

# TURNER COUNTY COURTHOUSE



**Location:** 400 S. Main Street, Parker, SD 57053

**Date:** Constructed in 1901.

**Architect:** W.R. Parsons and Son of Des Moines, Iowa.

**Description:** The Turner County Courthouse consists of a gable-roofed, cross-shaped, three-story, Omaha gray, pressed brick building, with a large domed cupola. The building is constructed in a Neo-Classical style with some Renaissance Revival elements. The front and sides are symmetrical, with five bays on the front facade and three bays on each side, with the center bays projected forward. The rear of the courthouse consists of a later addition, creating the base of the cross. The ground floor is separated from the second floor by a belt course of stone, which creates the appearance of a podium upon which the upper two stories rest. The second and third floors are smooth brickwork. Between the second and third floors is a projecting belt course of brick. The center bay on the front facade had a double entrance on the ground floor crowned by a pediment at the second floor level, but that has now been obscured by a modern, tan brick, flat-roofed entry. On the third floor the front center bay has two windows separated by a pair of thin pilasters and flanked by wider pilasters. The pilasters with their bases and capitals extend the height of the third floor. The bases of the pilasters are separated by closed balustrades. Above the windows is a decorative panel with a circle in the brickwork. On either side of the center bay is a flanking bay, one window wide, which is also projected forward to the same extent as the central bay. The windows on these bays are flanked by piers which extend the height of all three floors. On either side of those bays are bays with three windows on each floor. The windows on the third floor are separated vertically by pilasters which extend the height of the third floor, and separated horizontally by incised panels between the second and third

floors. The projecting center bay on each facade is topped with a decorated triangular pediment. The building is topped by a cornice with dentils and modillion blocks and a parapet with closed balustrades. The cupola contains eight windows which are now closed, separated by pilasters. The cupola also has a dentilated cornice, and the metal dome is pierced by four windows which have also been closed. The courthouse was designed by W.R. Parsons and Son of Des Moines, who also designed the courthouses in Faulk, Hanson, and Yankton Counties. On March 27, 1902, a bid from J.W. Delwiler & Co. of Des Moines, Iowa was accepted for \$27,653.00 to build the new courthouse.

***History:*** Turner County was established by the territorial legislature in 1871 from parts of Jayne (now Hutchinson) and Lincoln Counties.<sup>i</sup> The original county seat was located at Swan Lake and a courthouse was built there in 1872. There was a long and bitter "county seat war" between Parker, Marion and Swan Lake. At elections in 1881 and 1882, none of the three contenders prevailed. Another election was held in 1884 in which Hurley joined the contest, and again none of them could muster sufficient votes. Finally in 1885, the State Legislature placed the county seat in Parker, subject to relocation by a majority vote. At an election that fall, none of the other towns could muster a majority so the county seat remained in Parker. Prior to the 1885 county seat election, both Hurley and Marion offered to put up \$10,000 toward the construction of a courthouse. Parker offered the same sum, but once they won the election, failed to honor this promise, which caused hard feelings, so the county voters refused to approve funds to build a courthouse. Finally in 1901, private citizens and businesses raised \$10,000 toward the construction of a new courthouse, and the voters then approved the expenditure of an additional \$20,000 to build the courthouse. Later an addition was added for the jail, sheriff's office and living quarters.<sup>ii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> SL 1870-1871 ch 10, § 8.

<sup>ii</sup> Turner Auxiliary of Post # 2821, Then and Now, Parker, 1879-1979, (1979) page 39.