

BON HOMME COUNTY COURTHOUSE



Location: 300 West 18th Ave., Tyndall, SD 57066

Date: Constructed in 1914. (dedicated August 26, 1915).

Architect: Joseph A. Schwarz

Description: The Bon Homme County Courthouse consists of a flat roofed, rectangular, three-story, granite building with a small central dome constructed in the Renaissance Revival style. The facade and sides are symmetrical with three bays. On each, the center bay is projected forward. On the first floor, the center bay on the facade has a rusticated appearance which is caused by deeply scored joints between the stones. The rest of the first floor and the second and third floors are of smooth stone. The foundation rises to the level of the window sills on the first floor. There is a belt course of projecting stonework all the way around the building between the first and second floors which creates the appearance of a podium upon which the upper two stories rest. The center bay on the front facade has an entrance on the ground floor crowned by a highly decorated hood. On either side of the entrance are windows with three arched radiating voussoirs. On the second and third floors the front center bay consists of a decorative, non-functional loggia with three recessed bays containing windows separated by double Corinthian columns and flanked on each side by a single Corinthian column. The columns have decorative capitals and run the length of the second and third floors. The center window on the second floor is topped with a projecting pediment. Above the columns is an entablature with another belt course of stone, a frieze and a cornice with dentils and modillion blocks. The building is topped with a parapet on the center bay of the facade. In front of the building is a brick paved terrace surrounded by a balustrade of decorated stone. The interior features a rotunda with a stained glass skylight dome and four large interior murals done by Axel Soderberg of LaCrosse, Wisconsin.¹ The building was designed by architect Joseph A. Schwarz, who also designed the Moody

County Courthouse, and was built by the A.M. Wold Construction Co. of Brookings at a cost of \$92,000.

History: Bon Homme County was established by the territorial legislature in 1862 and the county seat was located in the town of Bon Homme, which was the main community in the area at the time.ⁱⁱ In fact, Bon Homme had come within one vote of being chosen as the location of the territorial capital. In 1873, a 30 x 50 foot log courthouse was constructed in Bon Homme at a cost of \$3,333. In 1879, it became apparent that the railroad was not going to go to Bon Homme and the town began to die. In 1884, the citizens of Tyndall donated \$6,000 for the construction of a courthouse conditioned upon its removal to their community and that sounded the death knell for Bon Homme.ⁱⁱⁱ The town site of Bon Homme now lies underneath the waters of Lewis and Clark Lake to the east of Springfield. The courthouse constructed in Tyndall in 1884 consisted of a square, two-story brick structure at the same location as the present courthouse. That building served as the courthouse until the present building was constructed. In 1898, the county constructed the landmark 100 foot flagpole reproduction of the Eiffel Tower flagpole at a cost of \$200.^{iv}



ⁱ Bon Homme County History, Herbert Hoover, Ed. (1994) page 80, Carolyn Torma, Building Diversity: A Photographic Survey of South Dakota Architecture, 1913-1940, South Dakota Historical Journal 19, pages 161-162 and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - Bon Homme County Courthouse (September 10, 1984).

ⁱⁱ SL 1862, ch 12, § 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bon Homme County History, Herbert Hoover, Ed. (1994) page 30-31.

^{iv} Bon Homme County History, Herbert Hoover, Ed. (1994) page 77.