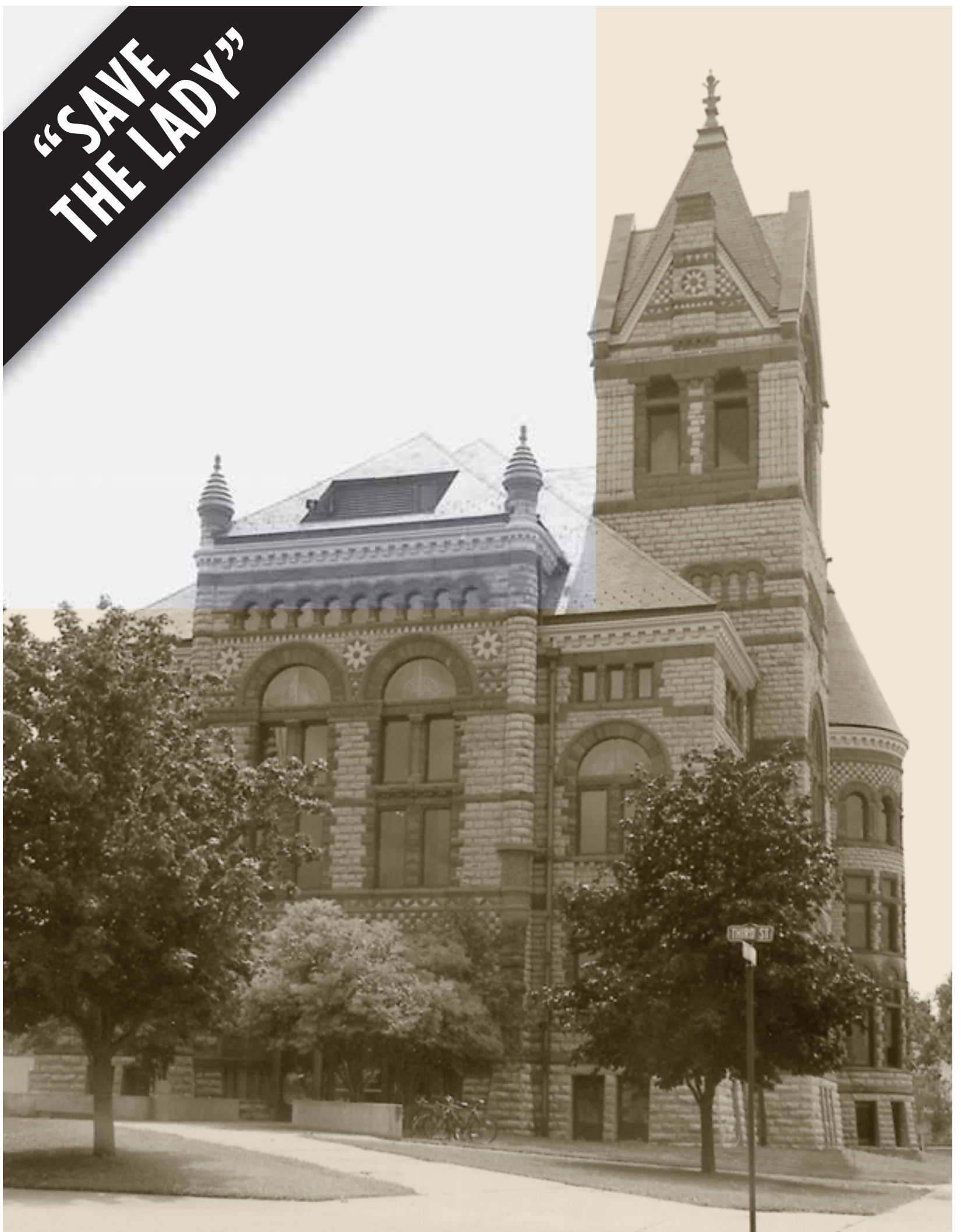


**“SAVE  
THE LADY”**



# The Struggle for the Winona County Courthouse

GREG GAUT AND MARSHA NEFF

**In 1956, Winona business** leaders set out to realize their dream of a modernized downtown. Their first goal was to demolish both the Winona County Courthouse and the U.S. Post Office and Federal Building, built in 1888 and 1890. They planned to replace these with a new federal-county government center to be located in Central Park, a wooded square block in downtown Winona that featured an elaborate fountain with a statue of Princess Wenonah, the legendary Indian maid for whom the city is named. In September, the Chamber of Commerce invited business and political leaders to a lunch meeting and explained its short-term objective of blocking a federal plan to spend \$100,000 renovating Winona's post office. The meeting went very well. The city council president, for example, rose to argue that spending that kind of money on an old building would be like "dumping it in the lake."<sup>1</sup>

In the end, however, the chamber realized only half of its dream. The old post office was razed after a new one opened in 1963. The Winona County Courthouse, however, still dominates the city skyline, the result of one of the state's earliest and longest battles over the historic preservation of a public building. After 18 years of controversy, Winonans who wanted to save the courthouse narrowly prevailed. The grand rededication of the remodeled building in 1974, however, turned out not to be the finale,

as the controversy quite unexpectedly resurfaced in 2000, leading to yet another rededication in 2003.

Why did Winona's business and political leaders place such a high priority on replacing nineteenth-century buildings with modernist ones? Why did many other Winonans dedicate considerable time, energy, and money to stopping them? The evidence indicates that Winonans disagreed about much more than whether an historically significant building should be preserved. Rather, the conflict seems to be part of a broader clash of visions involving deep disagreements about American culture.

**C. G. Maybury and Son**, a Winona architectural firm, designed both the Winona County Courthouse and the U.S. Post Office and Federal Building. Like many architects in the 1880s, Maybury was influenced by the public buildings of H. H. Richardson, the creator of a unique style now referred to as Richardsonian Romanesque.<sup>2</sup> This style was characterized by rock-faced stonework punctuated by carved stone ornaments, deep Roman arches over doors and windows, and dramatic asymmetrical towers. The Winona County Courthouse,

FACING PAGE: *Winona County Courthouse, built of local sandstone accented with Lake Superior brownstone*

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*Bird's-eye view, showing points of interest in the burgeoning town of Winona, 1874.  
The map, by George H. Ellsbury, was produced by the Chicago Lithographing Company.*

an imposing structure with two unmatched towers, is a classic exemplar of this style. The exterior, constructed of local sandstone accented by Lake Superior brown-stone, featured many stone ornaments. The interior was trimmed throughout in oak, including the main stairway, which was ornamented with intricately carved newel posts. Important offices had tiled fireplaces, and there was a wealth of stained glass in the windows and transoms. The post office, built of limestone and granite, was similar but smaller and not quite so ornate. Still, its facade had extensive decorative stonework, and the building featured a grand 121-foot tower.

**Winonans disagreed about much more than whether an historically significant building should be preserved.**

Buildings like these were common in the rapidly growing towns and cities of the midland prairie states in the 1880s. Settlers, whether established Americans moving west or European immigrants, wanted their new cities to equal, if not surpass, those in the East. The settlers had, as geographer Judith A. Martin noted, “urban ex-

pectations;” that is, they thought their cities should have grand public buildings of brick and stone.<sup>3</sup> The powerful arches and towers of Richardson’s dramatic style seemed an appropriate way to express the developing urban identity of the new political and economic elites in the Midwest.

