National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

FEB 1 3 1989

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.

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1. Name of Property			
	County Courthouse		,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,
other names/site number LL00			
	Lee County Courthouse		
2. Location			
street & number 2120 M	ain Street	N/A_not	for publication
city, town Fort M		N/A vicir	nity
state Florida co		code 071	zip code 33901
			00001
3. Classification			
Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources w	ithin Property
private	X building(s)	Contributing Nonc	ontributing
X public-local	district	10	buildings
public-State	site		sites
public-Federal	structure		structures
	object	10	objects
			Total
Name of related multiple property	listing:	Number of contributing i	resources previously
N/A		listed in the National Re	gisterN/A
A Change Fordered Assessed Conf.	Min - Al		
4. State/Federal Agency Cer	tification		
Signature of certifying official St	ate Historic Preservation State, Bureau of Historic	Officer Date	2/3/8/
In my opinion, the property	meets does not meet the National	Register criteria. See continuat	ion sheet.
Signature of commenting or other	official	Dat	e
State or Federal agency and burea	u		
5. National Park Service Cert	ification		
I, hereby, certify that this property			
entered in the National Registe See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the Nat Register. See continuation sh determined not eligible for the National Register.	er. Jelones Byun ional	Entered in the National Register	3/16/89
removed from the National Reconstruction of the reconstruction of	gister		
	Signature	e of the Keeper	Date of Action

6. Function or Use			
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions) GOVERNMENT/courthouse	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) GOVERNMENT/courthouse administration		
7. Description			
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)		
	foundation _	Stone:sandstone	
Classical Revival	walls	Brick	
	roof	Asphalt	
	other		

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Please See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance		
Certifying official has considered the significance of this propert nationally	ty in relation to other properties: \overline{X} locally	
Applicable National Register Criteria XA BXC	□D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	D DE DF G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions) Architecture Politics/Government	Period of Significance1915-1926	Significant Dates 1915,1926
	Cultural Affiliation N/A	
Significant Person N/A	Architect/Builder Kennard, Francis JA Heifner, F.PBuilder	
State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations of the control of		

Please See Continuation Sheets

	X See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	AC JOSE COntinuation Silver
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested to the recommendation of method at his line (55 of 17 o7)	State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	X Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University
Survey #	Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specify repository:
Record #	Fort Myers Historical Museum
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property Less than one acre	
UTM References	
$A \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 7 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 4 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 3 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 6 & 5 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 9 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 4 & 6 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 9 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$	B
Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
C	
	_
	See continuation sheet
	
Verbal Boundary Description	
The boundary of Lee County Courthouse is sh	nown as the detted line on the accommenying
map entitled "Site Plan-Lee County Courthouse is sin	
map entitled Site Flair-Lee Country Courtinot	ise, roll myels, ria.
	See continuation sheet
	See continuation sneet
Boundary Justification	
The boundary includes the courthouse, lan	ndmark banyan and live oak trees and World
War I Monument that have historically been p	
retain historic integrity. That parcel of t	
southeast of the Courthouse has been exclude	
courthouse annex and does not contribute tod	
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title William N. Thurston/Historic Preserva	tion Supervisor-Gloria Sajgo ६ Gladys Cook Lee
organization Bureau of Historic Preservation	February 6, 1989 Cnty
street & number 500 South Bronough Street	telephone (904) 487-2333
city or townTallahassee	state Florida zip code 32399-0250

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Summary

The Lee County Courthouse, located at 2120 Main Street, in Fort Myers, Florida, is a two-story buff brick building built in 1915 in the Neo-Classical Revival style, with an addition at the rear constructed in 1926. The building rests on a masonry foundation, and includes a basement, providing three floors. The main (north) facade features a classical Doric Order entablature with fluted columns flanked by pilasters. There are side entrances at each end of the main block of the building. Windows are paired wood sash with one over one lights. The roof is flat with parapet. The site includes a majestic oak tree, a large bayan tree, and a monument erected in 1922 commemorating the service of Lee County veterans of World War I.

Setting

Fort Myers, situated on the Caloosahatchee River, is the county seat of Lee County, located in southwest Florida. The Lee County Courthouse is located at 2120 Main Street, in the central business district of Fort Myers (map 1). The building occupies ' the north 200 feet of the block bounded by Main Street on the north, Broadway Avenue on the east, and Monroe Street on the west The site is simply landscaped with a variety of ornamental shrubs and several palm, cedar, and oak trees, including a large banyan tree, (Ficus benahalensis) and a majestic live oak tree (Quercus virginiana) which dominate the grounds in front of the building (photos 1 and 2). Paved walks provide access to the main and side entrances. A simple granite monument bearing a bronze plaque, erected by the local American Legion Post in 1922, commemorating the service of Lee County veterans in World War I, is located at the northeast corner of the site (photo 3). A modern, glass enclosed bus stop shelter near the northeast corner of the site (map 2) is noncontributing. The remainder of the block, formerly occupied by the county jail and other service buildings, is now occupied by a six story County office building constructed in 1961. A two story wing off the north side of this building abuts the rear wall of the 1926 addition to the Courthouse, which remains intact with the exception of doorways at each level to provide access between the two buildings. Although the surrounding area has likewise been subject to redevelopment in recent years, it remains the commercial and business center of the community. Thus, the County Courthouse retains the basic integrity of its urban downtown setting.

