

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and/or common Bay County Building

2. Location

street & number 515 Center Avenue

not for publication

city, town Bay City

vicinity of

congressional district 8th

state Michigan

code 26

county Bay

code 017

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bay County Board of Commissioners

street & number 515 Center Avenue

city, town Bay City

vicinity of

state Michigan 48706

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Bay County County Courthouse - Bay County Building

city, town Bay City

state Michigan 48706

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Michigan Inventory of
title Historic Resources

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Inventory Completed 1976-1977; 1981

federal state county local

depository for survey records Michigan History Division/ Michigan Department of State

city, town Lansing

state Michigan 48918

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Bay County Building is located on the east side of the Saginaw River in Bay City, Bay County, Michigan (PHOTO #1). It stands on the northwest corner of the intersection of Center and Madison Avenues flanked by open parking lots and an early twentieth century train depot to the north, an elegant nineteenth century residential district to the east, the Bay City Masonic Temple and additional nineteenth century residential areas to the south, and Bay City's central business district to the west. The massive eight story limestone and granite sheathed steel-framed structure completely fills three-quarters of a city block and looms well above its surrounding neighbors. Designed by Bay City architect Joseph C. Goddeyne and built between 1933 and 1934, the building displays Art Deco, or American Vertical, styling that makes it an outstanding architectural element in a predominantly nineteenth century streetscape.

The County Building's major facade fronts on Center Avenue and features such typical Art Deco design elements as a weighted base, piers that rise up across the entire face of the building to create a strong vertical emphasis, and a stepped-back massing of upper story levels. An entry portico highlights the first floor's center bay and provides clear, formal access to the building (PHOTO #2). This portico firmly establishes the Art Deco styling of the entire structure with its three deeply set and shadowed doorways capped by elaborate grillwork transoms, abstracted channeled pilasters between the entry doors, flanking portico bays pierced by small casement windows supported over concentric-square-detailed stone spandrels, and an abstracted corniceline ornamented with two low-relief bands of stone carving.

To the sides of the entry portico, the detailing of the partially subterranean basement and first floor levels girdles the building; simple trabeated windows in metal enframements and a wide, unadorned bandcourse create the smooth, weighted appearance of the building's base. Above the center portico, the remaining seven floors of the structure form an impressive mass. The slightly projecting center bay presents three trabeated windows in simple metal enframements at each floor level and smooth stone channels and wide corner piers which reach up the face of the building to create a clear vertical emphasis. Metal spandrels with elaborately abstracted low-relief crests and dentilated edges stand between the levels of windows; at the roofline, a delicate cornice band provides a subtle terminus for the vertical sightlines of the front facade's center bay. Balanced, three story side bays flank this prominent center bay and create the typically stepped-back massing for the front facade's upper stories. Highlighted by stacks of trabeated windows separated by concentric-square-detailed stone spandrels and capped by simply detailed cornicelines of stone moldings and abstracted carved crests, these side bays complete the Art Deco ornamentation of the front facade.

The east and west facades of the Bay County Building are matched in design (PHOTO #3). Again, the partially subterranean basement and first floor levels create a weighted base for the facade; only the east facade, however, presents a single entry entrance-way in a heavy stone enframement that echos the abstracted designs of the south facade's main portico (PHOTO #4). Above the base, three stories with stacked trabeated windows separated by stone piers and carved metal spandrels continue to emphasize strong vertical sightlines (PHOTO #5). The massing of the east and west facades steps back at the fifth floor level when the building faces retract to create the sides of the front facade's prominent center bay. Projecting center bays of channeled windows accent the

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stepped segments of both facades and, after again stepping back, open onto the two-story penthouse that crowns the Bay County Building. Just as the fenestration and detailing of the east and west facades echo each other, the north, or back facade, echos the appearance of the Center Avenue face of the structure. At the rear, however, elimination of the formal entry portico simplifies the overall design.

