

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUN 26 1979
DATE ENTERED	AUG 9 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Van Buren County Courthouse Complex

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Paw Paw Street

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Paw Paw

___ VICINITY OF
CODE
26

STATE
Michigan

COUNTY
Van Buren

CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
___DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE	___MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	___PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	___COMMERCIAL	___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL	___PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___ENTERTAINMENT	___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	___YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL	___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY	___OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
County of Van Buren Board of Commissioners

STREET & NUMBER
Van Buren County Courthouse, Paw Paw Street

CITY, TOWN
Paw Paw

___ VICINITY OF

STATE
Michigan

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Van Buren County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Paw Paw Street

CITY, TOWN
Paw Paw

STATE
Michigan

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Michigan State Survey Data

DATE

___FEDERAL STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Michigan History Division, Department of State

CITY, TOWN
Lansing

STATE
Michigan 48918

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Van Buren County Courthouse complex in Paw Paw occupies a square block bounded by Paw Paw, St. Joseph, Kalamazoo, and Niles streets. The courthouse building, erected in 1901-1903, stands near the center of the block and faces north on Paw Paw Street. West of the courthouse and standing a slight distance behind that structure's rear wall is the former county jail/sheriff's residence building, also erected in 1901-1903.

Two newer structures are not herein nominated. They are the 1963 jail, a flat-roofed, concrete building which stands west of the courthouse and north of the old jail, and the 1976 courthouse annex, a large, flat-roofed structure sited directly behind the courthouse. These structures were carefully planned and sited and do not crowd the old courthouse and jail. The annex is physically separated from the courthouse and is linked to it only by an enclosed bridge at the second-floor level. The modern jail, located at least thirty feet from the courthouse, is connected to the old jail only at that structure's back corner. The courthouse itself is fronted by a deep lawn; other buildings in the complex by shallower ones. The courthouse's east lawn, however, has become a parking lot.

The courthouse is a rectangular, three-story (plus-clerestory), hip-roof structure of yellow sandstone designed in the Classical style. Its four facades--each a symmetrical composition with a slightly projecting, pedimented, central section--have lower stories of banded, smooth-faced, rusticated, stone courses and upper stories of smooth-faced masonry decorated with Corinthian pilasters. The north front has a four-column, prostyle, Corinthian portico supported by a high arcade containing the principal entrance. The portico pediment is carved with the Michigan state seal flanked by flags, cannons, and cannonballs; the side pediments with crossed spears and the scales of justice. Rising from the center of the roof is a massive, four-stage, Italian Renaissance tower terminating in a cupola. The cupola roof, like the courthouse's main cornice, is made of copper. The main roof was originally surfaced with red glazed tiles, but these deteriorated and in 1960 a new roof of red composition shingles was installed.

The courthouse interior has three stories. The lowest, or basement story, is several feet below grade. The first floor contains the principal county offices. The courtroom, with its clerestory windows, is located on the second floor. The most notable feature of the Renaissance-style interior is a central space which extends from the first floor to the base of the tower. It contains square first- and second-floor lobbies and is illuminated from above by a skylight. The two lobbies are visually connected by a round opening in the second-story floor. The square courtroom lobby--the most ornamental room in the structure--contains marble wainscoting, Corinthian-pilaster-and-entablature doorway enframements, and decorative metalwork railings. Located to the west of the lobbies is the principal staircase. It is a broad, symmetrical structure with divided flights and handsome metalwork newels and railings.

(continued)

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7. Description (continued)

The old jail/sheriff's residence is a two-and-a-half-story, hip-roof structure, constructed of the same materials as the courthouse. Located in the front, near the street, the sheriff's residence has a Tuscan-column front veranda and an octagonal, turreted, corner tower.

Neither the courthouse nor old jail/sheriff's residence has suffered extensive exterior alterations. Only a fire escape and basement level cubicles added on either side of the front arcade mar the courthouse's exterior. While minor changes in the courthouse interior have been made, no major alterations have taken place in any of the important public spaces.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1901-1903

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Claire Allen

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Van Buren County Courthouse is significant as an architectural monument and landmark in Paw Paw and Van Buren County. A handsome, dignified, and richly decorated Classical Revival structure, the courthouse was constructed of fine materials and designed for permanence. It, like several other imposing, turn-of-the-century courthouse complexes in other southern Michigan counties, is expressive of the rapid growth of its own county in the relatively few years since its establishment and first settlement.

The beginnings of settlement in Van Buren County took place in the 1830's. Lumbering was at first the principal industry, but by the Civil War years the stands of timber were fast giving way to orchards, which thrived in the moderate climate and rich soil on the east shore of Lake Michigan. In the late nineteenth century, because of the ready accessibility of Chicago and other large markets, commercial fruit growing--peaches and apples in the west part and vineyards farther east--became the mainstay of a prosperous county economy.

