

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 28 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 19 1977

**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

\*\*

Morris County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Court Street &

Washington Street - between Western Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Morristown

VICINITY OF

5th

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New Jersey

34

Morris

027

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

**OWNERSHIP**

**STATUS**

**PRESENT USE**

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

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

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

County of Morris

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street (between Court St. and Western Ave.)

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Morristown

VICINITY OF

New Jersey

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

on file at Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

Court Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Morristown

New Jersey

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

1962

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Dept. of Environmental Protection

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

# 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		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Morris County Courthouse, built in 1827 by architect Lewis Carter, Chatham, and architect-contractor Joseph M. Lindsley, Morristown, belongs in the category of early American civil architecture, and represents a combination of Graeco-Roman style with independence in the manner of its interpretation. The structure indicates the architects' familiarity with earlier Georgian and Federal tradition, which combined with their knowledge of Graeco-Roman details, produced a result possessing a good deal of originality.

The Courthouse, a natural brick structure with brownstone trimmings, is a rectangle 74.6 feet long by 44.6 feet wide. It is composed of two principal stories plus attic and high basement, a tin gabled roof and four gable-end chimneys. Aside from preservation and growth, only minor changes have been undertaken with electric lighting and central heating; i.e. the fireplaces and chimneys still remain and are visible, although unused. Unfortunately, all original floor plans and early records from Freeholders' minutes are no longer in existence.

The main facade is seven bays, the three central windows of the second floor contained within a slightly projecting pavilion topped by a pediment which encloses a statute of Justice, carved of wood, and inscribed "A. Jones, N.Y.C., 1827". She holds the Scales of Justice representing a balanced judicial system in her left hand and a sword symbolizing protection of individual rights in her right hand. Unlike many of her counterparts she is not blindfolded.

The first floor windows are sixteen-over-sixteen panes, as are the Roman-arched second floor windows. The central pavilion is defined by quoins at the first floor and by four Ionic pilasters at the second. A portico supported by four Ionic columns shields the double doors, and is reached by a flight of sandstone steps which were quarried within the County. Quoins, pilaster, basement, string course and window trim are also sandstone.

The east facade is three bays wide, with the same sixteen-over-sixteen rectangular and arched windows on the second floor. The first floor windows contain modern sash. The attic story has two quarter-round windows at the edges flanking two rectangular nine-over-six windows topped by a central lunette. Two interior chimneys are joined by a parapet integral to the wall. The first floor has a door at the north corner, probably not original.

# 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 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 1827

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Lewis Carter, Chatham and

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Joseph M. Lindsley, Morristown

In historic Morristown, situated in northern New Jersey midway between the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, stands the Morris County Courthouse, constructed in 1827, and continuing in daily use as the traditional seat of Morris County government and jurisprudence. As the Courthouse prepares for the 150th anniversary of its dedication in September, 1977, attention is focused not only on the impressive structure's judicial reputation, but on the building as a representative example of early American transitional Federal/Greek Revival style public architecture.

The 1827 building is the third structure built to house the Morris County Court. Morris County was formed in 1739, but it was not until 1755 that a court house and jail were built in Morristown, although records indicate court sessions were held as early as 1740, apparently in the Jacob Ford Tavern. The 1755 Courthouse was a rude log structure erected near the center of the Morristown Green. It served until 1770 when the Freeholders purchased from the Morristown Presbyterian Church for five pounds one acre of land on the north side of the Green, and erected a one story shingled structure. In 1776 a second story was added. In July, 1825, the Board of Chosen Freeholders decided unanimously that a new court house and jail were necessary. And subsequently on October 23, 1826, a deed was recorded conveying 1.19 acres of land from James Wood and Eliza, his wife, to the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Morris for the purpose of erecting and maintaining a suitable courthouse and jail. The plot of land was bounded on the north by Washington Street, and on the west by New Weston Road, today known as Western Avenue. Court and Ann Streets had not been developed on the east and south. On July 13, 1826, the cornerstone of the new courthouse was officially laid. The dedicatory services were held September 26, 1827 with Henry A. Ford esq, delivering the address. The Court then went into session with Chief Justice Ewing presiding.

## Architecture

Immediately, the structure, or "New" Courthouse, as it was known assumed architectural importance. Newspaper accounts in the Palladium of Liberty, September 27, 1827,

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Eberlein, Harold Donaldson, "Morris County Court House, Morristown, New Jersey," The Architectural Record, September, 1927
- Green, Rufus S., p. 154, History of Morris County, W.W. Munsell and Company, 1882.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.19

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	543450	4516200	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Morris County Courthouse is shown as the green line on the accompanying map entitled "Section of Morristown Municipal Map, 1971."

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

(Terry Karschner, Historic Sites Section, DEEP 609-292-2023)

NAME / TITLE: Mrs. Sharon Doremus, Vice-Chairman, Morris County Heritage Commission

ORGANIZATION: Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders

DATE: November 9, 1976

STREET & NUMBER: Ann Street

TELEPHONE: (201) 285-6212

CITY OR TOWN: Morristown

STATE: New Jersey

# 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: [Signature]

TITLE: Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection

DATE: March 11, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION: [Signature]

ATTEST: [Signature]

DATE: 8/19/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER: [Signature]

DATE: 8-18-77

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Morris County Courthouse  
Morristown  
Morris County  
New Jersey 034

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DESCRIPTION

The domed gold-leafed cupola, representing the universal badge of official usage and public character, surmounts the roof directly above the pediment. Its corners are defined by four sets of Ionic columns. Louvers on each side are enclosed within keyed arches. The cornice, like that of the main facade, is decorated with modillions.

Only the main facade remains completely detached. The east facade is joined to a modern addition and remaining facades are totally obscured, except for the attic story of the west side.

As far as can be determined, the only exterior features not original are the double (front entrance) doors, the weathervane (installed in the 1920's and modeled after the plow of the New Jersey State seal), and east facade doorway and steps (questionable). Architectural historian H.D. Eberlein, in the article cited states that the front entrance steps and iron rails were removed in the late 19th century. It is unclear whether the present steps as restored during the Courthouse restoration during the tenure of Justice Charles W. Parker, 1907-1947 are the original.

The original color of the Courthouse is believed to have been the natural brick base with white trim. The exterior, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, underwent successive changes of grey, red, and brown paint. In preparation for the observance in 1927 of the 100th anniversary of the building's construction, the exterior was painted cream yellow with white trim. This color remained until the 1950's when sandblasting restored the Courthouse exterior again to its original red brick walls in observance of the rededication of the Courthouse in 1956.

The remaining feature of architectural interest is the interior of Courtroom Number One. Frequently described as the gem of all the Courthouse features, its dimensions are 42' 10" by 41' 8", with a ceiling height of 17 1/2 feet. Plaster walls have paneled wainscot which reaches to the bottom of the windows. A plaster cornice and richly modeled

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DESCRIPTION

plaster ceiling-work inspired by honeysuckle and grapevine are important features. Between the east wall's two windows, window-height paneling incorporating four fluted Ionic pilasters forms a backdrop for the judge's bench, which is supported by two fluted Ionic columns and finished with a palmette frieze. Four additional windows punctuate the north wall. The keys of all the window arches contain a honeysuckle-type design. The west wall supports a gallery which contains a honeysuckle-type design. The west wall supports a gallery which contains pews thought to be original. The original staves used by baliffs to maintain order are contained in their racks on each side of the courtroom. Although some restoration work has been done in this room in 1955 all of the important features appear to be original.

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SIGNIFICANCE

extolled the new Courthouse and Jail as durable, safe, spacious, and beautiful without parallel in New Jersey. The architects Lewis Carter and Joseph Lindsley were commended for executing the work with promptness and fidelity. The three story building, costing approximately \$25,000, contained on the first floor Clerk's, Surrogate's and Sheriff's offices, a fire proof room for records, parlor, and five rooms for debtors and criminals. The second floor contained the Courtroom at one end, and rooms for the Grand and Petit Juries, and Sheriff family apartments at the other end. The basement contained three cells, family apartments and a furnace for heating the prisons. In the 1850's the County Jail was attached to the rear of the original building, and the present Sheriff's office was built after the Civil war. During the next hundred years numerous additions were built until there were seven or eight different sections on various levels. Prior to its 100th anniversary in 1927 the Courthouse faced and won a struggle to replace it with a strictly modern building. The movement to preserve the Courthouse was headed by Justice Charles W. Parker who advocated the construction of the Hall of Records (now the County Administration Building,) and the Jail. In 1954, the Freeholders, in an attempt to integrate the various components into a unified complex, authorized a new wing (on Washington Street) which was dedicated in 1956. Subsequent additions include the present Hall of Records on Court Street in 1969, administrative facilities in the former Hall of Records in 1971, and purchase of the Washington Building in 1958.

Modern evaluation of the original courthouse structure is puzzling for those who insist on assigning specific stylistic descriptions to American architecture. H.D. Eberlein in his 1927 Architectural Record article comments on the composite character of the structure by specifically evaluating the east facade. He suggests the separate elements are purely Federal: twin chimneys set flush with the wall, the delicate tracery of lunette and quarter-round windows and the central blind arch on the second floor. But the domed cupola seen above this elevation, with its eight Ionic columns and modillioned cornice, is closer to Jeffersonian

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New Jersey Q31

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SIGNIFICANCE

Romanism. The north, or principal facade, shows evidence of a prototype even earlier than the Federal style, namely Georgian. Its influence is expressed in a number of features: the high basement story, the central pedimented pavilion, the quoins, and the string course. Eberlein goes on to say, "It is in the composite aspect of their work that the Courthouse displays features not commonly found elsewhere, and it is this aspect that makes the building worthy of close examination."

He feels that the interior decoration (preserved in Courtroom Number One) is equally noteworthy. Even the simple paneling is important because of "...the comparative rarity of any paneling precedents of this particular era, when paneling and dadoes were rapidly falling into disuse." Like the exterior, the interior features are significant not only for the skill of their execution but for their originality. Especially worthy of attention are the courtroom window key-blocks, the judge's bench with its palmette frieze and the stair balustrade. The designs of the ceiling plasterwork, depicting honeysuckle and grapevine, "...are excellent examples of the manner peculiarly characteristic of the era."

The successful integration of these disparate elements demonstrates how provincial architect-builders of the period were often able, with little or no formal training, to produce sophisticated results; such as this case which Eberlein calls one of the architectural treasures of New Jersey.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Today the original courthouse structure, an ambitious undertaking in 1827 for a county of 22,000 people, has become the cornerstone of a County complex serving 405,000 people. And architects Carter and Lindsley's attention to detail and hand craftsmanship has become translated into a feeling of concern for the individual and the assurance of his fair treatment before the law. During the past 150 years many legal opinions that have become basic in Law have



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SIGNIFICANCE

been decided in the original Courthouse. While the names of famous cases such as the Antoine LeBlanc Trial, Jeanette Lawrence Trial, the Leroi Jones Trial, and the Karen Ann Quinlan opinion focused national attention on the Court, the statue of Justice over the front entrance has also witnessed the entrance and exits of many thousands of persons, ranging from prisoners accused of murder and other crimes to governors, justices, and judges of our highest courts, outstanding members of the bar, litigants ranging from poor widows and orphans to nationally known figures, the possessors of great wealth, and lastly the steady flow of citizenry conducting the routine business of recording property transfers and probating wills. Truly, the Courthouse has served all peoples, and has been recognized in not only Morris County but by State, National and International Courthouse, as published in the Palladium of Liberty, on September 27, 1827, is still fittingly apt that, "The new Courthouse was dedicated agreeably to previous arrangements on Tuesday. It is truly a noble edifice and creditable to the county, as well as honorable to the liberality of those who projected and reared it".

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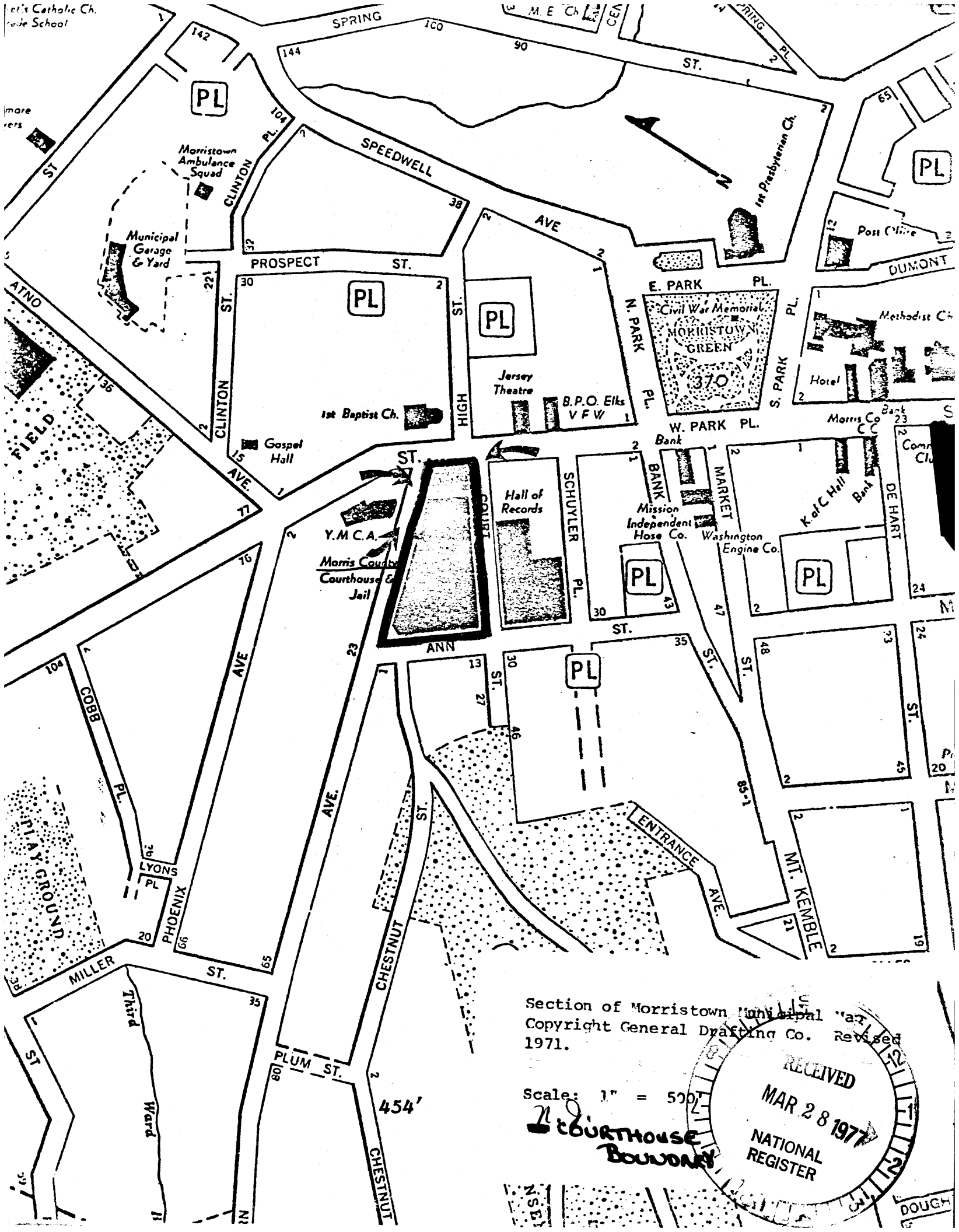
Morris County Courthouse  
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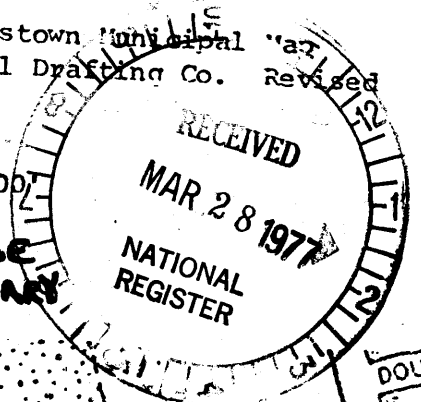
3. Jeffers, Albert B. Jr., "New Jersey's Morristown", American Bar Association Journal, February, 1970
4. Lewis Historical Publishing Co., A History of Morris County 1914, p.p. 228-229
  - a. describes earlier Morris County Court Houses, and dedication of 1827 building.
5. Parker, Charles W., "The Restoration of a Classic", Morristown Topics, April 27, 1923, p. 1 and 2.
6. Parker, Charles W., "The Classic Morris Court Houses and its Judges", New Jersey Law Journal, Volume XLVI, 1923, p.p. 196-200
7. Proceedings New Jersey Historical Society, p. 281-286; quotes from
  - a. Morristown "Palladium of Liberty", 1825-1827
  - b. "Jerseyman", 1827
8. Sherman, Andrew M., "Colonial and Revolutionary Morris County, New Jersey", The Daily Record, October 25, 1915, November 2, 1915
  - a. describes the "Old Morris" Court House and Jail
9. Book T-2 of Deeds for Morris County, September 20, 1825, p. 227
10. Additional articles appear in Morristown Topics,
  - a. April 24, 1924
  - b. July 2, 1925
11. Programs, 1956, 1971, printed for dedication ceremonies for additions to Courthouse complex.
12. Letter for Robert Berg, Architect whose family firm designed all modern additions to County Courthouse complex.
13. Article in New York Herald Tribune
  - a. January 24, 1948



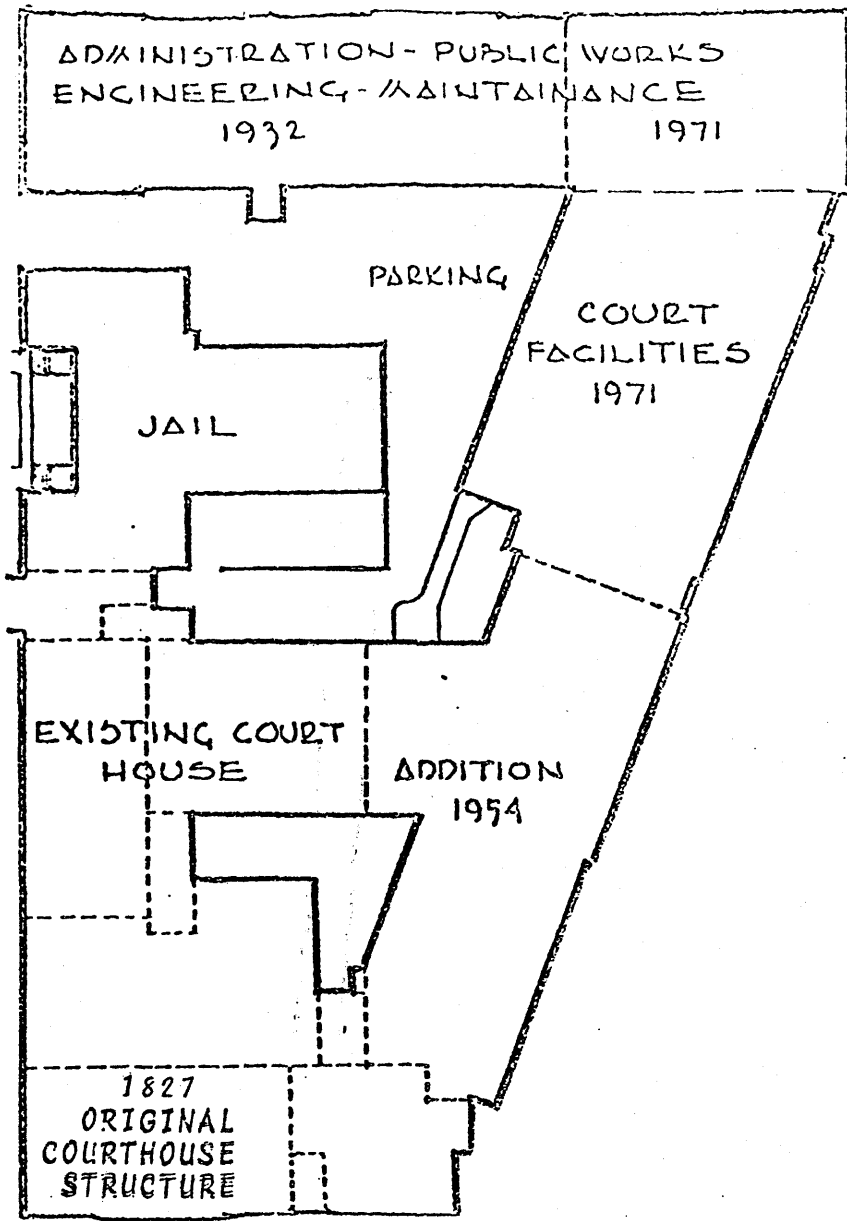
Section of Morristown Municipal "at"  
 Copyright General Drafting Co. Revised  
 1971.

Scale: 1" = 500'

**COURTHOUSE**  
**BOUNDARY**



454'



1827 COURTHOUSE

IN RELATION TO EXISTING ADDITIONS IN 1976

Morris County Courthouse  
Morristown  
Morris County  
New Jersey 034