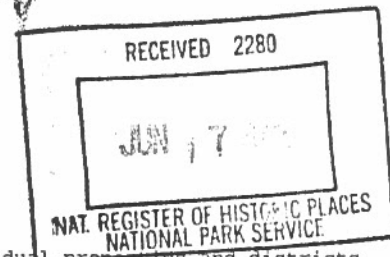


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

820



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1 Main Street not for publication N/A

city or town Pioche vicinity N/A

state Nevada code NV county Lincoln code 017 zip code 89043

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_ statewide X locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones  
Signature of certifying official

6-12-02  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I,  hereby certify that this property is entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

Edson H. Ball 2/25/02

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Ball

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: GOVERNMENT Sub: courthouse

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: GOVERNMENT Sub: courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Reinforced concrete  
roof Plywood covered by asphalt sheeting  
walls Exterior-reinforced concrete  
Interior-wood frame, lath and plaster, sheet rock  
other \_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT  
ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Period of Significance

1938

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Significant Dates 1938

Architect/Builder

A. Lacy Worswick, Architect  
L.F. Dow, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheet.

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See attached continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- \_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register
\_\_\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
\_\_\_ designated a National Historic Landmark
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
\_\_\_ Other State agency
\_\_\_ Federal agency
\_\_\_ Local government
\_\_\_ University
\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 1.35 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Table with 2 columns: Zone Easting Northing. Row 1: 11 724080 4201690 3. Row 2: 4. Includes 'See continuation sheet.'

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Roger Carey, Rick Coop, Bruce Parshall, Derek Segle, Kate Wintrol, Kay Yost
organization University of Nevada, Las Vegas, History Department date 12 December 2001
street & number 4505 Maryland Parkway, Box 455020 telephone 702-895-3011
city or town Las Vegas state NV zip code 89154-5020

=====  
Additional Documentation  
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Lincoln County

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Pioche state NV zip code 89043  
=====

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 7. Description

The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse is a 2-story, concrete, Art Deco-style building occupying 1.35 acres on the north side of the community of Pioche, Nevada. Residential areas surround it on three sides with a community park that predates the building on the fourth. The building has a rectangular floor plan. It rests on a poured-concrete perimeter foundation with a basement below. The building's dimensions are 48 feet deep by 102 feet wide. The roof is flat, with a parapet roof-wall junction, and is covered with rolled asphalt sealed with tar. The first floor extends beyond the second floor on both ends of the building, creating one-story wings on each end of the building. Integral concrete raised letters form the name of the building above the second floor windows in the center of the front façade.

The painted color of the courthouse is white interrupted only by a horizontal band of gray, itself subdivided into three bands by horizontal grooves along its length. This banding is a characteristic of Streamline Moderne and International influences. The spandrels above the first floor windows are representative of Art Deco detailing, as are the integral letters that form the name of the building above the second floor windows. The metal casement windows and doors and the horizontal grooves along all sides of the second floor from the top of the second floor windows to the roof are all typical Art Deco design elements. The setback of the east and west end sections of the first floor, and the geometric block design of the spandrel containing the date of construction further support the Art Deco classification.

The hallways on the first floor form a "T" with the cross running the width of the building and the stem extending from the front door to the center of the floor. The intersection of these hallways has molding at the ceiling-wall joints, and square Classical columns flanking the courtroom entrance. This Classical influence is limited to the first floor hallways where there is a second floor above. The hallways on each end of the building are unadorned, as is the basement hallway that has pipes and wiring suspended from the ceiling. Original light fixtures, heating units, and many of the original Art Deco fixtures and furniture remain in several hallways and rooms. Skylights, currently blocked off from the inside and viewed only from rear-facing windows on the northeast corner of the second floor, are present in the women's and judge's bathrooms. Safes and jail cells from the nineteenth century courthouse were transferred to this building during its construction and are still in use.

