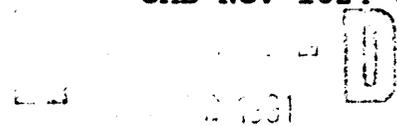


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: Contra Costa County Hall of Records

other name/site number: Contra Costa County Court House

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: 725 Court Street

not for publication: NA

city/town: Martinez

vicinity: NA

state: CA county: Contra Costa

code: 013 zip code: 94553

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
__ 1 __	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
__ 1 __	__ 0 __	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: __ 0 __

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals: Classical Revival

Other Description: NA

Materials: foundation: concrete roof: asphalt
walls: concrete other: terra cotta
stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: at the local level .

Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : NA

Areas of Significance: Politics and Government
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1932 - 1941

Significant Dates: 1932

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Bangs, Edward Geoffrey

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
 X See continuation sheet.

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The Contra Costa County Hall of Records (1932) is next to the 1901 Court House and Jail, facing Court in Martinez, the county seat. It is an almost square, solid Neo-Classical Revival structure with three stories and raised basement. It covers the entire block, with a narrow landscaped border between it and the sidewalk. There is no other building on the site. Of expert workmanship readily available during Depression years, the structure is off-white, of reinforced concrete with terra cotta facing and ornamentation. The roof always has been flat, of tar and gravel. In 1966, the third story was added at the back. This is not visible from the front elevation and maintains the original architectural style. Interior changes made at the time consisted of moving interior office walls to create more courtroom space. In feeling and association, the Hall of Records expresses its function: to provide a substantial, permanent office and courtroom building to meet the needs of a growing county.

The 1932 Contra Costa County Hall of Records (now the County Court House) is a square structure, except for the front wings which project six feet north and south. It almost covers the block bordered by Court, Ward, Pine, and Main Streets. This fireproof building has a reinforced concrete foundation, steel-reinforced concrete walls and floors, flat tar and gravel roof, limestone facings, and matching terra cotta ornamentation. Wide steps rise above Court Street to the first floor portico with six Doric columns. Below is a full basement. There is a second floor and cornice above. Set back is a parapet, with an additional set-back parapet above the portico. The center front section is flanked by two tall windows serving the first floor. Wings project north and south. Their window placement corresponds with those of the other sides of the structure. From the north and south, the partial third story is seen, while from the east an attic tier with a small addition above is visible. It is surrounded by steel railings. The building has symmetrical window and door placement, a rolled belt course above the basement and a smooth-faced coursed ashlar finish. There are entrances on all sides and two basement entrances under the front steps. Some windows or doorways have been modified to accommodate power plants and heating and air conditioning. In 1966, a partial third story was added on the east. Courtrooms were made from existing offices. The architect had been instructed to make plans so additions would be possible "without marring the general architectural theme" (Contra Costa Gazette 2/10/31). The original design predominates. Changes have not compromised its integrity.

Detailed Description - Exterior: The main entrance to the Hall of Records is on the west, facing Court Street. It is distinguished by wide brick steps which lead up to the first story portico with six Doric columns resting on 18-foot octagonal bases. Three sets of bronze double doors lead into the main lobby. They are flanked by narrow, recessed bronze-framed windows with two

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lights. Five second-floor windows, bronze-framed and metal-sashed, are visible. The portico projects eight feet from the main wall. Above the cornice is a parapet ornamented with decorative molding topped by festoons and fascies. The entablature is plain on all sides of the structure, except for the name of the building carved below the cornice. Below the cornice on the front and wings are mutules of 18 heads or gutae. Flanking the portico are recessed, narrow, double-casement windows with six lights and double-paned lights above. There are decorative window heads and above them festoons. Wings extend north and south six feet beyond the basically square design of the building. The corners of the wings are concave and have decorative tops. On each floor of the north and south ends of the wings are three sets of double-hung sash windows with multiple lights.

On the east elevation, the center of the wall projects four inches. There are seven double-hung, sash windows with multiple lights per floor in the projecting section. To the north and south are sets of three tall sash windows, double-paned, on the first floor. Smaller windows are on the other floors. On the basement floor near the south end, a window has been converted to a doorway for employees. To the north, a doorway has become a window. This is in the Court Security section, and windows are barred. All doors and windows are recessed, as are those on the north and south walls. From the east the rolled belt course above the first floor which continues around the buildings is clearly visible. The newer, partial third floor is seen above the cornice. Its windows are similar to those in the center section. Steel railings are above this attic floor and its addition. Several ducts and shafts rise higher. This is the most impressive evidence of the 1966 remodeling.