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Contributing Resource: The Courthouse Building and American Legion Monument.

The basic plan of the 1915 Lee County Courthouse is rectangular, with a central block rising slightly higher than the flanking, symmetrical wings. A 1926 addition creates a T-shaped building. The original rectangular shape remains the dominant mass of the structure. Constructed of buff brick, the Neo-Classical Revival courthouse is two stories in height plus a basement. The 1926 addition is also two stories in height. The foundation of the building is masonry with a smooth ashlar finish.

The roof structure includes a shallow gambrel above the central block and flat roofs above the wings. All are parapeted. The parapets are composed of brick and capped with a band of stone. The stringcourse or frieze below the parapet is a grouping of moldings also composed of stone. The principal facade of the courthouse is the north, or Main Street, elevation, where wide stone steps approach a colossal Doric entablature supported by two monumental fluted Doric columns (photo 1). The entablature, or upper level of the entrance design, features a dentil frieze with mutules (evenly spaced blocks beneath the cornice). Engraved in the projecting stone cornice is LEE COUNTY The architrave, with metopes and triglyphs is in COURTHOUSE. adherence to the formal Doric Order. The triglyphs are typical of the Doric Order with the characteristic guttae band of 6 (six) cone-shaped pendants. The capitals of the Doric columns are decorated with a grouping of moldings, the most formal of which is the egg and dart motif. The other vertical members of the entablature are stone pilasters with a smooth finish (photo 4). A stone string course beneath the projecting cornice contains banding inspired by the Doric Order capital form.

The east and west elevations are identical, each having a set of steps leading to an entrance door that is flanked by two-story stone pilasters and a projecting cornice supported by scrolled modillions. Wrought iron scones with round globes illuminate the entrances (photos 5,6, and 7).

Fenestration is regular throughout, with original paired double hung, one over one sash and transoms (photo 8). Exterior alterations to the original building include replacement of the

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original doors at each of th entrances (photo 9), and the installation of glass block panels in place of the second floor windows in the central bay of the main facade. Reversal of these alterations is currently in progress, and will restore the original appearance of these features.

The two story brick addition, with basement, constructed in 1926 is centered at the rear of the original building. It is lower than the central block of the original building, and lacks stylistic ornamentation. The east and west elevations carry paired, double hung sash windows with stone ledges at each level. The rear (south) wall originally carried neither windows nor door, however doorways were installed on each level to provide access to the adjacent office building in 1961.

The interior floor plan to the Lee County Courthouse, as designed by architect Francis J. Kennard, supports the function of a governmental building. While the exact functions or titles of each office changed over the years, the original floor plan is intact. Where offices were subdivided, those partitions will be removed in the process of the ongoing restoration.

The first floor is accessed through the main entrance where a vertibule and lobby adjoin the main east-west corridor. A monumental mantle stair hall at the east end provides access to the second floor as does a smaller scale staircase off-center. The offices of tax collector, tax assessor, county commissioners, county clerk, sheriff, treasurer, supervisor, superintendent of public instruction, and county judge were located on the first floor. The walls of the main corridor were faced with a grey marble wainscote. Floors retain the original one-inch ceramic tile covering in a geometric design (photo 10). Interior finishes include clear oak doors with glass panels. These features remain intact.

Originally, the second floor of the building housed a large courtroom in the center of the structure with two jury rooms, a grant jury room, and circuit judge's office on the west side. A lobby and courtroom balcony were located on the east end of the building. The 1926 addition resulted in the opening of a doorway on both floors into the new section, which would house storage in the basement, a courtroom on the first floor, and two hearing

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rooms on the second floor. In 1961, the courtroom was converted to the office of the clerk of the circuit court, by the removal of walls segregating the witness room and jury room from the main courtroom space. The hearing rooms of the second floor became the offices of the county agricultural agent and county welfare. Otherwise, the floor plans remained basically intact, with the addition of several removable room partitions.

