

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	SEP 19 1979
DATE ENTERED	NOV 27 1979

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC MERRIMACK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

AND/OR COMMON MERRIMACK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
163 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Concord

VICINITY OF
Second

STATE
New Hampshire

CODE
33

COUNTY
Merrimack

CODE
013

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
County of Merrimack

STREET & NUMBER
163 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN
Concord

STATE
New Hampshire 03301

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, MERRIMACK COUNTY REGISTRY OF DEEDS
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. MERRIMACK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

STREET & NUMBER
163 North Main Street, PO Box 248

CITY, TOWN
Concord

STATE
New Hampshire 03301

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None

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 checked="" 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

Present Appearance

The Merrimack County Courthouse is a free standing two-story building faced with buff brick and white granite, a popular regional material. The building's facade is organized into a three-bay main block flanked by lower wings of two bays each. A paneled brick parapet ranging between brick pedestals screens the truncated hip roofs of the main block and each wing. A pair of hooded interior chimneys are located on the north and south roof slopes of the main block, and smaller chimneys are found on each wing.

Ten banded brick pilasters, each topped by a granite capital carved in a freely adapted composite motif, frame the courthouse's facade and delineate each bay. Their verticle emphasis is balanced by a simple white granite architrave, unornamented frieze and undeveloped cornice which is accented by modillions. The visual impact of the cornices is somewhat diminished by the brick parapet directly above, which provides additional horizontal emphasis.

The recessed main entrance to the courthouse is located in the central bay of the main block. Oak doors featuring large single-pane glass lights above raised panels provide entrance to the lobby. The entrance is sheltered by a semicircular granite arch supported by engaged colonnettes whose capitals are carved in a Romanesque Ionic motif. An egg and dart moulding embellishes the archivolt, and the spandrels are carved in a floral motif.

The entrance arch is framed by two pilaster strips supporting a frieze and pediment, whose tympanum is also carved in a floral motif. Where the granite frieze and pediment intersect the brick pilasters, no capitals are provided for articulation or visual emphasis; the pilasters are carried directly into the second story.

Paired double-hung, one-over-one sash flank the entrance to the courthouse, each set distinguished by a rectangular granite lintel featuring a raised triangular section centered on its upper edge. The smooth faced lintels are set flush with the wall surface, as are the granite sills below each window. Identical window units are used in the two wings; each features two pairs on the first story and two above.

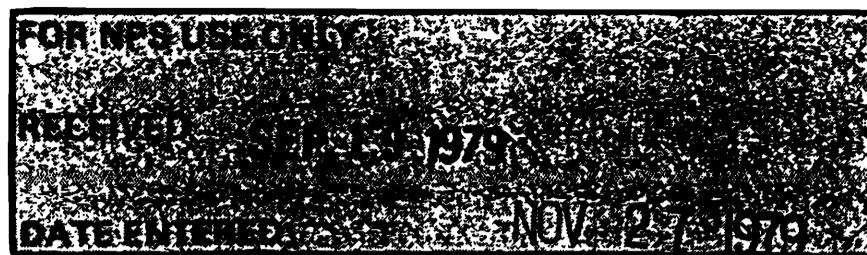
The courtroom space on the second floor of the main block is articulated on the facade by the use of large windows. These four-light double-hung sash, with transoms above, are located in the two outer bays. Between them is a shorter rectangular window centered over the main entrance. The three windows each have granite lintels and sills. A granite name plaque flanked by two decorative panels carved with swags ornament the uppermost wall surface of the main block's facade.

The Merrimack County Courthouse is clearly derived from classical precedents in massing and symmetry, and appears to borrow from the Romanesque for some of its details. Visual variety is provided by the restrained use of white granite ornament, the relatively elaborate entrance and the ten paneled brick pilasters, its most distinctive feature. Symmetry and balance are emphasized through the placement of windows, whose large lights and shallow reveals reduce their

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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Description (Continued)

three dimensional impact on the overall form. The quiet polychromy of buff brick and white granite underscores the building's solemn presence.

Original Appearance

In March, 1852, a committee was appointed in Concord to make arrangements "for the erection of a new building on or adjoining the site of the town house, with a town hall, courtroom and other offices in the same" (Lyford, P. 442).*

The newly chartered city of Concord agreed to finance the building jointly with Merrimack County, and upon completion, both city and county would occupy the structure. The May 30, 1855, New Hampshire Patriot & State Gazette contained a full report of the cornerstone laying ceremony attended by Governor Nathaniel B. Baker, numerous city officials, and J.L. Foster, the building's architect.

