

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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
Bergen County Court House Complex
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Court Main and Essex Streets. N/A
CITY, TOWN
Hackensack N/A VICINITY OF CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
7th
STATE
New Jersey CODE
34 COUNTY
Bergen 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 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
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
County of Bergen
STREET & NUMBER
Administrative Building
CITY, TOWN
Hackensack N/A VICINITY OF STATE
New Jersey

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Bergen County Clerk's Office
STREET & NUMBER
Court House
CITY, TOWN
Hackensack STATE
New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
N.J. Historic Sites Inventory (1316.17)
DATE
1977 _FEDERAL STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Office of Cultural & Environmental Services
CITY, TOWN
Trenton STATE
New Jersey

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

Facing the Hackensack Green on Court Street, the Bergen County Court House Complex consists of the Neo-Classical court house (1910-1912), an adjacent castellated jail (1910-1912) and the County Administration Building (1933) in the rear. All buildings are attached by a large modern masonry addition.

The Bergen County Court House, completed in 1912, is Neo-Classical in style. Designed by James Reilly Gordon and considered one of the "most successful buildings in the State," [Bergen County Panorama. 1941 (p. 166)] the court house is a three story massive granite public structure with cruciform plan and massive central dome. (Photo #1) The three bay projecting center section has smooth coursed rusticated stonework and round arched arcading at the ground level. (Photo #3) On the second and third floors are Ionic columns in antis. The corners of this portico are enhanced by statuary. The left group of three figures embody Honor supported by Law and Order. The right grouping is Truth, flanked by Justice and Integrity. The main three archway entrance is reached by a terraced stair and is flanked by statuary - the one on the left representing History; the one on the right, Law. All of the statuary is by John Gelert of New York City. (Photos #4, 5)

The flanking wings are each seven bays. The ground floor has smooth coursed rusticated stonework, with round window arches with voussoirs, arches and keystones. The second and third story bays are articulated by colossal Ionic engaged columns. The roof is surrounded by a balustraded parapet. Eagles surmounting hemispheres are at the extreme corners. The main roof is flat with balustraded parapet. The court house is capped by a copper coated dome with cupola, or lantern, surmounted by a statue. The dome is atop a Corinthian colonnaded drum on a balustraded polygonal base. (Photo #6)

According to newspaper accounts in the Hackensack Republican the ground floor was originally divided into offices and an auxiliary courtroom. The main floor contained the Freeholders room, offices of the county clerk surrogate, deputies, prosecutor, city collector, freeholders clerk, and superintendent. The second floor contained three courtrooms while the third floor was the gallery and a grand jury room (Hackensack Republican, July 8, 1919).

Presently, the original interior plan is basically intact although the functions of some of the ancillary rooms have changed. The axial Beaux Arts plan features a large central rotunda with colossal Corinthian columns of tinos marble, decorative ironwork railings, and a panelled and

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7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

stained glass dome on the interior. (Photos #10, 11, 12, 13) Radiating from the rotunda are corridors with elliptical arches and walls panelled in scagliola (an imitation ornamental marble). All hall flooring is white Italian marble. (Photos #7, 8)

The numerous courtrooms are essentially intact and in a good general state of preservation. Features include Corinthian columns and pilasters, classical ceiling cornices, decorative iron railing, fine woodwork, and recessed spectator galleries. The appeals courtroom has painted panels representing the historical twelve tablets of the Roman law. (Photos #14, 15) These murals are probably contemporary to the building itself. In 1937, however, painters for the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration unveiled numerous murals in the Chancery courtroom. These New Deal murals depicting scenes of events in Bergen County's history were done by local artists.

