

YH0503118

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 24 1977

DATE ENTERED JAN 30 1978

**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

Benton County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

same

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NW 4th Street between Jackson and Monroe Sts. NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Corvallis

VICINITY OF

1st

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Benton

CODE

003

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 checked="" 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:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Benton County

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Corvallis

VICINITY OF

Oregon

STATE

97330

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Benton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Corvallis

Oregon

STATE

97330

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties

DATE

1970

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Salem

Oregon

STATE

97310

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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Benton County courthouse, sited on a full block, is a major landmark in downtown Corvallis. Narrowly missing becoming the state capital in 1855, Corvallis, in the heart of the Willamette Valley where the Marys River empties into the Willamette, later became home of the state Land Grant College. The courthouse, dedicated on July 4, 1888, was designed by Portland architect Delos D. Neer in the High Victorian Italianate Style.

The extreme dimensions of the building are 73x116 feet. The plan is H-shaped: the end blocks rise three stories above the daylight basement, and the connecting center wing is two stories in height. The 32-inch thick walls of the basement are of heavily rusticated ashlar grey granite, and the rest of the structure is stuccoed brick. The first story is rusticated and the upper stories are plain with string courses and quoins in low relief. The whole is surmounted by a bracketed cornice with classical detail and a hipped roof.

A tower-like pavilion and single-story portico on the east end make the entrance. A female head is carved in the portico arch keystone. A broken pediment is set in the tower cornice, in which stands a Goddess of Justice, probably cast tin, the last example of its type in situ in the Willamette Valley. The tower rises one story above the pediment, then tapers inward with a mansard-like roof to the cubical clock block above, which is crowned with a pyramidal roof. There are two bells in the tower, as well as the large pendulum and weights of the original clock mechanism. The clock is now electrically powered. The one-word legends carried on each of the clock faces add up to "The Flight of Time." There were originally eighteen chimneys on the roof, which have been removed. Otherwise, the exterior remains unaltered and in good condition.

For a period of at least ten years, the Benton County Courthouse has been generally recognized by the County Commissioners and the community as a historic property worthy of preservation. Nevertheless, with demand for increased services, the County was pressed to seek room for expansion.

Following the failure of a bond issue for construction of a new courthouse in 1974, the County embarked upon a facilities-expansion program which was aimed at reserving the courthouse exclusively for Court-related activities. A two-story Health and Law Enforcement Unit was erected on the neighboring block due west of the courthouse, and a Corrections Division wing was added to the historic courthouse structure. The latter replaced a single-story, detached jail dating from 1929. The new facilities were opened for use in 1976. The Corrections Wing is joined to the central section of the north elevation of the courthouse. It covers an area of approximately 50x43 feet. Except for a central utility superstructure, it is one story above grade and, consequently, does not obscure one's view of the courthouse. It is a concrete block construction with form-textured concrete facing and ribbed steel roofing. The overall color of the new wing, which is grey, blends reasonably well with the high masonry ground course of the courthouse. The perimeter and southerly half of the courthouse block retain the park-like atmosphere created by mature shade trees, lawn, box hedges, and occasional bedding plants.

The courthouse interior was remodeled piecemeal over the years. For example, ceilings were lowered, certain spaces subdivided, heating and lighting systems upgraded, and so on. One of the two stairways originally at the east or formal entrance end, was removed and replaced by an elevator. The County is now proceeding with a renovation and restoration plan which achieves a satisfactory balance between preserving historic features of the building's interior, on the one hand, and providing additional usable space in support of the Courts, on the other.

(See continuation page)

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The original floor plan provided one large central Circuit Courtroom on the second floor with offices and smaller Courts in the wings and on other floors. In order to maintain all of the Courts and related functions under one roof, the original Circuit Courtroom will remain divided, though not precisely as it is now, and undeveloped spaces will be utilized. Because most of the alterations were additive in nature, much original finish work, including plaster ceiling ornament and white pine wainscoting, will be revealed. Where necessary, new details will match or blend with the original in style. Much of the original courtroom furniture is still in use in the building.

Basic steps called for in the approved renovation plan are as follows:

- Prepare basement for County Clerk and move extraneous functions from the building.
- Move District Court to the first floor.
- Repartition the second floor for use by Circuit Court and reinforce framing above.
- Finish the unused space above Circuit Courtrooms for use by District Attorney.
- Convert the attic into a Law Library.
- Use the tower for an employees' lounge.

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 1888-1889 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Delos D. Neer

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benton County courthouse is understood to be the oldest standing active courthouse in Oregon. It was dedicated on July 4, 1888. Its architectural style is High Victorian Italianate, and it remains in remarkably sound condition.

One of the smallest counties in Oregon, Benton County has an area of less than 670 square miles. It lies in the mid-section of the Willamette Valley, south of Portland. It was established in 1847 by the Provisional Government and named for Thomas H. Benton, US Senator from Missouri, a strong advocate of the Oregon Country. The 1888 population of Corvallis, county seat for Benton County, was about 1500. Passenger train service came in 1880, but riverboat travel continued long after that time. As late as 1887 the catalog of Oregon Agricultural College, now Oregon State University, advised students to reach Corvallis from the north by riverboat. The population of the county is now about 50,000. Some 30,000 reside in Corvallis.

The first courthouse was constructed in 1855. It was replaced in 1888-1889 by the present one, which is the oldest active courthouse in the state. The first one cost \$6,200, part of which was withheld from the contractor because of poor workmanship. The present courthouse cost about \$70,000 and was financed by a two-mill levy. It was authorized in 1888, and constructed in 1888-1889. A new jail was built at the same time to the south of the courthouse. It cost an additional \$14,500. The original jail was succeeded by a single-story, tile-roofed structure on the north in 1929 and, more recently, by the single-story Corrections Wing of 1974-1976.