The American Legion Monument has been a prominent landscape feature on the Courthouse grounds since it was erected in 1922 (photo 14). It is a simple granite stab on a stepped granite pedestal facing the northeast corner of the block. It carries a large bronze plaque with a bas relief sculpture of three servicemen in uniform above the American Legion emblem flanked by the dates 1917-1919. Below this is an inscription in tribute to those who served. The monument itself has not been altered or modified since its erection, but a flagpole was installed in the paved walk leading to it at an unknown date probably in the 1940s.

These contributing resources retain their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, as well as their essential historic character and appearance. Reversal of the minor alterations to the Courthouse building as cited above will restore its exterior appearance in all essential details.

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Summary:

The Lee County Courthouse is significant under Criteria A for its association with the political and governmental history of the county in the early 20th century. The construction of the building was the subject of a major political controversy in 1914, and its historic alterations in 1926 reflect the expanding needs of governments in the growing county. It is significant under Criterion C as a fine local example of Neo-Classical Revival architecture, and as the work of Francis J. Kennard, a major Florida architect noted for his interpretations of classical architectural styles.

Historic Context

Lee County, Florida, was created in 1887, when political pressure from residents of the area, then a part of Monroe County, convinced the State Legislature that governmental administration from Key West was no longer adequate to their needs. Settlement of the area had first developed after the Second Seminole War and implementation of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. A thriving community grew up around the wartime military post at Fort Myers, based in large part on the shipment of cattle from the surrounding range lands to the Key West and Havana, Cuba markets. Despite the disruptions of the Civil War, the cattle based economy survived, and continued to expand in the decades of the 1870s and 1880s. At this time, too, Ft. Myers began the development as a winter resort area that eventually attracted the interest and investment of many wealthy northerners, including Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone. As the area developed, administration from the Monroe County seat at Key West, some 150 miles away and accessible only by steamboat or sailing vessel, became increasingly impractical. The prominent cattlemen of the region, Captain F.G. Hendry, Samuel Summerlin, T.E. Langford, James E. Hendry, and William H. Towles, were particularly influential in affecting the establishment of the new county named for the Confederate General Robert E. Lee, and, as the County government expanded to meet the needs of the growing population, in the construction of the imposing Neo-Classical style County Courthouse.

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Historic Significance: Criterion A

Upon the formation of Lee County, William H. Towles and Capt. Francis A. Hendry were among those elected to serve as Lee County's first county commissioners. Towles was a native Floridian, who after coming to Fort Myers in 1884, entered the mercantile business with James E. Hendry, Sr. and opened the Towles and Hendry General Store. Later Towles devoted most of his time to the cattle business, becoming one of the leading cattlemen in Florida. Capt. Hendry was a native Georgian, who became a captain in the confederate forces during the Civil War. Afterwards he became a leading Florida cattlemen known as the "cattle king" of South Florida.

One of the first actions of the first Board of County Commissioners was to secure quarters for a temporary courthouse. For this purpose, Towles rented the upper floor of his Towles and Hendry general store building to the county. However, both Towles and Hendry immediately began building political support for a new, more impressive, courthouse. To finance their new courthouse, the county commissioners authorized Lee County's first bond election. On March 18, 1889, Lee County voters approved a \$20,000 bond issue for the construction of an imposing structure.

In preparation for the building of the new courthouse, the Lee County Board of Commissioners purchased about two acres of land bounded by what are now Main, Broadway, Second, and Monroe Streets as the site for the future courthouse. On September 6, 1889, the County Commissioners, "Ordered that the deed from C. W. Hendry and wife for courthouse site be accepted and that he be paid \$1,500 in cash and \$750 in warrant to run six months." A contract for the building was let to the firm of Thompson and Green. However as a result of the economic downtown of the 1890's the County found it impossible to sell its bond.

Since the commissioners were determined to move from their rented premises into a county owned courthouse, on September 1894, they awarded a contract for the construction of a wood frame courthouse. The building was completed in December of 1894, but it was a far cry from Towles' and Hendry's original vision.

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By 1914, however, economic recovery had brought renewed growth to Lee County. This made it an ideal time for Towles to revive the issue of the building of a stately courthouse. Towles chaired the Lee County Board of Commissioners and had two strong allies for the cause of building a new courthouse, Commissioners Captain F.A. Hendry and Ed Parkinson. Commissioners R.G. Collier and W.S. Turner were generally opposed to a new courthouse.

On January 5, 1914, the County Commissioners voted to authorize the erection of a new courthouse, and on April 6, 1914, the Commission accepted plans by the architect Francis J. Kennard of Tampa for a new courthouse building. The motion for final acceptance of the plans and specifications was made by E. Parkinson and seconded by F.A. Hendry. All five commissioners voted unanimously for acceptance of the plans and specifications.

At the same time the commission passed a resolution which would raise \$30,000 of the estimated \$85,000 needed for the erection of the courthouse. This resolution called for a two-mill tax increase for two consecutive years. It was estimated that the revenue from this two-mill tax would be approximately \$15,000 per annum.