Administration Building. Located in the rear (south) of the courthouse, this four story rectangular form masonry Second Renaissance Revival style building was completed in 1933 by the New York architectural firm of Tilton, Schwanewede and Githens. The structure is constructed of Arkansas marble and smooth ashlar. There are 17 bays on the longitudinal facades (north and south); nine on the narrow facades. Recessed coffered arched two story entrances are in the west, south, and north facades. The first and second story form the base with colossal Doric pilasters between flat window bays and a pronounced belt course. The third story has a plain wall while the fourth story has paired Ionic pilasters between round arched window bays and a pronounced classical entablature. The roof is flat with a solid parapet. On the interior the intersecting halls are richly finished, but the offices are quite plain. Essentially freestanding, the building is attached to the Court House by an enclosed passageway, added in 1956-58 when a large five story nondescript masonry wing was also constructed. This large wing engulfed a 1930's two story east wing which provided symmetry to the building. (Photo #9)

Bergen County Jail. 1910-12. Designed by architect James Reilly Gordon, the Bergen County Jail is a severe four story brick building with medieval revival elements contrasting sharply with the adjacent Neo-Classical court house. The jail has a projecting center block with

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7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

flanking wings creating a vaguely cruciform plan. A castellated appearance is established by the heavily corbelled battlement which create suggestions of corner towers and a massive octagonal center tower. The ground floor has small windows with the lintels incorporated in a continuous stone belt course. There is a belt course dividing the second and third floors also, but no exterior floor divisions beyond this. The windows on the second floor have label lintels. In the central block the third and fourth floors repeat the small windows on the lower two floors, but the flanking wings have narrow slot-like openings and large bared windows extending the full length of the upper floors. Alterations to the 1910-12 jail include the bricking in of several ground floor windows, and a modern stair to the north entrance. (Photo #2)

The interior was not accessible, but accounts of the jail shortly after construction indicate that the first levels contained the heating plant, kitchen, laundry, the women's ward, administrative offices, and padded cells. On the upper levels were the tiered lightwell cells with balconied corridor and the infirmary. Originally connected to the court house by an underground tunnel, a small modern two story four bay brick unit now provides added access.

The buildings are in a park-like setting surrounded by Court Street on the north, Main Street on the west, Hudson Street on the south, and a parking lot and garage on the east. (Photos #14, 16, 17, 18)

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 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 1910-12

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Reilly Gordon

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bergen County Court House Complex is important to the judicial, governmental and criminal justice history of Bergen County and reflects the pride and confidence of the county government in the early 20th century. The site of county government since the 18th century, the well executed and maintained Neo-Classical court house and the contemporary castellated jail are fine early 20th century structures designed by James Reilly Gordon, an architect nationally recognized for his public buildings.

Architecture

The Court House and Jail, built at the same time (1910-12) and designed by the same architect, James Reilly Gordon (1863-1937), clearly reflect the architectural eclecticism prevalent in the early 20th century. The Bergen County Court House is a well executed example of Neo-Classical architecture, and is a considerable contrast to the castellated medieval revival elements of the jail, also designed by Gordon.

Born at Winchester, Virginia, the son of a civil engineer and military officer, Gordon and his family settled near San Antonio shortly after the Civil War. Educated in San Antonio, at 16 he joined the Engineering Corps of International and Great Northern Railroad in Texas. Later he studied under the tutelage of W. C. Dobson, a San Antonio architect. Leaving there in 1883 Gordon worked in Washington, D.C. as draftsman in the Office of the U.S. Supervising Architect and later was employed as Supervisor on the construction of a number of governmental buildings in the Treasury.

Around 1900 Gordon returned to San Antonio after a brief stay in New York to begin private practice. Soon after, he became a partner of Alfred Zukor from 1902-1904. In 1904 Gordon returned to New York City and joined the architectural firm of Tracy and Swartwout where he remained seven years. From 1911 to 1937 Gordon operated an independent office in New York City.

