

Architectural Inventory Form

Official Eligibility Determination
(for OAHP use only)

- Date _____ Initials _____
- Determined Eligible - National Register
 - Determined Not Eligible - National Register
 - Determined Eligible - State Register
 - Determined Not Eligible - State Register
 - Need Data
 - Contributes to eligible National Register District
 - Noncontributing to eligible NR District

I. Identification

1. Resource number: 5HN68.27
2. Temporary resource number: 215
3. County: Hinsdale
4. City: Lake City
5. Historic building name: Hinsdale County Courthouse
6. Current building name:
7. Building address: 317 Henson Street, Lake City, CO 81235
8. Owner name and address: Hinsdale County Courthouse, P.O. Box 277, Lake City CO 81235

II. Geographic Information

- County Property No.: RTax exempt
9. P.M. 6th Township 44N Range 4W NW4 of NE4 of SE4 of SW4 of Section 27
 10. UTM reference
Zone 13 296880 mE 4211360 mN
 11. USGS quad name: Lake City Quad year: 1985 Map scale: X 7.5' ___ 15'
 12. Block(s): 54 Lot(s): 7-9 Legal:
Addition: Year of Addition:
 13. Boundary description and justification: Perimeter of parcel

III. Architectural Description

14. Building plan: L plan
15. Dimensions: 2100 square feet
16. Number of stories: 1, 1-1/2
17. External wall material(s): Wood horizontal siding
18. Roof configuration: Front gabled
19. Roof material: Metal
20. Special features: Bracketed cornice, dentils, corbelled chimneys
21. General architectural description:

One- and one-half story, front-gabled frame building. Metal roof; corbeled brick chimneys and flush skylights in south roof slope. Paired brackets and friezeboard in gable ends; paired brackets on eaves. "1877" signplate in east and west elevation. Walls are clad in clapboards and trimmed in cornerboards. East elevation has entrance with bracketed hood, dentil band and paired paneled door with 5-lite transom. At left of entrance is a shallow sign cupboard with crown molding.

West elevation has centered entrance with paired paneled doors and crown molding. Windows are 6-over-6 double hungs with crown molding; some lower story windows are covered in 1-over-1 metal-frame storm windows. Window at northeast corner is enclosed in wood. At southwest corner wooden fire escape accesses upper-story entrance with a paneled door. Circa 1985 shed-roofed addition on south elevation. Foundation stone and concrete.
Interior

22. Architectural style/Building type: Italianate
23. Landscaping or special setting:

24. Associated building, features or objects:
313 Henson Street, 319 Henson Street

IV. Architectural History

25. Date of construction Estimate: _____ Actual: 1877 Source of info: Lake City SILVER WORLD, Sat., June 30, 1877, page 3.
26. Architect: Jonathan Ogden Source of info: Lake City SILVER WORLD, Sat., June 30, 1877, page 3.
27. Builder/contractor: Jonathan Ogden Source of info: Lake City SILVER WORLD, Sat., June 30, 1877, page 3.
28. Original owner: Hinsdale County Source of info:
29. Construction history (major additions, alterations, demolitions):
One-story frame addition on south elevation built circa 1985 has external materials and windows similar to original. Skylights installed in south roof slope, circa 1985.
30. Original location: Moved Date of move(s) _____

V. Historical Associations

31. Original use(s): Courthouse
32. Intermediate use(s):
33. Current use(s): Courthouse
34. Site type(s):
35. Historical background:

Hinsdale County Courthouse is a two-story, front-gabled frame building built in Italianate style in 1877. It is Colorado's oldest courthouse which continues to be utilized for its originally intended purpose and a rare surviving example of a frame courthouse building.

Hinsdale County was formed in June, 1874, with its first county seat located at San Juan City on the upper Rio Grande River. A still extant single-room, squared log courthouse was constructed at San Juan City which continued in use until the county seat was transferred to Lake City in February, 1875. County officials utilized rental quarters prior to a March, 1877, decision by Hinsdale County Commissioners to construct a courthouse. A legal notice signed by Commission Chairman H.E. Turner appeared in the Saturday, March 24, 1877, Lake City SILVER WORLD advising contractors that plans had been prepared and bids due on construction of the building by 2 p.m. April 2, 1877.