Soon afterward, a strong opposition to the building of a new courthouse mobilized. In general, the opponents of the new courthouse were satisfied with the existing wood frame structure and saw no need for a more stately building. In addition, the opponents to the new courthouse doubted the constitutionality of the statute that allowed the commissioners to vote for a two-mill tax increase to finance the building of a new courthouse. They believed a project of that magnitude should be brought before the county voters for approval.

Among the leading opponents of a new courthouse were such influential Lee County residents as Harvie E. Heitman and Francis W. Perry. Harvie E. Heitman was a prominent builder, businessman, citrus grove owner and civic leader. He served as a member of the town and city council for twenty-one years and was council president several terms. Francis W. Perry was a well known composer who reorganized the Fort Myers Concert Band and was its leader for many years. He had purchased grove properties near Alva and was director of the Florida Citrus Exchange. He

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was one of the pioneer advocates of the Tamiami Trail. He was later elected as representative from Lee County to the state legislature in 1916, 1918, and 1920.

As tensions between the opponents and supporters of the courthouse grew, this issue became one of the greatest local political confrontations in Lee County's history. Twice, in the summer of 1914, the County Commission advertised construction bids and selected a contractor, and twice, opponents of the proposed new courthouse halted progress on the project by obtaining court orders which, on technical grounds, enjoined the commission from proceeding.

On October 8, 1914, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners again authorized the advertisement for bids for the new courthouse. The bids received were substantially higher than had been received in July and September. The following bids were received:

F.P.	Heifner, Atlanta	\$100,000
J.G.	Jenkins & Co., Ocala	\$110,000
Caho	w & Parker, Tampa	\$120,000

On Saturday, October 23, 1914, the Board of County Commissioners, by a vote of 3 to 2, awarded the contract for construction of the new courthouse to F.P. Heifner. However, Heifner's low bid of \$100,000 was substantially higher than the \$85,000 that had been estimated for total project cost in April of 1914 when the commissioners passed a resolution calling for a two mill tax increase to fund the project. To deal with this problem at the October 23, 1914 meeting, the Lee County Board of County Commissioners, "...discussed the millage and decided that three mills for courthouse purposes would be ample to meet the increased bids."

Three days after this motion was approved, when the county commissioners met to sign the contract with F.P. Heifner, they learned that the opponents to the new courthouse were sending Francis W. Perry and C.L. Johnson to Arcadia to obtain another injunction on the basis of a lack of necessity for a new building. In response, the Board of County Commissioners quickly passed a resolution authorizing Commissioner Towles to take

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whatever action he deemed necessary. Towles met with Heifner, and instructed him to demolish the existing wood frame courthouse, and on October 29, 1914, The Fort Myers News-Press reported, "A large force of workmen is employed in towing away the old structure and by tomorrow little will be left of the old building except the concrete foundation."

The opponents of the new courthouse were infuriated by the destruction of the old one. But in spite of their vocal and determined arguments, on November 12, 1914, Judge F.A. Whitney refused their request for another injunction. Since the wood frame courthouse was no longer standing, the issue of whether Lee County should keep or build a new one was moot. Lee County obviously needed a new courthouse.

The cornerstone for the new building was laid on Tuesday, April 13, 1915, with Masonic ceremonies. Among the speakers were F.A. Hendry, W.H. Towles, E. Parkinson, W.S. Turner, R.G. Collier, W.J. Odum, Ed L. Evans and others. "Before a great throng of people which taxed the capacity of the spacious courthouse grounds, the cornerstone of the new Lee County courthouse was laid..." Construction was completed and the new building was occupied in December, 1915.

Despite the disruptions and dislocations of the World War I period, Lee County continued to grow, and the general prosperity of the 1920s and the speculative Florida land boom hastened the pace of development. Growth still centered in Fort Myers, where developers opened several residential subdivisions such as Edison Park, Dean Park, and Henley Place, and the central business district became more densly developed as older buildings gave way to larger structures. The resulting expansion of county governmental activity, together with the euphoria of optomism, patriotism, and civic pride typical of the times are reflected in the two historic modifications to the property.

The first was the erection of the American Legion monument at the northeast corner of the site, the only structural adornment on the Courthouse grounds, in 1922. Proud of their military service in World War I, veterans in Lee County had organized the Rabe O. Wilkinson Post, No. 38 of the American Legion. The monument was erected in tribute to the men of Lee County who entered military

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service, and particularly those who sacrificed their lives in the conflict. It remains today, not only as a memorial to the men who served, but as a reminder of the appreciation of the community in the post war years.