Delos D. Neer of Portland was the architect for the courthouse. He was born in Charlottesville, New York in 1847. During the Civil War he served in the Union Army and participated in several battles, including the campaign of the Shenandoah Valley under the command of Phil Sheridan. Following the war he became an apprentice builder and earned journeyman carpenter status in 1868. He married in 1869 but his wife, Alfreliia, died in 1873 following the infancy death of their two children. Neer moved to San Francisco in 1875, where he practiced his trade. From California he journeyed to Portland in 1879 and began a serious study of architecture. The following year he opened an architectural office in East Portland which proved to be successful. Besides the Benton County Courthouse, he designed several other county courthouses in Oregon including the Washington, Clackamas, and Lake County courthouses, and the Snohomish County courthouse in Snohomish, Washington. He was the architect of the Barr Block, one of Portland's early imposing business blocks. Neer designed many other buildings in Oregon and was active until his death in 1917.

(see continuation sheet)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hines, H.K., compiler, An Illustrated History of the State of Oregon (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1893), 646-647. Note on the architect, Delos D. Neer.

Strand, A.L., correspondence as Benton County Commissioner to Byron Weston Co., Dalton, Mass., December 18, 1968. Establishes that Benton County Courthouse is oldest courthouse in Oregon still in use for original purpose. Attachments include abstracts from the Journal of the Benton County Court, 1887-1888. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 1.3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	10	479030	4934052	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is located in SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 35, T. 11 S., R. 5 W., of the Willamette Meridian. The area nominated is: Lots 1 through 12, Block 24 of the Original Town Plat of Marysville.

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

David W. Powers III, Temporary Assistant, Paul B. Hartwig, Park Historian

ORGANIZATION

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

DATE

July 1974, Updated July 1977

STREET & NUMBER

525 Trade Street SE

TELEPHONE

(503) 378-5001

CITY OR TOWN

Salem

STATE

Oregon 97310

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

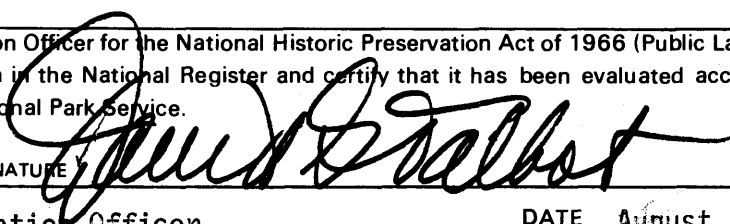
NATIONAL

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

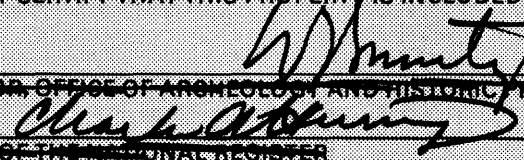


TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE August 15, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST: 
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 1-30-78
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE 1-30-78

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The Benton County courthouse was built of native stone and brick made on the site. The sand for the exterior stucco and interior plastering was shipped to Corvallis in sacks from Lewisville, Washington Territory. It was brought to Portland on a barge in a loose state and then placed in sacks and transferred about the distance of a block to the river steamer Bently, then taken to Salem, transferred to the smaller barge Three Sisters, and carried to Albany. At Albany it was loaded on rail cars for the final leg to Corvallis. A February 22, 1889 article in The Corvallis Gazette explained why: "The contracts call for the very best material in building this structure and, as no sand suitable could be procured at any nearer point this is the reason why it is brought from the above point (Lewisville)."

Nineteen large stones, eleven of which are as long as the front entrance of the courthouse is wide, were procured in San Francisco. They were utilized for the steps; their thickness being ca. eight inches and width ca. 16 inches.

A "Journal of the Benton County Court" for 1888 provides the exact costs for most of the construction work and materials:

carpentry: labor and materials-----	\$18,350
sheet metal: labor and materials (including galvanized iron cornices)-----	3,844
plumbing and sewage: labor and materials-----	695
steam heating system: labor and materials-----	2,980
plastering: labor-----	2,640
stone, brick and sand: labor and materials-----	34,628
Howard clock: labor and material-----	1,225
vault fronts: labor and material-----	490
rolled steel beams: material-----	325
sewer line: labor and material-----	320
architect: labor and material-----	1,748.41
Total:	\$67,145.41

Although the boiler and hot water heat were installed at time of construction, almost every room had a chimney connection for a wood-burning stove. Some of these were used. The eighteen small chimneys that once lined the roof have been removed. The building was piped for acetylene gas lights. The pipes can still be seen in the first floor hall.

The Howard tower clock was installed soon after the building was finished. It used weights for power which needed to be re-wound every week, a two-hour process. The weights and huge pendulum are still in the tower.

The old city fire bell is also there. It was tolled by a rope that ran through the upper floors, and down the front stairwell to the front door.

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The courthouse was erected in approximately one and one-half years. Although it is the oldest constructed courthouse in active use in Oregon today, its architectural integrity is intact and its condition is excellent. Moreover, a recent construction program which respected the courthouse as the focal element of an enlarged complex was completed to good effect in 1976. The county is now embarked upon a renovation and restoration plan for the interior of the courthouse, now wholly devoted to activities of the Courts.

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Stadvold, Cy, AIA, Benton County Courthouse Study (Corvallis, 1977). Renovation plan and history of the Courthouse. Includes bibliography.