Winona grew rapidly in the 1880s as the result of a dynamic economy fueled by the grain, lumber, and transportation sectors. Maybury’s use of the Richardsonian style was clearly intended to announce to the world that Winona was an important city with a great future. When the courthouse opened in 1889, local newspapers gushed with pride. Noting its “remarkably pleasing architectural design,” the *Daily Republican* called the courthouse “worthy of the leading county of Southern Minnesota.”<sup>4</sup>

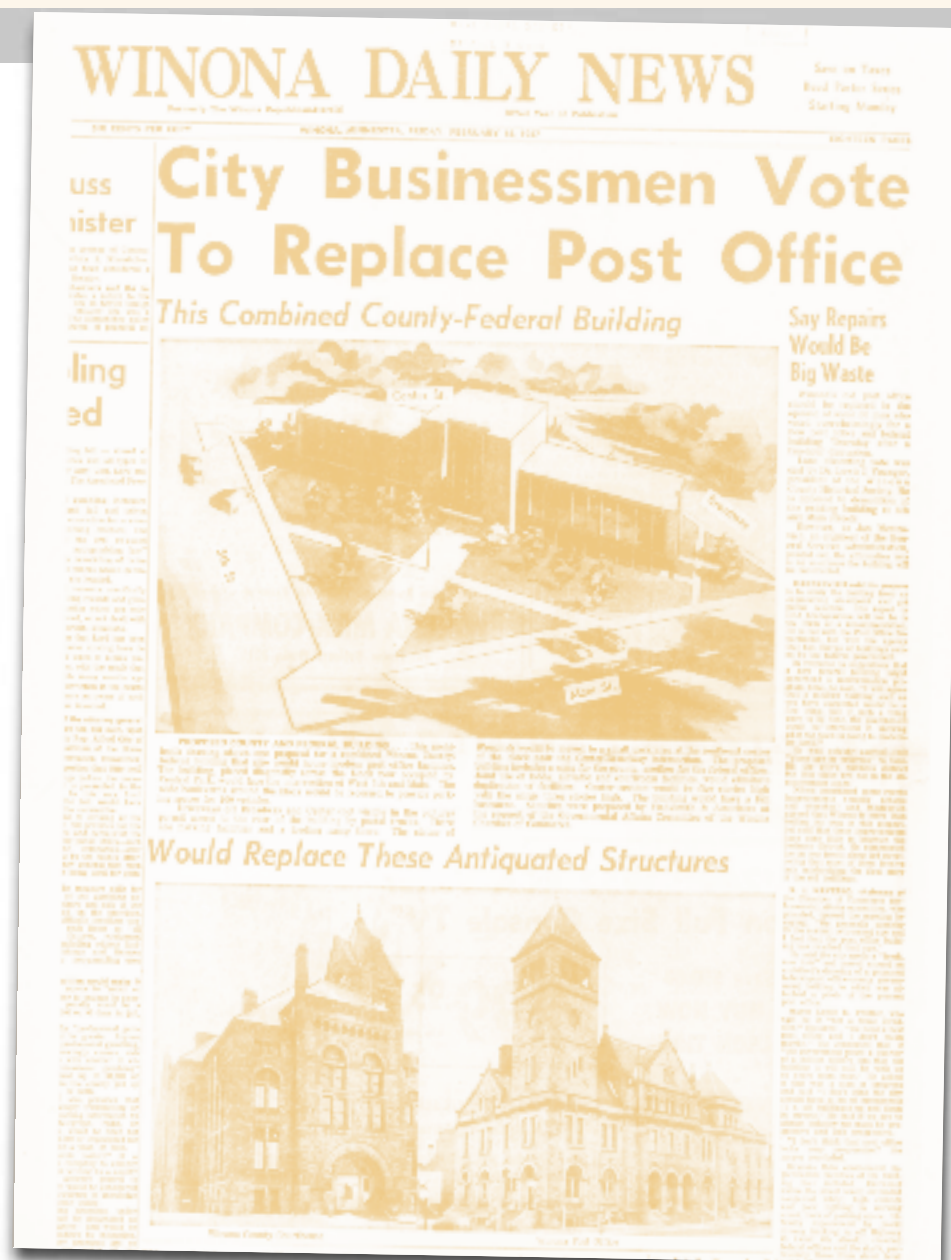
**Sinclair Lewis** had the Winona County Courthouse in mind when he wrote his 1941 novel *Cass Timberlane*, whose main character is a judge who loved his romantic old courthouse as a “symbol of the ancient and imperial law.” It was, Lewis continued, “his Westminster, his Sorbonne.”<sup>5</sup> By 1956 however, ornate public buildings no longer inspired such affection among Winona’s judicial, political, and business leaders.



When the Chamber of Commerce began its campaign in 1956, only a few Winonans had thought much about the need to preserve historic buildings. Nationally, the historic preservation movement was in its infancy. The National Trust was only seven years old, and the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act was still ten years away. When the Chamber of Commerce called a second, larger meeting in early 1957 to build support for replacing the post office and courthouse, all but one of the approximately 80 men in attendance voted in favor. The lone dissenter was Dr. Lewis I. Younger, president of the Winona County Historical Society (WCHS).<sup>6</sup>

Earlier, the WCHS board of directors had written an open letter opposing the destruction of the post office, which it called “a living tribute to the heritage of our city.” In a written response, Winona National Bank president S. J. Kryzsko argued that Winona faced a choice. It could work to achieve the “clean, fresh look of a modern city” by building “new modern buildings which are evidence of present day growth and progress.” Or it could settle for “sentimental attachment” to “old fashioned monuments.” He warned that sentimental attachment to “the glory that was Greece” had not preserved a “place in the sun” for Greece as a modern nation. He closed his argument by observing that styles change for cities just as they do for women’s apparel. “What woman today would come out wearing the fashions of yesterday?” he asked, adding, “Would you like it if she did?”<sup>7</sup>

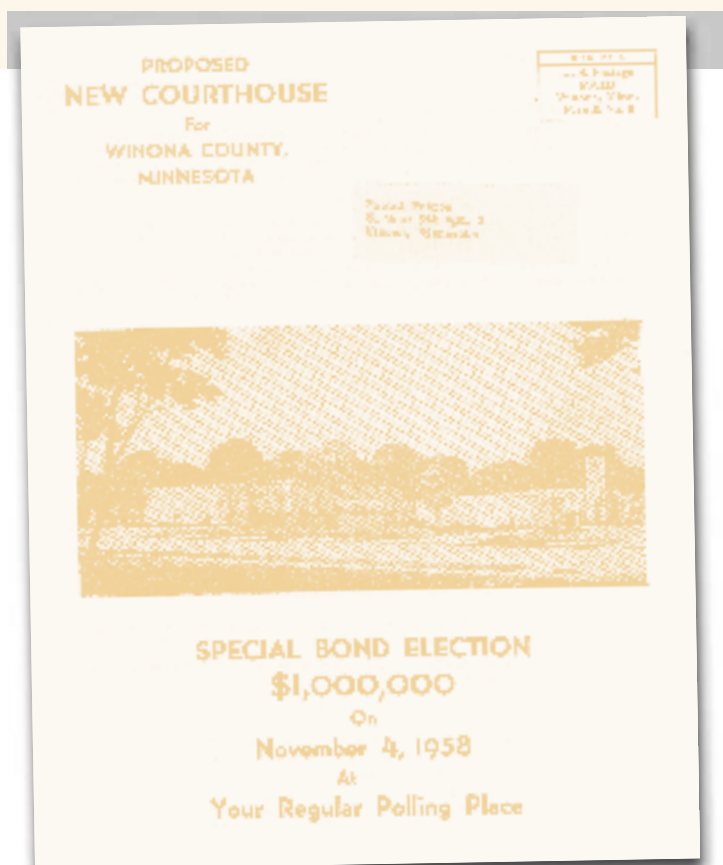
The Chamber of Commerce worked hard at lobbying federal officials. In the spring of 1958, Kryzsko and the chamber won over First District Congressman Albert H. Quie and U.S. Senators Hubert H. Humphrey and Edward J. Thye to their plan for a new post office. Mean-



Front-page news, February 15, 1957

while, Younger, as an individual, wrote an open letter to the community arguing, “Winona would not be improved by destroying the present building and erecting the new factory-type efficiency building that we are almost certain to get.” In addition, he stated that the idea of condemning Central Park with its Princess Wenonah fountain for use as the building site was “so grossly blasphemous that I recoil in horror.” Although the federal government declined to share a building with the county, it did agree to build the plain, one-story, box-shaped building in Central Park that functions as Winona’s post office today.<sup>8</sup> A bank bought the old post office and demolished it to make way for its new building: a two-story, modernist box.