The north and south sides of the Hall of Records, excluding the wing area on the west, are generally similar. There are no projections. There are sets of three narrow sash windows on each end and five smaller double-hung sash windows in the center on each floor. Windows are all the same size on the basement and third floors, however. Toward the east end of each exterior wall is an entrance. On the north, it is recessed and plain and opens on the basement floor. It is recessed, also, and the exterior of the entrance is decorated by three medallions above and a cornice with acanthus ornamentation. On both the north and south walls, some basement window areas have been taken for use by power plants and heating and ventilating systems.

Detailed Description - Interior: When built, the Hall of Records contained 8,000 square feet of floor space. It was designed with major offices on the corners with file rooms and storage areas adjoining. A central hall on each floor surrounds the center core which receives sunlight from a lightwell on its south. The Board of Supervisors' chamber and two courtrooms are in this

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core, the former now a courtroom. Marble and bronze open newel, square stairways are opposite the main lobby and within the core. There is an elevator beside the southernmost stairway. At the center rear of the building is another elevator with a smaller, open newel stairway beside it. This stairway has concrete steps, steel balusters, and oak banisters. All elevators and stairways reach all floors. Interior doors are oak with bronze figures, the single exception being glass doors with steel frames which set apart an anteroom of the courtroom off the entrance lobby. Marble floors are in the lobbies and hallways of the first (main) and third floors. Gray marble wainscoting is in the lobbies and all hallways except on the basement floor. Some offices were moved to other buildings as more courtrooms and auxiliary rooms were added.

The basement can be entered through two doorways under the front steps and one on the north. Its south hall is now blocked, forming part of the Recorder's Office, and a doorway for its staff has been formed from an eastern window. In addition to offices and a large corner room for research attorneys, there are storage, utility, and engineering rooms, a snack bar, and a secured section for Court Security officers. The first floor is entered through the portico on the west or up a short flight of steps on the south side of the building. The lobby floor is decorative, with large, brightly-colored geometric sections. Major doorways have gray marble surrounds. Wainscoting, five rectangular pillars, and several pilasters are gray marble. There is some Art Deco influence, including in the design of the metal frames of the portico doors and windows. In the center courtroom, wainscoting, trim, and furnishings are golden oak. Most of the wall behind the judge's bench is formed by a tall, oak panel with four sets of two Ionic paneled pilasters. Off the north hall is a secured, steel-doored holding area for prisoners. A portion of the south hall has been narrowed to accommodate judges' chambers. Additional courtrooms, jury rooms, and offices are on the second floor. The most notable feature is the lobby on the west with its barrel vaulted ceiling in five segments. The floor is marble set in geometric patterns, the color more subdued than on the lower floor. There are metal pilasters and stars and four geometric pillars, all painted Pompeian red. Ornamentation of the shaft heads, ceiling, and other features includes the torch of knowledge, scrolls, tablets of the law, wave moldings, and acanthus and other designs. The third floor is on three levels, with public access to offices from the west, east, and south hallways only. This is the attic floor. When the Hall of Records was first in use, many rooms remained empty. Today, space is at a premium. Despite changed space allotments, however, the original, basic architecture predominates.

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This building is notable under categories (A) and (C). It is the third permanent building in the county seat complex and was intended to be part of a county center. Its architectural theme is compatible with the 1901 Court House and Jail to the north. It is the perfect example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture in the county. It is unique. It was built during the Great Depression to accommodate additional courtrooms and office space which had been needed acutely for about ten years. Constructed and financed conservatively, debt-free, it was immediately put to heavy use and remains heavily used today. Restrained in architectural style and ornamentation, the Hall of Records symbolizes knowledge, law, justice, and government strength. It is reminiscent of some of the finer buildings on the University of California - Berkeley campus, where architect E. Geoffrey Bangs worked under John Galen Howard and himself designed some buildings. Located between the 1901 Court House and Jail and the A. F. Bray Courts Building, the Hall of Records continues to fulfill its functions with dignity and grace.

