

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAR 12 1984**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic San Juan County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 350^{W.} Court Street West not for publication

city, town Friday Harbor vicinity of

state Washington code 053 county San Juan code 055

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name San Juan County

street & number 350 Court Street West

city, town Friday Harbor vicinity of state Washington 98250

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. San Juan County Courthouse

street & number 350 Court Street West

city, town Friday Harbor vicinity of state Washington 98250

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title none has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The San Juan County Courthouse is a large, two story brick structure located in the town of Friday Harbor on San Juan Island. Erected in 1906, the building was designed in the style of the Second Renaissance Revival. The structure has been altered several times throughout its history. The most prominent change is due to the addition of a new courthouse on the north facade in 1982.

The courthouse sits in the middle of a 200 foot square plot just north of Friday Harbor's central business district. The knoll upon which the courthouse stands has been landscaped with a lawn, trees, and shrubs; some date from the courthouse's erection. The surrounding area consists mainly of vacant land and one to two story homes and small businesses.

The courthouse measures approximately 45 feet by 60 feet by 38 feet and sits on a high rubble stone foundation which is covered in a cement veneer scored to imitate coursed stone. This foundation has bar-covered windows on its northeast and southeast facades that once lit its basement jail. Above the foundation on the building's east corner is an original marble plaque that names the architect, and the county commissioners at the time of the courthouse's construction.

The main stories of the structure are executed in red brick laid in a common bond. The front facade is divided into three bays and the sides into five. The formal entrance is approached by means of a short concrete stoop that leads to a substantial one story portico. This element is composed of four rusticated brick piers which support a heavily molded cornice. Behind this portico is a double wood and glass door that is surrounded by sidelights and a transom.

The windows throughout the courthouse are wood, two-over-two double hung sash. On the first floor, these windows are set in a recessed arched openings that are ornamented with a simple granite keystones. Second floor windows have multipaned transoms set within a segmentally arched opening. Other details include a corbelled beltcourse between the first and second floors and a tall corbelled cornice which conceals the building's flat roof. Three chimneys project through the cornice.

On the building's southwest elevation is a slightly projecting one story pavilion. Set in the center bay, its cornice treatment imitates the front portico. The northeast facade once had a portico similar to that on the front facade. It was closed with bricks in the 1950's to create a lavatory. While the cornice survives, the new brick color and window treatment is different from that of the courthouse.

In 1982, a new courthouse was attached to the building's north facade. This addition is L-shaped and finished in a dull brown brick. The original courthouse's second story windows remain, but are covered by the addition. While the addition is two stories high at the point of attachment, it is still ten feet lower than the original courthouse. The rest of the addition is only one story high. Although the addition is rather large, the original courthouse still manages to dominate its hillside site by virtue of its scale, color, and design.

The interior structure of the original courthouse consists of reinforced concrete beams and floors resting on load-bearing brick walls and piers. Most of the courthouse's original floorplan survives, as well as wood and pressed glass doors, molded window and door trim, an iron stairway, vaultroom, and court chamber. This chamber has high ceilings and maintains its judge's bench and balustrade dividing the trial area from the audience.

The courthouse has been vacant for a number of years and has suffered some deterioration. County Commissioners have recently voted to fund a complete restoration.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates	1906	Builder/Architect	W.T. White, Seattle - Architect Shockey, Bellingham - Builder
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

For seventy-eight years, the San Juan County Courthouse has overlooked the small town of Friday Harbor. As the seat of county government and justice, this building has been the most important civic structure in the county during its entire history. As might be expected, the courthouse has been the scene of many dramatic judicial and governmental decisions over the past decades. The courthouse is also one of the few older buildings in the county to be designed by an architect and it remains one of the most architecturally distinguished buildings in the San Juan Island chain.

The geography of San Juan County makes it a most unusual municipality. The county consists of the 172 islands of the San Juan Archipelago. Located in Puget Sound between the mainland of Washington State and British Columbia's Vancouver Island, these small islands have never had a large population and historically have relied on a modest economy based on agriculture and fishing.