The chamber then turned its attention to the court-



Cover of the 1958 brochure sent to all Winona County residents

house and before long had convinced the Board of County Commissioners to place on the November 1958 ballot a \$1 million bond referendum to finance a modern building. Campaigning for a “yes” vote, the chamber sent a brochure to county residents that noted: “Winona County is the best place in the world to live,” but a few things needed improvement, including the courthouse, which, it claimed, could not possibly be remodeled to modern standards. The need for a new courthouse was clear: “The present one is done.”<sup>9</sup>

The *Winona Daily News*, the city’s sole newspaper, campaigned enthusiastically in favor of a new courthouse—and not only in its editorials. In the months before the election, the newspaper published five illustrated news articles under the recurring title “Why a New Courthouse?” The lead sentence of the first article—“There is a great stone dinosaur in our midst”—set the theme. The newspaper stressed that the building was ugly as well as inefficient, crowded, and a fire hazard. Accompanying the article was a photo of the courthouse captioned “a civic eyesore.”<sup>10</sup>

The campaign, however, failed to convince enough voters countywide, and the referendum was rejected by 57 percent of them. The strongest opposition came

from citizens outside of Winona, voters who, some speculated, saw no benefit to paying for a city building. In a post-election editorial, the newspaper grumbled that Winona’s mayor “spoke for many of us who want progress and prosperity” when he said, “I want to hang my head in shame.”<sup>11</sup>

Two years later, the county board and the chamber tried again, and this time they put much more energy into winning “yes” votes for the \$1.1 million bond referendum. The commissioners mailed all households a brochure entitled “Factual Information” that laid out the case for a new courthouse. The commissioners argued that the vaults in which the county kept records were too small and not fireproof. (The State Fire Marshal had cited the building and recommended a number of safety improvements, including a sprinkler system.) For its part, the Chamber of Commerce organized the Winona County Courthouse Committee, and this group, too, sent a mailing to county voters. Under the slogan “The need is great,” this flier also stressed the danger of fire.<sup>12</sup> If deeds were lost to fire, it suggested, property rights in Winona County would be in question. If birth records were lost, citizens would have difficulty establishing Social Security claims.

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Meanwhile, the *Winona Daily News* continued to criticize the existing courthouse, also stressing the fire-hazard theme. The newspaper dismissed opposition to the bond referendum as being “based on sentimental reasons—love for the outward appearance of this horse and buggy courthouse which is now outworn, dangerous and thoroughly inadequate.” In spite of this extra effort, the 1960 referendum also failed. Although it passed easily in three of the four Winona city wards, it once again did poorly in rural Winona County, where it lost by a two-to-one margin.<sup>13</sup>

**The county board** waited seven years before trying again. In the meantime, the concept of urban renewal

was sweeping the country, fueled by the availability of federal funding for slum clearance. In this new context, Winonans from both sides tried to strengthen their cases. For example, the county historical society's Younger sought the aid of Minnesota Historical Society director Russell W. Fridley, who helped arrange for a visit by St. Paul architect Edwin H. Lundie in 1961. Lundie inspected the courthouse, found it structurally sound and historically significant, and then presented findings in support of its preservation to the Winona County Township Officers Association, an organization that sought to rally rural voters against proposals for a new courthouse. On the other side, the *Winona Daily News* continued to remind readers of the need for a new courthouse in occasional news articles and editorials. In late 1961, for example, it editorialized, "Our antiquated courthouse is an ugly eyesore" and a "disgrace to our civic virtue." The paper again noted that fire might destroy the courthouse but added ominously that this might be a positive development: "At least we would be forced to build a new one."<sup>14</sup>

The courthouse controversy began to heat up in earnest in early 1967 when the county board appointed a study commission of about three dozen citizens from across the county, including Younger of the WCHS. Concerned about the growing talk of urban renewal, Younger and the Winona County Historical Society in January invited William Wesley Peters, lead architect at Taliesen Associated Architects, the Wisconsin firm founded by Frank Lloyd Wright, to tour Winona. Following his visit, the WCHS published his remarks in a booklet. Peters argued that Winona should seek to preserve buildings that expressed its uniqueness as an historic river town. It would be a mistake, he said, to replace usable older buildings with "chrome-plated and glass-fronted monstrosities" that were changing the face of America into a "drab, common similarity." He also evaluated the courthouse, which he found to be structurally sound and clearly repairable. He recommended that it be fully restored and suggested that it would not only provide office space, but "would always be an attraction to tourists."<sup>15</sup>

Younger cited Peters' comments in his attempt to sway the citizens' commission. However, most members were more impressed with the report of local architect Wayne Smith, who argued that "modernizing" the existing courthouse would cost more than a new building of

the same size. After four months, the commission voted overwhelmingly to support a third bond referendum, with only Younger and three others opposed.<sup>16</sup> The county board set the election for September 12, 1967.

This time, citizens' groups organized to campaign actively on both sides of the issue. Proponents of a new courthouse formed the Citizens Courthouse Committee and asked Dan Trainor Jr., owner of a printing business, to be one of its chairs. Trainor was part of a dynamic group within the Winona Jaycees who were committed to civic improvement projects in the county. The centerpiece of its courthouse campaign was a large, two-color brochure hand-delivered to households. Titled "This Is The Solution To An Urgent Problem," it featured an architect's rendering of the proposed modernist courthouse next to a drawing of the existing courthouse in which all the lines were wobbly, giving the impression that the building was about to fall down. The brochure alleged that the courthouse had structural defects ("bearing walls were cracked" and "South wall tipping toward South"). Trainor's committee also published a series of half-page ads in the *Winona Daily News* using these images and arguments and organized a courthouse tour. Committee members were convinced that voters who saw the condition of the building would vote for the bond.<sup>17</sup>



*Lewis I. Younger,  
president of the  
Winona County  
Historical Society,  
about 1958*

**In spite of active campaigning,  
only 29 percent of voters went  
to the polls on September 12.**

On the other side, and with considerably fewer resources, a small group called Citizens for a Well-Planned Courthouse issued a mimeographed one-page flier calling for a "no" vote. This leaflet argued that the \$1.3 million bond request was not supported by adequate planning. Several organizations, including the Kiwanis Club, hosted debates between representatives of these two groups.<sup>18</sup>

The *Winona Daily News* worked hand-in-hand with the Citizens Courthouse Committee, publishing its material in a series of news columns entitled "Questions,





*Citizens Courthouse Committee brochure, 1967, hand-delivered to county households*

Answers about Courthouse.” In addition to conventional editorials promoting a “yes” vote, the newspaper published the statements of six staff writers, ranging from the managing editor to the courthouse reporter, all favoring a new building.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, there were spirited exchanges in the letters column, mostly by individuals associated with the two opposed groups. The writers primarily debated whether a new courthouse was necessary and whether the need was great enough to justify the cost. At this stage of the dispute, there was no clear voice defending the courthouse as historically significant. In part, this was because Younger had announced in August that the Winona County Historical Society would “take no active part in the courthouse issue and that its officers would refrain from any public appearances or commitments concerning the matter.” Likely, Younger understood that the historical society might lose its county funding if it openly opposed the board’s plans.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of active campaigning, only 29 percent of voters went to the polls on September 12. All four Winona city wards voted in favor, but once again, there were two “no”

votes for every “yes” in the villages and townships of rural Winona County. However, this referendum had failed by only 221 votes in a county with 23,000 eligible voters.<sup>21</sup>

**Encouraged because** the margin of defeat was narrowing, the county board voted in early 1969 to authorize a fourth referendum. Then, in 1970 the board suddenly decided not to take that risk. Instead, in June it announced that the county would construct a new courthouse *without* a bond referendum by building in three stages using existing funds. According to this plan, the first stage would be a two-story modernist box attached to the south side of the courthouse. When the county was ready to build the later stages, the old courthouse would be razed. The board again contracted with architect Wayne Smith, and in mid-July approved his plans for the first stage.<sup>22</sup> The contentious courthouse issue, it seemed, had finally been settled. But then a surprising new force appeared, and the conflict escalated once again.

