

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1-10-90

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

89002222

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. 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. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Chase County Courthouse
other names/site number CH04-7

2. Location

street & number Broadway bet 9th & 10th Sts N/A not for publication
city, town Imperial N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Chase code 029 zip code 69033

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of Nebraska
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. See continuation sheet.

James A. Harrison
Signature of certifying official

November 17, 1989
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See cont. sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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

Date of Action

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) Tudor Revival Materials (enter categories from instructions) concrete
Other: Jacobethan walls brick
roof asphalt
other stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
 nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) Politics/government Period of Significance 1910-39 Significant Dates N/A
Architecture 1910-12

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A Architect/Builder Simmons, A.T.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet, section 8, page 1.

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Built in 1910-12, the Chase County Courthouse in Imperial is a good, example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. The property is a highly unusual example of a combination of stylistic influences or forms--classical, geometric, and Jacobethan or Tudor Revival--applied to a County Citadel building type. The impressive size, mass, siting, and unusual ornamentation of the courthouse work together to mitigate the effect of alterations.

The Chase County Courthouse is unique among Nebraska courthouse designs. With its very dark brown brick and contrasting limestone trim, the effect it displays is that of a fortress, a bastion of democracy. The strength and forbidding nature of the design perhaps served as a warning to would-be arsonists, for the courthouse was built after an arsonist set fire to the 1889 wood frame courthouse to hide his embezzlement.

Attention is directed to the prominent pedimented entry pavilion by the semi-circular shapes that are repeated for the concrete landing (three steps up from ground level), stone entry arch, and again in the stone-trimmed Palladian window at the top of the composition. The faceted entry columns with broad simple capitals impart a feeling of solidity, especially since the impressive stone round arch rests securely upon them. The original wood doors are recessed behind the round arch and feature three small top lights in the door panels and a round-arched transom above. Long narrow windows (now enclosed with glass brick) flank the double doors and are a Tudor Revival feature.

Like the east and west pavilions, corner towers are slightly pedimented with stone coping outlining them. While the top of the 2-bay space between the corner towers on the main facade is straight across, 5-bay spaces on the sides of the rectangular building have shallow pediments similar to those of the towers and entry pavilion.

Contrasting stone trim is used effectively to highlight recurring shapes and motifs, including the slightly pedimented coping, large, smooth, and flat lintels and sills, keystones on brick round-arched windows in the corner towers, the stone plaque of the entry pavilion that identifies the building as "Chase County," and unusual cross patterns at the corners and the entry pavilion. This cross pattern firmly anchors the design to the site by calling attention to the raised basement. The basement is slightly battered, another unusual feature.

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Jacobethan Revival elements include distinctive window treatment at the corners and entry pavilion, round-arched entry, presence of limited classical forms (notably the Palladian windows), multiple pane windows (now replaced except in parts of the entry pavilion), and the use of dark brick with lighter stone trim.

Geometric brick patterns are raised from the wall surface and concentrated at the top, especially on the corner towers. They further enliven the wall surface. Despite the various stylistic influences, the overall effect is that of a strong, even medieval, fortress.

The Chase County Courthouse is a two-story building resting on a raised basement. Visitors climb a short series of steps to enter the courthouse through the exceptionally fine entry. At the entry foyer are short flights of steps up to the first floor and down to the basement level. On the first floor is a rather small square central hall with offices and also the ladies room off it. Utility entrances leading to the basement are located on the south and west sides of the building.

Interior elements are relatively simple, and feature golden oak woodwork (counters with low swinging doors, chair rails, doors, frames, transoms) and metal stairs having a curving pattern. It appears that more attention was lavished on the exterior. The second story courtroom, which has folding seats rather than pews or fixed seats, is also modest, but the original woodwork is an attractive feature. The courtroom has a newer dropped ceiling and fluorescent light fixtures.

Alterations to the courthouse reflect changes mandated for prisoner care. On the south facade, several windows for the basement jail have been enclosed with brick, and a small fenced exercise yard added. In addition, many of the larger windows of the courthouse now have glass block with a smaller square window in them.

