

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

AUG 04 1989

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Somerset Courthouse Green  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number Main Street, between Grove & North Bridge Streets  NA not for publication  
city, town Somerville Borough  vicinity  
state New Jersey code 034 county Somerset code 035 zip code 08876

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Allen D. Seuche 05/26/89  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Alburt Byrne Entered in the National Register 9/7/89

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/county courthouse  
Government/government office  
Religious/religious structure  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/county courthouse  
Government/government office  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical Revival  
High Victorian Gothic  
Beaux Arts Classicism  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone  
walls stone  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof slate  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Somerset Courthouse Green Complex consists of two contributing buildings and one contributing object: the Somerset County Courthouse (1909), the Lord Memorial Fountain (1910) and the First Reformed Dutch Church (1897).

Located in the central business district of Somerville and offering a feeling of open space, this is the major focal point of the area.

1. Lord Memorial Fountain, 1910: A marble monument, with garlanded frieze and Corinthian columns enframing a rectangular stele, contains on its south face a niche with basin at the bottom and lion-head water source above it. A low wall extending on either side defines a planted semicircle, formerly the horse-watering basin, ornamented to the south by five bollards. Designed by John Russell Pope and sculpted by John Brae Boyde and Thomas C. Post Treleven.
2. Somerset County Courthouse, 1909: The courthouse derives its impact from the sedate last phase of Beaux-Arts classicism. In plan the building is a Latin cross with rotunda at the crossing. The three short arms terminate in pedimented porticos supported by colossal Ionic columns, the tout ensemble set on a rusticated podium so that the primary entrance is reached by a grand staircase. The gilded dome set on a high drum, a type loosely modeled on the monument of Lysicrates, is surmounted by a figure of Justice. Within, the galleried rotunda is supported by arches on the ground floor and then by eight scagliola Corinthian columns. A stained glass oculus lights the coffered dome. The interiors of most offices and courtrooms have been modernized, but the north wing contains the original major two-storied galleried courtroom lighted by full-height Roman-arched windows and a stained glass oculus. James Reilly Gordon, architect.
3. First Reformed Dutch Church, 1897: The church is a cruciform building constructed of Stockton granite with limestone trim. Its distinguishing external feature is a square tower centered on the facade. Over the nave the slate roof is punctuated on each side by three large dormers with wooden tracery. Within, a broad nave and aisles are defined by truss arches so that an expansive open ceiling dominates the sanctuary, which is finished entirely in dark wood. The design is

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enhanced by carefully wrought details such as the mosaic floor and etched-glass tracery doors in the vestibule, the unusual stepped tower windows enclosing stone quatrefoils, and the foliated stonework of the facade. There are two large 1940's one story additions in the rear of the church. Primarily concrete buildings, the facing is stone and remotely collegiate gothic. It is used as courtrooms and offices for the county. The original building is presently used as the waiting room for Somerset County petit jurors. William Appleton Potter, architect.

4. The Courthouse "Green" is the park-like area fronting the courthouse and the First Reformed Dutch Church on East Main Street. The Green has not been evaluated for its significance.

The area being nominated has been the site of Somerset County government and the Dutch Reformed Church since the 18th century and continues to function as the governmental center of the county. Both buildings are now owned by the county of Somerset and function as county government facilities. The nominated property is contained within the block surrounded by High Street, East Main Street, Grove Street, and North Bridge Street. The modern Administration Building at the northwest quadrant of the block and the County Jail are not part of the nomination.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government  
Architecture  
Art  
Religion

Period of Significance  
1897-1940

Significant Dates  
1897  
1907  
1910

Cultural Affiliation  
NA

Significant Person  
NA

Architect/Builder  
Potter, William Appleton; Gordon, J. Reilly  
Pope, John Russell/Boyd, John Brae &  
Treleaven, Thomas C. Post

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

For more than 200 years, the courthouse green in Somerville has been the political, social, and religious center of Somerset County. In the most recent building phase, the last decade of the 19th century and first of the 20th, both county and church turned to well-known architects, who adorned the square with distinguished buildings and monuments. The property meets Criterion A under the categories Politics/Government and Religion, and Criterion C under the Categories Architecture and Art.

Politics/Government

From the creation of Somerset County in 1688 until the Revolutionary War, the seat of county government was successively placed in two other locations. The last of the pre-Revolutionary courthouses, at the village of Somerset Courthouse (now Millstone), was burned by Loyalist troops in 1779. In 1782, a group of citizens met at Tunison's Tavern, at what was then called Raritan, and agreed to build a new courthouse and jail nearby. This action was taken at the suggestion of the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed congregation, whose church near Van Veghten's bridge had been burned by the same British raiding party. It resulted in the construction the following year of the first of the courthouses on the present site in Somerville.