On September 9, a group of 25 citizens representing a newly formed group, the Committee for a Sensible Court-

house Plan, attended the county board meeting, “spurred verbally” with the commissioners, and presented a petition signed by 1,300 people opposing the board’s plan. In the spring, two sisters, Pogo and Peggy Tweedy—one a college student and the other in high school—had asked Evelyn Bambenek, a Winona housewife and an active member of the Winona County Historical Society, to help them with a petition campaign to save the courthouse. When her son Greg returned to Winona for the summer after graduating from college, she asked him to help, and he investigated the issue and organized the new group. At the board meeting, Greg Bambenek cross-examined county board chair Leonard Merchlewitz, who conceded that the board had spent little on courthouse maintenance over the previous decade. Bambenek also accused the board of undemocratically “subverting and circumventing” the will of the voters who had three times rejected plans for a new courthouse.<sup>23</sup>

By early October, the Committee for a Sensible Courthouse Plan had incorporated as the Winona County Progress and Preservation Association, Inc. (WCPPA). When Greg Bambenek left Winona to start medical school, the group elected Edwin Maus, a farmer and piano tuner, president.<sup>24</sup>

The WCPPA attracted media attention, both locally and in the Twin Cities, because many of its most visible members, like Greg Bambenek and vice-president Pattilee Frisby, were in their 20s and also because it borrowed tactics from the civil rights and antiwar movements. However, the WCPPA was a diverse group that included older citizens like accountant Paul Libera, who had long opposed a new courthouse, and members of Winona’s wealthiest families. One of them was “honorary chairwoman” Gladys Watkins, the daughter-in-law of Paul Watkins, former president of J. R. Watkins Company, the Winona firm famous for its home sales of vanilla and other household products.<sup>25</sup>

The WCPPA made extensive use of traditional tactics like newspaper advertisements and public forums with speakers and slides, but it also attracted publicity by organizing a picket line at the courthouse and writing and recording “Save the Lady,” a protest song. The group generated funds to support its activities with paid memberships, donations, and fundraising dances featuring rock, folk, and jazz music. It was also adept at using confrontation to turn county board meetings into media

events. In October the group appeared at one such meeting, this time with 40 members. They loudly “serenaded” the commissioners with “Save the Lady,” and then several members made statements to the board. Gladys Watkins compared Winona unfavorably to Russia, where, she said, the government was trying to preserve historic buildings. Pattilee Frisby asked what consideration had been given to the WCPPA’s September petition demanding a halt in the plans for a new courthouse.<sup>26</sup>

**The trial would be held in  
the very building that was the  
subject of the litigation.**

When it became clear that the county board would not reconsider its decision, the WCPPA tried another approach. It contacted the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), seeking to have the courthouse listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In September 1970, WCPPA treasurer Evelyn Bambenek filed the initial papers, and in early November the MHS sent the nomination form to the U.S. Department of Interior with a request to expedite evaluation in light of the county board’s plans to raze the courthouse. In December MHS director Fridley announced that the courthouse was officially listed on the National Register, the first Minnesota county courthouse to be so designated. Fridley told the press, “This should give the efforts to preserve the building a lift.” Meanwhile, MHS historic sites supervisor Donn Coddington wrote to county board chair Merchlewitz that he hoped “every effort will be made to preserve this treasure of our national heritage.”<sup>27</sup>

Merchlewitz, however, was unmoved. He told the newspaper that he was “glad that the building was recognized,” but that the commissioners would nevertheless open bids for the construction of the new courthouse on January 6, 1971. In response, the WCPPA in early January asked District Court Judge Glenn Kelley for a temporary restraining order to halt the bidding process. The group argued that the county board had exceeded its authority by moving forward without a bond referendum. On the day scheduled to open bids, the judge issued the order, and the case was set for an early February trial date.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, the trial would be held in the very building that was the subject of the litigation.



**Twin Cities attorney** James O'Connor represented the WCPA at trial, aided behind the scenes by Dr. Younger, who continued to play an active but nonpublic role in order to protect the WCHS's county funding. The parties agreed to a stipulation of evidence that clearly showed that over the last 15 years the board had spent very little of its annual building fund on courthouse maintenance. O'Connor called several witnesses, including Russell Fridley and William W. Scott, chairman of the Historical Preservation Committee of the Minnesota Institute of Architects, as witnesses. The county attorney called local architect Wayne Smith and county commissioner Leo Borkowski, who admitted under cross-examination that he decided against a fourth bond referendum because he did not think it would pass.<sup>29</sup>

In his written opinion deciding the case, Judge Kelley eloquently described the architectural and historic significance of the courthouse in which his courtroom and chambers were located. He stated that if he had been a county commissioner he might well have voted for renovations. Even though he recognized that the three-stage plan would result in the destruction of the courthouse, he concluded that the county board could not be overruled judicially when it made decisions about county buildings.<sup>30</sup>

A week later, the action shifted to St. Paul, where a legislative subcommittee conducted a hearing on whether to list the courthouse as an official "state historic site." If so designated, the county board would need approval from the Minnesota Historical Society for any major al-

teration of the building. WCPA leaders testified in favor, while two county commissioners and several Winona business leaders testified against the bill, successfully arguing that it put a controversial local issue in the hands of a state agency.<sup>31</sup>

**Having won all the skirmishes**, the commissioners were now free to build a new courthouse in three stages. But instead of going forward, they hesitated. Several factors probably contributed to this. The National Register listing publicly recognized the courthouse as worthy of preservation. The failed WCPA lawsuit and legislative lobbying had succeeded in delaying the county board and keeping the issue before the public. Meanwhile, the WCPA continued to organize broad-based public pressure for preservation. It published newspaper ads asking citizens to sign and return a tear-off "courthouse ballot" agreeing that the building should be "preserved, renewed and used as a courthouse and county office building." In March the WCPA published a two-page newspaper ad that listed 1,100 citizens who had returned the ballot and authorized use of their names. The preservationist side was strengthened further when the Winona County branch of the National Farmers Organization gave its support to the WCPA.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, in January, the county board lost its most influential ally when the *Winona Daily News* switched sides. Acknowledging that he disliked "admitting that my



*Winona Board of County Commissioners, 1970 (from left): James Papenfuss, Leo Borkowski, Richard Schoonover, chair Leonard Merchlewitz, A. J. Wiczek, Paul Baer, and Julius Gernes.*



*Paid advertisement, Winona Daily News, January 31, 1971,  
shortly before the case to stop bidding went to trial*

previous thoughts were wrong,” the publisher now called on the commissioners to hire a “neutral architectural firm to make an expert study of just what could be done to make a usable building out of the present structure.” Then, after the lawsuit was dismissed, the editor urged the county board to abandon the three-stage plan, noting the “change in public opinion.”<sup>33</sup>

**The county board lost its most  
influential ally when the  
Winona Daily News switched sides.**

Finally, and perhaps decisively, Charles E. Williams of Winona had won a seat on the county board in the November 1970 election. He was the first commissioner in 15 years who was not committed to razing the courthouse. Before long, Williams decided that the board should bring a proposal to remodel the courthouse before the voters.<sup>34</sup>

As a result, the tide turned dramatically. In early April the board decided to hire a new architect to develop a remodeling plan that could be submitted to the voters in a bond referendum. After interviewing six architects, the board chose the Minneapolis firm of Horty, Elwing and Associates. When Thomas Horty delivered a preliminary plan in July, he proposed finishing the never-before-used third floor as a way of meeting the county’s growing need for office space. The redesign, he acknowledged, would remove most of the original oak woodwork, including the main stairway and the district courtroom’s trim. Charles Williams then proposed and the county board supported a fourth referendum to fund courthouse renovation.<sup>35</sup>

This time, the county board sent a noncommittal letter to voters explaining the background to the vote. The newspaper published some mild editorials in support of the bond. The WCPA, however, campaigned aggressively for a “yes” vote, arguing that remodeling was the most economical solution to the county’s space problem.

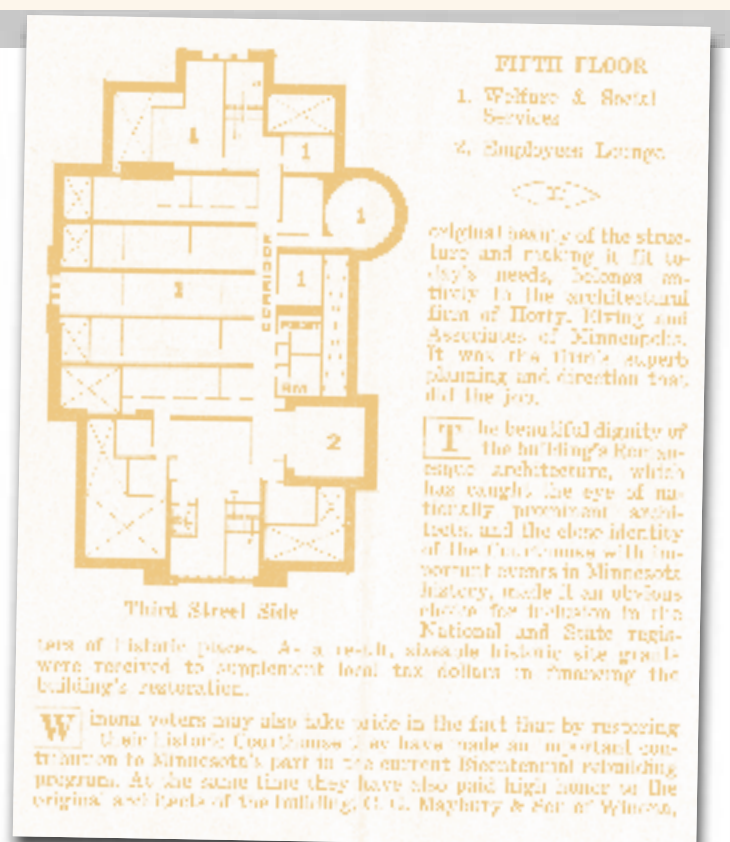
No group organized a full-scale campaign for a “no” vote, although Winona radio executive Jerry Papenfuss placed several newspaper ads on behalf of the Concerned Taxpayers’ Committee. These ads argued that the county would still lack office space after the courthouse was remodeled, whereas new construction would provide space that was cheaper per square foot.<sup>36</sup>

The opponents of renovation might have been more active had they not assumed that this referendum, too, would fail. But when citizens read their newspaper on December 8, 1971, they learned that 60 percent had voted “yes.” Even more “unbelievable,” as the newspaper headline read, rural voters, who had strongly rejected bonds for a new courthouse three times, now voted for renovation by a two-to-one majority.<sup>37</sup> Many people had assumed that rural opposition had been an expression of frugality or an unwillingness to fund a city building. In fact, rural voters were willing to approve a \$1.1 million bond to finance remodeling.

