

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 Webster County Courthouse  
other names/site number WT07-104

#### 2. Location

street & number 225 W. 6th Ave. N/A not for publication  
city, town Red Cloud N/A vicinity  
state Nebraska code NE county Webster code 181 zip code 68970

#### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of Nebraska  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

#### 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. Anderson November 17, 1989  
Signature of certifying official 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  
Government/correctional facility  
Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) Government/courthouse  
Government/correctional facility

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions) Renaissance  
Other: Second Renaissance Revival  
Materials (enter categories from instructions)  
foundation stone  
walls brick  
roof other  
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 1914-39  
Significant Dates N/A  
1914 . 1887

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Person N/A  
Architect/Builder Gernandt, William F.

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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   1  

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Built in 1914, the Webster County Courthouse is a good, largely unaltered example of the Property Type, County Citadel. Identifying features include: rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, 2nd Renaissance Revival stylistic influence, provision for fireproof storage, and impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity. In addition, the courthouse has other County Citadel characteristics: prominent raised basement and designed by an architect. The property is an interesting example of one of the ten Nebraska courthouses William F. Gernandt designed during an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Dawson County Courthouse built in 1913-14. The courthouse is part of the Willa Cather Thematic Group National Register Nomination.

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The Webster County Courthouse is rectangular and consists of two stories upon a prominent raised basement. This basement is "rusticated" brick and also Bedford limestone, which forms a low base-within-a-base. The stone portion of the basement also forms a continuous sill for the ground floor windows. Limestone is used effectively for trim, (such as the shaped first floor window lintels), and contrasts well with the brownish brick ("goldenrod brick" from Sunderland Brothers of Omaha) of the wall surface.

The architect has expanded upon a form he used for his Dawson County Courthouse, stone-trimmed brick arcades between pilasters. For the Webster County Courthouse the arcades have become the dominant design feature, and arcaded pavilions occur on the south, east, and west facades. The round-arched brick arcades trimmed in stone spring from stone capitals of relatively simple brick pilasters. The arcade consists of eight arches on the main facade, and three on the sides where it projects more from the wall surface than does the main arcade. Tall and slightly arched parapets have a dentiled stone course that follows this arched shape. Below is a metal cornice featuring mutules with a row of dentils below. The forms further call attention to the arcades.

Gernandt has also added new fanciful effects. Two rows consisting of four brick stretchers form "keystones" for ground floor windows. Second story sills feature a row of guttae below, an unorthodox use of this element. And the stone keystones of the arcade pierce a stone moulding and have unusual round tops (which echo the arch of the arcade). Mutules, dentils, and guttae, all squarish shapes, are used freely and almost interchangeably to enliven the surface. The one-story projecting entry porch is also an unusual feature, for it is rather small and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   2  

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enclosed, and the two doors are separated rather than a single set of double doors.

The building displays elements of the 2nd Renaissance Revival style, including a rusticated ground floor, moulded courses, arcades, and dentils. The courthouse lacks the distinct horizontal divisions of typical examples, although the water table and other courses do provide some horizontal elements, and the window treatment is different on each level.

The 63x75' building was designed to have one primary entrance on the south facade, and secondary entrances on the east and west sides that open directly on the ground floor level. The rear or north facade continues the materials and treatment of the other facades, but in a simplified manner, and there are no arcades.

At the entry foyer, steps lead down to the ground floor or up to the first floor corridor. County offices are arranged off the lobby. Vaults so large they are referred to as "Record Rooms" on the blueprints are located in three corners of the building. A smaller vault intended for the county attorney is located adjacent to the southwest corner of the building. On the second floor the district courtroom occupies much of the north end of the building.

Interior features are relatively simple and include painted brick wainscoting with plaster above, metal banisters and simple newels for the stairs, terrazzo flooring on the first and second floors, and large single pane transoms over some doors. The courtroom has original woodwork, including a curving bar between spectators and the court and jury box. The wood screen behind the judge's bench has pilasters with triglyphs and guttae.

Interior changes include: modern wood paneling and lowered ceilings with flush fluorescent lighting. Courtroom spectator seating is now rows of chairs rather than pews or opera seats. There are few exterior alterations: one main entry door no longer opens and the other is a modern replacement, and there are replacement windows with opaque panels.