The "New City Hall and Court House" was completed in January, 1857, at a cost of \$56,000. The detailed description of the building which appeared in the New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette at that time noted that the brick structure's 54 foot wide main block was flanked by wings of 33 feet each, and that the central section was "surmounted with a large dome which, with its circular finish at the top, is 33 feet high, making the entire height of 95 feet" (1/14/1857, p. 2).* The article described the building's arcaded wooden porch as one story in height, ten feet in depth, and located along the front of the main block and extending "so as to cover the entrances into the wings." *

A nineteenth century photograph of the courthouse used in Lyford's History of Concord corroborates this evidence. Entrance was provided by the doors located in each wing. The main block did not feature a central entrance because it housed the 51' x 70' City Hall on the ground floor. The photograph shows that the main block and wings each had pedimented roofs embellished by denticular ornament. A prominent belt course divided the building's two floors, with plain brick pilasters above and paneled brick pilasters below framing each of the facades' seven bays. The two-over-two double hung sash were framed by simple granite lintels and sills, and the only paired windows were found on the ends of the wings. The building's distinctive dome was set on an octagonal base at the center of the main block. Above the base, a low drum below the dome itself contained twelve small windows.

The City Hall and Court House served Concord and Merrimack County until 1904. At that time the city sold its interest in the building to the county for \$20,000. (Merrimack Records, Vol. 361, p. 416). In the following year, the county considered

*See Bibliography for publication information for footnotes.

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Description (Continued)

proposals to remodel the building, as well as proposals for new construction. Members of the county convention met in April, 1905, and voted to accept the remodeling proposal submitted by George S. Forrest, a Concord architect. Forrest's plan called for extensive remodeling of the building's interior, removal of the dome and porch, and a new facing of pressed brick (necessitated by changes in window height). The extensively remodeled building, completed in 1907, remains virtually unchanged today.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1857, 1907

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Joshua L. Foster; George S. Forrest

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The design of the Merrimack County Courthouse integrates Renaissance detailing within the massing of the original 1857 building. Neo-Renaissance design was popularized in public architecture at the turn of the century, and the courthouse exemplifies this (prominent) architectural phenomenon. As the first seat of Merrimack County and Concord's first City Hall, the Courthouse has witnessed the continuous growth of the area. The process of expansion which characterizes the building's history mirrors the social and political history of Concord and Merrimack County.

The Merrimack County Courthouse stands on land used for civic purposes continuously since 1790 when a one-story clapboard Town House was constructed. The Town House was doubled in size in 1823 when Merrimack County was formed with Concord as its shire town. By 1855 the functional requirements of the building's two occupants had outgrown the space available. The old building was moved off the site to make it available for the construction of Joshua L. Foster's imposing City Hall and County Court House building. In 1901, the City sold its half interest in the structure to the County and built a new City Hall on a separate site. Faced with the options of renovation or demolition and new construction, the County moved to renovate the 44-year-old building according to plans submitted by George S. Forrest.

It is noteworthy that both architects associated with the Merrimack County Courthouse made lasting contributions to the State of New Hampshire. Joshua L. Foster, whose Concord architectural practice was terminated by the panic of 1857, later achieved considerable success in the newspaper industry. In 1872 he founded Foster's Daily Democrat, the Dover, New Hampshire, newspaper, which has maintained regional circulation to the present day. George S. Forrest, who, like Foster, is a New Hampshire native, was the designer in the Concord firm of Kimball, Danforth, and Forrest. This firm is accredited with several prominent buildings throughout the state, including the A.E. Tilton House in Tilton, the Town Hall in Bradford, the Methodist Church in Pembroke, and the South Congregational Church in Concord.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet #3

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 56,000 sq. ft.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 9	2 9 3 7 5 0	4 7 8 7 0 3 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

City of Concord, Tax Assessors Map, Pg. 46, Lot 1237

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

Bruce Fernald

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

23 Kenwood Street

TELEPHONE

(617) 738-5855

CITY OR TOWN

Brookline

STATE

Massachusetts 02146

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 Commissioner, NH Dept. Resources & Economic Development DATE

NH State Historic Preservation Officer

May 23, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11-27-79

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/21/79

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Major Bibliographical References

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Lyford, James O., Editor. History of Concord, NH. Vol. 1. Concord: The Rumford Press, 1903. pp. 297-8; 361-3; 442-444.

Stearns, Ezra S. Geneological and Family History of the State of New Hampshire. Vols. II, IV. New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1908. VII - P. 662; IV - P. 1663.

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Report of the County Commissioners of Merrimack County. 1905/1906; 1906/1907. Concord: Evans Company, 1906, 1907. (1905/pp. 215-218; 1906/pp. 12).

New Hampshire Patriot and State Gazette (Vol. 9 No. 419). May 30, 1855, p.2. Jan. 14, 1857, p. 2 (Vol. 10, No. 504)

Concord Evening Monitor (Vol. 82, No. 91.) April 21, 1905, pp. 1-2.