**Preservationist forces** had won the vote, but the struggle over what should happen to the courthouse was not over. The WCPPA had supported the referendum even though it was not happy with the remodeling plan. It hoped to influence the final design of the interior if the bond passed. During 1972 the WCPPA and the WCHS pushed for greater preservation of the interior. Meanwhile, court and other county personnel were complaining loudly that they still needed more space.<sup>38</sup>

In April 1972 Harty returned with a revised plan that he hoped would satisfy both sides. He originally had called for four floors of offices and courts (including the basement). The new plan added a new fifth floor in the attic space. He also claimed that he would save more of the existing woodwork and stained glass by coving the new dropped ceilings upward near the windows.<sup>39</sup>

After much haggling, the county commissioners awarded contracts for the exterior and interior work in early 1973, and by mid-1974 the \$2 million project was completed. Ultimately, the stained glass and fireplaces were saved, but much of the woodwork, including the grand stairway and the courtroom interiors, was lost. On the other hand, the exterior was cleaned of 80 years of soot, and the original contrasting colors of the sandstone and brownstone reappeared, thanks to historic preserva-



*Plan of the new fifth floor, from the 1974 courthouse rededication brochure.*

tion grants from the federal and state governments totaling about \$140,000. In sum, a restoration of the exterior was coupled with, as preservation writer Robert Roscoe noted, a “modernist blow-out of the interior.” It was, as the *Winona Daily News* put it, “a compromise.”<sup>40</sup>

The county board, still led by Leonard Merchlewitz and Leo Borkowski, hosted a gala rededication of the courthouse and a public open house on December 8, 1974. Almost 20 years after deciding to raze the building, the board prepared a brochure announcing that “the beautiful dignity of the building’s Romanesque architecture” and its close identity with important events in Minnesota history “made it an obvious choice for inclusion in the National and State registers of historic places.” At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the mayor, state legislators, representatives from the Minnesota Historical Society and the Winona County Historical Society, and even Borkowski gave short speeches. Then 3,000 citizens toured their courthouse, far exceeding the county board’s expectations.<sup>41</sup> After years of division, the county leaders and the majority of citizens were finally on the same page, together singing the praises of their historic courthouse.



**Why was the courthouse** a divisive issue for so long? This controversy allows us to examine grassroots ideas about the value of older buildings because it began long before the National Historic Preservation Act and State Historic Preservation Offices had popularized the idea of historic preservation. The dispute presents a paradox. Politically conservative business and elected leaders sought to tear down a substantial nineteenth-century symbol of “law and order” and replace it with a building in a new architectural style rooted in the modernism of the European avant garde. A preservationist movement, energized by young people influenced by the 1960s counterculture and protest movements, rose up to save it.

Proponents of a new courthouse consistently argued that the county needed more space, the old courthouse was a fire hazard, and tax dollars would be more efficiently spent on new construction. Their campaign routinely ignored the question of whether the courthouse was historically or architecturally significant; it was just old. For example, Daniel Trainor Jr., who co-chaired the citizens’ committee in 1967, argued that there were only two basic issues: how much it cost to remodel and how much it cost to build new. He favored a new courthouse because “remodeling would cost the same and you would

still have an old building.” Looking back on the controversy, he noted that he was influenced by arguments that the courthouse was beyond repair. He also liked the fact that a modern building could easily be expanded to accommodate future county-government growth. Businessman Jerry Papenfuss, who campaigned against renovation in 1971, bluntly stated that the arguments about the architectural merit of the courthouse “carried no weight with me whatsoever.” The building was an inefficient “black hole.”<sup>42</sup>

Although practical issues of space, efficiency, and cost took center stage, the Chamber of Commerce’s 1956 project to replace the post office and courthouse was fundamentally driven by concerns about architectural style and the overall look of the downtown. Bank president Kryzsko’s 1956 letter to the WCHS set the tone by rejecting Victorian architecture as backward and old fashioned and celebrating the “clean, fresh look” of modern architecture as pointing the way to prosperity and progress. The *Winona Daily News* reinforced this theme, repeatedly worrying that “the great stone dinosaur” signaled to outsiders that the city was content to stay in a “horse and buggy” era: “The present shabby courthouse, which looks like a medieval dungeon, gives the rest of downtown a



*Winona's new post office, 1963*

black eye. What out-of-town businessman . . . would after seeing this aging structure be inspired to establish a new industry here?”<sup>43</sup> Clearly, local business leaders feared that cities weighted down by the symbols of the past would be left behind.

The business and political elite associated modern architecture with the expansion of commerce, or “progress,” and they came to believe that they had the right to impose that style on Winona’s public buildings without citizen input. In this they followed a design trend that was sweeping the country. Major U.S. corporations were hiring architects to build factories and corporate headquarters in the modern or “international style,” or what some architectural historians now call “corporate international style.” In 1957, for example, Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram Building was rising in New York City and closer to home, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill was designing the modernist General Mills headquarters in Golden Valley. The Winona business community was surely aware that Saarinen, Saarinen and Associates was erecting a corporate international-style building for IBM just down the road in Rochester.<sup>44</sup>

The desire to replace Victorian buildings with modern ones was also fueled by an aesthetic rejection of Richardsonian Romanesque style. The problem, the *Winona Daily News* argued, was not just that the courthouse was an old, dilapidated, inefficient firetrap, but also that it was ugly. The newspaper began using the phrase “civic eyesore” in the 1958 referendum campaign and later adopted the redundant term, “ugly eyesore.” A 1964 editorial bluntly stated: “We are also inclined to take a dim view of those who say the courthouse should be preserved for its architectural or aesthetic value. At best, it is typical of an era when bad art and ugly buildings abounded.” This was hardly a passing view, as this 1967 editorial demonstrates: “On the much-discussed point of architectural quality, we have to side with those who consider the old courthouse hideous. . . . Each age has produced its own multitude of affronts to the eye of the beholders and this certainly is one.”<sup>45</sup>

The national movement for urban renewal and the availability of federal funds for slum clearance provided further encouragement to remove nineteenth-century buildings. For example, the Winona Housing and Re-



*Courthouse doorway exhibiting the deep, recessed arch, stonework, carvings, and other flourishes characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque style*

development Authority, supported by generous federal planning grants, decided in 1966 to raze the Morgan Block, a full city block of Maybury-designed buildings on Third Street. Spurred by hopes of a modernized downtown and aided by a Housing and Urban Development grant, the city went ahead with demolition in 1971. The Morgan Block, however, remained a windswept sandlot for the next six years as the plans of various private developers for new stores, offices, parking ramps, and high-rises fell through. Supported by further HUD grants, the HRA cleared two adjacent downtown blocks in the mid-1970s.<sup>46</sup>

**The dreams** of the modernizers looked more like nightmares to preservationists. This camp argued that renovation was a fiscally sound approach to providing office space for the county. However, preservationists were emotionally committed to saving the courthouse not only because they believed it was historically significant but also because they considered it aesthetically superior to the modern building that would replace it. On top of that, by the late 1960s they had begun to fear that the courthouse dispute was the key battle in a larger process that might lead to the complete physical transformation of the city of Winona under the banner of urban renewal.