All of the inner rooms, including the bathrooms, are wood 2-by-4 frame, sheetrock and lath-and-plaster construction. The courtroom is located in the center of the first story. Off of the east hallway are the judge's chambers, the Auditor/Recorder's office, the Clerk's office, and the women's restroom. The County Assessor, Nevada State Department of Motor Vehicles, District Attorney, and Treasurer's offices are located in the west hall. The basement houses the County Commission Chamber, the Sheriff's department, the city and county jail, public telephone, and the men's restroom. The second

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 2

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 7. Description, continued

story contains the Juvenile office, Grants/Social Services office, the Meadow Valley Judge's office, the offices of an impact study on nuclear waste that is funded by the nuclear industry, and the Microfilms/Surveyor's office.

The main entrance to the building is in the center of the south façade. It currently consists of a glass door with a single glass pane above it, and three symmetrical panes on each side. The original doorway contained two single-paned glass doors with a single-pane transom.<sup>1</sup> There is a two-step concrete stoop leading to the front door. A concrete wheelchair ramp was added in 1999.<sup>2</sup> The front entrance walkway is flanked on either side by two identical lamps. Each lamp is composed of a black steel openwork stand on scrolled feet, and topped with white translucent glass globes. On the front façade, the first story has two symmetrical sets of four-panel, horizontal pane casement windows. Each first floor window on the front, sides, and setback portions of the back has a vertically corrugated, molded cement spandrel above it. A horizontal band of gray trim divided into three lines separates the first story from the second and continues along the east, west, and north sides of the second floor of the building. There are three sets three-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows on the second story. One set of windows is above the door, while the other two sets are symmetrically placed above the first-story windows closest to the door. All exterior window sashes are made of steel. There are seven window air conditioning units in use, but they are not permanently affixed to the building. Below the second story window and above the front door is a spandrel containing the year of construction, 1938, surrounded by a geometric block design.

There is a second entrance on the east side of the building with a walkway leading to it. Above the door a single bulb in a flat circular reflector is suspended by a metal bow projecting perpendicularly from the wall. The east basement level has two, two-panel, vertical-pane casement windows. This side of the building has two sets of four-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows directly above the basement windows. Above the light fixture over the door is a smaller single set of two-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows. The west side of the building has three sets of double four-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows, and the north side has six, five-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows on the projecting section where there is a second story. There are two symmetrically placed sets of four-panel, horizontal-pane casement windows on the single-story wing sections where there is no second story. Three doors, three barred windows, and two three-panel horizontal-pane casement windows appear on the basement level. The roof has a red metal air duct, and a gray civil defense tower. A furnace stack extends from the west end side wall.

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<sup>1</sup> Pioche Chamber of Commerce, *Pioche, Nevada: Largest Zinc and Lead Producer in Nevada*, Brochure, Lincoln County Historical Museum, p. 6. The date of the change is unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Phyllis Robistow, conversation with authors, Pioche, NV, 9 November 2001.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 7. Description, continued

The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse possesses a high degree of historic integrity. Since no significant changes or alterations to the building or its intended uses have been made, it continues to convey its 1938 period of significance. The building sits on a flat area on the north side of town, formed by the collection of the products of erosion of the surrounding hills. These materials collected to form a fan-shaped area at the natural bottom of the valley. The courthouse construction coincided with the town's growth, and it serves as a symbol of the economic boom-and-bust cycle swinging once again in a favorable direction. The spare design and simplicity of form combine with the utilitarian concrete construction to demonstrate the need and desire of the community to overcome the spectacle of the previous courthouse and exhibit the characteristics of thrift and frugality. The quality of workmanship becomes evident when, in contrast to the older courthouse, no cracks exist in the structure (James 1994). It is as solid and sound as the laws it embodies.