All sides of the courthouse continue the motifs and materials of the main or east facade. This is appropriate for a courthouse occupying a full block, since it is visible from all sides. Numerous mature trees grace the site in addition to a small gabled utility shed (1920s vintage and not counted for this nomination) at the back and a small stone plaque near the entrance (also not counted). Dedicated in 1967, the granite slab rests on a small pedestal. It was erected by "Veterans and Civic Organizations" as "a tribute in honor of all those who served their country. Erected in memory of those who paid the Supreme Sacrifice."

The courthouse square is located just off Imperial's main commercial

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street. Railroad tracks occur at the other end of the main street, and the arrangement is a variation of the "T-town (the courthouse does not front directly on the main street). Since the developers of Imperial, the railroad-company-related Lincoln Land Company, donated the first courthouse building and presumably platted the town, it appears that their intentions were to encourage development between the tracks and the courthouse site. Early maps show that Broadway, where the courthouse is located, was platted with small commercial lots. However, the area is residential.

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The Chase County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and also historically significant (Criterion A) for its association with politics and local government. The property derives its historic significance as the focal point for the administration of local government and institutions in Chase County. It is a good example of public architecture in the community and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse. The impressive size, mass, siting, and unusual ornamentation of the courthouse work together to mitigate the effect of alterations.

As an unusual example of the County Citadel, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, and distinctive ornamentation. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey an impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

With its Jacobethan stylistic influence, the Chase County Courthouse is a unique example of an early twentieth century courthouse in Nebraska, one that does not neatly fit into the dominant categories or typical stylistic influences. Nonetheless, it carries a number of associative and physical features that identify it as an important example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska.

The Period of Significance is 1910, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Chase County Courthouse is being nominated as an example of the Property Type, County Courthouses of Nebraska (County Citadel) of the Context, County Government in Nebraska, 1854-1941, from the Multiple Property Submission, County Courthouses of Nebraska.

Located in the southwest corner of Nebraska, Chase County was organized in 1886. Its west boundary abuts Colorado, and it is one county north of the Kansas state line. Chase County lies in an area south of the Platte River that enjoys fine fertile farmland.

Also in 1886 Imperial was established as the county seat, beating out other contenders in three elections. The Lincoln Land Company, the land development arm of the Burlington Railroad, established Imperial as a rail stop, and the railroad arrived in 1892.

To encourage development in Imperial (and therefore real estate sales),

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the company donated the first courthouse to the county. This wood frame building burned in February 1910. At their February 9, 1910 meeting the commissioners noted that it was clear the fire was of "incendiary origin," and offered a reward of \$300 "for the arrest and conviction of the party or parties of said fire."

The county received \$3000 from their insurance company which they deposited in the building fund. A election to vote on \$25,000 in courthouse bonds was held May 3, 1910, and the measure passed.

That same month architects from three states, Illinois, Colorado and Nebraska, presented their proposed courthouse plans to the commissioners. The board selected A.T. Simmons of Bloomington, Illinois for their architect. Simmons also designed the Dundy County Courthouse in Benkelman, Nebraska in 1921. Dundy County is the next county south of Chase County.

Construction did not commence until the following spring. On June 7, 1911, the commissioners selected Winters and Short (R.A. Winters and J.T. Short) of Atwood, Kansas as the contractors. (Winters and Short were also contractors for the Morrill County Courthouse built in 1909-10.) Construction proceeded, and on January 12, 13, 22, and 23, 1912, the careful commissioners inspected the completed facility. According to the commissioners records,

...after a careful inspection and examination of every part of said building from basement to roof, [we] find the same is constructed of the materials and in the manner set forth in the contract.

On January 24, 1912, the county moved into the building.

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet, section 9, page 1.

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.5 acres

UTM References

A	1 4	2 7 6 10 8 10	4 4 8 8 16 8 10	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

[] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet, section 10, page 1.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Barbara Beving Long, consultant
organization	Four Mile Research Co. date November 8, 1989
street & number	3140 Easton Boulevard telephone (515) 266-4964
city or town	Des Moines state Iowa zip code 50317

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.
Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-940, M281-938.
Chase County. Commissioners' Records. Book B.
Lundgren, Lisa. "Chase County Court House." Term paper. 1983. NeSHPO files.
"Chase County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.

