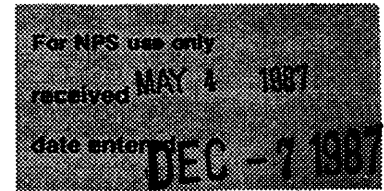


**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Colfax County Courthouse Item number 1-3, 6, 7 Page 1
-Springer

Colfax County, Springer
County Courthouses of New Mexico

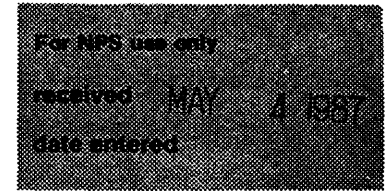
1. Name: Colfax County Courthouse (Former) in Springer
Santa Fe Trail Museum
(County Courthouses of New Mexico)
2. Location: 614 Maxwell Avenue
Springer, New Mexico
3. Owner: Municipality of Springer
P.O. Box 488
Springer, New Mexico 87747
6. Listed on New Mexico State Register, file #509.
7. Description: The 1882 Second Empire Style Colfax County Courthouse is a two story, linear plan, church-form building with a three story tower centrally located on the symmetrical front facade. The building is situated in a modified court square, currently shared with a schoolyard, and is located on the main throughfare of Springer. In fair condition with minor remodeling, this structure now serves as a museum.

Second Empire Styling is typified by a squared, central projection known as the central pavilion, often taller than the rest of the structure. Although simplified, the Colfax County Courthouse at Springer utilizes a central pavilion with a tower as the focal point, with mansard and hipped shingled roofs, eyebrow-like pediments over clock area (now missing), and a bracketed cornice. Below the tower, the central pavilion is constructed of brick (currently painted) in a square plan with windows on three sides. The main entrance is located on the front of the central pavilion and consists of two single leaf wood paneled doors with screens. This is framed above by a soldier course, brick segmental arch. The windows at the front of the tower are 2-over-2 wood sash in pairs with six light transoms and soldier course arches (segmental at the second floor, true at the third floor). The tower's side windows are 2-over-2 wood sash with segmental, soldier course arches.

Behind this central pavilion the structure is symmetrical, with a pitched roof and several chimneys. The building is painted brick with evenly spaced and handsomely proportioned 2-over-2 wood sash windows with segmental arches. The front of the roof is gabled to properly meet the tower, the rear is hipped with a small gablet. The foundation of the structure is exposed stone. A small brick extension at the rear once served as the jail. This portion also has a hipped roof.

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Page 2

The main entry to the courthouse building opens into a foyer in the central pavilion. A central corridor bisects the building from the front to the rear with rooms to each side. The room layout and finish materials of the interior give the building a "schoolhouse" ambiance. The courthouse has wooden floors, plaster walls and ceilings, wood doors with transoms, and a simple stairway at the rear leading to the second story. The second floor is currently a large open space with a wooden floor and is used for museum exhibits. A small room at the front of the upper floor contains an electric chair, the only one in New Mexico which was actually used.

The old courthouse is in fair to poor condition. A major crack in the east facade has been stabilized with a concrete buttress on the southeast corner; the interior wood trim needs painting; the jail retains its metal window bars but is in deteriorating condition with only minor remodeling, and is obscured on the southside by a relatively new school building.

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received: OCT 23 1987
date entered:

Continuation sheet Colfax County Courthouse Item number 8

Page 3

8. Significance: The (former) Colfax County Courthouse in Springer, New Mexico meets National Register Criterion C as most architecturally-accomplished, historic, public building in Springer and as one of the few unmodified Second Empire Style buildings remaining in New Mexico.

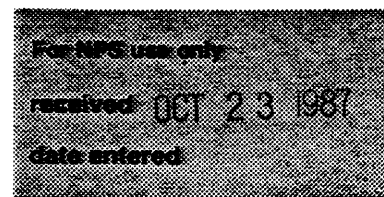
This courthouse was erected at a cost of \$15,000 in 1882, one year after Springer was designated the new county seat and three years after the arrival of the railroad. The body of the building is of modest brick construction with projecting brick hoods over the segmental-arched openings. The brick work is comparable to that of the large residences, business blocks and institutional buildings erected in the Territory's larger cities--Las Vegas, Albuquerque and Santa Fe--just after the arrival of the railroad. The projecting tower, with its bracketed cornice, projecting circular panels with molding cap and steeply pitched pitched roof, is a provincial approximation of the Second Empire Style.

However provincial compared to the civic buildings of the East during Grant's administration or the recent courthouses in Texas, the Springer courthouse stood out among the surrounding one-story, mostly unornamented residences of adobe or wood frame. The buildings of the commercial district, two blocks south were equally modest adobe and utilitarian brick structures. Since Springer grew only gradually after the railroad boom, lost the county seat in 1899 and reached a population of only 1,314 in 1940, no other civic building every appeared to challenge the limited grandeur of the old courthouse.

