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National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. 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. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing 10 Prop.

County Courthouses in Idaho MPS

B. Associated Historic Contexts

County Government and Courthouse Architecture in Idaho State/Territory
from 1864 to 1940

C. Geographical Data

The State of Idaho

See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Thomas J. Lee

8/3/87

Signature of certifying official

Date

Idaho State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

[Signature]

9/27/87

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

County Government and Courthouse Architecture in Idaho State/Territory from 1864 to 1940

Idaho's 44 counties were formed over a fifty-five year period of territorial and state growth. Counties were organized soon after the white settlement of particular areas, and spurts in county formation resulted from the major economic and transportation developments that brought people into the state. In his political geography of Idaho, Benjamin E. Thomas divides county formation into several periods corresponding to the periods of white settlement, economic growth, and exploitation of various resources. Before Idaho Territory was organized in 1863, four counties were formed by Washington Territory in the area now within Idaho boundaries. Formed in response to the gold rush into Orofino Creek, the Salmon River mines, and Boise Basin, the counties were Idaho (1861), Nez Perce (1861), Shoshone (1861), and Boise (1863). Idaho Territory established further county divisions, especially in the southern mining areas, including Owyhee (1863), Alturas (1864, abolished 1895), Lah-toh (1864, repealed 1867), Oneida (1864), Ada (1864), Kootenai (1864), and Lemhi (1869).

Clarification of the state boundary between northern Utah and southeastern Idaho and the growth of an agricultural economy in that region resulted in the formation of two southeastern counties between 1875 and 1881: Bear Lake (1875) and Cassia (1879). Mining interests continued in importance during this period, when Custer County (1881) formed after development of the Yankee Fork mines and Washington County (1879) formed in response to expanded farming and ranching and to mining development at Heath and the Seven Devils.

Railroads came into Idaho Territory in 1879 (the Utah and Northern Railroad, built north from Utah through southeast Idaho and into Montana) and 1882 (the Northern Pacific, built east from Spokane across northern Idaho, and the Oregon Short Line Railroad, built west through southern Idaho with a spur north to the Wood River mines at Hailey, Ketchum, and Bellevue). County seats established subsequent to railroad construction were usually in railroad towns that had developed into the principal supply and market centers for their regions. Along the railroads between 1885 and 1895 the following counties were established in areas where irrigated (and some dry land) agriculture was becoming an increasingly important economic base: Bingham (1885), Latah (1888), Elmore (1889), Canyon (1891), Fremont (1893), Bannock (1893), Blaine (1895), and Lincoln (1895) counties.

The population of Idaho tripled between 1900 and 1920, and 21 new counties were established during that period. Population growth resulted from the availability of newly irrigated agricultural lands and the growth of extractive industries like lumber milling and ore smelting. Irrigation projects financed through the Carey Act of 1894 and the Reclamation Act of 1902 provided storage water and canal systems for its delivery to fields. Untilled irrigable acreage, especially in south central Idaho, attracted new settlers to justify the creation of new counties in southern Idaho. During the same period, the lumber industry became important to the economy of northern Idaho and several new counties were carved out of those already extant. The more remote areas of the larger counties lobbied the Idaho legislature to establish new counties that could provide

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services closer to the new population centers. A 1912 amendment to the Idaho Constitution that required one state senator per county also encouraged citizens to push for the formation of new counties to obtain better representation in the state legislature. By 1919, however, a constitutional limit on the minimum size of a county (more than 400 square miles) and on the wealth of a county (at least one million dollars taxable property) stopped the proliferation of Idaho counties.

County seats were established either by legislation or through often-controversial elections. As population centers shifted, so too did county seats. Early county seats were established in mining camps that lost population to other mining camps or to agricultural market towns and railroad towns. This was the case in Owyhee, Idaho, Shoshone, and Elmore counties. Relocation of county seats was slowed, though, through legislation requiring a two-thirds majority in any vote to change a county seat and requiring a six year gap between such votes.

The location of the county seat grew in importance as county government offered more services and the court system became more effective than it was during the mining rush. Throughout Idaho, the county courthouse was the significant location for most political, governmental, and legal activities, as few towns had city buildings until the 1950s. The construction of a courthouse was an event of major importance to the county community both symbolically and practically, providing a visible token of the community's coming of age as a viable settlement, and providing much-needed space for county offices, storage of legal documents, trials, and jails. Most communities supported construction of a courthouse through bonds, which were approved in a popular vote. Bond issues met with some difficulties, often from rival county seats or remote areas of a county, but most were successful. As a result, few Idaho counties now occupy buildings that were not designed as courthouses.