Martinez has been the county seat since 1850 when the counties of California were created. By 1932, the original government building in Martinez, the 1901 court house, was no longer adequate to accommodate the needs of a population that had jumped from 5,328 in 1860 to 78,608 in 1930. As a result, the Hall of Records was built in 1932 on the block next to the court house. Its purpose was to house the growing mass of county records and to provide two additional courtrooms. This third permanent building in the county seat (the first and second being the Court House and Jail across the street) was to ensure a strong core of government in Contra Costa County.

The new Hall of Records was to hold the Mexican land grants, survey books of both the land and waterways, the railroad right of way maps, and the court cases involving the railroads. The original papers from the Court of Sessions were moved into the new building as well as the assessment books from the beginning of the county. Census as well as voting records were kept with birth and death information. The cattle brand books show a listing of cattle owners registered in the early 1800s. The calendars of the County Clerk with the files from the District Attorney's Office filled the first floor of the massive building. The actual court cases from 1850-1932 were moved into the new space along with Grand Jury files, business and marriage licenses, and county road information (maps, petitions, decisions).

The records of the industries that helped form the County of Contra Costa were all moved into the new building. As examples:

The coal mines of Nortonville, Sommersville, Stewartville, Judsonville, West Hartley -- coal from these mines kept the riverboats moving on the waterways and the furnaces burning in the small hamlet of San Francisco during the 1800s.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

The petroleum drilling and processing in 1862.

The McNear shipping wharfs of Port Costa -- the records show prices for wheat and coal and the names of the vessels.

Records of the Cowell Portland Cement Company -- this company produced the cement used in the buildings in the county.

The Balfour Guthrie operations.

Redwood Lumber Company in Pittsburg -- largest lumber company on the West Coast in the late 1800s -- most of the court cases show names of companies purchasing from this lumber company as well as the prices of lumber.

Records of the shipyards land and marine occupancy.

The court cases of the C&H Sugar Company in Crockett.

Records from the Ford Motor Plant in Richmond.

Court cases from the paper mill in Antioch, the walnut processing, the wineries, the agriculture departments, and the cattle sales.

Standard Oil of California and the Shell Oil Companies.

The Hall of Records also became the home of cemetery records, probates, and the records of establishment of the water and electrical companies in Contra Costa County.

This beautiful Neo-Classic building covered the entire block next to the Court House and Jail and quickly became a hub of Contra Costa County's government.

The 1932 Hall of Records is one of only three Neo-Classical buildings in the entire Contra Costa County (one of the largest counties in California). It is the perfect example of Neo-Classicism -- the architect, E. J. Bangs, was a devout admirer of this form. His buildings on the campus of the University of California - Berkeley have the same solid, imposing conformation.

This building qualifies as architecturally significant under Criteria C because it presents the qualities of Stylistic Revival, which were so important in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Court House next door was the first example of Classical Revival in Contra Costa County, and this building was to complement the first structure. Bangs knew that Classical styles were chosen

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because they were easily recognizable and understandable. Roman architecture stood for justice and Greek architecture for government. Classicism symbolized law and justice; therefore, the 1932 Hall of Records in Martinez with its two courtrooms represented the solid government of the county seat of Contra Costa County.

Before the first World War, Contra Costa County recognized it needed a Hall of Records. The 1901 Court House was crowded, noise from the railroad disrupted court proceedings, a third courtroom was necessary, and offices were in the basement ill-designed for the purpose. National involvement in war delayed any action. However, in 1922, the county purchased from the Fernandez estate the block directly south of the Court House and bordered by Court, Ward, Pine, and Main Streets. It was envisioned this would be the site of a second new building in the county center.

Economic and other factors delayed building until 1932. The Board of Supervisors imposed a general three-year tax levy. It hoped to hold the cost of the building at \$300,000, plus \$30,000 for furnishings and an architect's fee of \$24,000.

E. Geoffrey Bangs of Berkeley became the architect. Born in 1889, Bangs designed schools and the court house in Marysville, California, and the Blackstone Apartments in Oakland. He was the last partner of John Galen Howard, architect of many buildings on the University of California campus at Berkeley. Bangs' name appears alone on Lewis Hall and the addition of Cowell Hospital on the Berkeley campus. His article in Architect and Engineer, 1924, on the Blackstone Apartments, reflects his belief that buildings should identify with the mores of the period. He wrote and illustrated Portals West, 1930, a book on California buildings in the 1800s.