Early in his practice Gordon acquired a reputation as a specialist in designing various types of governmental buildings. One of the earliest of these, the Arizona State Capitol, was completed in 1900, followed later by the Mississippi Capitol in association with the firm of Link and Haire. Gordon designed some 69 court houses, numerous prisons, banks, hotels, theatres, churches, synagogues, and clubs. Most noteworthy were the county court house at San Antonio, the National Metropolitan Bank of

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5.9 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Hackensack, NJ

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 | 580500 | 4525540

B 18 | 580630 | 4525540

C 18 | 580620 | 4525380

D 18 | 580540 | 4525360

E 18 | 580460 | 4525420

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 64, Bounded on the north by Court Street, on the west by Main Street, on the south by Hudson Street, and on the east by an asphalt parking lot.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE N/A CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Terry Karschner, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Cultural & Environmental Services

DATE

4/1981

STREET & NUMBER

109 West State Street

TELEPHONE

(609) 292-2028

CITY OR TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey 08625

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.

Deputy

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Jessanne C. [Signature]

TITLE

Chief, Office of Historic Preservation

DATE

11/22/82

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Entered in the
National Register

DATE

1/11/83

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

Washington, D.C., Gramercy Park apartments in New York City, and the Texas State Building at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. Gordon was also the principal architect of New Jersey's Somerset County Court House.

The Administration Building, completed in 1933 to the designs of Tilton, Schwanede and Githens, is a Second Renaissance Revival style building displaying fine materials and interesting architectural details.

Government

The earliest court house, destroyed by the British during the American Revolution was replaced in 1799. This 2 1/2 story Federal building, extended in the 1870's and renovated in 1895, was used until the present court house was built. Construction of the present court house and the jail began in 1910 and was completed in 1912.

Local newspaper accounts in 1910 provided an insight into the expectations and desires of a county judicial facility. "The proposed structure as a temple of justice and the seat of government of the most rapidly growing county in the state, will prove dignified ornament fully creditable to Bergen." (Hackensack Evening Record, July 7, 1910).

The Hackensack Republican went even further in establishing the importance of a prestigious court house by writing,

"The courts stand for the protection of rights, for the redressing of wrongs, for the punishment of crime. They are the great safeguards of the freedom of the people. . . Hence we build these court houses as temples of justice, substantial, ornate, and commodious as the appropriate form for the great duties which are here to be exercised." (Hackensack Republican, July 7, 1910.)

Symbolic of justice, truth, and strength, the classical architectural features of the Bergen County Court House are the embodiment of democratic government. The fortress-like appearance of the castellated jail, an integral component of the judicial process, however, points to the inevitability of punishment for wrongdoing. Although the present-day functions of county government are extensive, the administration of justice remains a primary county responsibility.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

Interestingly, one of the first activities of the present county court house was an investigation into alleged graft and corruption concerning the construction of the court house. Enough evidence of improprieties was gathered that a Bergen County Grand Jury investigated the matter fully. The Grand Jury determined that the architect (Gordon) and the county engineer (Mr. Earle) acted improperly when they awarded the construction contract to John T. Brady Company, but that the county received a true value to the subsequent work completed so no remedial action would be taken. (Hackensack Republican. September 12, 1912.)