Van Buren County was created in 1829. In 1835 commissioners appointed by the governor of the state selected the village of Lawrence, eight miles west of Paw Paw, as the county seat. Two years later, however, when county government was established, the rapid growth of population in the eastern part of the county made Paw Paw a more convenient location. The courts were held in Paw Paw from the first and in 1840 the village was officially designated as the county seat. The first courthouse was erected in 1842-1845. No longer in use as a courthouse, this modest Greek Revival structure still stands and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Between 1845 and 1900 the population of Van Buren County grew from 2,000 to over 33,000. Although a jail was erected in 1855 and a county office building in 1875, by 1900 larger quarters were needed. The present courthouse complex was begun in the summer of 1901 and completed early in 1903. The courthouse itself was evidently patterned after the courthouse at Hillsdale, Michigan, built for Hillsdale County in 1898-1899. During the course of construction of the Van Buren structure, however, a number of refinements--such as marble rather than oak wainscoting and copper rather than galvanized iron cornices--were added which substantially increased the cost.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- D. W. Ensign & Co., History of Berrien and Van Buren Counties, Michigan. Philadelphia, 1880.
- R. L. Polk & Co., Michigan State Gazetteer and Business Directory. Detroit, 1891-1925.
- Captain O. W. Rowland, A History of Van Buren County, Michigan. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1912.
- National Register nominations for Gratiot, Ionia, and Shiawassee county courthouses.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	591055	4674015	B			
	550	150					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property nominated includes the entire block bounded by Paw Paw, St. Joseph, Kalamazoo, and Niles streets.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert O. Christensen, Historic Preservation Coordinator

ORGANIZATION

Michigan History Division, Department of State

DATE

April 6, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

208 N. Capitol Avenue

TELEPHONE

(517) 373-0510

CITY OR TOWN

Lansing

STATE

Michigan 48918

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Martha M. Bigelow

TITLE

Director, Michigan History Division, D.O.S.

DATE

6/18/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

8-9-79

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8-8-79

Emma Jane Sage
Regional Coordinator

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8. Significance (continued)

The Van Buren County Courthouse and jail were designed by Claire Allen, an architect who worked in Jackson, Michigan, from about 1890 at least into the 1920s. Allen planned at least two other Michigan courthouses which are still in use (in addition to the Hillsdale one for which his authorship has not yet been proved): the Gratiot County Courthouse at Ithaca, built in 1900-1902, and the 1903-1904 Shiawassee County Courthouse at Corunna. As a contractor, in the days before he turned to designing, Allen also worked on another Michigan courthouse, the Ionia County Courthouse at Ionia, built in 1883-86.

The Van Buren County Courthouse, an object of pride at the time of its construction, remains very much an historic and visual landmark in Paw Paw and Van Buren County.

Property Van Buren County Courthouse Complex

State Mich. (Van Buren) Working Number 6.26.79.1536

TECHNICAL

Photos 5
Maps 1

CONTROL

pl
OK 6.26.79

HISTORIAN

Architecturally significant as a good example of the ~~Classical~~ ^{Renaissance Revival} style as applied to an early 20th C. institutional/public building and as one of several examples by the design of locally prominent architect, Claire Allen. Significant spaces & interior detailing include open stairwell/lobby lighted by central skylight, marble wainscoting & decorative metalwork.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept.
Saxe 8-8-79

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept.
Saxe 8-8-79

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____ Send-back _____ Entered AUG 9 1979
Federal Register Entry 9-4-79 Re-submit _____



Van Buren County Courthouse
Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, Van Buren
County, Michigan

Janet Kreger 1978
Negative filed: Michigan History
Division

Northeast view

#1 95

AUG

DOE
9 1979

JUN 26 1979



Van Buren County Courthouse
Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, Van Buren
County, Michigan

Janet Kreger 1978
Negative filed: Michigan History
Division

Second-floor lobby
#245

JUN 26 1979

DOE
AUG 9 1979



JUN 26 1979

Van Buren County Courthouse
Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, (Van Buren
County, Michigan)

Janet Kreger 1978
Negative filed: Michigan History
Division

Staircase detail

#3 75

208
AUG 9 1979



Van Buren County Courthouse
Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, (Van Buren
County, Michigan)

+39 Janet Kreger 1978
Negative filed: Michigan History
Division

Detail of second-floor railing

#4 45

JUN 26 1979

AUG

DOE

9 1979



Van Buren County Courthouse
Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, (Van Buren
County, Michigan)

