

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Dawes County Courthouse

other names/site number DW03-081

2. Location

street & number S Main St bet W 4th & 5th Sts N/A not for publication

city, town Chadron N/A vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Dawes code 045 zip code 69337

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	<u>2</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. Hanson
Signature of certifying official
Nebraska State Historical Society

May 14, 1990
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)

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

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

Architecture

Period of Significance

1935-40

Significant Dates

1935-37

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/a

Architect/Builder

Latense & Sons, Inc., John W.

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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Section number 7 Page 1

Built in 1935-7, the Dawes County Courthouse is a good, relatively unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, permanent materials, distinctive ornamentation, provision for fireproof storage, Art Deco stylistic influence, and the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, and strength. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: flat roof and designed by an architect. The courthouse, bandstand, and three objects placed about the site are considered a district for this nomination; a small garage was not counted.

The courthouse is rectangular and consists of two stories set upon a raised basement, plus a small attic jail space not visible from the exterior. A prominent entry pavilion on the east facade identifies the slightly projecting public entrance. Attention is focused on the centered entrance by means of its raised and set-back facade, decorative stonework, recessed doorway, and the short steep flight of stairs.

The wall surface is light tan brick with limestone trim. The smooth stone is used for coping, elongated stylized capitals on brick pilasters, a course uniting these capitals, lintels, water table and, especially, around the entrance. Above the recessed doorway is a stone panel with "Equality before the law." Above that are three windows that light the staircase; alternating bands of stone and brick highlight them. Still farther up the pavilion is a large stone plaque identifying the building as the "Dawes County Court House." Three attractive painted metal grilles exhibiting a star pattern move the eye up the pavilion, which culminates with two slender stone vertical elements.

Four attractively proportioned bays consisting of rectangular, double-hung windows flank the entry pavilion. The windows on all facades have white metal panels of a textured and zig-zag design between them, a unifying feature along with the pilasters with stylized capitals. The latter appear in profusion on the north, south, and west facades, which also have raised parapets that are much simpler than that of the east facade.

The floorplan is a T-shape, with steps up from the entry vestibule occupying the stub of the "T" of the 60x80' building. County offices occupy the first floor, and there are large vaults centered on the north and south sides. The second floor district courtroom runs virtually the length of the north end of the building and is generally unaltered, except for a new ceiling and replacement lights.

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Courtroom furnishings are of greyish brown wood and original. The judge's bench and the jury box are simply rendered and paneled. The interior is quite simple and relatively unaltered, although most offices have new ceilings and many have new wood paneling. Original features include dull grey marble for wainscoting, and frames for doors and plaques, patterned terrazzo flooring, metal balustrades with wood railings and metal patterned newels, and in the main hallway a light fixture with four small globes.

Exterior alterations include metal storm windows, a concrete ramp for access by the handicapped to the original basement entrance beneath the east entrance, and two new exit doors at the original exterior fire stairs on the south facade. An historic photograph at the Nebraska State Historical Society reveals how little the building has changed.

The courthouse is a good example of the County Citadel courthouse exhibiting Art Deco stylistic elements. These include a linear, hard-edge composition with vertical emphases, stylized decoration including zig-zags, stepped facade, low relief, and metal panels.

The Dawes County Courthouse occupies the east end of a spacious tree-strewn courthouse square. The site is just south of Chadron's commercial area. The courthouse fronts on a busy street, and houses are located on all sides.

The courthouse shares the site with a number of objects as well as a bandstand, apparently placed at random on the large (400x270') site. Numerous mature and immature evergreens and deciduous trees (approximately fifty) as well as shrubs dot the site; some pines are grouped in copses.

At the northwest quadrant is a small bandshell which appears to be less than fifty years of age. The octagonal building has sawn (not turned) balusters, a plywood interior, asphalt shingle roof, and a small vented cupola. Because of its recent construction date, the bandshell or gazebo is a noncontributing resource.

A considerably older painted metal fountain, however, is a contributing object. It dates from when the old courthouse occupied the site, for it is shown on a site plan prepared in 1935. Above a petal-like bowl is a cherub caressing a large bird. The base of the bowl consists of swans and cattails; below is a larger circular ground-level pool. A non-contributing object is a simple veterans memorial located at the northeast corner of the site. The second contributing object is a

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memorial just north of the courthouse dedicated "to the valor of the Pioneers. 1885-1935." It consists of local rocks assembled to form a small rectangular monument with a metal plaque on it.

On the site a concrete walk runs diagonally from the northeast corner to its center, with another running from the center to the middle of the west side of the site. These, as well as the fountain and the pine copses, are relics of the old courthouse period, before 1935, and show the lay-out of the site when there was a courthouse at its center. Parking reached by lanes from the west and south is located behind the present courthouse.

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The Dawes County Courthouse is architecturally significant (Criterion C) and 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 the county. It is a good example of public architecture in the county and contains good examples of design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use as a courthouse. In addition, Dawes County is one of seven Nebraska counties to acquire a courthouse using federal work programs during the Great Depression of the 1930s and thus the courthouse is directly associated with the role of federal government assistance programs during this period.