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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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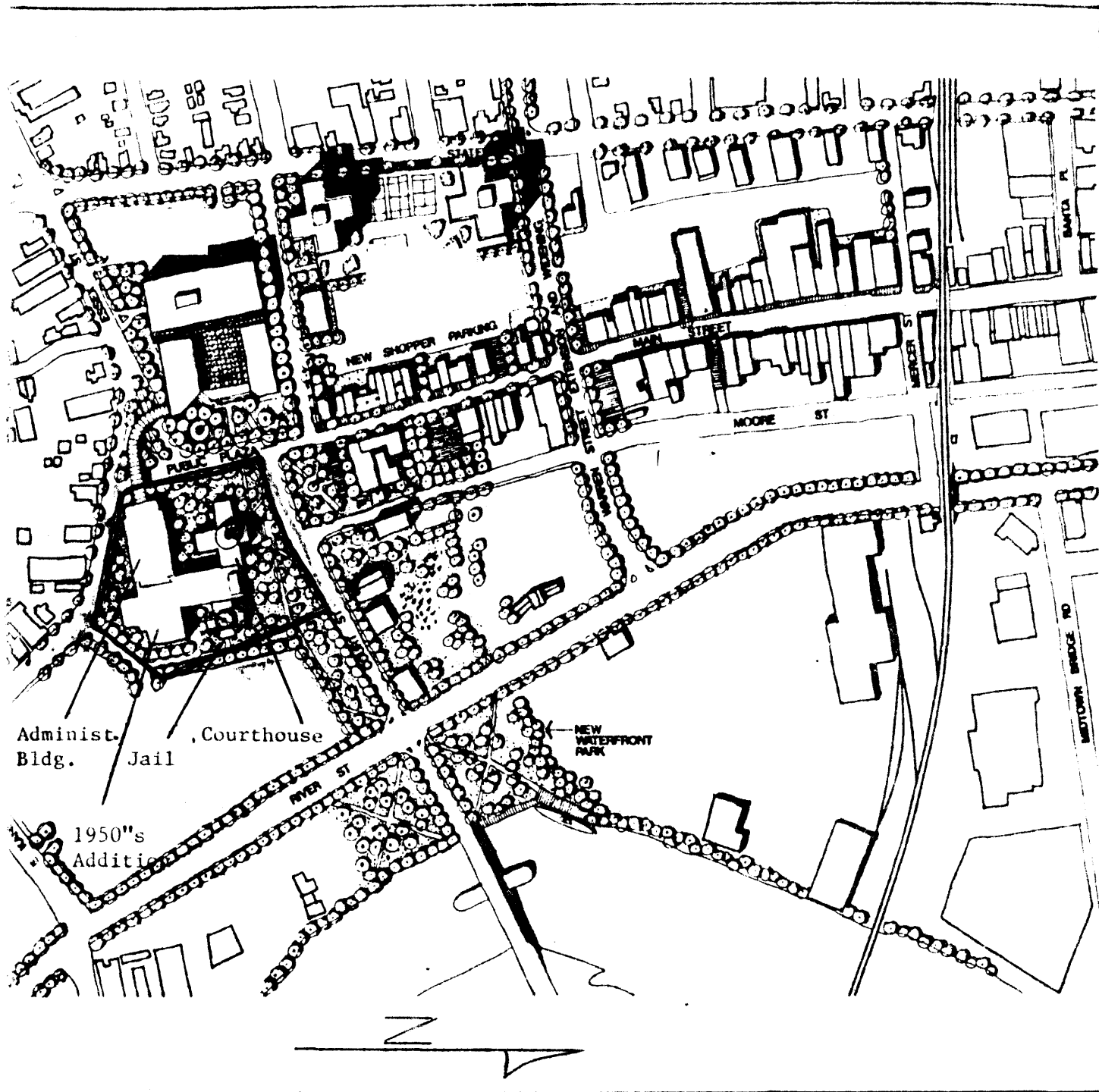
Development Program: Center
City Complex, Hackensack, NJ
Beyer Blinder Belle, Architects
and Planners, 1976.

(Proposed development plan for
Hackensack. Nominated Courthouse
Complex is essentially accurate,
but some of the proposals for the
surroundings have not been
implemented)