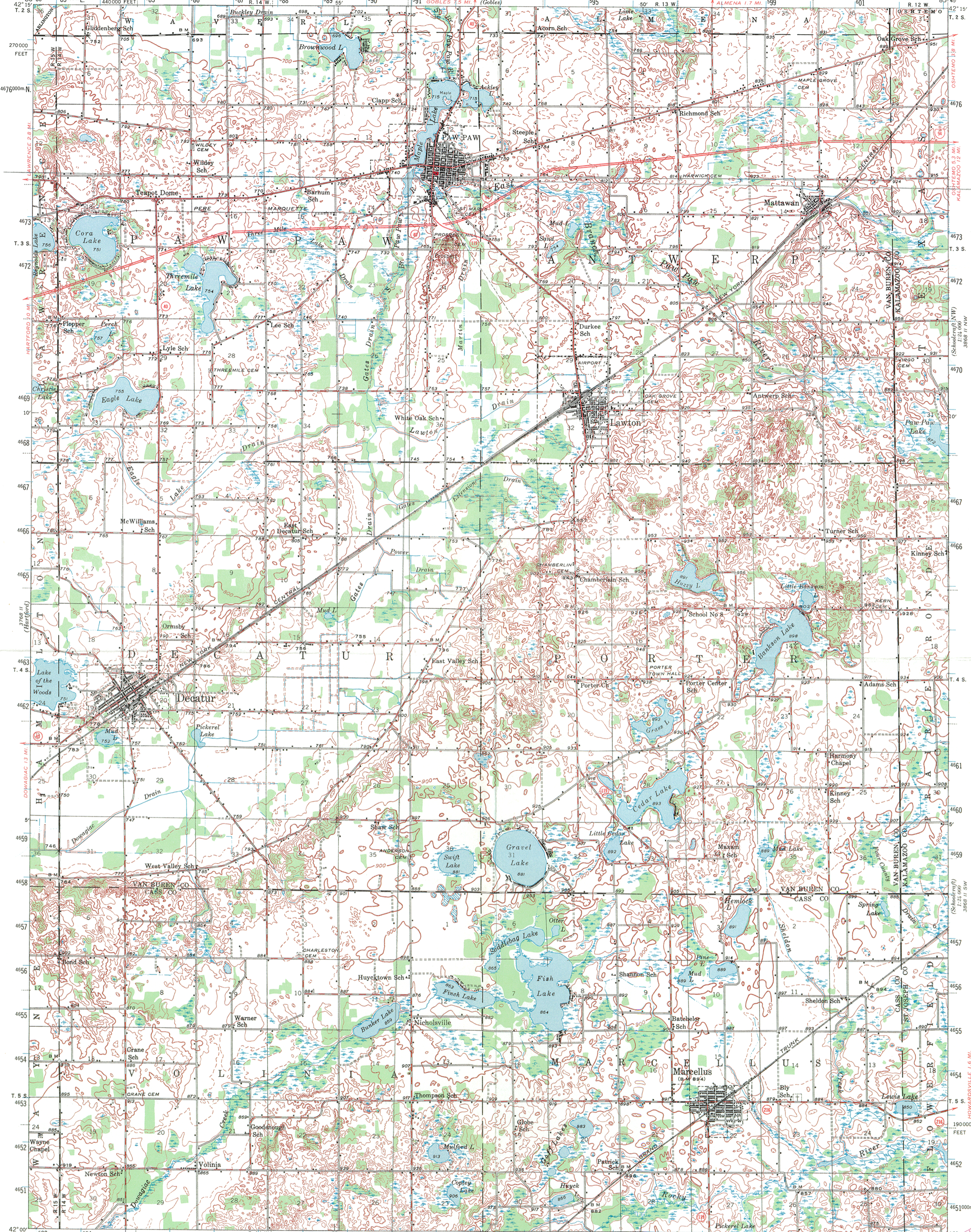
Janet Kreger 1978
Negative filed: Michigan History
Division

County jail and sheriff's residence

#515

JUN 26 1979

AUG 9 1979

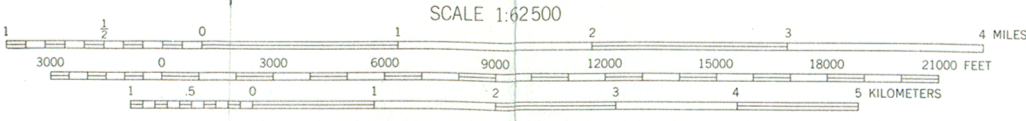


Van Buren County
Courthouse Complex
Paw Paw, Michigan
UTM Reference:
558 / 591955/4674915
1958

Mapped by the Geological Survey
1944
VANDALIA 8.7 MI.

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
1965
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— State Route ———

UTM GRID AND 1984 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



Contour interval 90 feet
10 foot contours in dashed lines

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10000 foot grid based on Michigan (Central)
rectangular coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 16, shown in blue

MARCELLUS, MICH.

N4200—W8545/15

1944

AMS 3868 III SERIES V762



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE MICHIGAN

Date Entered AUG 1979

Name

Location

Van Buren County Courthouse Complex

Paw Paw
Van Buren County

Ionia County Courthouse

Ionia
Ionia County

DeLano, William S., House

Kalamazoo vicinity
Kalamazoo County

Emporium

Marshall
Calhoun County

Also Notified

Honorable Donald W. Riegler, Jr.

Honorable Carl Levin
Honorable David A. Stockman
Honorable Harold S. Sawyer
Honorable Howard Wolpe

State Historic Preservation Officer
Dr. Martha Bigelow
Director
Michigan History Division
Department of State
Lansing, Michigan 48918

NR Byers/bjr 8/13/79

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.