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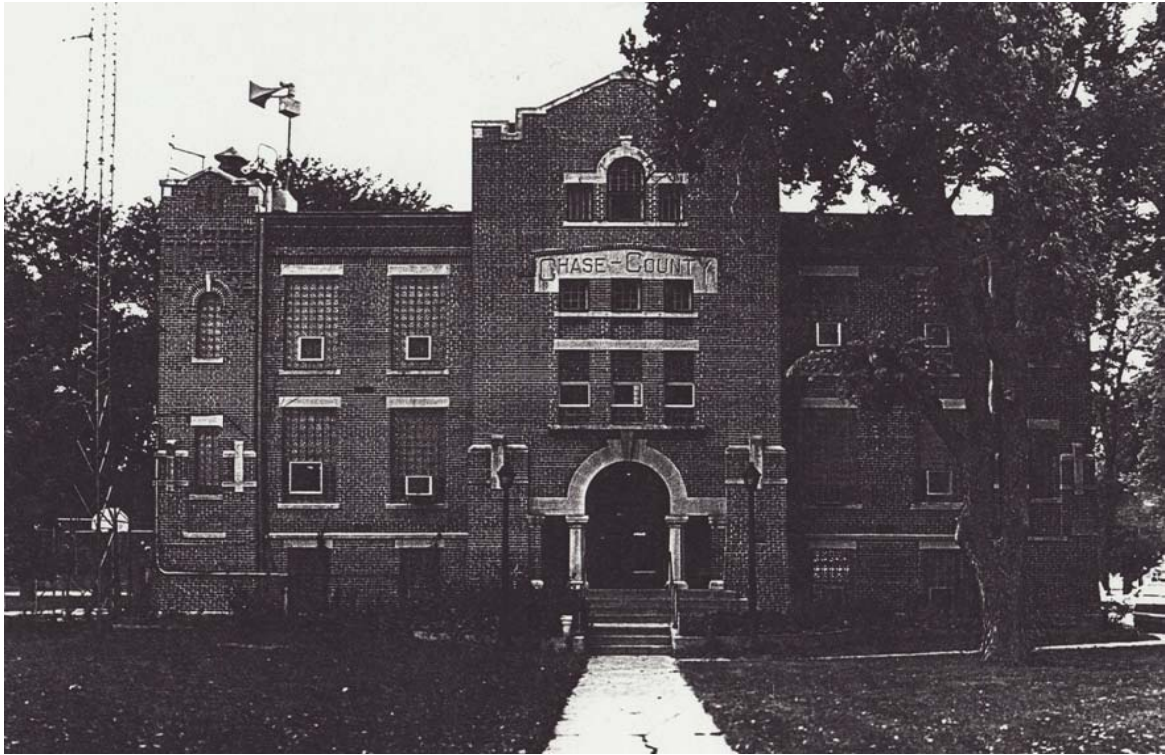
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Verbal Boundary Description

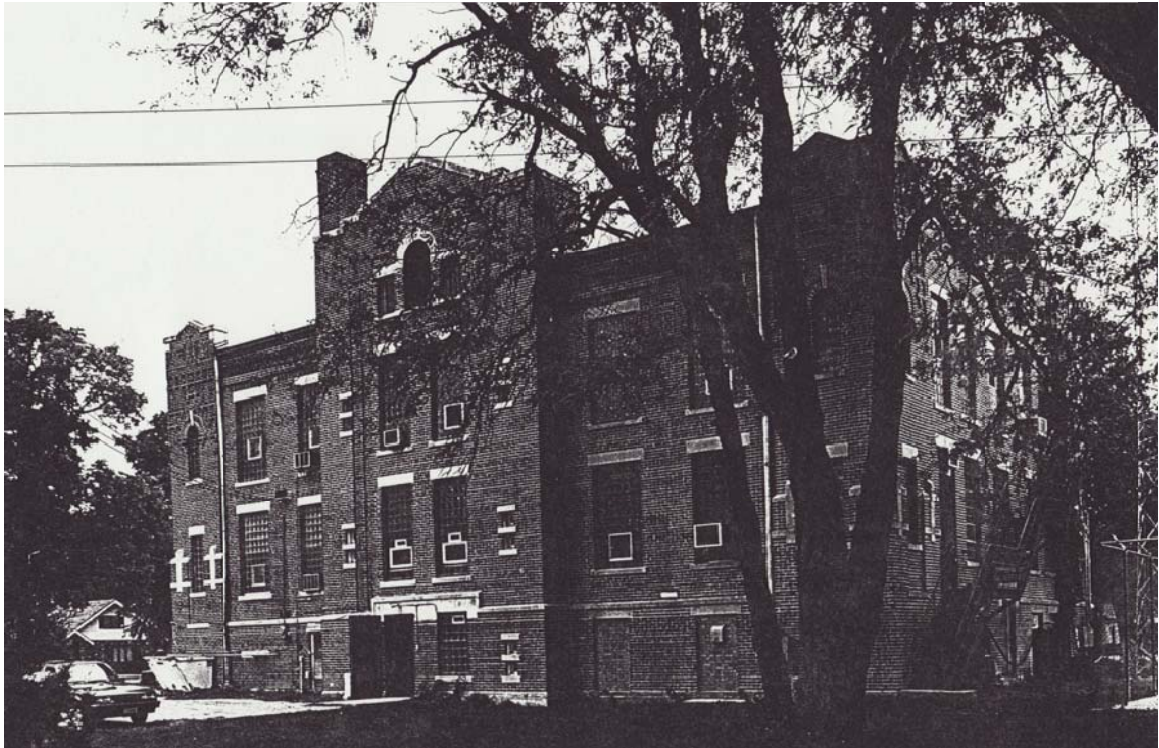
The nominated property, Chase County Courthouse, occupies all lots of Block 5, Mercer's Addition in Imperial.