The second was the addition at the rear of the Courthouse constructed in 1926, in order to provide additional courtroom and judicial office space. In 1925, the Lee County Board of Commissioners approved plans for a \$35,000 addition to the The commission again retained architect F.J. courthouse. Kennard. The money was raised by the issuance of time warrants, payable \$7,000 each year for the five years, with interest at 6%, authorization for such issuance having been made at the 1925 session of the Florida legislature. The bonds were advertised for sale and the addition built in 1926. In this configuration the Lee County courthouse continued to serve the functions of the Lee County government until 1961. Actual court proceedings now take place in a new Justice Center across the street, but current restoration work will revitalize the offices for the Board of County Commissioners. The courtroom will be utilized as the commission chambers.

Architectural Significance, Criterion C:

The courthouse is designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style, which in Florida occurred generally from 1910 to 1920. The style reflects a renewed interest in Neo-Classicism, which is the last phase of classicism in the late 18th and 19th century, a movement based on the use of pure Roman and Greek forms. The style is characterized by monumentality, the strict use of orders, and a sparing application of ornamentation.

The style typically represents one of the classic orders, which in the Lee County Courthouse is the Doric Order. The Doric Order follows a column and entablature style developed by the Dorian Greeks, which features a sturdiness of proportion, with a simple cushion capital, a fringe of triglyphs and metopes, and mutules in the cornice. The courthouse is a strict intrepretation of the elements characterizing the formal Doric Order. The lack of arches is a main characteristic of the Greek origins.

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The architect, Francis Joseph Kennard, was born in London, England, on March 15, 1865. In 1886 his family moved to central Florida, where his father invested in orange groves. The "Big Freeze" of 1888 ended their citrus crop venture, but young Francis had already established an architectural office in Sanford, which he later moved to Orlando.

In 1891 Kennard supervised the construction of the Tampa Bay Hotel (NR 1972) for developer and railroad magnate Henry B. Plant. The architect relocated in Tampa in 1895 and was associated for the first few years with another Englishman, M.J. Miller. Francis Kennard's son, Phillip F. Kennard, subsequently became an architect and joined his father in business. Francis Kennard remained in Tampa until his death in 1944. The History of Hillsborough County Florida, published in 1928, refers to Kennard as the oldest practicing architect in Tampa in length of service.

Kennard was responsible for many prominent buildings in the Tampa-St. Petersburg area, including the Belleview Biltmore Hotel in Bellaire (NR 1979), the Floridian Hotel in Tampa, Hillsborough High School in Tampa, the Pinellas County Courthouse in St. Petersburg, the Peace Memorial Church in Clearwater, St. Andrews Episcopal Church in Tampa, and the Municipal Auditorium in Tampa.

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Section number Photos Page 1 Lee County Courthouse

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

- 1. Lee County Courthouse
- 2. Fort Myers, Florida
- 3. Ed Clement
- 4. May, 1986
- 5. 1518 Jackson Street, Fort Myers 33901
- 6. Northwest Elevation Facing Southeast
- 7. 1 of 14

Items 1 through 5 are identical for all photographs

- 6. North Elevation, Landmark Oak Tree Facing South
- 7. 2 of 14
- 6. WWI Monument Facing Southwest
- 7. 3 of 14
- 6. Detail, Column Capital Facing South
- 7. 4 of 14
- 6. East Elevation Facing West
- 7. 5 of 14
- 6. Detail, Modillion Facing West
- 7. 6 of 14
- 6. Detail, Sconce, North Elevation Facing South
- 7. 7 of 14
- 6. Window Detail Facing South
- 7. 8 of 14
- 6. Doors, East Elevation Facing West
- 7. 9 of 14
- 6. Floor and Door Detail, Interior
- 7. 10 of 14
- 6. Detail, Staircase, Interior
- 7. 11 of 14
- 6. Door Detail, Interior
- 7. 12 of 14

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- 6. Light Fixture Facing West
- 7. 13 of 14
- 6. Northeast View Facingg Southwest
- 7. 14 of 14