**The problem, the Winona Daily News argued, was not just that the courthouse was an old, dilapidated, inefficient firetrap, but also that it was ugly.**

As early as 1958, when Dr. Younger had pled to save the old post office, he made a case for its historic significance but also praised its “extensive ornamentation and fine handwork,” noting that “people go to Europe now to see buildings which have such interest and charm.” The youthful activists of the early 1970s continued to blend a defense of the courthouse as historically significant with an open preference for handcrafted Victorian decorative style over the machined lines of modernism. As WCPA vice-president Frisby wrote, it “has a human touch,” because it was “built with care, talent, and love for an artist surely loves his work.” By this time, the preserva-



*Greg Bambenek and Pattilee Frisby, officers of the Winona County Progress and Preservation Association, inside the courthouse, 1970*

tionists had experienced the loss of the post office and Central Park, and they had seen the new modern post office built “under the aegis of progress”: a “shoe box” that “could be a dormitory or anything,” Greg Bambenek recalled. They were expressing a general tenet of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture that favored individual artistic self-expression over corporate-controlled mass culture and opposed what Bambenek called the “planned obsolescence” of modern society.<sup>47</sup>

Younger and the WCPA leaders also believed that in preserving the courthouse they were saving Winona from a modernization campaign that might obliterate all evidence of the city’s past. Looking back, Maus recalled that WCPA members were concerned because “we didn’t know where urban renewal would stop.” They felt that advocates of modernization were “trying to change our culture” by doing away with the past.<sup>48</sup>

**The dreams of the modernizers looked more like nightmares to preservationists.**



Both Maus and Greg Bambenek emphasized that they were not opposed to technological advancements. They argued, however, that Winona could modernize without destroying its historic buildings. This was the reason, they recalled, that they named their organization the Winona County Progress *and* Preservation Association. They also expressed the youthful preference for participatory democracy that was common in those years. They were angered that the county board intended to build a new courthouse after the voters had three times rejected the plan.

**Then a completely unexpected catastrophe struck, and the community's attitudes toward historic preservation were again put to the test.**

Preservationist Winonans' aesthetic rejection of modernism and embrace of Victorian architecture mirrored the business and political elite's aesthetic rejection of Victorian styles and embrace of modernism. The story of Winona's grassroots preservation movement raises troubling questions for contemporary preservationists now confronting the problem of whether modernist buildings should be saved.<sup>49</sup> Winonans who mourned the loss of Victorian buildings might not invest significant time and energy in efforts to preserve modernist buildings, however historically significant.

**The positive attitude** toward the courthouse expressed at the 1974 rededication was still very much in evidence in 1988 when the county celebrated the building's centennial. Since tourism had become more significant to Winona's economy, the business community now considered the nineteenth-century courthouse an asset. The *Winona Daily News* enthusiastically editorialized: "When tourists and friends come to town, Winonans often make sure that visitors get a chance to see what a real courthouse should look like, instead of one of those modern boxes. . . . If future county boards have any sense at all, they will never say, 'See that old building? Let's tear it down and build something nice.'" <sup>50</sup> By then, the county no longer assumed that its offices could be located in one

building. It had sacrificed the historical integrity of the courthouse interior to create more room during the 1973 renovation but quickly outgrew that space. In 1985 the county erected an office building across the street.

Then a completely unexpected catastrophe struck, and the community's attitudes toward historic preservation were again put to the test. Just after 3:00 A.M. on September 3, 2000, the suspended ceiling on the fourth floor of the courthouse gave way, pulling down the sprinkler pipes and flooding a courtroom. Water filled the room and then began to flood everything beneath it. The ceilings, sprayed with asbestos in the 1973 remodeling, came crashing down, and the floodwaters spread asbestos through the courthouse. Officials quickly found temporary quarters for everything housed in the courthouse. Then the debate began about what to do.<sup>51</sup>

County board chair Dave Stoltman stood firmly for preservation of the courthouse, but some Winonans, including the *Winona Daily News* editors, County Administrator Robert Reinert, and several members of the county board, felt the Labor Day flooding tolled the death knell of the building. Apparently forgetting its 1988 editorial, the newspaper now argued, "It's time for the community to separate sentiment from this grand lady." Calling for a new building, the editorial stated that we have "21st century government in a 19th century building." In other words, many of the arguments of the 1950s and 1960s were repeated.

But times had changed since 1956. Public opinion was now friendlier to historic preservation. For example, Daniel Trainor Jr., who had campaigned for a new courthouse in 1967, now felt that the building was a "treasure" that should be preserved, especially in light of the investment that had been made in it. And by 2000, Winona had a second newspaper, the biweekly *Winona Post and Shopper*, which editorialized in favor of preservation.<sup>52</sup>

The Winona County Historical Society, now a much stronger organization, this time felt at liberty to intervene aggressively in the dispute. The WCHS asked the Minnesota Historical Society to send state historical architect Charles Nelson to lead a re-use study of the damaged building. By this time, the controversy had polarized around two options: constructing a new building that would house all county functions under one roof or renovating the existing courthouse as part of a "campus" of county buildings. The re-use committee concluded that

# Winona Daily News

Established 1955

Monday, September 4, 2000

50 cents

## Unions turn to Internet

Cyberspace is like an 'electronic home visit'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like their counterparts in business, labor leaders in the United States have increasingly turned to the Internet to find new members, keep their dues paid and keep their members.

What they've found is a much better ability to organize on a large scale with less effort. Before the widespread use of e-mail, union organizers often had to stand outside the gates of a plant, handing out union literature, then track down workers at home.

■ The United Food and Commercial Workers union's Web site receives about

150 to 200 e-mails daily from workers wanting to know more about their rights and about union organizing.

Workers can apply for union membership online, e-mail questions and access union literature in the privacy of their homes — and with easy access to dozens of previous links. The American Federation of Teachers holds most of its local meetings, in effect creating an online union voice for teachers.

Most of the labor links are unions, but a few take aim at corporate policies and workers' compensation. One site, www.alternet.org, reproduces the million-dollar lawsuit of IBM head Lou Gerstner, under the heading, "We are IBM customers." Another site, www.alternet.org, shows alleged worker abuses by Wal-Mart.

The United Food and Commercial Workers union's Web site receives about 150 to 200 e-mails



A collapsed ceiling covers most of Winona County Judge Margaret Shaw-Johnson's courtroom in the Winona County Courthouse. The 2:30 a.m. ceiling collapse broke water pipes, which in turn caused extensive damage to the floors below.

By Ron Mawse  
Winona Daily News

The Winona County Courthouse's interior sustained what one official called "devastating" damage early Sunday morning when a ceiling collapsed, snapping pipes that sent water rushing throughout the building.

"It looked like a waterfall in some places," said a staff Pam Wolf, Winona County Justice manager, who was called to the 199-year-old structure shortly after 2:30 a.m. "I couldn't believe what I saw from one floor to the next."

“

There was paint just peeling off the walls, ... water oozing out of the walls. It's hard to explain how bad it really is.

— Pam Wolf, Winona County Justice manager

Officials said they did not know if the collapse was related to heavy storms that moved through the area early Sunday morning. The storm produced high winds, heavy rain, fast and swirling lightning.

Rob Bennett, Winona County administrator and the fifth floor courtrooms, where his office, the personnel department, the county fiscal department, a research room and several smaller offices are located. That would indicate some of the water came in from the building's roof, which was replaced during the summer of 1999.

Officials said high winds may have been a more likely factor in the collapse. Despite its stone base and masonry structure, the old building's upper floors sometimes chatter during high winds.

In addition to the structural damage to ceilings, walls and floors, water and debris fell on com-



Many work stations at the Winona County Courthouse — even in the basement — were covered by plaster and other debris after water pipes broke Sunday.



Part of the ceiling in Judge Lawrence Collins' third-floor courtroom collapsed Sunday.

puter locations.

Bennett, Wolf and other officials were called to the building shortly after emergency firefighters detected smoke going off.

Bennett and Wolf said the chain of events began when the series false ceiling in Judge Margaret Shaw-Johnson's courtroom courtroom collapsed. Wolf said the ceiling fell in one piece, landing on the judge's bench, jury box and public seats.

As the ceiling gave way, it tore out scissor-like pipes between the false ceiling and the original courtroom ceiling. The pipes burst at several points, and water began spraying through the floor and walls and into the third-floor courtroom of Judge Lawrence Collins, causing most of the floor ceiling there to collapse.

Please see COURTH.