By the 1880s a number of counties felt the need of a building specifically designed for use by county officials and the courts. Frame or brick courthouses were built in Ada, Washington, Oneida, Alturas, Bear Lake, Bingham, Shoshone, Latah, Nez Perce, and Kootenai counties. Most of Idaho's courthouses were designed and built by local or regional architects and contractors. A courthouse was a major commission, often the most elaborate building in a county seat and its region.

Courthouse construction nearly ceased during the 1890s. Then, during the expansive period of 1904-1928, courthouses were built by those established counties that had not yet afforded a building, to replace rented quarters in a house, a school, or a commercial building, or by new counties in communities that grew up along railroad lines or near growing industries or reclamation projects. Usually there was a lag between county formation and construction of a courthouse. Many counties established in the 1860s built courthouses about twenty years later,

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in the 1880s. This pattern did not change much for counties established in the 1870s and after. Bingham, Caribou, and Bonner counties were exceptions, building courthouses immediately upon formation.

Following the hard times that hit the Western agricultural states during the 1920s, Idaho's percentage decline in income between 1929 and 1932 was eighth in the nation. The state was also eighth in per capita Federal relief expenditures during the period 1933 to 1939. Beginning in 1933, measurable economic indicators suggest that Federal relief dollars had an effect in Idaho. According to an analysis by historian Leonard Arrington, between 1933 and 1939 there was an increase in individual and corporate tax income, in bank deposits, in per capita income, in farm market income, and in silver production.

Federal relief programs were important in improving the state's economy, but they were also significant in their dramatic impact on the cultural landscape. In Idaho, Federal relief provided financial underwriting and labor for construction of new roads and improvement of old ones, for construction of irrigation projects, for construction of city sewer systems and water systems, for development of recreational facilities and public parks, for development and construction of airports, and for design and construction of institutional buildings. At least 203 institutional buildings were built in Idaho with Federal relief labor and/or funding, including 78 educational buildings, ten courthouses, and several courthouse additions. Through the New Deal support, several counties were able to build their first courthouses, and several of the older counties managed to replace buildings that had become inadequate for their needs. The WPA courthouse was regarded as a superior building, carefully supervised and well designed with quality materials. News reports of the construction of 1930s courthouses remark on the all-fireproof design, the presence of adequate vault space, and the beauty of decorative features. The new buildings provided space for expanded community needs, such as relief sewing rooms, public meeting rooms, and county extension agent offices.

After 1940 the diversion of labor and materials during World War II produced a break in county courthouse construction until 1952. Between 1952 and 1958 five courthouses were constructed around the state, and four more followed during the 1970s.

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type Courthouses

II. Description

Usually two story with hipped roofs, the 1880s Idaho courthouses are characteristic of late nineteenth century institutional style, drawing chiefly upon characteristics of the Italianate and the Romanesque Revival styles. They are cubically massed with tall, vertical proportions, a modest scale, and applied ornamentation. These buildings are generally more ornate and less monumental than those built later, and their proportions, scale, and ornamental style did not distinguish them from the domestic and commercial buildings around them so much as did their siting. The 1880s courthouse usually was the only building set in the center of a park-like landscaped block. Such blocks were not town squares,

III. Significance

Throughout Idaho, the county courthouse was the significant location for local political, governmental, and legal activities, as few towns had city buildings until the 1950s. The construction of a courthouse was an event of major importance to the county community both symbolically and practically, providing a visible token of the community's coming of age as a viable settlement, and providing much-needed space for county offices, storage of legal documents, trials, and jails. Most communities supported construction of a courthouse through bonds, which were approved in a popular vote. Bond issues met with some difficulties, often from rival county seats or remote areas of a county, but most were successful. As a result, few Idaho counties now occupy buildings that were not designed as courthouses.

IV. Registration Requirements

County courthouses in Idaho are important for their association with the development of local government, for their association with the 1930s New Deal in Idaho, and for their representation of a particular architectural type.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the alteration of many courthouses with replacement materials such as aluminum sash windows and with new additions of varying compatibility with the original structures. Some buildings were altered to such an extent that they no longer resemble the period in which they were built for their counties. Most alterations and additions leave the original building discernible to the viewer, able to represent the period of their construction.

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

This nomination is the result of a statewide survey, conducted during FY86 and FY87, to identify all buildings constructed as county courthouses, extant and demolished. Extant buildings were documented at National Register level on Idaho IMACS sites forms and have been incorporated into the Idaho Architectural and Historic Sites Inventory along with photographs, maps, and a report that is the basis for this multiple property listing. Fieldworkers for the survey included Jennifer Eastman Attebery, Nancy Renk, Lois Palmgren, Madeline Buckendorf, Elizabeth Jacox, Brian Attebery, and Tom Green.