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

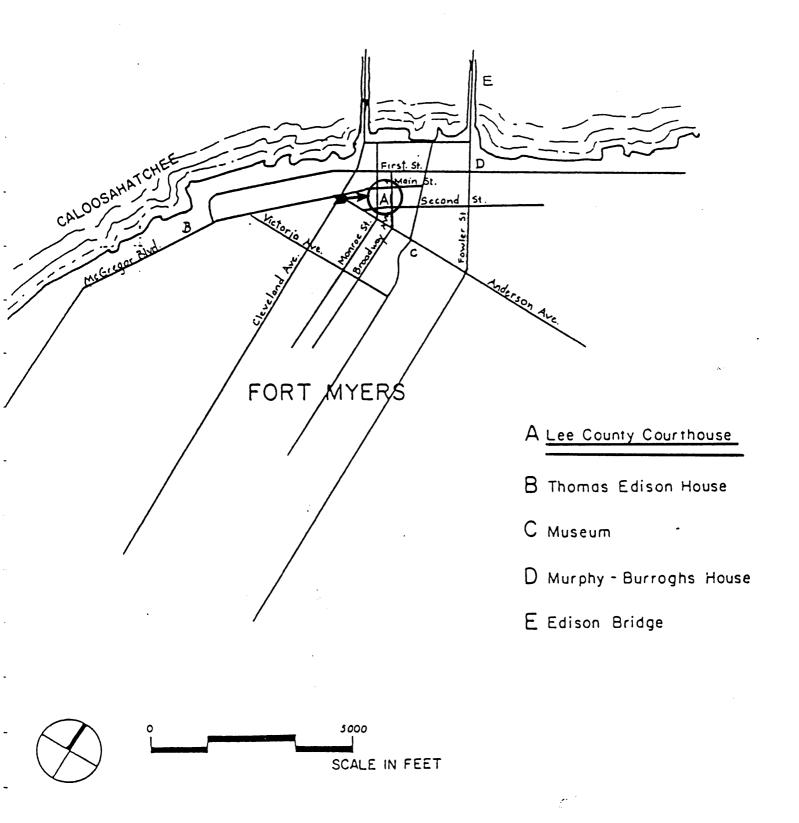
- Ackerman, Joe A., Jr. Florida Cowman. Madison, Fl: Jimbob Publishing. 1976
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GOVERNMENT

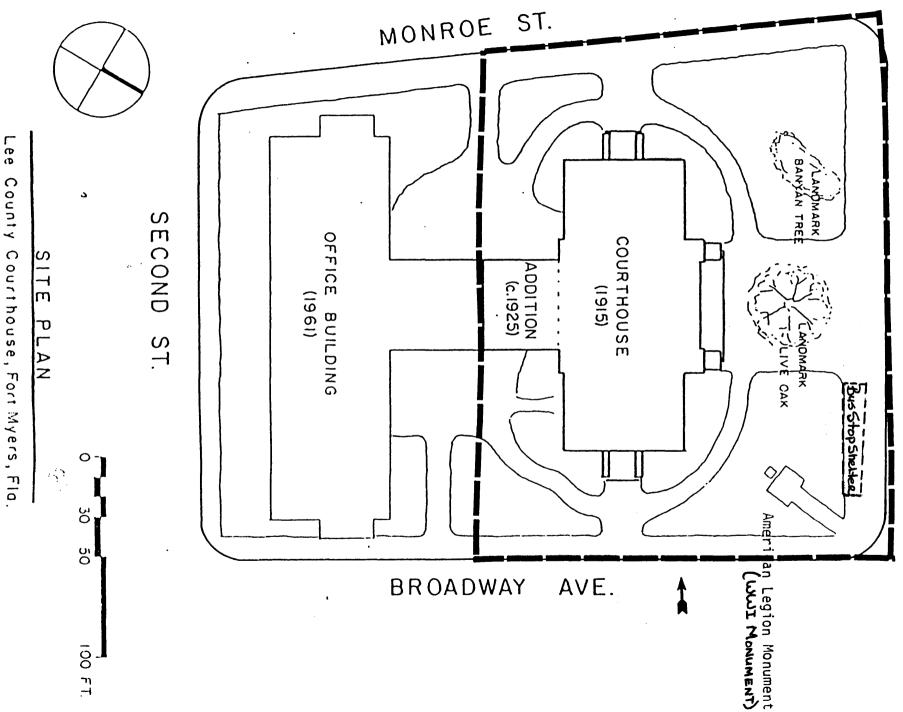
Minutes, Lee County Public Records, Lee County, Florida 1886-1926.

NEWSPAPER

The Fort Myers News Press, 1886 to 1926. Lee County Public Library, Fort Myers, Florida.