BERGEN COUNTY COURTHOUSE COMPLEX
HACKENSACK, BERGEN COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

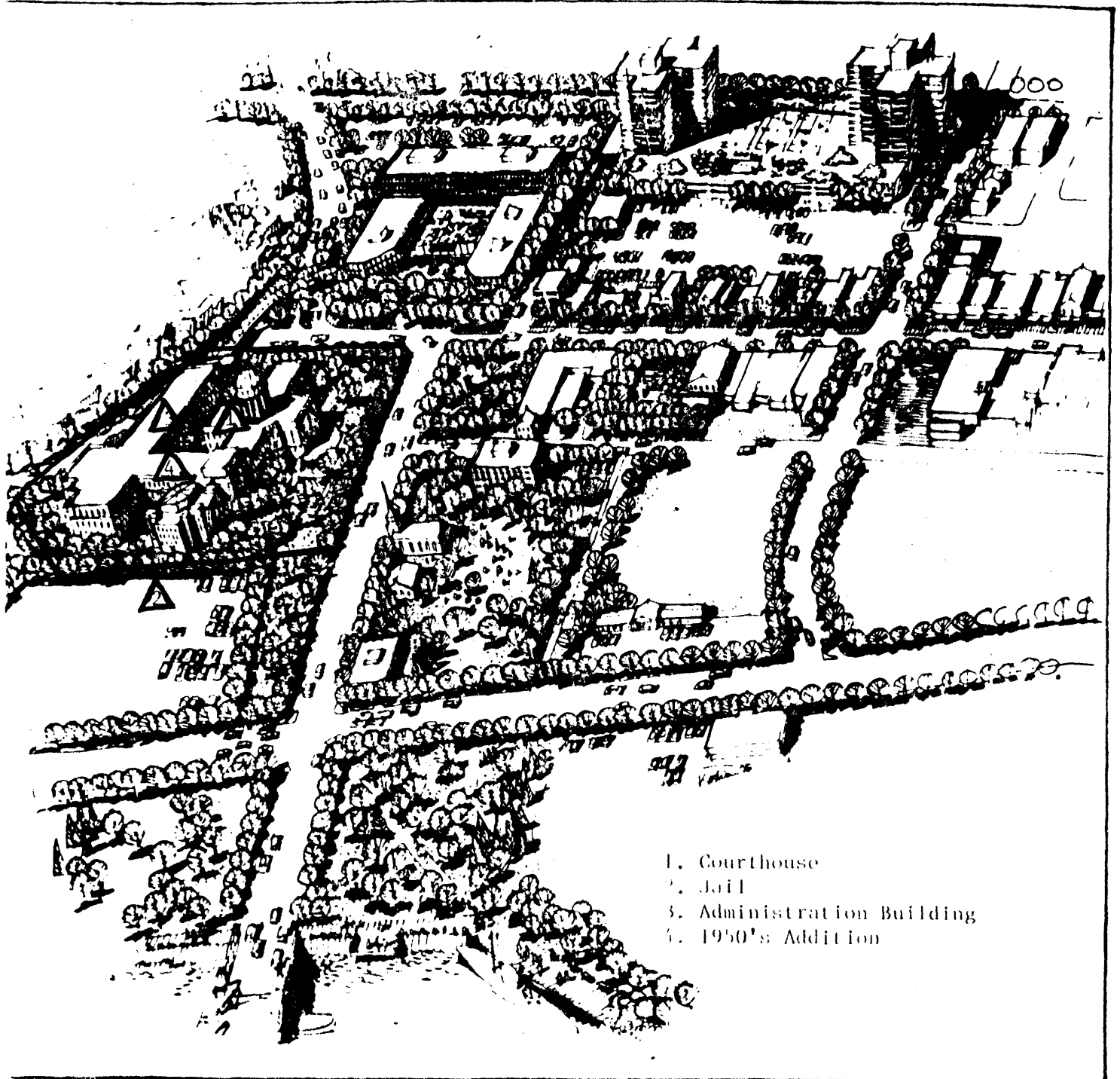
OUTLINE SITE PLAN

T. Karschner 5/1981



BERGEN COUNTY COUR HOUSE
CENTER
HACKENSACK, BERGEN COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

SITE PLAN AND ENVIRONMENT



Reference: Development Program: Center City Complex, Hackensack, NJ.
Beyer, Blinder Belle, Architects and Planners, 1976.

Reference:

Development Program: Center
City Complex, Hackensack, NJ

Beyer Blinder Belle, Architects
and Planners, 1976.

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NEW JERSEY

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