

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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).

1. Name of Property

historic name Essex County Jail other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 21 Wilsey Street city, town Newark state New Jersey code 034 county Essex code 013 zip code 07102

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure, object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 10, Noncontributing 0 buildings, sites, structures, objects. Total 10. Name of related multiple property listing: NA. Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0.

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: James F. Hall, Acting Assistant Commissioner for Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO. Date: 3/11/91 (3/11/91).

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official. Date. State or Federal agency and bureau.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:). Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]. Date of Action: 9/3/91.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/correctional facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/not in use**7. Description**Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brownstonewalls brownstonebrickroof slate

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Essex County Jail, located at 21 Wilsey Street, Newark, was constructed in 1837, with two subsequent major wings added in 1890 and 1895. Designed by famed architect John Haviland, it is the oldest government building in Essex County and one of the oldest buildings of any kind in the city of Newark. The brownstone and brick complex occupies an entire city block, and is bounded by Wilsey Street on the south, New Street on the east, Newark Street on the west and the city subway tracks on the north. Prior to the construction of the subway, the jail fronted on the Morris Canal immediately above lock #17. Originally built as part of the industrial canal waterfront dominated by leather goods manufacturers, the jail is now part of the continually expanding University Heights area. The Essex County Jail is a small but notable example of John Haviland's Greek Revival period, and possesses characteristics common to his interpretation of the style such as self-contained massing, and predominantly flat and planar exteriors emphasized by strong horizontal bands placed upon the facade (Baigell 1966: 200). All ten buildings of the Essex County Jail complex are contributing.

The plan of the jail is a large square with interior courtyards created by internal buildings. The original Haviland jail complex consisted of the warden's house and the east wing. Eight additions were made to the complex over time, the most recent being the 1909 hospital wing. These buildings include the west wing (1890), women's wing (1895), warden's office/intake room, north wing (1904), power plant (1904), hospital (1909) laundry and maintenance facility. Except for the warden's house, all of the buildings are connected by an underground labyrinth of tunnels (Photos #1 and #2).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

The Warden's House

The main focus of the prison exterior is the stately and massive brownstone warden's house with its 12' high brownstone walls extending from the side facades (Photos #2, #3 and #4). The three bay, two story residence is dominated by a slate-clad hipped roof with overhanging eaves once punctuated by four corner chimneys and a hipped roof wooden cupola topped by a flagpole; the chimneys and cupola have since been removed. The two story facade is articulated by unusual stonework: the first floor of which is laid in cut and dressed brownstone, the second floor and remaining facades in uncut stone (Photo #3); the corners are trimmed with dressed brownstone quoins. The Greek Revival entrance, hidden from view by a wooden Victorian portico, consists of dressed brownstone pilasters supporting a simple brownstone entablature. Fenestration consists of 2/2 double hung wood windows ornamented with dressed brownstone lintels and sills. The brownstone walls which flank the house and are set back from it approximately two feet, extend along the entire block front and turn both corner blocks to encompass the jail. The only entrance to the complex on New Street is through the door of the warden's home.

The interior of the two story warden's house consists of four rooms to a floor, each with a fireplace on the exterior wall, with a wide central hallway and a staircase located in a sidehall (Photo #8). A bathroom was inserted into the second floor between the two front rooms at a later date. The house was converted to offices for the jail sometime in the 1930s. Having lost their domestic use, the interior finishes were all altered by modern materials, the fireplaces were closed up and a modern boiler placed in the basement.

The rear of the central hall on both the first and second floors leads to an antechamber from which one can enter various wings of the jail. On the first floor the antechamber leads to the women's wing on the west or to a narrow, two story brownstone wing on the eastern side of the jail which might have originally contained offices for the warden and his men. On the second floor where the antechamber is a barrel vaulted passageway, an entrance in the north wall originally led directly to the second floor of the 1837 jail wing (Photo #9). This entrance was cut off when the masonry jail cells were replaced by "modern" steel tiers in 1907, however, the massive wooden door with its handwrought strap hinges and box lock

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

is still in place.

The East Wing

The original jail, or east wing, is a narrow two story brownstone building, four bays in depth, with a parallel hip slate-clad roof punctuated by skylights. The east wall is of brownstone rubble fenestrated by small, single pane windows on the basement level, large two story windows illuminating the body of the building, and small single pane windows above these, allowing light to enter from the top of the wall. The large two story windows are combination double hung and hopper-type windows; all have steel bars and brownstone lintels and sills. Unusual interior features include splayed walls, thickening as they reach the stone floor, and a decorative pressed metal ceiling. Both the west and north walls of the building were removed and replaced by cast iron columns when the west wing was joined to the original jail in 1890.

The interior of the original jail has been substantially altered since it was first built in 1837. Little remains of the original cell structure; in the basement there is only a row of small brick cubicles running down the center of the building and surrounded by corridors. The cell structure was replaced in 1907 by new cell equipment made entirely of tool-proof steel furnished by the Pauli Steel Cell Construction Company of St. Louis ("Remains of Dungeon Cells in Original Jail: unidentified newspaper clipping, c. 1907). Each cell was given a hopper and running water. The cells were built in the same place as the old ones, consisting of three tiers facing a wide corridor running entirely around the building. Outside of the cells and extending from the stone floor to the roof, a heavy steel grating forms a huge barred cage. All around this at a distance of about three feet, are catwalks of heavy bullet-proof glass, allowing the guards to see shadows. The tool-proof locks were operated by a system of levers which could open the cells singly, in pairs, in groups of four, eight or twelve, or a whole tier at once (Photo #9).