The courthouse is centered on a full courthouse square about two blocks from Red Cloud's commercial district and it is surrounded by dwellings. The area at the north or back of the courthouse is now a parking lot, and a rather large storage building is also north of the building on the square. Built c. 1960, the storage facility is one-story, has a hipped roof and garage doors, and is constructed of concrete block (a noncontributing building for this nomination).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   3  

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A number of deciduous trees adorn the ample south lawn. A long concrete walk leads directly to the south entry steps where it curves nicely around to walks leading to the east and west entrances. On the northeast corner of the courthouse square is the jail/jailer's quarters built in 1887. The jailer's house is two-story, has a multiple hipped roof, and exhibits Italianate or Victorian stylistic influences (simple brackets on painted metal cornice, soft stone sills, additional gables with a wood sunburst pattern on them, and semi-circular arched 2/2 windows). A small shed-roofed porch is tucked between two wings. Attached to the rear of the quarters is the jail section, which is still in use. It is rectangular, has long narrow windows, a hipped roof, and is one and one-half stories high. Built of brick, the entire facility has been stuccoed and a soft stone rubble foundation has been painted. A fenced exercise yard is located off the jail. Despite the changes, the building is a contributing element for this nomination, for it offers a glimpse of late nineteenth century law enforcement facilities, a rarity in the state.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   8   Page   1  

---

The Webster 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 Webster 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.

As a fine example of the County Citadel, the courthouse contains design features and facilities distinctive to its design and use (such as fireproof vaults), has a rectangular shape, centered entrance, costly materials, distinctive ornamentation, and 2nd Renaissance Revival stylistic influence. Elements of the design combine effectively to convey the impression of a government building representing modernity, simplicity, strength, and prosperity, also features of the County Citadel.

The property is an interesting example of one of the ten Nebraska courthouses William F. Gernandt designed during an unusually productive period, between 1910 and 1923. It shares certain design characteristics with the Dawson County Courthouse built in 1913-14, and represents the evolution of Gernandt's courthouse designs.

The Period of Significance is 1914, when construction began, to 1939, when the "fifty year rule" takes effect. The Webster 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.

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Webster County is located in the southern tier of the state in the fertile Republican River valley, some 150 miles west of the Missouri River. Area settlement dated from 1870, and efforts at county organization occurred soon thereafter. Acting on a petition from area residents, the governor proclaimed Webster County to be established in 1871. On April 19, 1871, an election was held to select officers and the county seat.

Only one county seat site was voted on, and the 45 votes it received was a unanimous decision. The east half of the northeast quarter of Section

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number  8  Page  2

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2, Township 1, Range 11 (part of the holdings of Silas Garber<sup>1</sup> and present Red Cloud) was thus selected to be county seat. Garber's rude dugout house initially doubled as the courthouse.

In 1878 the county built its first courthouse on the present courthouse square, a wood frame building with the jail located in the basement. The Burlington Railroad paid for its construction, in exchange for having all taxes forgiven that the company owed from before 1877.

The basement level jail in the courthouse proved inadequate, and in November 1886 county residents voted a tax levy for a separate jail. On January 13, 1887, a new jail committee was appointed, according to county records, and the jail was constructed that year.

By 1913 Webster County residents were prepared to replace the aging 1878 courthouse with a more substantial edifice. On August 13th they submitted a petition calling for a three-year tax levy of four mills to help fund a new courthouse. The county board agreed with the proposal and took steps to acquire courthouse plans and specifications.

On October 1, 1913, the board examined various plans architects had submitted but were unable to make a decision. After several ballots the following day, William F. Gernandt received a majority of the votes and "was and is declared the architect of said Board," according to commissioners' records.

On February 25, 1914, they selected the Rowles Company of Onawa, Iowa to be general contractors, with a low bid of \$46,786. City Plumbing and Heating of Boulder, Colorado, received the plumbing and heating contract. In the early spring of 1914 the board had the old courthouse moved 120' west of the center of the courthouse block.

The county board had relied on legislation related to county government when it declared that taxes would be levied for the courthouse. But in February 1914 the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that this technique was unconstitutional in a case involving Burt County. Webster County officials notified the contractors of the problem and directed them not to spend money on the project until further notice. The board then called a special election to vote on the tax levy, and the measure passed on April 14, 1914.