Bangs was instructed to design a building "comparable to the Courthouse and one that could be altered as the county grew". In 1931, crews under County Engineer R. R. Arnold leveled the site and began excavations for the boiler room and foundations, using 20 men three days a week. Contractors submitted over 150 bids.

Most contractors were from Contra Costa County. This was in keeping with the supervisors' policy. In an open letter, the Martinez Chamber of Commerce said the architect should be instructed to specify county contractors, materials, and labor. William J. Buchanan, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, notified all contractors they were expected to employ local labor as much as possible -- actually, 84% was from the county -- and to file an agreement that all their assistants would be from Contra Costa. In the case of foremen, however, they should be the most expert for the job. Labor was to be hired

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equally from each supervisory district. The minimum per diem wage was set at \$5.50 for laborers, the maximum of \$11.00 for structural steel workers and bricklayers. One contractor who hesitated to file a statement regarding local subcontractors was not employed until he followed the supervisors' policy.

In the building would be 640 tons of structural steel, 4,300 cubic yards of concrete, 1,200 tons of stone, and 12,000 square feet of terra cotta. All mill work, brick and tile partitions, and plumbing fixtures were from the county. Much of the damp proofing, steel, cement, and roofing was, also. All terra cotta was from California. Chairman Buchanan was adamantly opposed to use of any foreign materials, including slightly cheaper Belgian steel. The fact that local sources supplied the bulk of the materials testifies to the size and diversity of the county's industries.

Construction proceeded rapidly. On February 18, 1932, men began pouring concrete for the 122 foundation holes and placed reinforcements and bolts for the structural steel work. Six weeks later, in a special ceremony, Buchanan and each of the other supervisors drove the first rivets to bind the girders in place. The first concrete floor was poured the day riveting was to be complete, in early May. Soon, stone-setting, interior decoration, and installation of machinery would follow.

On September 23, 1932, the cornerstone was laid under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of Masons of California. A procession began at the Martinez Masonic Temple, led by a police escort and the city band. Joining the march were traffic and police officers, representatives from the county's 12 Masonic lodges, a "civic band from Richmond", and architect Bangs. On the platform were county officials. Former District Attorney A. B. Tinning gave a brief history of the Hall of Records. The Martinez band played, the Kiwanis Glee Club sang. Martinez Boy Scouts were ushers. Associated Oil Company had installed the public address system. On the cornerstone was the date in Roman numerals and names of the supervisors and county clerk. In a copper box were county records, a complete set of building plans, Masonic records, and county newspapers containing information about the ceremony.

The completed building was dedicated on a Sunday afternoon, April 9, 1933. The Grand President of the Native Sons of the Golden West directed the ceremony. Parade Marshall, Sheriff R. R. Veal, the world's oldest elected sheriff in continuous service, had a mounted escort. Supervisor Buchanan welcomed the large audience. Other speakers and entertainment followed. Among those speaking were State Senator Will R. Sharkey, District Attorney James F. Hoey, Supervisor James N. Long, the Grand President of the Native Sons, and the Past Grand President of the Native Daughters.

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There are significant differences between the 1901 Court House project and that of the Hall of Records a generation later. The nation had experienced the World War and the world's deepest depression. It was necessary to build a structure proving Contra Costa's importance. It was to be rigid, permanent, practical, expandable. Construction was a county-wide effort and an economic boost during the Depression.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:		Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	10	576200	4208040	B	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description:

Bounded of NW by Main Street, SW by Court Street, NE by Pine Street, SE by Ward Street in Martinez, California.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the entire city block that has historically been associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Contra Costa Co. History Center (revised by OHP 4/16/91)

Organization: Contra Costa Co. His. Society Date: 1/28/91

Street & Number: 1700 Oak Park Blvd. Telephone: (415) 939-9180

City or Town: Pleasant Hill State: CA ZIP: 94523

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Antioch Ledger

April 16, 1932

September 21, 1932

Baird, Joseph, owner of Baird Gallery, former professor of art history at University of California-Davis. Telephone interview. January 28, 1991

Collier, George C. The Court Houses of Contra Costa County. 1969 (Mimeographed book.)

Contra Costa County Development Association. The Story of Contra Costa County California. Richmond, CA, Contra Costa County Development Association, 1937.