Several elaborate Second Empire buildings were erected in New Mexico in the late 1870s and early 1880s: St. Vincent's Sanitarium, St. Michael's College, Loretto Academy, the Palace Hotel and the Staab House in Santa Fe, San Felipe Hotel in Albuquerque and the Grant County Courthouse in Silver City. All have since been demolished or modified beyond recognition. Of the handful of remaining Second Empire buildings in the state, only the Ailman and Meredith Houses in Silver City, and the Hayt-Wientge House in Santa Fe are more accomplished than the Springer Courthouse. The Ward House in Las Vegas is comparable to the courthouse and the With House in Albuquerque more modest.

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Colfax County Courthouse Item number 9,10

Page 4

9. Major Bibliographic References:

Pare, Richard, ed. Courthouse: A Photographic Document. New York: Horizon Press, 1978.

Pratt, Boyd. Gone But Not Forgotten: Strategies for the Comprehensive Survey of the Architectural and Historic Archeological Resources of Northeastern New Mexico. Santa Fe: Historic Preservation Division, 1986.

Robinson, Willard. The People's Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails and Municipal Halls. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983.

Sanborn Map Company. "Springer, N.M." Maps dated 1890, 1898, 1902, 1907, 1939.

Whisenhunt, Donald. New Mexico Courthouses. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1979.

Wilson, Chris. "Springer, N.M., September 15, 1987" Field notes on file, NMHPD.

10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of Lots 1-3 and 10-12, block 8 of the Original Townsite, Springer, N.M.

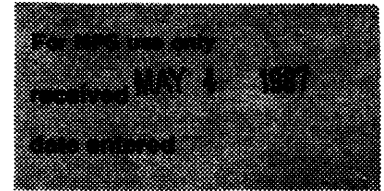
Quad Name: Springer, N.M. Quad Scale: 1:24,000

UTM Reference: 13 536655 4039075

Acreage: approximately 2 acres.

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-Springer

Item number 1-3, 6, 7

Page 1

Colfax County, Springer
County Courthouses of New Mexico

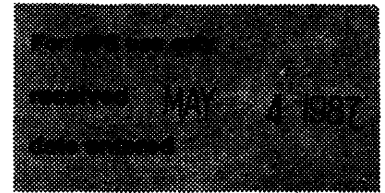
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Continuation sheet Colfax County Courthouse Item number 8-10
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The main entry to the courthouse building opens into a foyer in the central pavilion. A central corridor bisects the building from the front to the rear with rooms to each side. The room layout and finish materials of the interior give the building a "schoolhouse" ambiance. The courthouse has wooden floors, plaster walls and ceilings, wood doors with transoms, and a simple stairway at the rear leading to the second story. The second floor is currently a large open space with a wooden floor and is used for museum exhibits. A small room at the front of the upper floor contains an electric chair, the only one in New Mexico which was actually used.

The old courthouse is in fair to poor condition. A major crack in the east facade has been stabilized with a concrete buttress on the southeast corner; the interior wood trim needs painting; the jail retains its metal window bars but is in deteriorating condition with only minor remodeling, and is obscured on the southside by a relatively new school building.

8. Significance: The Colfax County Courthouse in Springer is architecturally significant for its use of Second Empire Styling, and historically significant as a rare, extant example of 1880's New Mexico courthouse building, and the only courthouse with an electric chair which was used.

Colfax County was created in 1869 from part of Mora County, and named for Schuyler Colfax, then Vice-President under President Grant. In this year, Elizabethtown was designated as the first county seat but retained that distinction only shortly. In 1870, Cimarron was made the county seat, but by 1880 Cimarron was losing population and in 1882 the county seat was moved to Springer. In 1882, Springer built a small (by eastern standards), Second Empire Style courthouse for \$15,000. Although not elaborate in detail, this structure is a good example of the Second Empire Style, a style which rarely appears in New Mexico. It is one of only six county courthouses in New Mexico which were built in the 1800's and which retain their architectural integrity.

9. Major Bibliographical References:

New Mexico State Archives, Santa Fe. WPA Inventory of the County Archives, Colfax County, New Mexico. "Housing, Care, and Accessibility of Public Records." 1938.

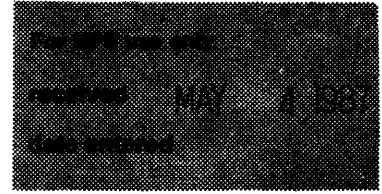
10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of Lot 1,2,3 & 10,11,12, Block 8, Original Townsite, Springer.

Quadrangle Name: Springer

Quadrangle Scale: 7.5 minute

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Continuation sheet Colfax County Courthouse Item number 10
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UTM References:

Zone 13 Easting 536655 Northing 4039075

Acreage:

Approximately 2 acres.