The first frame courthouse of 1783 was replaced by a brick structure in 1799. In 1801, small buildings to house county offices were built; these were replaced in 1841. Construction of the present Courthouse began in 1907 and was completed in 1909. The Courthouse is symbolic of justice, truth and strength; the full embodiment of democratic government. The Courthouse gained a measure of national fame in 1927 as the setting of the Hall-Mills murder trial, one of the most famous murder trials in twentieth-century America. The victims of this widely publicized 1922 crime were Reverend Edward Wheeler Hall and his illicit

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

- Primary location of additional data:
- State historic preservation office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Bound Brook Quad

Acreage of property 2.2 acres (95,670 square feet)

UTM References

A 

1	8
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5	3	2	9	2	0
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4	4	9	0	6	6	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See attached boundary map.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were drawn to include the architecturally significant courthouse, church, and fountain, and to exclude the incompatible county administration building and jail.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Constance M. Greiff and Robert Guter; edited by Robert Craig, ONJH, 4/89

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lover Eleanor Reinhardt Mills. Reverend Hall's wife and her two brothers were eventually tried and acquitted for the murders in 1927, but during the trial, the newspapers devoted extraordinary coverage to the crime, and to the love affair, which seemed to symbolize the perceived moral decay of the period. (Kunstler, The Minister and the Choir Singer).

Religion

The First Reformed Dutch Church of the Raritan held its first services under the guidance of Guiliam Bertholf, a missionary preacher, in 1709. Classes held by subsequent ministers John Frelinghuysen and Jacob Hardenbergh were the fore-runners of Rutgers University. In 1783 the church was moved to the newly-erected Courthouse. A brick building, erected in 1788 on the site of the present church, was replaced by a new structure in 1834. The First Reformed Dutch Chapel was a simple Gothic Romanesque building constructed in 1886 and enlarged in 1895. It was demolished in the mid-twentieth century to make way for additional parking. The present church was begun in 1896 and completed in 1897.

Architecture and Art

The Somerset County Courthouse, completed in 1909, is a fine example of the Neo-classical style. The architects were cited in the brochure published for the dedication as Gordon, Tracy and Swartwout, of New York City. J. Reilly Gordon was evidently the partner-in-charge for his photograph appears in the brochure with the caption: "A Practical Court House Architect. Specialty Court Houses. Has Designed 70 Court Houses".<sup>1</sup> Gordon, born in San Antonio, Texas, worked as a draftsman in the office of the U.S. Supervising Architect from 1883 until about 1900. He returned to San Antonio briefly and established a practice there, designing county courthouses and the Arizona State Capitol. He moved to New York City in 1904. Egerton Swartwout and Evarts Tracy had worked for McKim, Mead & White for many years. After their association with Gordon was dissolved, they designed the Missouri State Capitol, 1913-1918. The contractor for the Somerset courthouse was William H. Fissell, also of New York City: "A Builder of National Repute. Built One Wing of Capitol at Washington".<sup>2</sup>

The Somerset County Courthouse, one of two county courthouses in New Jersey designed by Gordon, is a well-proportioned example of the domed, classical public building, influenced by the tenets of the Beaux-Arts. Based on the symbolic precedent of the United States Capitol, its chaste and almost severe white marble exterior reflects the stylistic precedent of Palladio's Villa Rotunda. The interior is more lavish. Although modest in scale and proportion, the rotunda,

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with its scagliola and gilt columns, and balusters, and the white and gold main courtroom echo the lavish effects of contemporary state capitols.

The Lord Memorial Fountain is at the southeast corner of the courthouse green. Erected in 1910, it was designed by John Russell Pope and sculpted by John Brae Boyde of New York City and Thomas C. Post Treleven of Brooklyn. Its graceful forms and the relative lightness provided by the openings produce a pleasing aspect not always present in Pope's later monumental designs.

The First Reformed Dutch Church was constructed in 1897. Its architect, William Appleton Potter, well-known for High-Victorian Gothic ecclesiastical designs, designed it as a free interpretation of an English Parish Gothic church. It is particularly distinguished by the broad and generous handling of the interior spaces and the fine execution of the detailing. The Church was sold in 1974 to Somerset County, which now uses it for office space and the sanctuary as a juror's waiting room.

1. (Somerville) Unionist Gazette, April 11, 1907, p. 1.
2. Arthur P. Sutphen, Souvenir of the Opening of the Somerset County Court House, March 1909, n.p.

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Kunstler, William M. The Minister and the Choir Singer. William Morrow and Co., New York, 1964.

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Somerset County, 250 Years. Somerville: Somerset Press, 1938.