"It's going to be expensive, but look at thousands of dollars worth of damage," said Bennett. "County employees who work at the courthouse should not report to work Tuesday."

Bennett said some services probably will have to be moved to tem-

porary and other important, furniture and some public documents. Some desks were caked in layers of wetter paint and plaster.

"I went down into the planning department, and the older the just running off of the map," Wolf said. "It's all so terrible."


“the campus plan would be preferable,” as it would “result in preservation of the courthouse as a historic resource and centerpiece of county government.” Nelson also published an opinion piece in the *Winona Post* explaining why the committee concluded that the courthouse was a “true architectural landmark” worthy of preservation.<sup>53</sup>

In October the Winona Heritage Preservation Commission held a public forum attended by the county commissioners. The Winona County Historical Society mobilized members, and about 100 people attended. All 25 who testified spoke in favor of renovation, some quite passionately. Unlike the earlier stages of the conflict, the local judges and bar association came out publicly in favor of preservation.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, the commissioners remained deadlocked, and it was not until the county hired a dispute facilitator in February 2001 that they reached a consensus. They decided to gut and renovate the courthouse and, to relieve overcrowding, house only the court system there. In 2002 the county purchased an empty bank building to house other county offices—ironically, the one that had been erected in the 1960s on the site of the demolished post office. The architectural firm of Boarman Kroos Vogel designed the interior remodeling in a style chosen to invoke the look of Maybury’s original work (still with

five, rather than three, floors). Kane and Johnson Architects oversaw the exterior restoration, which included re-creation of broken and worn decorative stonework and complete tuck-pointing. The exterior restoration won a Preservation Alliance of Minnesota award in 2004.<sup>55</sup>

The courthouse was rededicated one more time on October 13, 2003. Thanks to the electorate (and especially rural voters in the first three referenda) and to preservationist citizens who invested much time, money, and creative energy, the Winona County Courthouse survived the modernization campaign of the 1950s and 1960s and the freak accident of 2000. Events easily could have turned out differently. Several Minnesota courthouses from the 1880s and 1890s have been razed and replaced with modern buildings. One of these, the Murray County Courthouse, was listed on the National Register.<sup>56</sup>

The Minnesota Supreme Court, which was in Winona to hear a case, took part in the rededication ceremony. Speaking for the court, Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz praised the county board, noting that it “took some bravery” to preserve the courthouse. She asked the gathered state, county, and municipal officials to remember: “We are caretakers of these symbols and we must care and protect them so that our and future generations can enjoy their significance and beauty.”<sup>57</sup> 

## Notes

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1. *Winona Daily News*, Sept. 25, 1956, p. 3. Winona National Bank president, S. J. Kryzsko, told the meeting, “We just can’t afford the luxury of a park in the heart of the city when we are hemmed in the way we are.” The fountain had been installed in

1902; Jerome Christenson, “Langdon’s Princess: Wenonah in Winona,” in his *Pieces of the Past* (Winona Daily News, 2001), 46.

2. *The Spirit of H. H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies: Regional Transformation of an Architectural Style*, ed. Paul Clifford Larson (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988); Henry Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, “Notes on the Architecture,” in *Courthouse: A Photographic Document*, ed. Richard Pare (New York: Horizon Press, 1978), 165–250.

3. Judith Martin, “The Prairie City Comes of Age: Ambitions and Expectations in the Richardsonian Era,” in Larson, *Spirit of H. H. Richardson*, 10.

4. *Winona Daily Herald*, Aug. 10, 1889, p. 1; *Winona Daily Republican*, Sept. 16, 1889, p. 1–3.

5. Sinclair Lewis, *Cass Timberlane: A Novel of Husbands and Wives* (New York: Random House, 1941), 11.

6. William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, rev. ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997); Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles and Practice* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000); *Daily News*, Feb. 15, 1957, p. 1. This article also reported that Jan Mestrovich, an engineer with the federal General Services Administration, told the group that the post office was “very sound structurally” and that the federal government could not agree to a joint federal-county building.

7. Open Letter, Oct. 12, 1956, and S. J. Kryzsko to Board of Directors, Winona County Historical Society, Nov. 8, 1956, both in Winona County Courthouse Files, WCHS archives (hereinafter cited as Courthouse files.)

8. Lewis I. Younger to Fellow Citizens, Mar. 12, 1958, Courthouse files. With the



demise of Central Park in 1962, the Princess Wenonah statue became a wanderer. After several moves, it came to rest in Windom Park, near downtown, in 1993; Christenson, "Langdon's Princess," 46.

9. *Daily News*, Sept. 4, 20, 1958, both p. 3; "Special Bond Election . . . November 4, 1958," Courthouse files.

10. For *Daily News* editorials, see Sept. 8, 1958, p. 6, and Nov. 3, 1958, p. 6; for "Why a New Courthouse?" see Sept. 27, 1958, p. 3 ("civic eyesore" photo caption), Oct. 1, 2, and 3, 1958—all p. 3, and Oct. 4, 1958, p. 8.

11. *Daily News*, Nov. 19, 1958, p. 6.

12. "Factual Information" and "Support County Commissioner's [*sic*] Plan . . . Nov. 8th," both Courthouse files; *Daily News*, Oct. 25, 1960, p. 3. The "Factual Information" brochure stated that remodeling—including a new roof, complete rewiring, a new heating plant and plumbing, and fire-proof vaults—would cost about \$300,000. The board argued that this would be "unsound economically."

13. *Daily News*, Oct. 26, p. 6, Nov. 2, p. 9, and Nov. 9, p. 3—all 1960.

14. *Daily News*, Apr. 27, 1961, p. 3, Dec. 22, 1961, p. 6.

15. William Wesley Peters, *Winona Urban Renewal: Beauty and Natural Advantages of Winona* (WCHS, 1967). Peters' full remarks on the courthouse were also printed in the *Daily News*, Feb. 3, 1971, p. 6A.

16. *Daily News*, May 17, 1967, p. 3; Lewis Younger to Leo Murphy, May 13, 1967, Courthouse files.

17. *Daily News*, Aug. 18, 1967, p. 3; Daniel Trainor Jr., interview by the authors, Dec. 19, 2003, transcript in WCHS archives; brochure, Courthouse files. For ads, see, for example, *Daily News*, Sept. 11, 1967, p. 2.

18. Leaflet with "Vote No" handwritten on left and right margins, Courthouse files; *Daily News*, Sept. 1, 1967, p. 3. The "no" group was bolstered by the support of the Pleasant Hill Farmers Union; *Daily News*, Aug. 20, 1967, p. 3.

19. *Daily News*, Sept. 6, 7, 11, 1967—all p. 3, Sept. 8, 1967, p. 6, and unsigned editorial, "Vote on Courthouse Bond Issue Nears," *Daily News*, Aug. 18, 1967, p. 6.

20. *Daily News*, Aug. 18, 1967, p. 3. Several letters in the WCHS archives show that the historical society felt pressured by the county board in 1969, and it can be reasonably inferred that Younger felt that his funding was threatened as early as 1967. See Robert G. Hall to Dr. Lewis Younger, Mar. 6, 1969; Younger to Leo Borkowski, Mar. 28, 1969.

21. *Daily News*, Sept. 13, 1967, p. 1. For full results, see "Abstract of Votes Polled at the County Courthouse Bond Issue Election

. . . Sept. 12, 1967," Office of the Winona County Auditor.

22. *Daily News*, Jan. 8, 1969, June 23, June 25, July 15, 1970—all p. 3A.

23. *Daily News*, Sept. 9, 10, 1970, both p. 3A; Evelyn Bambenek, "People Power Saved Winona's Courthouse," *Daily News*, Sept. 12, 1988, p. 6A; Dr. Gregory Bambenek, interview by the authors, Aug. 10, 1998, transcript, WCHS archives. The Committee for a Sensible Courthouse Plan included excerpts of a transcript of the Bambenek-Merchlewitz exchange in a paid advertisement; *Daily News*, Sept. 20, 1970, p. 11A.

24. Edwin Maus, interview by the authors, Dec. 10, 2003, tape and transcript, WCHS archives.

25. See, for example, Ronald Ross, "Battle over the Winona Courthouse," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1970, *Picture Magazine*, p. 4-16; Don Spavin, "Keep This—Or Destroy It for This," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 6, 1970, p. 24-27; Peter Vaughn, "Winona's Courthouse, 'A Beautiful Girl' or Just a 'Crummy Old Building'?" *Minneapolis Star*, Dec. 2, 1971, *Variety*, p. 1C. Elizabeth Callender, one of Winona's best-known philanthropists, was another core member of the group. Her husband at that time was the owner of Badger Foundry in Winona.

