

MCCOOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE



Location: 130 West Essex Avenue, Salem, SD 57058

Date: Constructed 1934.

Architects: Kings & Dixon of Mitchell, SD

Description: The McCook County Courthouse consists of a hip-roofed, rectangular, three-story building constructed of concrete clad with brick in the Art Deco style. The front and sides are symmetrical with seven bays on the front and five on each side. There is a contrasting stone base rising to the sills of the first floor windows. The ground floor is slightly projecting and topped with a contrasting stone belt course, giving the appearance that the upper two floors rest on a raised foundation or pedestal. The center bay on the facade has an entrance framed by a slightly projecting stone surround. On the second and third floors the center bay is flanked by two wide projecting pilasters, topped with stone caps with geometric motifs rising nearly to the roof line. Within the center bay are two smaller piers rising to the top of the third floor windows where there is a decorated stone panel and a flag pole. The bays on either side of the center bay contain windows on the ground floor and windows on the second and third floors, which are separated horizontally by spandrel panels of polished aluminum with a geometric design, and separated vertically by slightly projecting brick piers or pilasters topped with stone ziggurat capitals, which are not as large or tall as those flanking the entry bay. Above the third floor windows is a wide, unadorned brick entablature topped at the roof line by contrasting stone caps. The interior features extensive marble and Art Deco elements of aluminum and chrome. ¹ The building was designed by Kings & Dixon of Mitchell and Floyd Rosser of Montrose. Kings &

Dixon also designed the Aurora, Davison and Miner County Courthouses. The building was built by the Huron Construction Co. of Huron.

History: McCook County was established by the territorial legislature in 1873 and was first organized in 1878.ⁱⁱ The original county seat was located at Cameron in a small building donated by a local resident. In 1880, a countywide election moved the county seat to Bridgewater, where a small courthouse was built. However, in 1882 the residents of Salem stole the county records and safe from the Bridgewater courthouse through a door that had been left unlocked by a sympathizer and thereafter obtained the blessing of the territorial convention to their claims to be the county seat. In 1884, the county built a small, two-room courthouse on the same site where the present courthouse is located. In 1893, that structure was enlarged into a two-story, wood-frame building with a stone foundation, brick veneer, and an ornate cupola. In the 1920's the county established a courthouse sinking fund and by 1933, when federal assistance became available, the fund contained \$105,000. Sufficient signatures were obtained on petitions to allow the necessary bonding without an election but there was some difficulty in selling the bonds. Bids were received both for the brick building and one constructed of McCook County Quartzite, but the brick was found to be more economical. Construction was begun in the spring of 1934 and was completed in December of that year.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Carolyn Torma, Building Diversity: A Photographic Survey of South Dakota Architecture, 1913-1940, South Dakota Historical Journal 19 (19__), page 184 and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - McCook County Courthouse (September 1, 1992).

ⁱⁱ SL 1872-1873, ch 16.

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form - McCook County Courthouse (September 1, 1992).