Sutphen, Arthur P. Souvenir of the Opening of the Somerset County Court House. Somerville: 1909.

Whiston, Jean L.; and G. Wallace Conover, Somerville in Picture and Story. Somerville: 1959.

Clippings and pictures in the files of the New Jersey Collection, Somerset County Library, Somerville.

MAPS:

(All are held by County Clerk's Office, Somerset County Administration Building, Somerville)

Otley, J.W.; and J. Keily. Map of Somerset County New Jersey, Camden: Lloyd Van Derveer, 1850.

Hughes, Thomas. Somerville: The Seat of Justice of Somerset County, New Jersey, Philadelphia: 1857.



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1873.

Somerville 1882. Asbury Park, NJ: Fowler & Evans, 1882 (panoramic view).

Glickner, Charles W. A Map of Somerville East to Finderne, Bridgewater Township,  
Somerset County, N.J., n.p., 1897. Glickner, Charles W.

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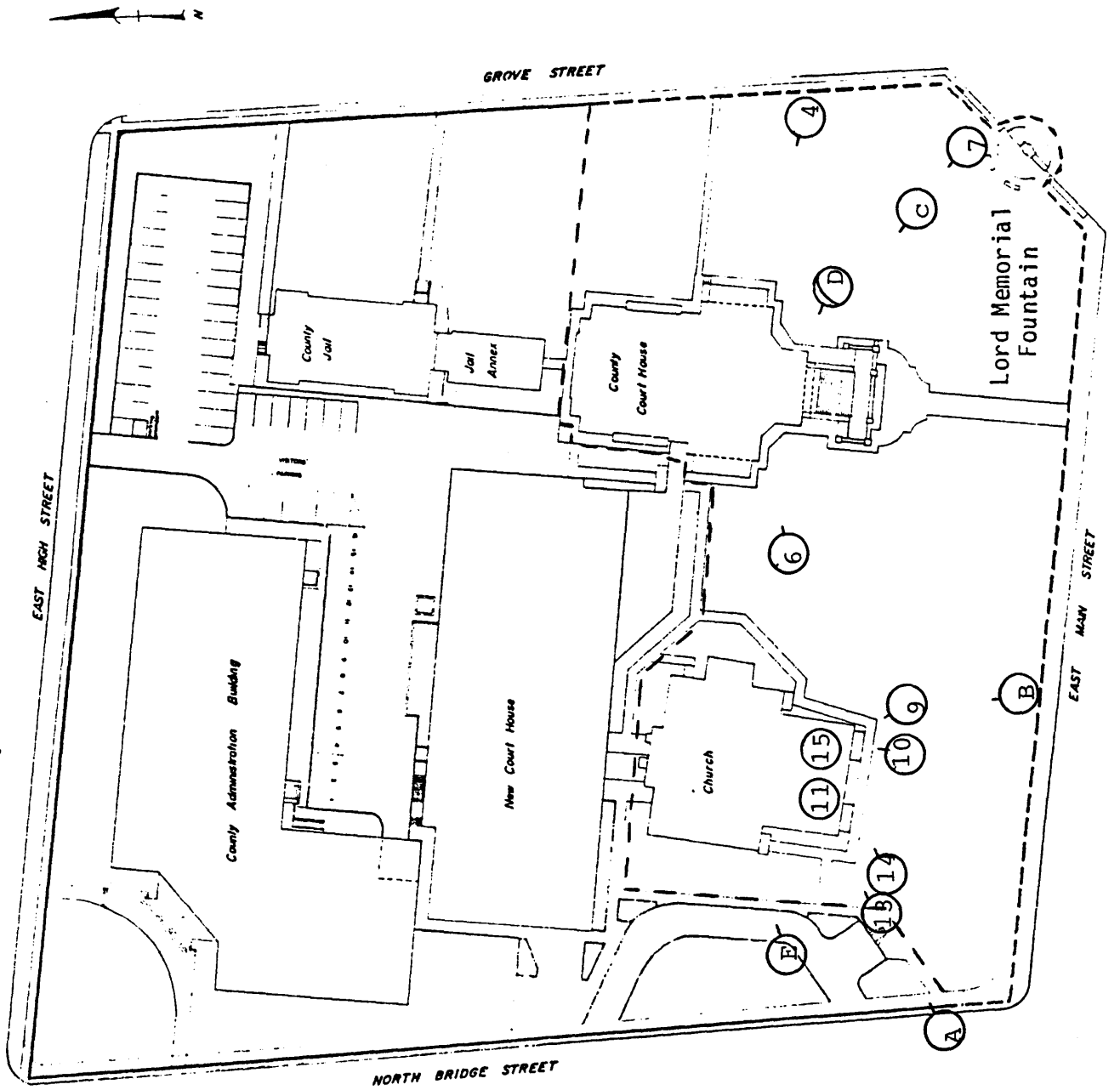
The following information is the same for all photographs included:

Somerset Courthouse Green  
Somerville Borough  
Somerset County, New Jersey  
Photos/Negatives: Terry Karschner  
Office of New Jersey Heritage  
CN 404  
Trenton, NJ 08625

SOMERSET COURT HOUSE GREEN  
SOMERSET COUNTY  
Somerville, New Jersey

PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

**SOMERSET COUNTY FACILITIES**

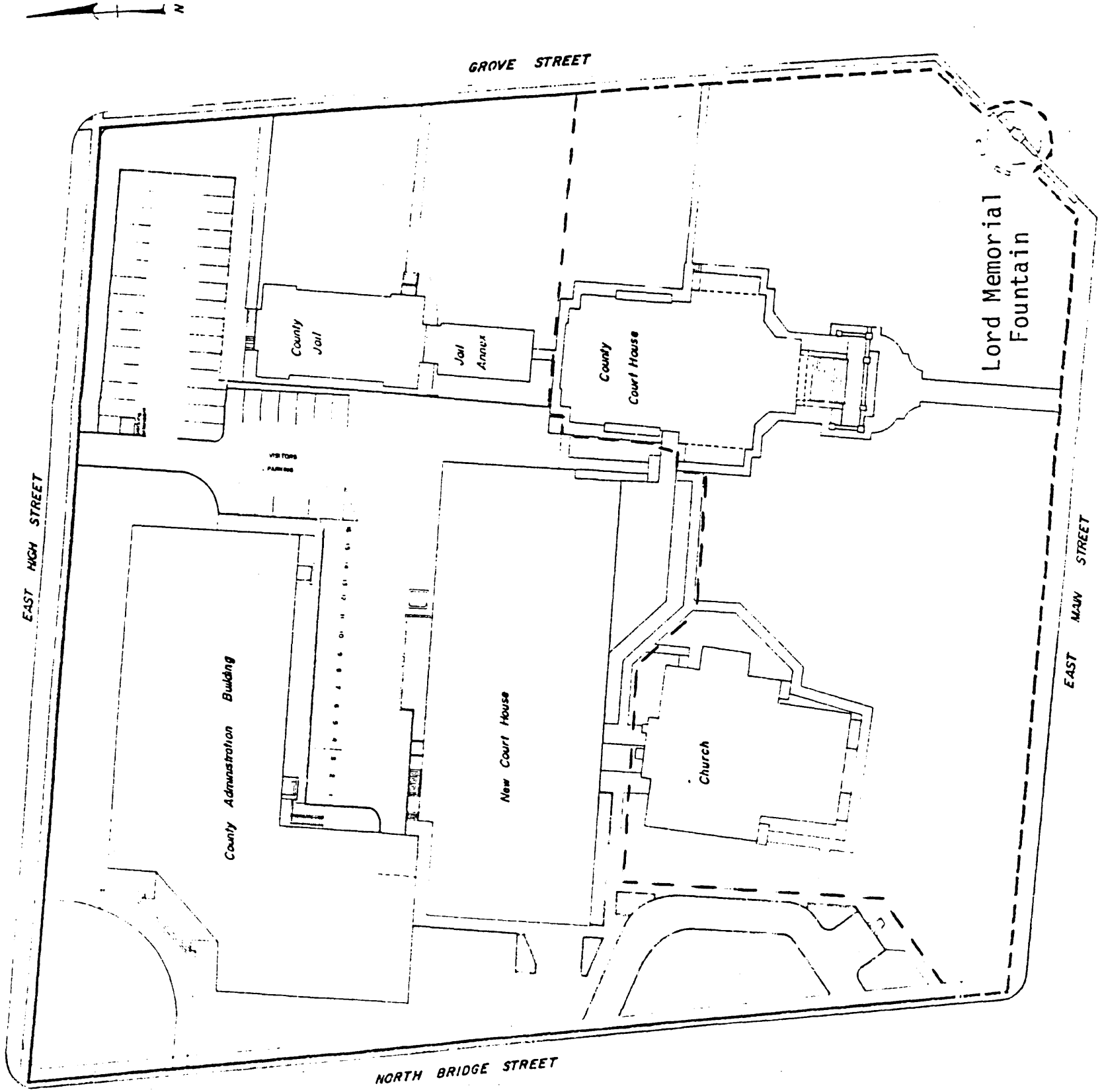


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Somerset Court House Green

# SOMERSET COUNTY FACILITIES

SOMERSET COURT HOUSE GREEN  
SOMERSET COUNTY  
Somerville, New Jersey



Somerset Court House Green  
1" = 109'