In 1903, the County Commissioners began discussion on "a new and credible county building" to replace the inadequate old frame building then in use. By 1906, they developed a formal proposal to build a new courthouse of brick at a cost of \$12,000. The architect was named, and the citizenry went to the polls to approve the project by a vote of ten to one.

Construction began, but the building was destined to be the focus of controversy from the start. The architect, contractors, and building materials all came under attack from the county's many self-appointed experts. During construction the roof collapsed, escalating the controversy. Finally, the hostility was pushed aside and construction resumed. By Valentine's Day 1907, electricity had come to Friday Harbor, and the county offices were occupied. However, the building was declared unsafe by summer of that first year and measures had to be taken to shore up the slanting floors. One resident asked that "wouldn't it have been better to have doubled the cost and erected a building that would have served the people for 50 years?"

Decades went by on the courthouse calendar. The building survived and grew old through two world wars and the Great Depression. The halls echoed with the footsteps of generations of island families struggling with the drama of enacting justice and guarding the treasury as well as the quality of life. In 1907, the Friday Harbor Journal remarked: "people isolated from theatrical privileges find the courtroom an interesting place."

By the time the 70's came along, the old walls resounded to a new era of heated rhetoric on rock music festivals, home rule, federal trust lands, and sprawling real estate development. The courthouse had gone full circle, with debate raging once again on slanting floors and failing facilities. New architects appeared on the scene, and after all factions had vociferously expressed their opinions, the advent of the 80's saw a modern courthouse rise alongside the old.

Virtually all civil affairs in the county were conducted in the courthouse, for Friday Harbor is the only incorporated town in the entire county. Consequently, the county courthouse is a unique symbol of government and political life in the San Juans.

The building is also one of the most architecturally significant structures in the San Juans. Due to a limited economy, most of the older buildings in the county are modestly scaled and detailed. Nearly all are of wood construction. While the San Juan

9. Major Bibliographical References

Richardson, David. Pig War Islands, Orcas Publishing Co., Eastsound, Washington, 1971.
 Splitstone, Fred John. Orcas: the Gem of the San Juans, Fred T. Darvill, Eastsound, 1954.
The Islander. Newspaper published in Friday Harbor, Washington, from 1890 to 1914.
The Friday Harbor Journal. Newspaper published in Friday Harbor, Washington, from 1906 to the present.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Friday Harbor

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

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Verbal boundary description and justification Block 7 of the Original Plat of the Town of Friday Harbor. From the Northeast corner of Court and First Streets, proceed Northwesterly 200 feet then Southwesterly 200 feet to Second Street. Proceed Southeasterly along Second Street 200 feet to Court Street and Northeasterly to the point of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	n/a	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title <u>Harry Towne, Jean Thomas, Winifred Ruthroff, Jay Hurlburt, and Joann Blalock</u>	Edited by <u>Mark L. Brack</u> Archaeology & Hist. Pres.
organization <u>Theatre Group</u>	date <u>September 20, 1983</u>
street & number <u>Straights of Juan de Fuca</u>	telephone <u>(206) 378-5555 or 378-5203</u>
city or town <u>P.O. Box 1337</u>	state <u>Washington 98250</u>

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 *Carol E. Strom*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date March 5, 1984

For NPS use only

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

for Allene Byers Entered in the National Register date 4/12/84
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

2

County Courthouse is rather small compared to other courthouses in Washington State, it was quite simply the grandest structure in the archipelago when erected. Only W.T. White's 1907 bank in Friday Harbor exhibits a similar treatment of material and scale. The bank is in fact the only other known W.T. White design, and both bank and courthouse employ the Second Renaissance Revival Style, the sole buildings in the county to do so.

The alterations to the courthouse have obscured some historical details. However, two facades have been left completely intact and the original building visually dominates its recent addition. The courthouse remains an important historical and architectural landmark, an invaluable cultural resource of San Juan County.