Plans for a two-story, 30 x 60' frame courthouse were prepared by Jonathan Ogden. Plans called for five county offices on the ground floor, vault for the safekeeping of papers and records, and courtroom with two offices on the upper floor. Jonathan Ogden is an early Lake City contractor who is best known for his work on the courthouse plans and construction. Other than his work on the courthouse, Ogden is identified as a founding member of Lake City's First Baptist Church in 1877; also in 1877, he received the contract to construct a two-story commercial building for Dr. G.A. Kellogg in the downtown business district.

Ogden was one of four Lake City contractors bidding on construction of Hinsdale County Courthouse. His successful bid of \$4,450 was the lowest cost of the four proposals received by the county commissioners -- other bidders in the courthouse competition were McDonald, \$7,273; A.P. Gibson, \$4,473; and Overfield & Stocker, \$4,985. Construction began in March on two lots donated for the purpose by Lake City businessman J.W. Brockett, later owner of the now demolished Brockett Block, 301 Gunnison. Cornerstone laying ceremonies were held April 11, 1877, under auspices of the local Odd Fellows lodge, Silver Star Lodge No. 27, and included an address by General Addison Danford. By mid-May, SILVER WORLD reported the structure was entirely enclosed, floors laid, and lath prepared for the start of plastering. During plaster repair in the late 1990s, lath forming a curved wall at the entrance of the downstairs stairway was found to consist of willow branches which had been covered with plaster.

Anxious to celebrate completion of the structure, county officials and the local legal fraternity sent out invitations to a courthouse ball on June 8, invitations urging gentlemen to bring "as many ladies as you

can induce to be present." Proceeds from the \$1.50 admission ticket were earmarked for the purchase of a courthouse flag. The celebration ball was held on schedule, the SILVER WORLD noting "The lime dust and cold air, from the failure of the windows to arrive in time, somewhat interfered with comfort, but people will enjoy dancing and are not generally dismayed by such annoyances, and hence the dance was kept up until a late hour."

SILVER WORLD described progress on the new courthouse building, including a June 30, 1877, tour of the building. "The structure is 30 x 60 feet and appropriately faces the Orient where justice was born and matured. A hall runs the entire length of the building, on the left of which as you enter, is the County Treasurer's Office and County Clerk's rooms, these two rooms separated by a vault, which has iron doors and floors, and an entrance from each office...

On the right of the hall are two rooms set apart for the grand and petit jurors. Ascending the winding staircase at the entrance to the building, we are brought to the Court Room proper in the second story; this home of equity and legal ground is 35 x 45 feet, and at the west end is the bar, which is surmounted by a circular walnut-finished railing, enclosing sufficient area for the accommodation of the legal fraternity, jury, and Clerk of the District Court's desk... at the end of the Court Room are two rooms, occupied respectively by the Clerk of the District Court and the Sheriff of the County. The exterior is painted white, and surmounted with a staff bearing a silver-colored globe emblematical of the silver world in which it is located..."

As an insight into early Hinsdale County finances, county warrants were traditionally redeemed for as little as 25-cents on the dollar. In consequence, when commissioners issued warrants to pay for Ogden's bid of \$4,450 for construction of the courthouse, the translated cost in county warrants was nearly \$20,000, an aggregate expense which contributed a county-wide debt of \$148,000 -- the largest per capita in the United States -- by 1893.

Charles S. Thomas, later a Colorado Governor, recalled he was present when court convened in the new Hinsdale County Courthouse in 1877. "The entire town was assembled in the courtroom for the occasion," Thomas wrote in an article published in COLORADO MAGAZINE in July, 1924. "The Sheriff was Henry Finley. The judge was not prompt in arriving. He finally appeared, however, and edging his way through the crowd, managed with some difficulty to reach the bench. Taking his seat, he looked over the room for a moment, then removed his cigar from his mouth, blew a large volume of smoke into the air, and said to the sheriff, "Turn her loose, Fin'." In addition to the day-to-day county business which has taken place in Hinsdale Courthouse for over 125 years, seminal events in the building's history include the 1883 conviction of Alferd Packer's for murdering five fellow prospectors in 1874, and the September, 1877, appearance of suffragette Susan B. Anthony. Anthony came to Lake City as part of a state-wide speaking tour and spoke to a capacity audience on two successive nights. Anthony was scheduled to speak in the upstairs courtroom of the courthouse but was obliged to exit the over-crowded room and instead make her address from the courthouse's east entrance facing Henson Street.