As a good example of the County Citadel Property Type, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), a rectangular shape, centered entrance, and permanent materials. Elements of the design combine to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity and simplicity, also features of the County Citadel.

The Period of Significance is 1935, when construction began, to 1940, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Dawes 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.

Dawes County is located in the far northwest corner of the state. Its northern boundary is the state line with South Dakota. In the 1870s Native American settlements associated with Fort Robinson occupied the area. Later, until 1884, cattle raising on open ranges dominated the area. In 1885 settlement had reached the stage that residents petitioned successfully for separate county status, and Dawes and Sheridan Counties were carved out of Sioux County.

Chadron and Dawes City (now called Whitney) competed for the county seat designation, and Chadron, the terminus for the railroad serving the area, won the election that settled the question. A courthouse was built on the present courthouse square in 1887. A Sanborn fire insurance map for 1928 shows that the courthouse was centered on the site.

Beginning in 1935, the county board took steps to improve county facilities. They met in special session on June 28, 1935 regarding a

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Public Works Administration (PWA) grant for the proposed courthouse and jail and met with Frank Latenser of John W. Latenser & Sons, Inc., an Omaha architectural firm. Latenser submitted tentative drawings of the building, and the commissioners voted to have Latenser submit an application to the PWA for them.

The application was evidently approved, for on October 22, 1935, the commissioners voted to accept the contract with the federal government for the project. The grant for the new courthouse and jail was to cover 45 percent of the cost, not to exceed \$45,000. The following month the board opened bids for excavation.

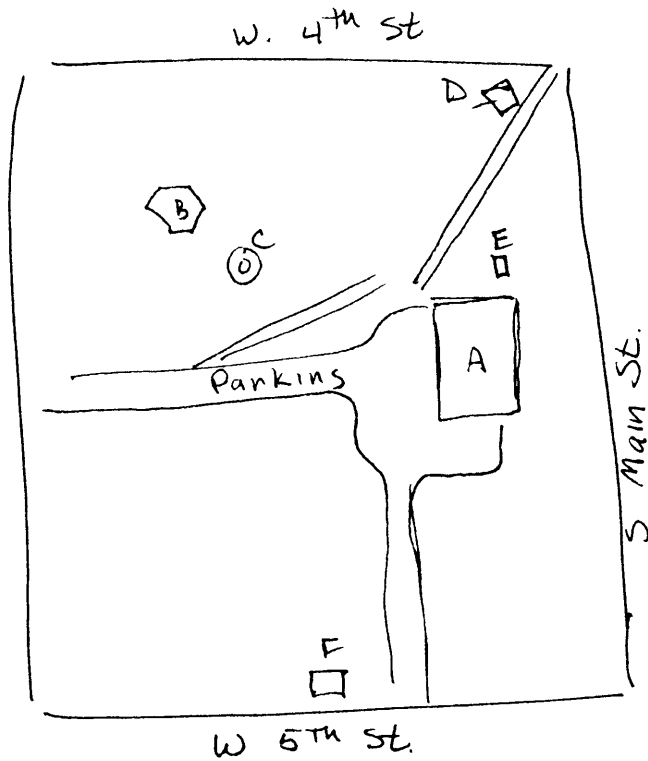
On January 3, 1936 the board formally approved the architect's plans. That same month the general contractor for the project, C.E. Atwater Company of Grand Island, was selected with a bid of \$71,890. Construction proceeded through 1936. An indication of the progress is that on September 29, 1936, bids were opened for linoleum and window shades, items not required until the building was nearly complete. On January 5, 1937 the county advertised for bids to raze the old courthouse, and on May 4 of that year they formally accepted the new courthouse. County records noted that "said building is now occupied."

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DAWES COUNTY COURTHOUSE



- A - courthouse (cont.)
- B - gazebo (noncontr.)
- C - fountain (contrib. obj.)
- D - veterans memorial (contr obj.)
- E - pioneer memorial (contributing object)
- F - shed (not counted)

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

Acreeage of property 2.48 acres

UTM References

A	<u>1131</u>	<u>1631642101</u>	<u>141714131315101</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>
	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 January 12, 1990
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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.

Nebraska State Historical Society. Photo Collection. #M281-949.

Dawes County. Commissioners Record. Book E.

Tracings. Dawes County Courthouse. John W. Latenser & Sons, Inc.

"Dawes County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.

Chadron, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1928.

Works Progress Administration. Survey of County Courthouse Records. 1936. NeSHS Archives. Dawes County.

Pinney, Patricia, comp. Dawes County. The First 100 Years. N.p., 1985.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property, the Dawes County Courthouse, occupies all of block 24 of Western Town Lots' 1st Addition and is roughly 400x270' in size.

Boundary Justification

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



Photo 1 of 4. Looking E showing W façade. Photo by BJB Long, 1988, NSHS (8809/6:23a)



Photo 2 of 4. Fountain. Photo by BJB Long, 1988, NSHS (8809/7:2a)

Photo 3 of 4. Looking NW showing Pioneer Memorial with fountain & bandstand in background. Photo by BJB Long, 1988, NSHS (8809/7:7a)



Photo 4 of 4. Photo by BJB Long, 1988, NSHS (8809/6:35a)