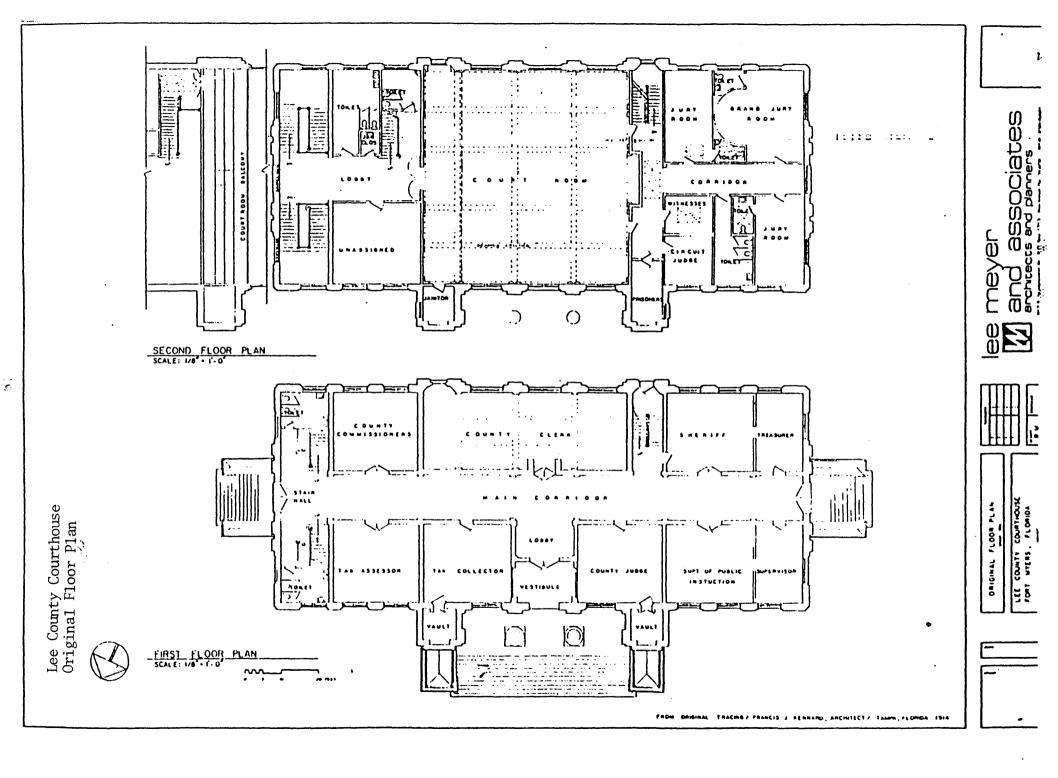
Lee County Courthouse, FLORIDA

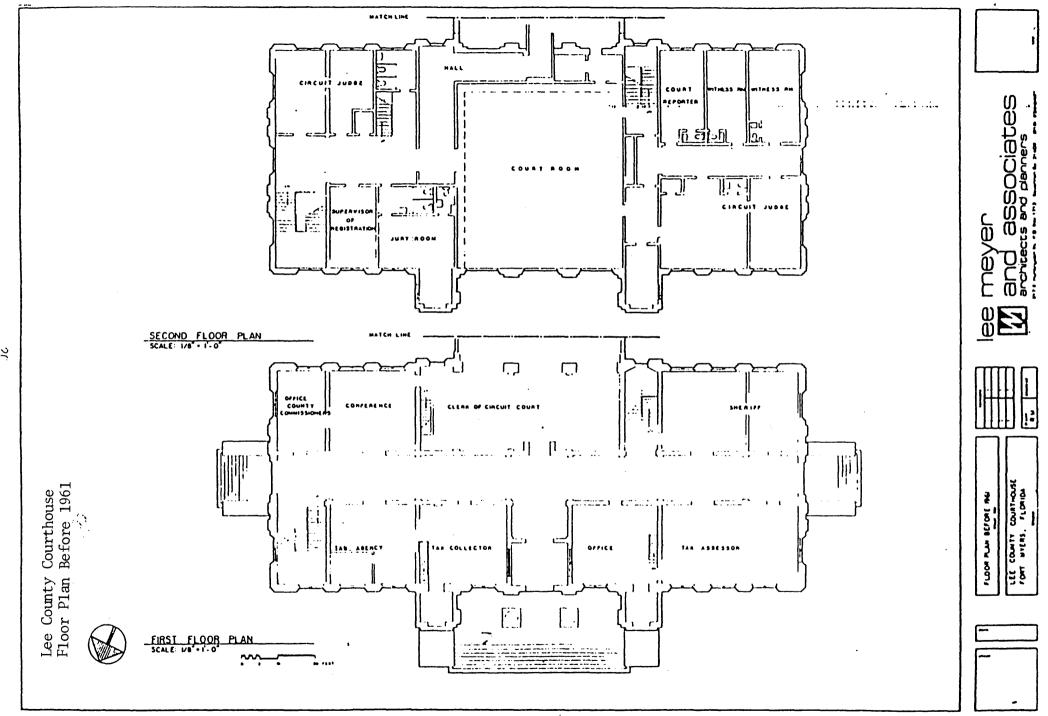


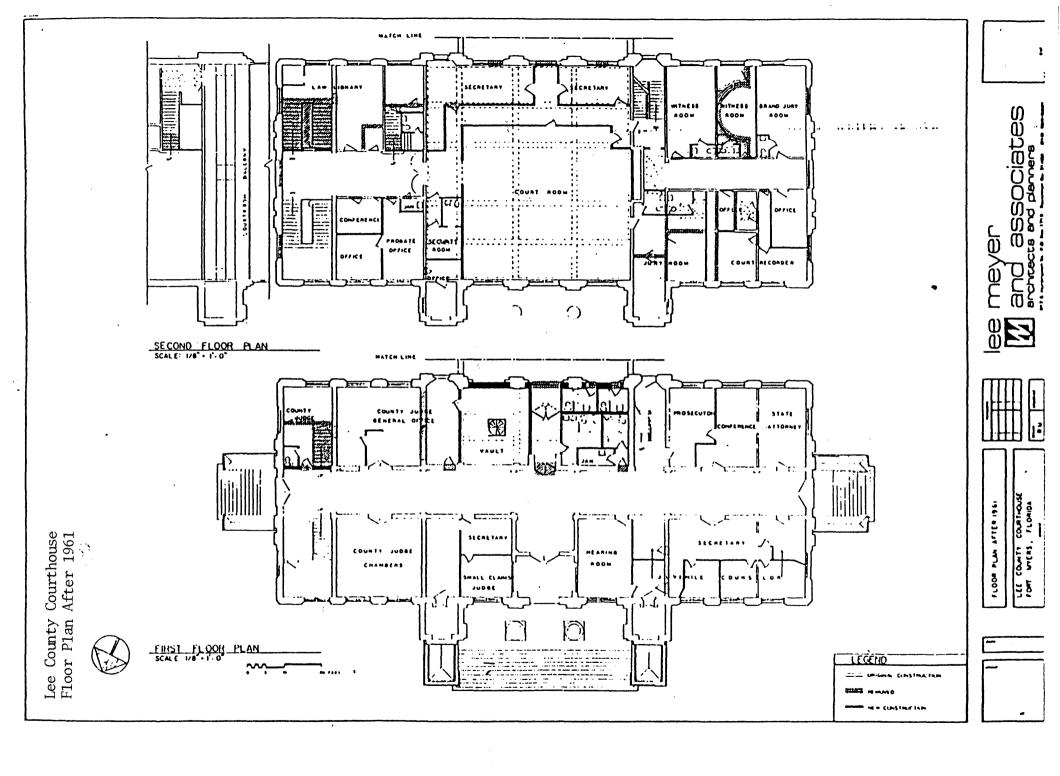