After designing the exterior of the Bay County Building to be as contemporary and distinctive as possible, architect Joseph C. Goddeyne developed the building's interior to be similarly up-to-date and cleanly functional in layout and appearance. He carefully studied the space needs of the various county offices to be housed in the new governmental facility and proposed his floorplans accordingly. After meeting with department heads and County Board members and systematically visiting other county courthouses both in and outside of Michigan, Goddeyne formalized his floorplan arrangements. At the ground floor level, the architect provided office space for the Coroner, Probation Officer, Superintendents of the Poor, County Road Commissioners, Agricultural Agent, and Building Superintendent; various building systems were also housed at this level and in a connected sub-basement area. For the first three offices, Goddeyne felt that the basement location and easy access would afford those coming in for welfare assistance or personal business with a heightened degree of privacy. At the first and second story levels, Goddeyne placed offices that generated a great deal of pedestrian traffic both during the day and in the evening. Thus, the offices of the County Clerk, Treasurer, and Register of Deeds filled the first floor level; at the second story level, the space housed the Weights and Measures Office, the Supervisors Assembly Room equipped to seat 150 to 200 visitors, the Board of Auditors Office, Special Exhibition Rooms, meeting rooms for war veterans and womens' auxiliaries, and a public meeting room for the Bay County Historical Society.

Architect Goddeyne provided space for the Probate Court and its ancillary jury rooms at the third floor level. At the fourth floor level, the Circuit Court and its jury rooms and the specialized work areas for the Probation Officer, Friend of the Court, Bar Librarian, Court Reporter, witnesses, attorneys, and members of the press filled the available space; an office for the School Commissioner was also located on this floor. The fifth floor housed the Prosecuting Attorney's staff offices while the sixth afforded space for a second circuit courtroom complete with offices, jury rooms, attorneys' rooms, and Court Commissioners' chambers. Goddeyne had incorporated this second courtroom into his design for future use; in the meantime, the office space was used for the Red Cross, the Drain Commissioner's offices, and for activities surrounding compensation cases, naturalization work, and coroner's inquests. Finally, the sixth floor housed the main offices of the Drain Commissioner and the seventh floor provided space for the School Commissioner's office and a county health unit.

Today, the interior of the Bay County Building remains almost completely intact with floors, wall treatments, ceilings, and even furnishings appearing as they did when the structure opened in 1934. The front foyer and first floor corridor are by far the most elegantly finished in the building. Molded edge marble panels completely line the walls of the foyer and main hall; a decoratively colored, tile-edged terrazzo floor creates a visual traffic pattern for the movement of visitors through the building. At the corniceline, a wide plaster fascia provides a strong visual accent with its aqua- and gold-colored bands and a half-moon patterned ribbon painted in gold,

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aqua, pale blue, and deep green (PHOTO #6). A smooth plaster ceiling treatment completes the basic detailing of the space. While modestly scaled, the first floor corridor is nicely appointed with heavy, dark stained wood door enframements leading to the various offices, brass and silver-plated fixtures, and, in the centralized service core, grand brass elevator doors engraved with images of Bay County and all its townships. The center corridors on the other floors of the County Building echo the floor, wall, and ceiling finishes of the first level but are less elaborately detailed. While the terrazzo floors remain the same throughout, the marble walls are replaced by simple plaster finishes edged with dark stained wood baseboards. The cornicelines remain a color accent at every floor but are simpler in detailing than in the main corridor; at the seventh floor level, the ribbon pattern is even changed to a simple triangular design painted in less delicate colors.

The Probate Courtroom at the third floor level and the Circuit Courtroom at the fourth are the most elaborately ornamented of the County Building's public and office areas. Both rooms display elegantly panelled oak wainscotting standing six feet high; simply plastered walls, a speaker's dais constructed of the same deep-stained oak panelling as the wainscotting, and a simply molded ceiling corniceline complete the ornamentation. In both courtrooms, the original leather-topped desks and captains chairs remain in use. In the Circuit Courtroom, where the main interior space reaches up an extra story into the front of the fifth floor level, a balcony with a simply squared balustrade rings three sides of the room (PHOTO #7). The offices in the Bay County Building are all finished alike regardless of location. Each offers access through a heavy wood door enframement fitted with a wood based and glass topped panelled door. Inside, terrazzo or wood floors, plaster walls edged with wood baseboards, and casement windows in simple metal enframements offer sturdy and businesslike finishes.