## 8. Significance

The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse in Pioche, Nevada is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as a tangible expression of a county's response to a series of events associated with the construction of the previous courthouse, and for its association with the local depression-era lead-zinc mining boom, and its association with a federal building program that has become a significant part of American culture and tradition. It is also eligible under Criterion C as the only Art Deco-style county courthouse in Nevada.

### Criterion A—Historical Significance

The Town of Pioche is situated in Lincoln County, Nevada, approximately 175 miles northeast of the city of Las Vegas. Pioche and Lincoln County are both important in the history of Nevada settlement, development, and mining. Pioche's unique flavor derives from its status as one of a select number of true mining boomtowns to survive past their "glory days." At its height, more than 15,000 people lived there; now, fewer than 700 do. At its peak, Lincoln County was one of the largest silver producing areas in the state. Despite the loss of its mining glory, Pioche has managed to maintain its small-town charm, its rustic feel, and its industrial heritage.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> James Hulse, *Lincoln County, Nevada, 1864-1909: History of a Mining Region*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1971), 35.



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 4

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 8. Significance, continued

### *Original Settlement, Industrialization, and Decline*

The area received its first serious Euroamerican attention in 1862 when a Paiute Indian led a Mormon missionary, William H. Hamblin, to it from the southern Utah area. After careful survey of the area, a large deposit of silver, called the Panacker Ledge, was discovered in 1864, and immediately Mr. Hamblin set up a furnace for smelting silver. A number of other mines operated in the area, known originally as the Meadow Valley Mining District (later renamed the Ely District), and Lincoln County was established in 1866. Crystal Springs was the first county seat, but soon Hiko won the distinction. Around 1868, F.L.A. Pioche, a French banker from San Francisco, acquired William Hamblin's mining property. In 1869 or 1870, P. McCannon, L. Lacour, and A.M. Bush laid out a new town in the district. It was named Pioche at the suggestion of Mrs. Carmichael Williamson, and the post office was established on August 17, 1870.<sup>4</sup> Pioche began to be a serious contestant in the state's silver-producing industry, as a result of the success of the Panacker Ledge, and it wrested county seat status from Hiko in 1871. The local economy boomed and the town began to grow exponentially. Between 1870 and 1877, the mines in the area had produced more than \$20,000,000 in silver and nearly 6,000 people had come to work the mines and live in the area, although estimates place the population as high as 15,000. Like all mining booms in the Silver State, however, this phenomenal wealth and spectacular growth did not last. By 1873, congressional demonetizations of silver began to take its toll on the mines in the area, and orders and prices for the white metal declined.

### *"Million-Dollar" Courthouse*

As with most mining boomtowns, Pioche had a reputation for lawlessness and disorder, and it was reported to have been one of the wildest towns in the Old West. Although the stories vary in the details, at least 70 men lost their lives to violence before the first person died of natural causes. As the more law-abiding members of Pioche society struggled to establish law and order in the rough community, the Board of Lincoln County Commissioners authorized the construction of a courthouse in Pioche, the newly designated county seat. This 1871 courthouse was originally slated to cost the citizens of the county around \$16,000. Due to construction blunders and alterations to the original plans, the final construction costs swelled to nearly \$75,000. To finance the project, the Board of County Commissioners issued certificates of indebtedness, or scrip, at an unusually high rate of interest. When hard times hit the county as a result of the change in monetary policy, the value of these certificates fell to below face value. In an effort to repay these debts, the Commissioners issued more scrip, which had the effect of contributing to the financial chaos, and the debt mounted.

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<sup>4</sup> Helen S. Carlson, *Nevada Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1974), 191.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 8 Page 5

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 8. Significance, continued

The county eventually defaulted on the original obligation and made a refunding issue that restructured the debt, but not before becoming the object of scorn and ridicule for its fiscal practices.<sup>5</sup> Lincoln County paid the final installment on the 1871 courthouse in 1938. Although accounts vary, the final cost of this debacle has been placed at more than \$800,000, resulting in the structure's popular nickname, the "Million-dollar Courthouse." The Million-dollar Courthouse still stands in Pioche, and it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 23, 1978.