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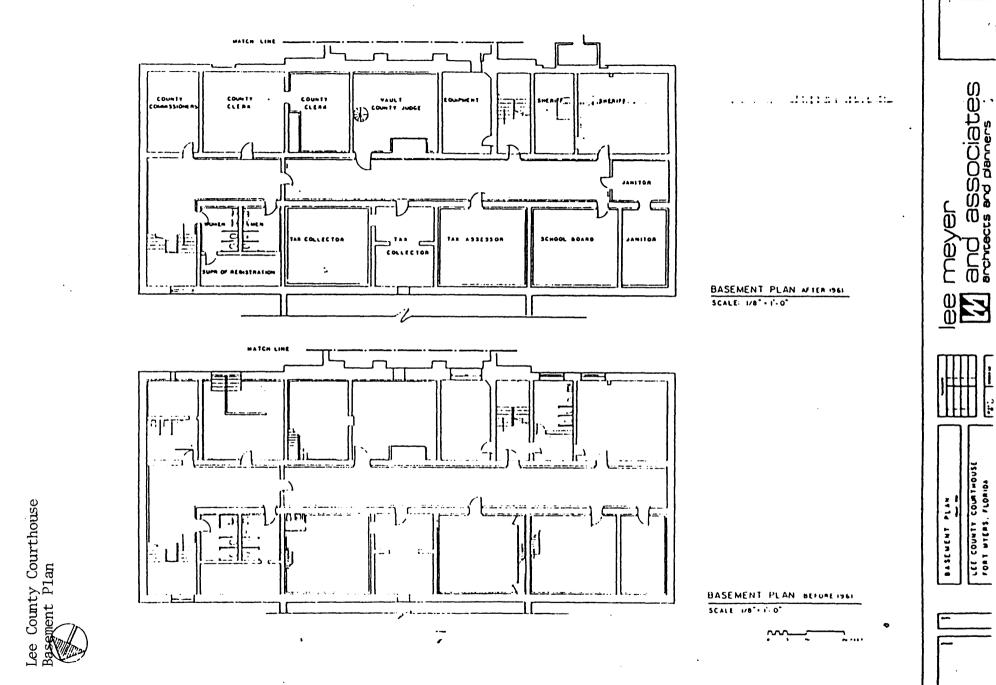
ST.

County Courthouse, Fort Myers, Fla.









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