Just as he controlled the interior and exterior design of the Bay County Building, Joseph Goddeyne also maintained control over the interior decoration and furnishing of the new facility. The architect summarized the final results of this fortunate mixing of responsibilities when he stated in a letter to the County Board dated April 20, 1934 that the "...results attained far exceed the added work I performed. The building, without question, is furnished and equipped more consistently, more beautifully and has more real quality in it than any other similar building. I have gone to extraordinary pains and personal expense in my search for "just the right thing," and I know that the building committee and the public have no regrets for the furniture and equipment suggested by me." Indeed, the compatibility of the building's seventy-five different kinds and styles of lighting fixtures, stacked-based ashtrays and rounded-edge oak benches in the public areas (PHOTO #8), leather-topped desks and comfortable chairs in the courtrooms, and functionally yet elegantly designed office furniture well attests to the architect's interior design skills. Both inside and out, the Bay County Building is an unusually refined statement of Art Deco design dating from the Depression Era.

The County Building remains in full use and good condition today. Although only three-quarters of the original offices still have adequate space to remain housed in the building, the structure does not reflect the cramped, make-shift appearance seen in so many other aging governmental office buildings. The County Board plans to maintain the structure as its headquarters for Bay County business and to upgrade its service facilities without compromising its architectural integrity. A successful listing on the National Register is viewed as a way to gain recognition for an outstanding work of Art Deco design reflective of the Depression Era in Bay City and Bay County.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Built: 1933-1934 Builder/Architect Architect: Joseph C. Goddeyne
 Builders: See text below

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the Bay County Building located in Bay City, Bay County, Michigan stems from three sources. First, the building was the special project of Samuel G. Houghton, a popular Bay County circuit judge, and the design of Joseph C. Goddeyne, a prominent Bay City architect. Thus, the County Building is associated with the lives of people significant in the political, judicial, and artistic heritage of Bay County, Michigan. Second, because the County Building was a project developed during the Depression to help thwart local unemployment, it is associated with an event that had a significant impact on the broad patterns of American history. Third, the County Building was a fine example of Art Deco, or American Vertical, design and was a clean, functional departure from the Revival styles popularly used for governmental structures early in the twentieth century. Thus, the building embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type of architecture and a period of design work important to the State's architectural heritage.

(Note: An expansion of the Statement of Significance can be found on Continuation Sheets #8-2 through #34.)

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In 1858, the State Legislature of Michigan granted Bay County its county charter. A small white clapboard building at the foot of Fourth Street on the east side of the Saginaw River in Bay City became the new county's courthouse and served Bay's growing rural population for the next ten years. By 1867, however, the population of Bay County had grown to over 6,000 residents and warranted the erection of a larger, grander courthouse. The County Board proceeded to issue \$15,000 in bonds for the new building and, at a general election, was authorized by the electorate to issue \$15,000 more. The property owners of four lots on the northwest corner of Center and Madison Avenues donated land to the new courthouse project; D. H. Fitzhugh offered an additional piece of land to complete the parcel for the price of \$1,000. On May 6, 1868, the residents of Bay County attended a gala cornerstone ceremony for the new building and watched its erection by local craftspeople over the next eleven months.

Mr. C. K. Porter of Buffalo served as the architect for the second Bay County Courthouse with his plans executed under the direction of George Watkins, a general contractor in Bay City. The resulting structure was a massive red brick and stone building that anchored the western end of what was soon to become Bay City's grand residential promenade of lumber, salt, and agriculture "baron" homes. The three story courthouse featured a projecting center bay with tall rounded arch windows and a classically-inspired pediment, side wings with balanced fenestration and stone quoining, a mansard roof with tall chimneys at both ends, and a mansard roof-capped tower that rose eighty feet above the ground. Completed at a cost of \$40,000, the building was cited as the finest courthouse in the State and one that would serve the county's residents for a century.