Printed and graphic sources were consulted in an effort to document and interpret the formation of counties and the construction of courthouses. In addition to the standard histories of Idaho, those sources included Sanborn Company maps, local newspapers, architectural blueprints, historic photographs, local histories, manuscripts regarding the W.P.A. in Idaho, and promotional brochures and other ephemera. Secondary sources that were especially useful are listed in part H of this form.

See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

- Wright, Patricia, and Lisa B. Reitzes. Tourtellotte and Hummel of Idaho: The Standard Practice of Architecture. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1987.
- Arrington, Leonard J. "Idaho and the Great Depression." Idaho Yesterdays 13/2 (summer 1969): 2-8.
- Thomas, Benjamin E. "Political Geography of Idaho." Ph.D Dissertation, Harvard University, 1947.
- Files of J.U. Otter, P.W.A. MS34, Boise State University Collection, Boise, Idaho.
- Idaho State Planning Board. "Long-Range Programs for Idaho." February, 1940. "The Counties of Idaho." Pacific Northwest Quarterly. April 1940, pp. 187-206.
- McDonald, Scott Bruce. "Multi-County Associations in Idaho: A View Towards Councils of Governments." M. A. Thesis, Idaho State University, 1972.

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency

- Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository: Idaho Architectural and Historic Sites Inventory

I. Form Prepared By

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however: typically they were located a block or two off Main Street, just outside the commercial core of the town, where commercial development gave way to residential neighborhoods. This characteristic siting of the county courthouse continued in use throughout the period 1880-1940. Other characteristics that are typical throughout the period are the two-story plan with some sort of central hallway and stairs, and the symmetrical front elevation, with an entrance demarked by ornamentation or spatial design. In the 1880s the entry might be indicated with a porch, tower, dormer, or some combination of these.

During the 1890s courthouse construction in Idaho nearly ceased. The two courthouses that were built, in Washington and Bannock counties, were similar to those of the 1880s.

During the period 1904-1928, Idaho's institutional architecture was dominated by academic classicism, and architects drew upon Beaux Arts Classicism, the Colonial Revival, and Neoclassicism for their courthouse designs. (One courthouse, Lincoln County courthouse built in 1904, is an exception that has more in common with the 1880s courthouses; it is an Italianate style building with a Romanesque Revival wall dormer above the entry bay.) Often these styles were combined in an eclectic fashion.

Between 1904 and 1922 Idaho experienced unprecedented growth, and many counties were able to construct courthouses. Several buildings of this period suggest Beaux Arts Classicism in their ornamentation and spatial design, but toward the end of the period one can see a plainer Neoclassicism gaining favor, as it did nationwide. During the agricultural depression years, between 1922 and 1928, only a few courthouses were built. These buildings depart somewhat from the Beaux Arts and Neoclassicism to draw upon the Colonial Revival and the Prairie styles.

Throughout this period of academic classicism, in contrast with the 1880s courthouse, county buildings were larger in size, extending to three stories or adding a raised basement story and utilizing a rectangular rather than a square plan. Entry bays were centered, elaborated with classical forms, and often raised above grade to emphasize the larger, more monumental scale of the buildings. On those buildings influenced by the Beaux Arts school, entrances are elaborated through the full height of the building and are outset from the plane of the front elevation, making the remainder of the building appear as side wings. Sometimes this is accomplished with multiple setbacks. Typical structural materials are brick, stone, or concrete. Veneers are typically brick or stone.

Idaho courthouses of the New Deal period share a number of characteristics, some of them new and some of them traditional to courthouse design of the previous three decades. These buildings combine stylistic features from the Art Deco and Moderne styles with classicism's predilection for symmetry, evenly spaced openings, simple boxy massing, monumental scale, and ornamented, outset entry

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bays. In the Art Deco courthouses, ornamentation is expressed chiefly in applied terra cotta around entries, doors, windows, and rooflines. These buildings suggest verticality through their massing and streamlined, geometric ornamentation. Many of these buildings are well preserved on the interior, retaining Art Deco features typical of WPA buildings: light fixtures, tiled areas, etched glass decoration and lettering, textured plaster, and oversize ceiling moldings.