In 1936, the Board of County Commissioners found themselves back in the courthouse building business. A number of office workers in the old courthouse complained about the wind and weather blowing through the courtroom, causing the walls to shake and weave. Prompted by these safety concerns, the commissioners hired a consultant, architect A. Lacy Worswick of Las Vegas, to inspect the courthouse with the idea of making an estimate of its condition, and necessary repairs.<sup>6</sup> Worswick completed his inspection and made a somewhat hesitant report of his findings. In a letter to the County Commission dated 3 July 1936, Mr. Worswick was forced to report, ". . . the main building is in a very unstable and dangerous condition, and should be abandoned at the earliest possible date. I also deem the jail portion more dangerous, and in a condition of near collapse."<sup>7</sup> Condemned by a competent architect, the "Million-dollar Courthouse" received the worst possible label, and cemented the stigma of "scandal" to it forever.

### *The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse*

The dilapidated and condemned condition of the 1871 courthouse, combined with the county's continued embarrassment over the expenses and scandals associated with it, produced the impetus for a fiscally responsible public project to replace the old building. In 1937, Lincoln County entered a significant lead and zinc boom period that supported the county's economy for two-decades, and resulted in a total production of more than \$70,000,000 worth of the two minerals. Lead and zinc production kept the county afloat during the Great Depression, and during World War II, Pioche served an important national role in the production of these vital war materials. This boom came to the end in 1957 when the government's need for these metals ended, resulting in the economic downturn the area continues to endure.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald M. James, *Temples of Justice: County Courthouses of Nevada*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of July 1, 1937 County Commission Meeting, *Proceedings of the Lincoln County Commissioners*, Vol. D, 1931-1938.

<sup>7</sup> "Courthouse and Hospital Plan Told to Lions Club," *The Pioche Record*, 22 July 1937, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> James Hulse, *The Silver State: Nevada's Heritage Reinterpreted*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 338.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 8 Page 6

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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**8. Significance, continued**

While the Lincoln County mines were producing lead and zinc, the local attitude about building a new courthouse began to change. It seemed possible, despite the general depression crippling the country, to build and finance a courthouse without revisiting the problems of the previous one. Assembly Bill No. 355 was introduced to the Nevada legislature by a select committee of the Lincoln County delegation on 16 March 1937. The proposed enabling legislation allowed for a bond issue to pay for a new judicial building.<sup>9</sup> The bill was passed, and approved by the Governor on 24 March 1937, and entered into Chapter 142 of the *Laws of Nevada of the Thirty-eighth Session of the Legislature of the State of Nevada*.<sup>10</sup> Although the State Assembly had authorized an amount not to exceed \$100,000, the Lincoln County Commissioners subsequently set a limit of \$60,000 on the new building.

Throughout the summer of 1937, numerous articles appeared in the two county newspapers, *The Pioche Record* and *The Caliente Herald*. These articles touted the benefits of a new county courthouse, extolled the need for a new facility for county business, and explained the obligations and duties of the citizenry to pass the bond election in the fall. Community and civic groups openly supported courthouse construction. At no time was any editorial stance taken to oppose the proposition, and only positive information was released as news. As a result, in August of 1937, the voters of Lincoln County authorized the bond issue. The vote margin was 517 to 158, though only about 27% of the electorate bothered to vote. Those voting against the bond issue were primarily the property owners in the outlying and more rural areas, who had a harder time seeing the benefits of a new county courthouse. Both of the major urban areas, Pioche and Caliente, carried the bond issue and the newspapers enthusiastically reported the results.<sup>11</sup>

The county sold the bonds in their entirety, by bid, to the Nevada Industrial Commission. Lincoln County also applied for and received assistance in the form of Public Works Administration (PWA) funding from the federal government. The PWA was one of the alphabet-soup agencies instituted by the Franklin Roosevelt presidency to counteract the devastating effects of the Great Depression. Lincoln County's PWA grant amounted to \$26,800 or roughly 45% of the expected cost of

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<sup>9</sup> Nevada State Assembly, *The Journal of the Assembly of the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Legislature of the State of Nevada 1937*, (Carson City, Nevada, 1938), 444.