Contra Costa County Planning Department. Preliminary Historic Resources Inventory, Revised, Contra Costa County, Martinez, CA, 1989

Contra Costa Gazette (Martinez)

January 17, 1931

January 19, 1931

January 20, 1931

February 10, 1931

March 12, 1931

March 12, 1931

March 16, 1931

March 17, 1931

March 30, 1931

April 28, 1931

May 19, 1931

May 23, 1931

June 23, 1931

July 7, 1931

August 14, 1931

December 22, 1931

February 11, 1932

March 2, 1932

March 3, 1932

June 28, 1932

August 16, 1932

August 20, 1932

Courier-Journal (Walnut Creek)

September 15, 1932

September 22, 1932

April 6, 1933

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Dehaesus, Anthony, former Director of Community Development for
Contra Costa County. Interview. January 29, 1991

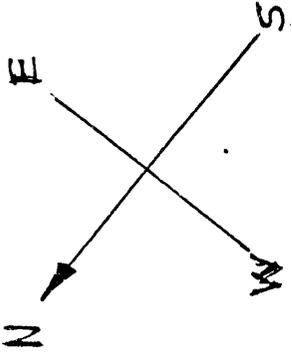
Martinez Historical Society. Martinez, A California Town. Martinez,
RSI Publications, 1986

Purcell, Mae: History of Contra Costa County. 1st ed. Berkeley.
Gillick Press, 1940

Roberts, William, The Bancroft Library. Telephone interview.
January 15, 1991

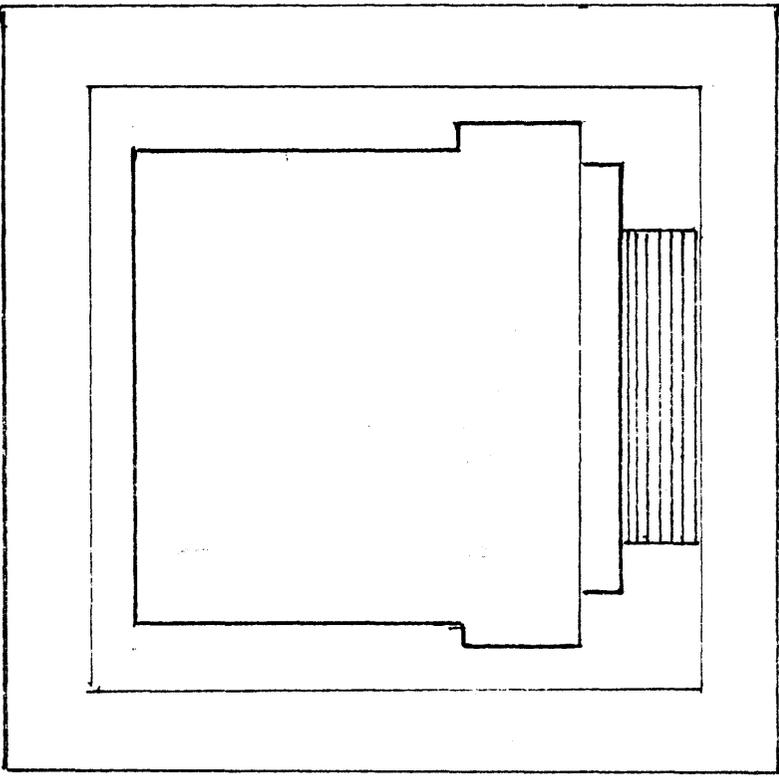
University of California Department of Architectural Design.
Telephone Interview, January, 1991

Woodbridge, Sally, architectural historian. Telephone interview.
January 29, 1991



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
HALL OF RECORDS (PRESENT
COURT HOUSE), 725 COURT ST.,
MARTINEZ, CA, 1991.

PINE STREET



MAIN STREET

WARD STREET

COURT STREET

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APR 11 1991

ONE

Section number _____ Page 1
Photographs

1. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: unknown
C. 1955
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Front view, facing NE
2. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: A. E. Davies
C. 1945
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Front view, slight angle, facing NE
3. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Rear view, facing S
4. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Corner of parapet above portico - on front of building
5. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Third floor lobby
6. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Third floor lobby

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Photographs

7. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Third floor lobby
8. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Third floor lobby
9. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Third floor lobby
10. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Main lobby
11. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Main lobby
12. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Main staircase

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Photographs

13. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Main staircase
14. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Court Street - front view - west side
15. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Main Street - north side
16. Contra Costa County Court House (1932 Hall of Records)
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
January, 1991
Neg: Contra Costa County History Center
Ward Street - south side