933 and December 1, 1933.
9. "McCook County Commissioners Record," manuscript volume 6 (1929-1940), unpaginated, entries dated from December 6, 1933 to November 20, 1934.

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Bibliography:

"McCook County Commissioners Record." Manuscript volumes maintained at the County Auditor's Office, Salem, South Dakota.

Within These Borders ... Salem, South Dakota: n.p., 1976.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

All of fractional Block 30, Original Townsite of Salem, South Dakota; and all of Lots 20 through 31, Pettigrew's First Addition, Salem, South Dakota.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the courthouse building and the landscaped grounds immediately surrounding it. It coincides with the legal description of the tract of land historically set aside as the courthouse grounds. It does not include adjacent city streets, or the unrelated urban development surrounding the block.

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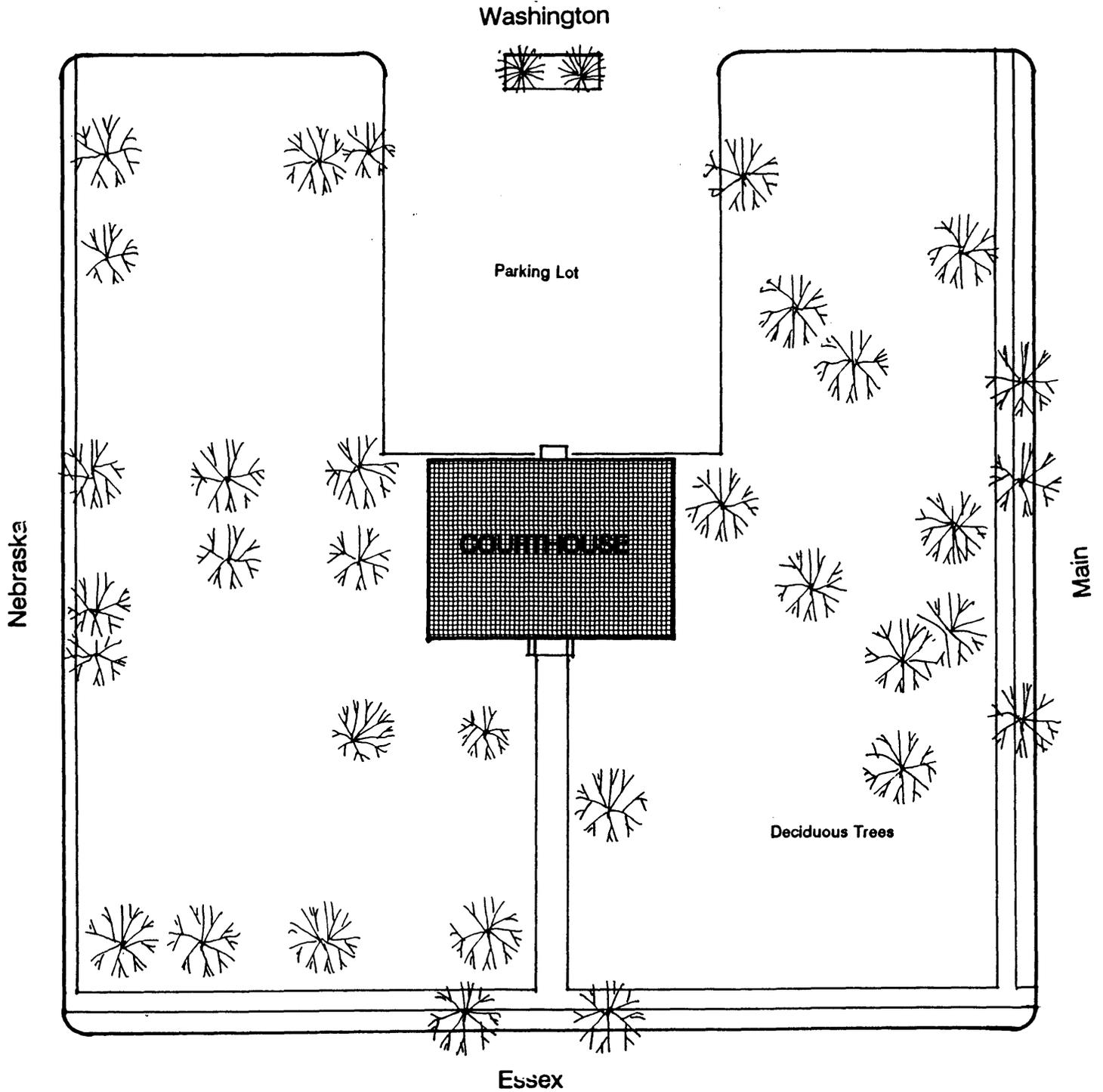
Index to Photographs

Photographer: Lon Johnson

Date: January 17, 1992

Location of original negatives: South Dakota State Historical Preservation
Center, Vermillion, South Dakota

Photograph Number	Description	Direction of View
1	South (primary) exterior elevation	North
2	West and south exterior elevations	East- northeast
3	North exterior elevation	South- southwest
4	East exterior elevation	West
5	Detail of primary entry south elevation	North
6	Detail of exterior spandrel panels	
7	Interior hallway and stairwell	
8	Interior stairwell and geometric floor design	
9	Detail of interior stair and balustrade	
10	Detail of interior radiator cover	
11	Interior, top floor hallway	
12	Courtroom interior	



Scale: 1" = 50'

McCOOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE
 Salem, South Dakota

All of Fractional Block 30 - Original Townsite
 Lots 20 through 31 - Pettigrews First Addition