<sup>10</sup> Nevada State Assembly, "Chapter 142", *Statutes of the State of Nevada passed at the 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Legislature 1937*, (Carson City, Nevada, 1938), 311-313.

<sup>11</sup> "County Bond Issues for Courthouse, Hospital Win by Big Majorities," *The Caliente (Nevada) Herald*, 12 August 1937, p. 1. "Courthouse Hospital Bond Carries Heavily," *The Pioche (Nevada) Record*, 12 August 1937, p. 1.

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Section 8 Page 7

1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 8. Significance, continued

construction. These were the only PWA funds Nevada received between 1933 and 1939 for county courthouse construction.<sup>12</sup>

### *Federal Involvement*

The PWA provided construction-funding assistance in one of two ways. First, the PWA worked through the existing federal bureaucracy, such as allotting PWA money to the Treasury Department for post office construction. Second, the PWA worked with states and municipalities in funding local requests. Only a fraction of the thousands of applications received were approved. The states received an allotment based on population and unemployment statistics.<sup>13</sup>

The PWA had an extremely close and detailed examination procedure for the applications. First, the engineering division would review technical and design details of a project. Then, the financial division would examine the project costs. Next, the law division would ensure the project met any legal requirements. After passing this initial review, the project would then go before the PWA Review Board. Once the board completed its review, Administrator Harold Ickes took the board's report to President Roosevelt. After receiving presidential approval or rejection, the project's status was released to the news media.<sup>14</sup>

Mr. Ickes, with the approval of President Roosevelt, decided that the projects designed by the PWA had to be visually pleasing, as well as cost effective.<sup>15</sup> Architects during the 1930s, although classically trained, often desired to express modern ideas in their designs, and viewed Art Deco as a means to that end.<sup>16</sup> These two positions, along with the general popularity of Art Deco in the 1930s, explain why this type of architecture was common in federally-supported projects. The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse has special significance because it is Moderne architecture, a later period subset of Art Deco that employed Beaux Arts classicism, combined with Streamline Moderne and International style influences. So popular was the Art Deco/Moderne style with New Deal building projects, it came to also be known as "Federal Deco," or "PWA Moderne." The style was cost effective; and it was

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<sup>12</sup> United States Office of Government Reports, *Nevada Volume II: Statistical Section 1940, Work Accomplishment Report 1933-1938*, (United States Printing Office, 1940), 9. The Public Works Administration participated in the construction of the Nevada State Supreme Court Building in Carson City in 1937, employing the Art Deco style of architecture.

<sup>13</sup> Jeanne Nienaber Clarke, *Roosevelt's Warrior: Harold L. Ickes and the New Deal*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 160

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 157-158.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 66, 98.

<sup>16</sup> Steven R. Hoffbeck, "Art Deco Architecture in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 62, no.4, (Fall 1995): 16.

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1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 9. Significance, continued

based on a popular, visually pleasing style. The Art Deco characteristics satisfied the desires of the residents of Lincoln County, as well, whose enthusiasm for the modern was demonstrated in a Chamber of Commerce brochure: “. . . the present structure [the new courthouse] is a symbol of the modern approach to local problems, just as the old one is a symbol of the old treatment of them. Well-equipped and modern in every respect, it is being paid for in a systematic manner.”<sup>17</sup>