26. *Daily News*, Oct. 6, 1970, p. 3. Apparently Winonans had little opportunity to hear "Save the Lady" on local radio. At a public forum, Bambenek charged that Winona radio stations refused to play it. Charles Williams, KWNO station manager (and county commissioner-elect), replied that the record had been played but then dropped because listeners complained of its "profane language"; *Daily News*, Nov. 13, 1970, p. 3.

27. Historic Sites Survey form prepared by Mrs. Hubert Bambenek, Sept. 28, 1970, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, Nov. 2, 1970, and Donn Coddington to Leonard Merchlewitz, Dec. 23, 1970—all in Winona County Courthouse file, State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 26, 1970, p. 9.

28. *Daily News*, Dec. 22, 1970, p. 3A, Jan. 6, 1971, p. 3A.

29. *Daily News*, Feb. 7, 9, 10, 1971—all p. 3A; Younger to O'Connor, Dec. 17, 1970, copy, Courthouse files, which also contain a copy of Younger to Greg Bambenek, Nov. 8, 1970, explaining that "his hands are tied" with respect to a more public role because of fears that the county would cut the society's funding. In a letter to the *Daily News*, Jan. 16, 1972, p. 7A, Younger asserted that the Winona Progress and Preservation Association was entirely independent of the Winona County Historical Society.

30. *Daily News*, Feb. 24, 1971, p. 3A.

The ruling and other official papers can be found in *Edwin Maus, et al. vs A. J. Wiczek et al*, Winona County District Court Civil File #25644, Office of the Court Administrator, Winona County Courthouse.

31. *Daily News*, Feb. 21, 1971, p. 5A; Mar. 3, 9, 1971, both p. 3A.

32. *Daily News*, Feb. 22, 1971, p. 3, Mar. 7, 1971, p. 8A-9A. NFO leader Donald Rupprecht told the newspaper that members "couldn't understand the county board's actions in light of the fact that the people of the county had voted down the bond issues three times."

33. *Daily News*, Jan. 29, 1971, p. 6A, Feb. 25, 1971, p. 6A.

34. Charles E. Williams, interview by the authors, July 27, 2001, tape and transcript in WCHS archives. President Edwin Maus recalled that the WCPPA considered Williams an ally, someone one could talk to even when not seeing eye to eye; Maus interview.

35. *Daily News*, Apr. 5, 1971, p. 3, Aug. 3, 1971, p. 3A. A few days later Merchlewitz and Borkowski almost succeeded in reversing the decision to have a bond referendum, which they claimed was doomed to fail. Arguing that Harty's fees were too high, they tried to reinstate the three-stage plan; *Daily News*, Aug. 6, 1971, p. 3A.

36. The letter stirred controversy when County Attorney Julius Gernes ruled that the board could not use county funds for mailing. The League of Women Voters supplied volunteers to address the envelopes, and the WCPPA agreed to pay the postage; *Daily News*, Dec. 3, 1971, p. 3A. For WCPPA ads, see *Daily News*, Dec. 3 and 6, 1971. See also letters to the editor from WCPPA president Edwin Maus, Nov. 21, 1971, p. 7A, and WCPPA spokesperson Royal Thern, Dec. 5, 1971, p. 7A.

The Concerned Taxpayers' Committee ads, *Daily News*, Dec. 5, 1971, p. 9A, and Dec. 6, 1971, p. 13A were financed by lawyers who wanted to keep their opposition to renovation out of the public eye; Jerry Papenfuss, interview by the authors, Dec. 22, 2003, tape and transcript, WCHS archives.

37. *Daily News*, Dec. 8, 1971, p. 3A; "Abstract of Votes Polled for the Special





Election," Dec. 7, 1971, Office of the Winona County Auditor.

38. *Daily News*, Dec. 6, 1971, p. 7A, Jan. 13, 1972, p. 3A; Lewis Younger to Thomas Horty, Sept. 19, 1972, Courthouse files.

39. *Daily News*, Apr. 4, 1972, p. 3A. For detailed architectural floor plans, see *Daily News*, May 24, 1972, p. 3B.

40. Robert Roscoe, "Splendid Victories: One of Minnesota's Finest Moments in Historic Preservation," *Minnesota Preservationist*, Jan.-Feb., 1999, p. 8-9, 14; *Daily News*, Jan. 7, 1973, p. 6A. See also Roscoe, "Endangered," *Architecture Minnesota* 27 (Mar.-Apr. 2001): 11, 46-50. There was one exterior change: several fireplace chimneys were removed from the roof. Two ornately carved newel posts and part of the balustrade of the main stairway now grace the entrance to the Winona County Historical Society offices and museum.

41. "Presenting Winona County's Reborn Court House," brochure, Dec. 8, 1974, Courthouse files; *Daily News*, Dec. 9, 1974, p. 3A. Charles Williams had not sought reelection and was no longer on the board.

42. *Daily News*, Aug. 23, 1967, p. 3; Trainor, letter to the editor, *Daily News*, Sept. 6, 1967, p. 7; Daniel Trainor Jr., interview by the authors, Dec. 19, 2003, transcript, WCHS archives; Papenfuss interview.

43. *Daily News*, Sept. 8, 1958, p. 6, Nov. 3, 1958, p. 6.

44. IBM dedicated its Rochester plant about a month before Winona's 1958 courthouse referendum. The *Daily News*, Sept. 30, 1958, p. 4, featured a prominent article about the dedication, noting that the \$8 million plant had turned Rochester in a "boom" community. See also David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 129, 312, 422.

45. *Daily News*, Feb. 20, 1964, p. 6, May 11, 1967, p. 6.

46. Lewis I. Younger, "Sometimes Renewal is Change for the Sake of Change," *Daily News*, Heritage and History supplement, Sept. 16, 2001, p. 19, reprint of a paper he wrote in 1985.

47. Younger to "Dear Fellow Citizens," Mar. 12, 1958, Post Office file, WCHS archives; Bambenek interview; "Committee for a Sensible Courthouse Plan," typescript, n. d., Courthouse files; Pattilee Frisby, letter to the editor, *Daily News*, Feb. 5, 1971, p. 7A.

48. Here and below, Maus interview; Bambenek interview.

49. See for example, Richard Longseth, "When the Present Becomes The Past," in *Past Meets Future: Saving America's Historic Environment*, ed. Antoinette J. Lee (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1992), 213-53; Philip Glenn Koski, "Modernism's Midlife Crisis," *Architecture Minnesota* 28 (Nov.-Dec. 2002): 48-49, 58, 60.

50. *Daily News*, Aug. 19, 1988, p. 6A, Aug. 14, 1988, p. 1C, Oct. 9, 1988, p. 1A.

51. Here and below, *Daily News*, Sept. 10, 2000, p. 6A; see also Sept. 8, 2001, p. 6C, where the editors approved the restoration generally but criticized Stoltzman because he continued to push for authentic wooden stair rails rather than metal.

52. 90. *Winona Post and Shopper*, Sept. 13, 2000, p. 4A, Oct. 15, 2003, p. 4A; Trainor interview. On the other hand, Jerry Papenfuss, who had campaigned against renovation in 1970-71, believed that recent events had vindicated his position. After the flooding, he thought, "Now we have had enough, let's tear it down"; Papenfuss interview.

53. "Winona County Courthouse Re-Use Study," Oct. 3, 2000, Courthouse files; *Winona Post and Shopper*, Nov. 8, 2000, p. 5A.

54. *Winona Post and Shopper*, Oct. 29, 2000, p. 1; *Daily News*, Oct. 27, 2000, p. 1.

55. Linda Mack, "Great Saves," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis), Sept. 18, 2004, E1.

56. Laura Weber, "Wins and Losses: The National Register of Historic Places in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* (Fall 1997): 312-13.

57. Kathleen Blatz, speech, Oct. 13, 2003. Thanks to Chuck Tombarge, Supreme Court information officer, for supplying a copy.

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*The photos on p. 316, 320, 322, 327, 333, 334 and p. 324 and 329 (from Minneapolis Tribune originals by Richard Olsenius) are courtesy the Winona County Historical Society; p. 328 is courtesy Kane and Johnson Architects, Inc.*

*All others are in MHS collections, including p. 326 in the State Historic Preservation Office.*



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