Hinsdale Courthouse remained true to its intended purpose in ensuing decades. Office configuration remains essentially unaltered, an exception being the office of County Assessor which now takes ground floor rooms originally intended for grand and petit jurors. Electricity was first installed in the building in May, 1892. The first of several minor alterations occurred in late March, 1953, when it was determined the shared vault between the county clerk and treasurer's offices was of insufficient size for the accumulation of important county records. The vault was reconfigured with a single entrance door via the county treasurer's office. A new cinder block vault was constructed on the south side of the building, accessed using the original vault door from the County Clerk's office.

The vault projection was later incorporated into a single-story addition with shed roof providing added office space for the county clerk and county treasurer. The south addition covers a portion of the building's ground floor south elevation, leaving corners of the original building unobscured. An interior renovation of the historic courthouse took place in 1956 and in 1959 an exterior staircase was completed near the southwest corner of the building providing alternate access to the upstairs courtroom. Hinsdale County received a \$40,000 State Historic Fund grant in 1995 to stabilize the southwest corner of the courthouse, together with minor exterior and interior repair.

36. Sources of information:

Lake City SILVER WORLD, Sat., March 24, 1877, page 3, Sat., March 31, 1877, page 3, Sat., April 7, 1877, page 3, Sat., April 14, 1877, page 3, Sat., May 19, 1877, page 3, Sat., June 2, 1877, page 3, Sat., June 16, 1877, page 3, Sat., June 30, 1877, page 3, Sat., August 11, 1877, page 3 Sat., September 22, 1877, page 3; Lake City TIMES, Thurs., May 26, 1892, page 1; Gunnison NEWS-

VI. Significance

37. Local landmark: Yes No Date of design.: _____ Design. authority: _____

Within Lake City Historic District (local historic district)

38. Applicable National Register Criteria:

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
- B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory
- Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G
- Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria

39. Area(s) of significance: Community planning and development, architecture

40. Period of significance: 1877 - 1904

41. Level of significance: National State Local

42. Statement of significance:

The Hinsdale County Courthouse is associated with settlement and development of Lake City during the late 1800s mining era. It is significant for its role as seat of county government since its 1877 construction. Seminal events in the building's history include the 1883 conviction of Alferd Packer's for murdering five fellow prospectors in 1874, and the September, 1877, appearance of suffragette Susan B. Anthony. Anthony came to Lake City as part of a state-wide speaking tour and spoke to a capacity audience on two successive nights. Anthony was scheduled to speak in the upstairs courtroom of the courthouse but was obliged to exit the over-crowded room and instead make her address from the courthouse's east entrance facing Henson Street.

Especially significant was the 1883 Alferd Packer trial, which attracted national and international attention. It is the only known trial in the United States involving cannibalism. The Packer association to this day attracts travelers to the town and the courthouse.

The Hinsdale County Courthouse is Colorado's oldest courthouse which continues to be utilized for its originally intended purpose and a rare surviving example of a frame courthouse building. It is also a well-preserved representative of the local interpretation of the Italianate style constructed in Lake City during this period, as reflected in its clapboard exterior, bracketed cornice, cornerboards, friezeboard, transoms, and narrow windows with crown molding.

43. Assessment of historic physical integrity to significance:

The architectural integrity of this building is intact, as evidenced by minimal alterations to its character-defining features.

VII. National Register Eligibility Assessment

44. National Register eligibility field assessment: Eligible Not Eligible Need Data

45. Is there National Register district potential? Yes No

Discuss _____

If there is National Register district potential, is this building Contributing Noncontributing

46. If the building is in an existing National Register district is it? Contributing Noncontributing
(Lake City National Historic District)

VIII. Recording Information

47. Photograph numbers: Roll 3, frame 27-30, 32-34; roll 21, Negatives filed at: Lake City Town Hall
frames 20-22; roll 24, frames 28-29;
roll 26, frames 16-17, 23
48. Report title: 2003 Architectural Survey of Lake City, Colorado
49. Date(s): September 2002 - June 2003
50. Recorders Cathleen M. Norman and Grant E. Houston
51. Organization: Town of Lake City
52. Address: 230 Bluff Street, Lake City CO 81235 53. Phone no. (970) 944-2333

**Colorado Historical Society - Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
1300 Broadway, Denver CO 80203 (303) 866-3395**