### *Courthouse Construction*

The Board of County Commissioners decided to build the courthouse on a parcel of land adjacent to the town park on ground that the Town of Pioche already owned. The county purchased the site from the township, since the state law at that time did not allow donation of the property. Bids were advertised, and those received in November 1937 were all rejected as being above the \$60,000 limit the County Commission had authorized for the bond issue. A new advertisement for bids went out in March of 1938 and were received and opened in April of that year. The construction firm of L. F. Dow of Los Angeles, California and Las Vegas, Nevada were awarded the contract for the courthouse with a bid of \$49,347.00. Dedication of the completed building was scheduled for 21 June 1939. Unlike the county's past experience, the debt for the new courthouse was retired in less than 20 years.<sup>18</sup>

The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse is still located at the corner of Pioche and Main Streets on the alluvial fan below the main business and commerce sections of town, and faces up toward the center of Pioche and its mines, roughly to the south. It has been in continual use as a county courthouse, state office building, Sheriff's office, and city and county jail. It also currently houses the offices of Lincoln County.

### **Criterion C—Architectural Significance**

The Lincoln County Commissioners selected A.L. Worswick, the architect who had previously condemned the 1871 courthouse, to design the new public building. Mr. Worswick was one of the most prolific and influential architects in Las Vegas during the early years of the twentieth century.

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<sup>17</sup> Pioche Chamber of Commerce, *Pioche, Nevada: Largest Zinc and Lead Producer in Nevada*, Brochure, Lincoln County Historical Museum, p. 7. Although undated, internal details prevent the brochure from being more recent than 1960. It probably was made in the early 1950s. The cover notes Pioche is “Today A Modern Community” after listing some nineteenth century historical references, and the subtitle on page 6 is “The Camp with Plenty of Promise”, a marked contrast to late twentieth century references as “The Camp that Came Back.”

<sup>18</sup> Ronald M. James, *Temples of Justice: County Courthouses of Nevada*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 106.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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1938 Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincoln County, Nevada

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## 8. Significance, continued

Worswick came to Las Vegas around 1929, where his career continued into the 1940s. He was a native of Kansas and a graduate of Kansas State University. Worswick's architectural career began in 1902 in San Francisco, and in 1904, he joined the city's Bureau of Architecture. Presumably, Worswick had a role in rebuilding San Francisco following the 1906 earthquake and fire, as did Nevada's other prominent courthouse architect, Frederic DeLongchamps.<sup>19</sup>

Worswick served on the Las Vegas City Planning Commission and during his tenure advocated city planning and controlled growth. Among numerous others in Las Vegas, Mr. Worswick designed the Henderson House, the Palace Theater, the War Memorial Building, the Chief Hotel Court on Fremont Street, and the old McCarran Airport terminal building.<sup>20</sup> He lived in what is now known as the Las Vegas High School Historic District, and he designed two Las Vegas buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Whitehead House, and the Las Vegas Hospital. Unfortunately, they were both destroyed by fire.<sup>21</sup> Mr. Worswick also made a significant impact on the current culture of Las Vegas by designing the Hotel Apache. This was one of the first hotel-casinos in the city, built shortly after gambling was legalized in 1931. He designed the building to distinguish it from other downtown buildings and draw the attention of potential customers.<sup>22</sup> As far as can be determined, the Lincoln County Courthouse is the only example of Worswick's use of the Art Deco style. The Pioche building, which he rendered in a style that looked to the future rather than the past, provides a link between two eras of courthouse construction in Nevada.

### *Art Deco*

The Art Deco architectural style blends a variety of architectural sources and movements, but its popularity in the United States can be traced to American exposure to the 1925 Paris Exposition. This style is primarily defined by the nonstructural elements that focus on surface and form. During its popularity peak in the United States between 1925 and 1945, this style existed alongside other architectural schools and movements. After 1945, its popularity declined rapidly as a design motif. Modern architectural historians describe Art Deco as architecture of technology, geometry, optimism, vibrancy, and an exuberant pursuit of the modern, casting off the old.

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald M. James, *Temples of Justice: County Courthouses of Nevada*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994), 106.