With legal problems resolved, the courthouse was built over the spring

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<sup>1</sup>Garber was elected Governor of Nebraska in 1874.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   3  

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and summer of 1914. Progress was such that the cornerstone was laid on July 30. By the end of September the board was ready to buy furniture (American Furniture Company). In November they advertised for bids on the janitorship. The following month the board took steps to insure their building, further evidence of its completion, and the architect received his final payment. On December 15, it was moved and seconded that "said building be approved and accepted," and the motion carried.

**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 2 acres

UTM References

A	1 4	5 4 0 8 2 0	4 4 3 7 8 0 0	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	August 17, 1989
street & number	3140 Easton Boulevard	telephone	(515) 266-4964
city or town	Des Moines	state	Iowa zip code 50317

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1  

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Long, Barbara Beving. "County Courthouses of Nebraska." Multiple Property Submission. 1989.  
Webster County. Commissioners' Records. Books D and E.  
Red Cloud, Nebraska. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1922.  
Tracings. Webster County Courthouse. William F. Gernandt. Clerk's office.  
"Specifications for General Contract. Webster County Courthouse, Red-Cloud, Nebraska." William F. Gernandt. Clerk's office.  
Photograph. Laying the cornerstone, July 30, 1914. Foyer of courthouse.  
Works Progress Administration. Survey of County Courthouse Records. 1936. NeSHS Archives. Webster County.  
"Commissioners Let Court-house Job." Webster County Argus. February 26, 1914.  
"Webster County." Who's Who in Nebraska. Lincoln: Nebraska Press Association, 1940.  
"Webster County." Andreas, A.T. History of the State of Nebraska. Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1882.  
Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Adams, Clay, Webster and Nuckolls Counties. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number  10  Page   1  

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### Verbal Boundary Description

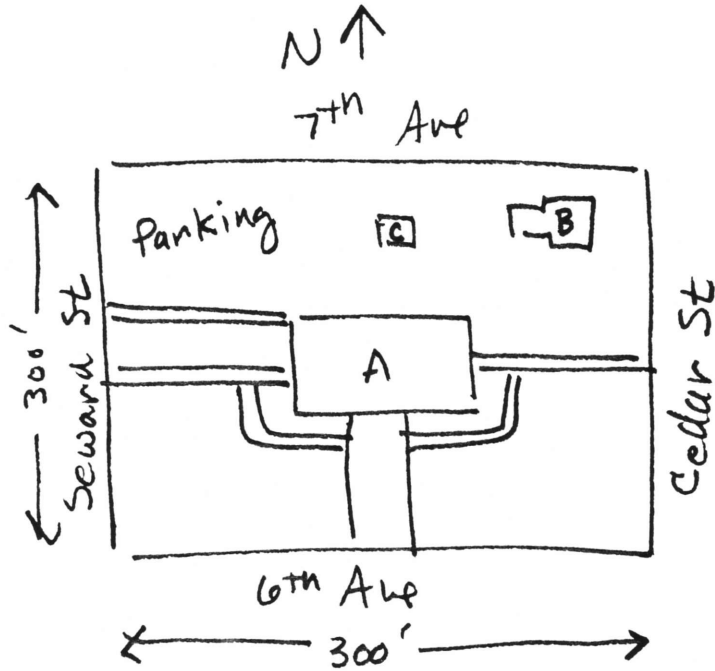
The nominated property, Webster County Courthouse, occupies lots 1-24 of Block 12 of the Original Town of Red Cloud and is roughly 300x300' in size.

### Boundary Justification

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



WEBSTER COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE (WT07-104)  
Red Cloud, NE



Contributing Bldgs

A - Courthouse

B - Jail/Jailer's Quarters

Noncontributing Bldg

C - Storage facility

Not to scale



Photo 1 of 3 — view looking north showing south façade of courthouse, jail to right  
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1989 (NSHS 8904/9:20)



Photo 2 of 3 — view looking southwest showing north and east facades of courthouse  
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1989 (NSHS 8904/9:32)



Photo 3 of 3 — Jail, looking northwest showing east & south facades  
Photo by BJB Long, Four Mile Research, 1989 (NSHS 8904/9:30)