By the late 1920s, however, Judge Samuel G. Houghton, a popular Bay County circuit judge, actively was campaigning for a new building. He aggressively scheduled tours for mens' fraternal groups, womens' clubs, and church societies to visit the old courthouse he labelled a "dangerous firetrap." He held at least one meeting in every township hall and in most of the rural school districts to take his plea to the people; often, Houghton held two if not three such meetings in one evening. The Judge penned news articles and editorials, printed an informational pamphlet citing the dangers of the old courthouse's continued use, and disseminated broadsides at every public gathering. His most convincing presentations stressed, first, that the old building had caught fire five times during 1929 and 1930 and, thus, was clearly a threat to lives and irreplaceable county records; second, that the building had grown too small for the county's needs and that rent was wasted on additional governmental quarters around town; and, third, that the Depression was causing unemployment problems that a good injection of government-subsidized construction could help alleviate.

Judge Houghton's campaign proved to be a success. On April 6, 1931, a majority of the voters authorized and directed the County Board of Supervisors to borrow or raise by loan the sum of \$375,000 for construction and equipment of a new courthouse. With an additional \$165,000 then released from the county's "sinking fund" and added to the bonded sum, the Board began the selection process for an architect and builders with the resolve that only Bay County talent would be used for the structure. By July 1, 1932, the Board members had selected Joseph C. Goddeyne, a local Bay City architect, as the designer for the building; the Bay City Stone Company for general construction; the Al-

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bert Eurich Company for heating, ventilating, and plumbing; the Modern Electric Company for electrical work; and the Otis Elevator Company, the only non-local company, for the building's elevator systems.

Joseph Goddeyne began work immediately on the interior and exterior design of the new County Building. First, he visited every existing county office that was to be housed in the new governmental facility to talk with supervisors and workers about their space needs. Next, he measured the space available to the various offices, observed the transaction of business, and measured the size and amount of office stock and machinery. With department heads, Goddeyne discussed extra space needs that were not being met in the old building and noted extra space features that were desired. Finally, accompanied by County Board members, the architect systematically visited other courthouses in Michigan and surrounding states. By April of 1932, Goddeyne had created twelve complete design solutions for the building and offered the selection to the Building Committee comprised of J. Harry Nelson, Chairman, Frank A. Hewitt, Bentley A. Major, W. Merrill Jereaw, Leonard W. Hutton, Fred H. Moeller, and Louis D. Ott. While the selection of the final plans was made soon after the presentation date, the County Board had to postpone the start of construction until July of 1932 due to a temporary insolvency of the county.

Incoming bond revenue authorized by the voters the year before eliminated the county's insolvency by July and allowed the project to begin. In September of 1932, offices from the old county building began moving out to the Young Office Building located nearby on Salzburg Avenue. Here, the county had rented temporary quarters for \$300.00 per month and brought in Bay City architect A. E. Munger to adapt the office building for county use at a cost of \$3,000.00. The Bay City Stone Company holding the general contract for the new building managed the demolition of the old county building and finished the salvage, clearance, and site preparation by the spring of 1933. On April 13, 1933, Bay County residents participated in the cornerstone ceremonies for their third county courthouse.