<sup>20</sup> Dorothy Wright, *Wildcat Country: Las Vegas High School and Its Neighborhood 1930-1945*, (Las Vegas: The Nevada State Museum & Historical Society, 1989), 12, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Sean Whaley, "Historic sites in state dwindling," *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, 6 November 2000, [http://www.lvrj.com/lvrj\\_home/2000/Nov-06-Mon-2000/news/14736331.html](http://www.lvrj.com/lvrj_home/2000/Nov-06-Mon-2000/news/14736331.html).

<sup>22</sup> Jörg Rügemeier, *Lost Las Vegas: Vanishing Relics of a Transient Past*, (Los Angeles: Public Access Press, 1996), 15.

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## 8. Significance, continued

Art Deco was used more for public buildings than private ones, and courthouses represented a small but significant percentage of those public buildings. *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* lists sixteen courthouses of this variety of architecture found in America. The use of Art Deco designs for PWA-built buildings during the Great Depression accounts for much of the public emphasis. While Nevada contains several examples of Art Deco architecture, such as the post offices in downtown Reno and Lovelock, the Robert H. Mitchell School in Sparks, the Las Vegas High School, Hoover Dam, and the Nevada Supreme Court and Library Building in Carson City, there is only one Art Deco county courthouse in Nevada: the Lincoln County Courthouse in Pioche.

### *Impact*

The Great Depression brought many changes to the social landscape. During that decade, the federal government, through New Deal agencies, provided funds for nearly as many local projects as it has done since. By participation in New Deal programs, Lincoln County became a part of the greater nation by allowing the country to participate in local affairs as it paid for a significant portion of the courthouse construction. In return, Lincoln County, which had faced an earlier courthouse debacle, had to agree to meet federal standards for design, functionality, appearance, and utility. The residents of Lincoln County also accepted the responsibility of sound fiscal management, and pursued this ideal not only for themselves, but also for the citizens of Nevada who purchased the bonds.

Within this historical context, the 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse is not only an important example of the PWA Moderne style of Art Deco architecture, but it is also a lasting monument to the spirit and determination of the people who settled and developed this community amidst the harsh elements of the eastern Nevada desert.

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**10. Geographical Data**

***Verbal Boundary Description***

The 1938 Lincoln County Courthouse is identified as Assessor's parcel Number 01-039-01. The legal description is as follows: Beginning at a point on the West side of Pioche street from which the South East Corner of Section 22 T. 1 N. R. 67 E. MDM bears South 14° 21' East 4846.2 feet; thence, North 42° 8' East 60 feet; thence, North 4° 3' East 200 feet; thence, North 85° 57' West 242 feet; thence, South 4° 3' West 247.2 feet; thence, South 85° 57' East 205 feet to the place of beginning, containing 1.35 acres of land and being in the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of said Section 22 T. 1 N. R. 67 E. MDM. in Lincoln County, Nevada.

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**10. Geographical Data, continued**

***Boundary Justification***

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the courthouse. The parcel is currently bounded on the north by Fourth Street, on the south by Pioche Street and the east by Main Street, and on the west by a community park and baseball fields extant at the time of construction.