Three of the southeast Idaho buildings are nearly identical Art Deco designs, were designed by Sundberg and Sundberg of Idaho Falls, and were completed in 1939. They provide an interesting example of design recycling. The three buildings were differentiated by applied ornamentation--elaborate terra cotta entries--and through slight variations in the rear interior plan. More variety is found in the designs by the Boise firm of Tourtellotte and Hummel for four southwest Idaho courthouses in Owyhee, Ada, Gem, and Washington counties. The Owyhee building, designed 1936, is a simple one-story brick building whose chief ornamental feature is an Art Deco entry surround. The Ada Courthouse, originally designed as a neoclassical counterpart to the neighboring Idaho Capitol, was eventually built as an Art Deco building dominated by a setback tower with fluted piers. The Gem and Washington county buildings use the bas relief ornament typical of Art Deco in a highly classical fashion. In them the vertical pier of Art Deco becomes a shallow pilaster with a stylized capital.

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Most of Idaho's courthouses were designed and built by local or regional architects and contractors. A courthouse was a major commission, often the most elaborate building in a county seat and its region. In addition to their importance for their association with the development of local government, the courthouses that still retain most of their architectural integrity are good examples of the architectural styles popularly perceived as appropriate for the formal and stolid image desired for a courthouse.

Those courthouses built with W.P.A. monies are associated with Federal relief programs important in improving the state's economy and exceptionally significant in their dramatic impact on the cultural landscape. In Idaho, Federal relief provided financial underwriting and labor for construction of new roads and improvement of old ones, for construction of irrigation projects, for construction of city sewer systems and water systems, for development of recreational facilities and public parks, for development and construction of airports, and for design and construction of institutional buildings. At least 203 institutional buildings were built in Idaho with Federal relief labor and/or funding, including 78 educational buildings, ten courthouses, and several courthouse additions. Through the New Deal support, several counties were able to build their first courthouses, and several of the older counties managed to replace buildings that had become inadequate for their needs. The WPA courthouse was regarded as a superior building, carefully supervised and well designed with quality materials. News reports of the construction of 1930s courthouses remark on the all-fireproof design, the presence of adequate vault space, and the beauty of decorative features. The new buildings provided space for expanded community needs, such as relief sewing rooms, public meeting rooms, and county extension agent offices.

Five of the ten courthouses built during the 1880s are extant, and of those three have been listed in the National Register. The remaining two, the Bingham and Nez Perce courthouses, are no longer eligible for listing due to additions that completely obscure their front elevations.

Previous National Register listings of courthouses from the period 1904 to 1928 show a bias in favor of nominating those buildings in which Beaux Arts Classicism is most clearly expressed. Consequently, more courthouses from 1904-1921 than courthouses from the 1920s are listed. Excepting the Italianate style Lincoln County courthouse of 1904, eleven of the fourteen Idaho courthouses built between 1904 and 1921 are still extant. Five of these are already listed in the National Register, and four more buildings are eligible for listing but not yet listed. Two are not eligible for listing as a consequence of radical alterations to their surface texture and fenestration. All five courthouses from the period

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1922 to 1928 are extant. One of these, the Kootenai County Courthouse, is listed in the National Register, and three are eligible for listing. The Clearwater County Courthouse and the 1928 remodeling of the Nez Perce County Courthouse require further investigation before evaluation.

Courthouses are the only New Deal buildings in Idaho that have been systematically surveyed. All ten of the New Deal courthouses built in Idaho are extant. Three of them are already listed in the National Register, and the seven others have been evaluated as National Register-eligible.

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In this nomination a courthouse has been considered eligible for the National Register if it retains the features characteristic of its era, as analyzed in part II of this form. Generally, it is necessary for the building to retain its location in order to exhibit its association with the political and governmental life of its community. This is a moot point, since no courthouses in Idaho have been moved, and most courthouses are too large to consider moving. The setting must be retained if setting was a planned landscape feature, as with the Power County building.

Materials and design features should be retained that are important to the particular style and era of the building. For the 1880s and 1890s courthouses those features include the exterior wall materials, Italianate and Romanesque style ornamentation, original scale and massing, and original roof profile (often hipped). For the courthouses built between 1904 and 1928, those features include exterior wall materials, monumental scale, rectangular massing, and entrance ornamentation. For the courthouses built between 1936 and 1940, those features include Art Deco and Moderne style ornamentation, symmetrical facade, monumental scale, and ornamented entry bays. In addition, most courthouses retain a great deal of their interior plan and finishing materials, which greatly enhances our understanding of their historic use.

The most common alterations to courthouses are additions and window replacements. Where additions have obscured the principal facade of a building, or where they radically alter the style or massing of a building such that the original block is not perceivable, the building has not been considered eligible for National Register listing. Where window replacements fill original openings, and therefore the original rhythm of solid and void is retained, a building has been considered still eligible for listing.