Boundary Justification

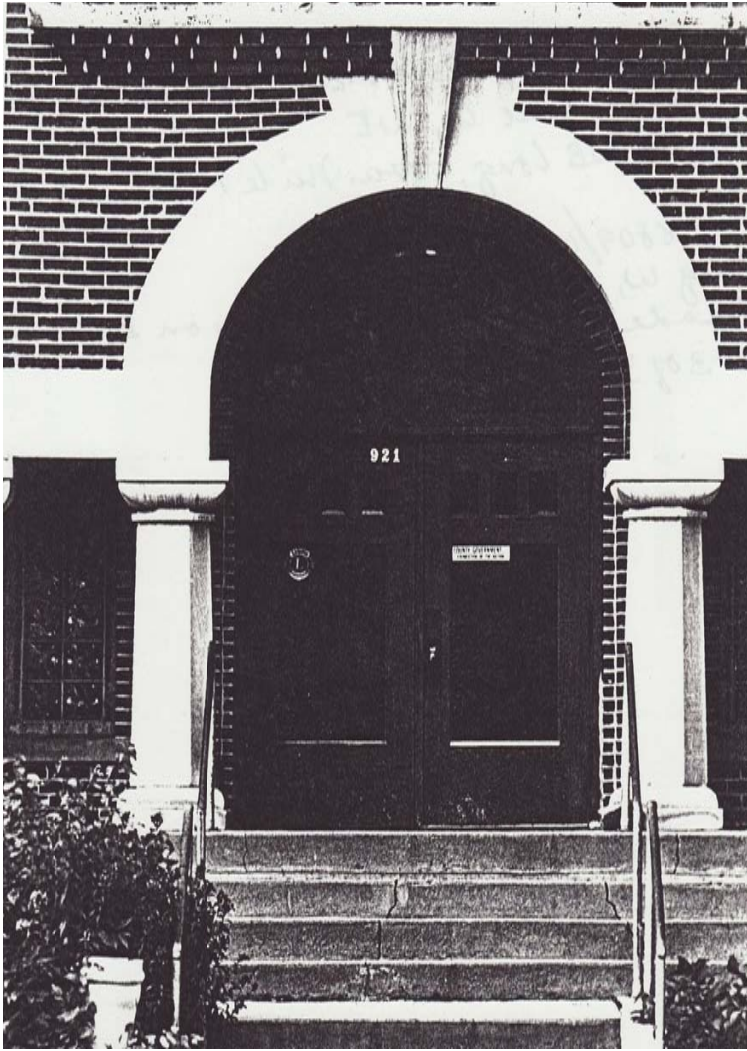
The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the property.



Looking W, showing E façade
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1988
(NSHS 8809/10:1a)



Looking NE, showing S & W facades
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1988
(NSHS 8809/10:11a)



Looking W, showing entry doors on E facade
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1988
(NSHS 8809/10:3a)