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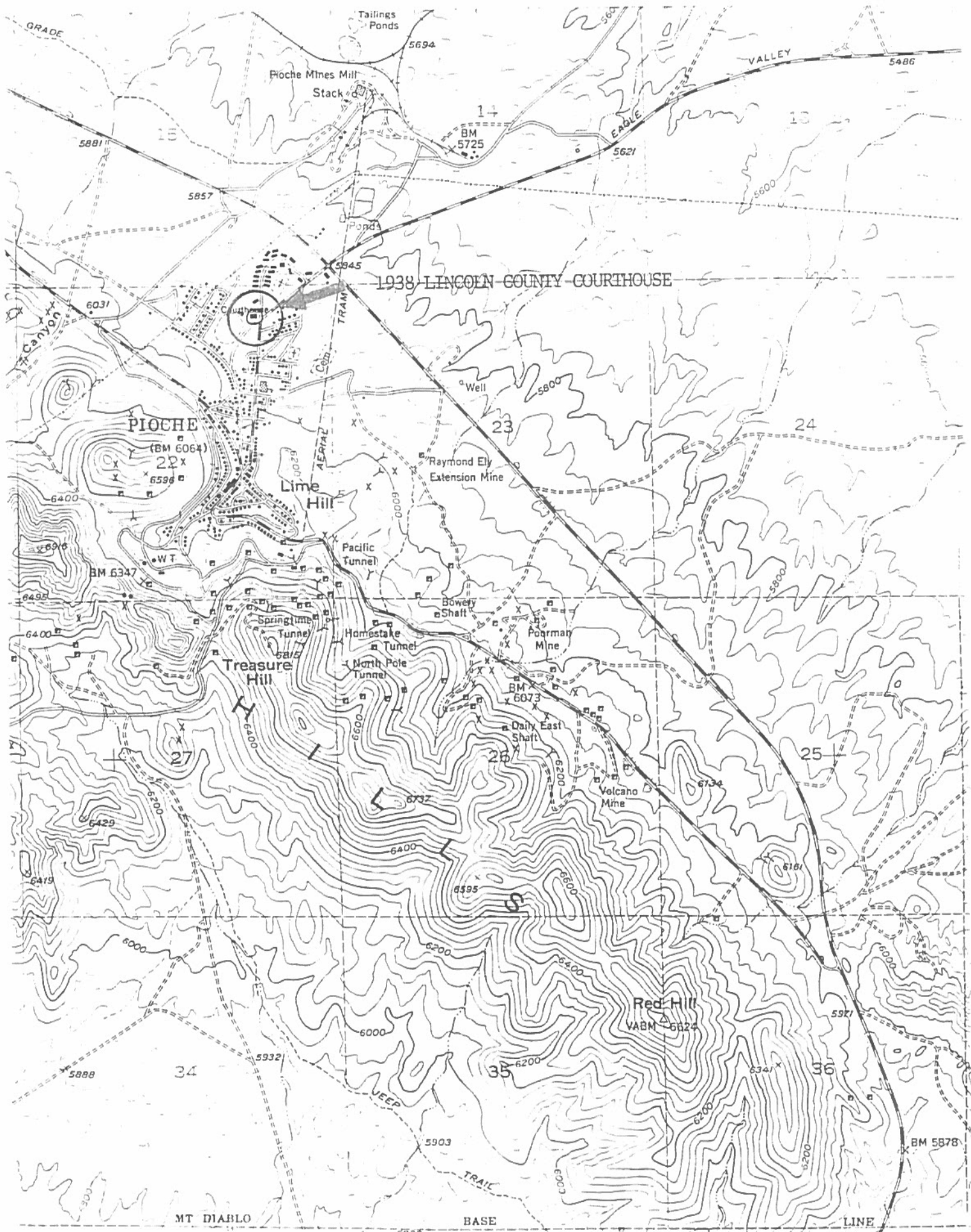
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**Photographs**

Name of Property:	1938 Lincoln County Courthouse
County/State:	Lincoln County, Nevada
Location of Negatives:	State Historic Preservation Office 100 North Stewart Street Carson City, NV 89701
Date of Photographs:	November 2001
Photographer:	Richard Coop
Photograph 1:	Front (south) elevation Facing north
Photograph 2:	South and east elevations Facing northwest
Photograph 3:	West elevation Facing east
Photograph 4:	Rear (north) elevation Facing south



LINCOLN COUNTY COURIHOUSE (1938)

U.S.G.S. 7.5' QUADRANGLE PIOCHE, NEV  
1953 (P.R. 1969)

LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSION HOUSE

1936



LINCOLN COUNTY COURT HOUSE