In spite of the Depression, construction of the County Building continued on schedule over the next eleven months and allowed the County Board of Supervisors to meet for the first time in their new facility on March 9, 1934. This first meeting date also marked the day on which the newly completed building opened to the public during a festive celebration. The special activities began with an honors luncheon for over 200 people sponsored by the Bay County Bar Association and held at the Wenonah Hotel in downtown Bay City. By three o'clock in the afternoon, the celebration's focus moved to the courthouse where a two hour formal opening was scheduled in the main circuit courtroom. The speakers list reprinted in the Bay City Times the next day reflected the importance of the courthouse festivities. For example, six Michigan Supreme Court Judges participated in the opening including Louis H. Fead, Nelson Sharpe, W. W. Potter, George E. Bushnell, Walter H. North, and Bay County's own Edward M. Sharpe who served as master of ceremonies. Also featured were Thomas A. E. Weadock, a former Justice; Patrick H. O'Brien, Michigan's Attorney General; Samuel G. Houghton, Bay County's circuit judge and the prime mover behind the courthouse construction project; and Joseph C. Goddeyne, architect. Additionally, the dais held various representatives from the churches in the community; Hubert J. Gaffney, President of the Bay County Bar Association; the mayors of cities from around Bay County; and George E. Butterfield, President of the

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Bay County Historical Society. After the formal ceremonies were completed, the building remained open until nine o'clock in the evening to allow thousands of interested county residents to visit and enjoy their new facility.

The grand and celebrative opening reflected the general acceptance shown the new building by Bay County's citizens. Indeed, the voters who had supported the bond issue for the structure seemed to have a romantic feeling for the building that successfully had risen during the depths of the Depression. As the Bay City Times reported in its March 8, 1934 edition:

"Chiseled firmly against the horizon, the new county building towers over surrounding structures as contrastingly as a feudal castle over a mountain, atop which it is built.

And it takes only slight imagination on a breezy day to form a mind picture of the inspiring edifice as a feudal palace.

Atop the spiring walls are ventilators resembling at a distance knights clothed in armor. Caught by the wind, they revolve and give the aspect of human guards patrolling a parapet against onslaught by a marauding band."

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- Bell, Steve. "County Building in violation of fire codes." Bay City Times, April 15, 1981.
- "Contractors' List of Jobs Given." Bay City Times. March 8, 1934.
- "Courthouse is Opened to Public - Hundreds Attend Dedication of New Half-Million Dollar Edifice." Bay City Times. March 9, 1934.
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- "History of the Bay County Court House, The." Copy of letter sent to Joseph C. Goddeyne, dated January 19, 1935. Copy held in central files, Michigan History Division, Lansing, Michigan.
- "Houghton, Judge S. G. "Judge Houghton Urged New Unit - Old Courthouse Ablaze Five Times In Two Years." The Bay City Daily Times. March 9, 1934.
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- Nelson, Mayor J. Harry. "Mayor Tells of Committee's Work - Tells of Surveys, Studies His Group Made." The Bay City Daily Times. March 9, 1934.
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- "Renovate Memorial Board." Bay City Times. October 5, 1964.
- Sass, Charles, Chairman, Board of Supervisors. "County Chieftain Praises Building - Supervisors' Chairman Says Its 'Last Word.'" The Bay City Daily Times. March 9, 1934.
- "Ultra Modern Clocks Lend Attractive Touch to Rooms." Bay City Times. March 8, 1934.
- Young, Brig. "Danger of Fire and Loss of Old Records Aided Carriage - Former Reporter Recounts Drive." The Bay City Daily Times. March 9, 1934.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

"Bay Cityan Does Sculpture Figures - Courtroom Figures Handiwork of R. L. Rischman."

Bay City Times. March 8, 1934.

Bay County Courthouse Directory. Bay City, Michigan: Bay County Board of Supervisors, 1936.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 1.5 acres

Quadrangle name Bay City Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	2	6	7	1	4	0	4	8	3	1	1	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Description: Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, also east 10 feet of vacated alley adjacent to said lots 1 through 6, Block 56, Lower Saginaw. Justification: This is the entire property associated with the Bay County Building.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Janet L. Kreger, Regional Preservation Coordinator

organization Michigan History Division

date June 1, 1981

street & number Michigan Department of State

telephone 517-373-0510

city or town Lansing

state Michigan 48918

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Janet L. Kreger

title Director, Michigan History Division

date 1/29/82

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration