

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received **OCT 28 1983**  
date entered

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

## 1. Name

historic Lane County Clerk's Building

and/or common N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 740 West 13th Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Eugene N/A vicinity of Fourth Congressional District

state Oregon code 41 county Lane code 039

## 3. Classification

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Lane County Board of Commissioners

street & number 125 East 8th Avenue

city, town Eugene N/A vicinity of state Oregon 97401

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lane County Courthouse

street & number 125 East 8th Avenue

city, town Eugene state Oregon 97401

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title City of Eugene  
Historic Landmark has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date November 1975  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records City of Eugene Dept. of Housing & Community Conservation

city, town Eugene state Oregon 97401

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>1855, c. 1915, 1957, 1964</u>

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lane County Clerk's Building in Eugene, Oregon, Lane County seat, is a rare, intact example of a public building in the Classic Revival style, which epitomized architecture of the state's Territorial period. Built in 1853 by local carpenter-builder Prior Blair, the small, single-story prostyle building with its full, pedimented cornice return, has been moved no less than four times, beginning in 1855. Its original location was at 10th and Willamette Streets. In 1855 it was moved to 9th and High Streets, and at that time owner Stuckley Ellsworth added 20 feet to the 16 x 20-foot building for living quarters. The building was moved to 7th and Pearl Streets about 1915. In 1957, when title to the building was given to the Lane County Historical Society, Ellsworth's addition was removed and the building was relocated to the County Shops. In 1964 the historic County Clerk's Building was permanently sited on the Lane County Fairgrounds, immediately south of the County Museum building, where it faces west. In 1977 a partial restoration resulted in an in-kind replacement of deteriorated portions of the cornice, porch and windows in which replacement material was worked with hand tools to insure compatibility with original treatment.

The Lane County Clerk's Building was originally utilized as both an office for county clerk and as a gathering place for local governmental activities such as meetings and trials. The building, an excellent example of the Classical Revival style of architecture, was built in 1853 by a local carpenter Prior Blair.<sup>1</sup> The Clerk's Building is in very good condition and remains intact with few alterations having been made during its 130 years of existence. It presently serves as an extension of the adjacent Lane County Museum, providing an exhibit of an earlier time and also housing the Oregon Genealogical Society Library.

Lane County Commissioners' Records indicate that on July 5, 1853, the county clerk was ordered to proceed, as soon as possible, and employ a workman to build a clerk's office "fronting on the public square. . . , the size to be sixteen by twenty feet, and one story high." The 1853 September session of the commissioners authorized "orders issued upon treasurer in favor of said [Prior] Blair for \$100.00 for building clerk's office for the County of Lane." When completed, the County Clerk's Building was in fact a single story structure with outside dimensions of sixteen by twenty feet. The design of this building in the Classical Revival style is almost identical to the state of Oregon's first Customs House, built in 1852 in Astoria and demolished in 1901. The Classical Revival style, typical of the 1840s and 1850s, was the first recognized architectural style to appear in Oregon. The building is undoubtedly one of the finest intact examples of the style in Oregon.

The exterior of this all wood structure is sheathed with six-inch-wide siding. The original weatherboarding shows evidence of the vertical marks left by a whip saw from Eugene's first saw mill, which was located on the millrace and was water powered. The frame building rests on its original hand-hewn sills.

The principal facade of the County Clerk's Building, now facing west, is designed to resemble a classical temple and is composed of a boxed cornice with a fully pedimented return resting atop four unarticulated porch columns. There are two windows on the front and south sides of the building, all with nine-over-six panes. Intact examples of 9 over 6 glazing in window sash of the Territorial period are rare in Oregon today. The front door, which is original, is located in the center of the facade and is composed of five panel construction. The rear door with four panels dates from a later time.

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The interior of the Clerk's Building is divided into two rooms. The larger, approximately twelve by fifteen feet, is toward the front and served as the meeting space and court room. The smaller room to the rear, approximately seven by fifteen feet, served as the clerk's office. The interior finishes have been modified to some extent. The original floor boards are presently covered over with 3¼ inch tongue-and-groove flooring. The walls, which are framed with studs, are panelled; the front room with tongue-and-groove, and the back with a shiplap variety. There is evidence that the earliest ceilings were of muslin.<sup>2</sup>

A significant interior feature is the hanging chimney which is located in the smaller back room. Although the upper portions have been removed, the lower segments of the chimney are still intact.

A partial restoration of the Clerk's Building was done in 1977 under the supervision of Gregg Olsen, a local restoration woodworker. Deteriorated woodwork was restored on three of the four windows and on the front and south cornice. Some work was also done to the porch ceiling. The manufacture of the new woodwork was done using hand tools so that the character of the original material was replicated as closely as possible. Funding for the project came through the City of Eugene Department of Housing and Community Conservation.

While the present site of the building, on the Lane County Fairgrounds, is different from the original setting of 1853, siting adjacent to the County Museum affords the structure safety from vandalism, and management as an extension of the museum allows controlled public access to the building.

<sup>1</sup> County Commissioners' Records, 1852-1860.

<sup>2</sup> Gregg Olsen, Recommendations for Preservation of Lane County's 1853 Clerk's Building, 1977.

## 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 checked="" 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** 1853 **Builder/Architect** Prior Blair

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lane County Clerk's Building in Eugene, county seat of Lane County, Oregon, is significant because of its age, rarity and association with early settlers and governmental leaders of Oregon. The building is the oldest authenticated structure in Lane County and among the oldest public buildings in the state. It is an excellent example of the Classic Revival style of architecture. The building, constructed by local carpenter-builder Prior Blair in 1853, epitomizes the Classic Revival public building architecture of Oregon's Territorial period (1849-1859), and it is an extremely rare remaining example of its type. A small, single-story prostyle, or temple-fronted building with boxed cornice and full pedimented cornice return, it has a ground plan measuring 16 x 20 feet. Its interior was divided into a meeting room-courtroom in the front, and the office of the Lane County Clerk in the rear. Its stud walls rest on hewn sills. Lapped, horizontal weatherboards bear whipsaw marks, believed to be evidence of their manufacture by Eugene's first saw mill.

The building was the scene of the first jury trial in Lane County, presided over by District Judge Matthew P. Deady. Eugene Skinner, proprietor of the Eugene townsite, was County Clerk. The Lane County Clerk's Building meets National Register criterion "a" as a symbol of Lane County government, which was organized by act of the Territorial Legislature in 1851. The building also meets criterion "b" for its association with figures, such as Deady, who were prominent in Oregon jurisprudence, and for its association with the founder of Eugene. While the small building was moved no less than four times, beginning in 1855, its loss of context is overridden by the fact that, under National Register criterion "c", it is one of the oldest government buildings remaining in the state and it continues to convey its Classic Revival design characteristics and historic method of construction. In Oregon today, only the original Wasco County Courthouse (1858) is comparable in date, but the Lane County Clerk's Building is a far more distinctive building than the former architecturally. The Clerk's Building provides a firsthand source for understanding the skills, workmanship, and ability of early Oregon builders.

The Lane County Clerk's Building is noteworthy for the events associated with it during its early years. In October of 1853, almost upon its completion, the District Court of Lane County held its first jury trial here. At this trial, Matthew Deady, was the District Judge; Joseph W. Drew, U. S. Marshall; L. F. Grover, District Attorney; W. Stuart Brock, Prosecuting Attorney; and Eugene Skinner, County Clerk. Matthew Deady, who had arrived in Oregon in 1849 and established a law practice, served many years as District Judge as well as U. S. District Judge for the State of Oregon and was noted for his brilliant mind.<sup>1</sup> Eugene Skinner is most noted as the founder of the city of Eugene. Skinner, who established his donation land claim in 1846 along the south side of the Willamette River in the area now known as Skinner's Butte, donated a portion of this land in 1852 for the original plat of Eugene City. Skinner also served as postmaster and practiced law.<sup>2</sup>

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Eugene East, Oregon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

1	0	4	9	1	7	18	10	4	18	7	16	6	4	10
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Lane County Clerk's Building was permanently sited on the Lane County Fairgrounds, in T. 17 S., R. 3 W., W.M., in Eugene, Lane County, Oregon in 1964. It is situated immediately south of the Lane County Museum building. The nominated area measures 20 x 25 feet and is more particularly described as follows:

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** (continued)

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul A. Holtz

organization University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts date March 1983

street & number 1379 East 21st Street telephone 503/343-8261

city or town Eugene state Oregon 97405

# 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.

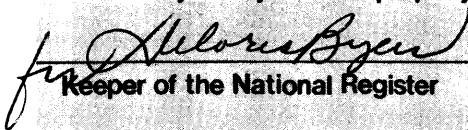
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date October 10, 1983

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

Entered in the National Register date 11/25/83

  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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In 1854 jury trial proceedings were said to have been so congested that there was not enough room in the building for all the court officials, the jury, and the witnesses. On one occasion at least, court was moved outside and held beneath a grove of nearby Oak trees.<sup>3</sup> The situation made the County Commissioners realize the necessity for a larger courthouse. Therefore in 1855, just two years after its completion, the Clerk's Building was moved to make way for a larger courthouse. The Clerk's Building, which had been located on the southwest corner of the block bordered by Willamette and Oak Streets and Ninth and Tenth Avenues, was moved to a site adjacent the northwest corner of Ninth and High.<sup>4</sup>

At its new location it was acquired by Stuckley Ellsworth, a graduate of Yale University and an early Eugene attorney. Ellsworth used the Clerk's Building as his office and had a 20-foot addition built for his living quarters at the back. Thus, the Clerk's Building became the fourth residence within the city limits. In the process, its original sixteen foot width was maintained but its length was doubled to forty feet. Ellsworth later became a member of the Oregon Legislature and was instrumental in getting the University of Oregon located in Eugene.<sup>5</sup>

The progression of ownership after Ellsworth is unclear. However, the next substantiated transaction concerning the Clerk's Building is its purchase between the years 1912-1925 by Frank Chambers, who was one of Eugene's most prominent citizens at the turn of the century. Chambers and his family owned a great deal of property locally and were involved in banking and city government. Chambers was interested in the building because of its significance to the county and city. Chambers moved the enlarged Clerk's Building to Seventh Avenue, between Pearl and High Streets, soon after purchasing it.

The Salvation Army purchased the building in 1937 in order to gain valuable right of way to the rear of its property immediately to the west. While owned by the Salvation Army, the structure was used as a residence for employees. The Salvation Army maintained the Clerk's Building at 232 7th Avenue until 1957, at which time it was given to the Lane County Historical Society.

The Lane County Historical Society, upon receiving title to the building, moved it to the site of the County Shops, just off Roosevelt Avenue. At this time the additions were removed and the Clerk's Building was restored to its original sixteen by twenty-foot configuration.

The Lane County Clerk's Building was permanently sited on the Lane County Fairgrounds in Eugene, the county seat, in 1964. It is situated immediately south of the Lane County Museum building and faces west. It is occupied by the County Museum as an auxiliary exhibit, and it houses the library of the Genealogical Society of Oregon. The building was declared a City of Eugene Historic Landmark in 1975, the first Eugene building to be so designated under City ordinance.

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- <sup>1</sup> Howard M. Corning, Dictionary of Oregon History, Portland: Binfords and Mort, 1956, p. 70-1.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 225.
- <sup>3</sup> ABC Papers, January 1953, p. 1-3.
- <sup>4</sup> Albert G. Walling, Illustrated History of Lane County, Portland, Author, 1884.
- <sup>5</sup> Eugene Register Guard, March, 1959. Josephine Harpham, "First County Clerk's Office Still Stands."
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.

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ABC Papers, January 1953, University of Oregon Library, Oregon Collection.

Lane County Commissioners' Records, 1852-1860.

Corning, Howard M., Dictionary of Oregon History, Portland: Binford & Mort, 1956.

Eugene Daily Guard, 1897. Undated clipping, "Pioneer Court House Has Done Service for 42 Years."

Eugene Register Guard, 1955, 1959, 1963.

Olsen, Gregg, Recommendations for Preservation of Lane County's 1853 Clerk's Building, 1977.

Oregon Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, Oregon Landmarks: Oregon Coast, Portland, Metropolitan Printing Company, 1966, p. 14-15. Discussion of the stylistically similar First Customs House in Astoria (1852).

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1890, 1895, 1902, 1925, 1949, 1968.

Walling, Albert G., Illustrated History of Lane County, Portland, Author, 1884.



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Beginning at the southwest corner of Lot 6, Block 6 as platted in Huddleson Addition, recorded in Lane County Plat Records, Lane County, Oregon, said corner being the northwest corner of the intersection of West 13th Avenue and Monroe Street, thence easterly along the northern margin of West 13th Avenue 400.0 feet to a point with an intersection of the east margin of Madison Street if Madison Street were extended south to West Thirteenth Avenue, thence southerly on said Madison Street projection 275.0 feet, thence west 144.0 feet to the true point of beginning, thence south 20 feet, thence west 25 feet, thence north 20 feet, thence east 25 feet to the true point of beginning, in Eugene, Lane County, Oregon.