The 1907 renovation also provided for shower baths and a locker room on the first floor along the east wall (Photo #9). The shower baths are located where the execution chamber once stood; an "L"-shaped

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

scaffold served as the gallows (Star Ledger, January 8, 1950: n.p.).

West Wing

In 1890, the Newark architectural firm of Messrs. Staehlin and Steiger were hired to construct a new wing to the jail. The two story brick structure they designed connected to the old east wing by the removal of the brownstone west wall, and was completed in 1891 (Essex County Freeholders Proceedings 1890-1891: 120). The north and south facades of the wing are six bays wide; the west facade is two bays wide with a window in each of the canted corners (Photo #5). This wing contains the oldest existing masonry cells in the complex (besides the underground dungeon cells in the east wing). They are of brick construction arranged in two tiers of 26 cells each surrounded by a wide corridor. Exterior ornamentation of the building is limited to brownstone lintels and sills and a corbelled brick entablature with bluestone coping, punctuated by decorative cast iron bosses in the frieze. The windows appear to be triple hung wood frame sash with iron bars. This wing was used to confine alcoholics and other Skid Row habitues (5 to 30 day prison terms) (Star Ledger January 8, 1950: n.p.).

The Women's Wing

Gustavus Staehlin was responsible for the design of the new women's wing in 1895. Although it is always referred to as the "women's wing," this building was constructed as a prison for both women and children. (Prior to the construction of a separate wing, children were confined together with adult inmates, as were witnesses). Considered modern for its day, the jail contained 82 cells constructed of sheet steel, arranged in two tiers and encircled by a wide corridor. Baths, a small hospital for women, a juvenile ward with a hospital room, and a laundry were also provided (Essex County Board of Freeholders Proceedings 1895-1896: 175). The two story brick building is 12 bays long and two bays wide (Photo #4). The stepped parapet is decorated with a corbelled entablature and a datestone in the frieze, "1895." At a later date, a kitchen was added to the north wall of the wing.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

The North Wing and Power Plant

The 6 bay, 2 story, brick north wing and the single story brick power plant with its dominating stack were built in 1904 under the direction of Newark architect, Thomas Cressey. The north wing was furnished with steel cells from the Pauli Jail Building Company, St. Louis (Essex County Board of Freeholders Proceedings 1904-1905, 1906-1907: 184). It was used for first time offenders and those awaiting grand jury action (Star Ledger January 8, 1950: n.p.)

Hospital

The hospital was the most recent building added to the jail complex. Built in 1909, the two story, 6 bay brick building was designed to hold 12 hospital beds and contained an emergency operating room, and a doctor's and dentist's office.

Warden's office

The warden's office is a small single bay, single room, two story brick building at the east side of the complex, between the east wing and the hospital. The exterior of the brick structure features a semi-circular inset arch on the second floor with a tri-partite semi-circular window encircled by a lintel of brick headers and a brownstone lintel over the first floor entrance inscribed "Warden's Office." The roofline is delineated by a gabled, corbelled entablature with a bluestone coping, above which rises a parapet. A small single bay wooden shed at the entrance provided an enclosed passageway for prisoners being dropped off from paddy wagons (Photo #6).

The interior of the warden's office is finished with tongue and groove panelling and plaster walls and ceiling. A long wooden railing of turned balusters along the south wall separated the intake officers from the prisoners. This room, known as the "intake room," was where a prisoner was first brought in, questioned and registered (Photo #7). The officers sat behind a long desk on a raised platform and the prisoners would have to stand behind a painted yellow line on the floor. The prisoner would then proceed to the key center in the east wing, where he would be assigned a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

cell. An upstairs room, similarly finished, was used as an office for the warden.

Other Buildings

The two story, brick jail laundry in the northwest corner of the block and a small single story, brick maintenance facility adjacent to the west wall of the warden's house are the remaining buildings within the jail complex.

The Prison Wall

The prison complex is surrounded by a 12' high brownstone wall (Photo #1). Originally the wall enclosed only the southern half of the block. In 1901, the vacant northern half of the block, adjacent to the Canal, was purchased and the wall was extended to enclose the entire block. The purpose of the land purchase was to give the institution more light, better ventilation and ample exercise grounds, however, the land was quickly filled with new buildings (Essex County Board of Freeholders Proceedings 1902-1903: 137). Openings in the wall are located at the Warden's house and the Warden's office along Wilsey Street, where the prisoners were removed from the paddy wagons, and at Newark Street, where coal deliveries were made for the power plant. These openings were secured by very heavy sliding steel doors.

Although the prison has not been used as such since the construction of the new County Jail in 1970, the jail was occupied by the Bureau of Narcotics until several years ago. The buildings are currently vacant due to an inter-agency dispute and have suffered some interior damage (mostly plaster and paint deterioration) due to the turning off of the heating system in the winter. Although the warden's house has been altered by the removal of the chimneys and cupola, and the interior of the jail was altered in 1907, the complex as a whole has retained a good level of integrity.

The site of the building is Block 399, Lot 1, bounded by Wilsey Street on the south, New Street on the east, Newark Street on the west and the city railroad tracks on the north. The total area is 1.52 acres.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G NA

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1837 - 1909

Significant Dates
1837
1890
1895

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Significant Person
NA

Architect/Builder
Haviland, John

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Essex County Jail is an architecturally significant penitentiary because of its Greek Revival influence and because it is the work of famed architect John Haviland (1792 - 1852). The jail is also significant as the oldest existing government building in Essex County and one of the oldest buildings of any kind in the city of Newark.

In both design and workmanship, the Essex County Jail is indicative of John Haviland's work during his Greek Revival period. Although most closely identified with his Gothic influenced Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, his most famous prison, Haviland designed many Grecian, or classically-styled buildings. These buildings were characterized by a horizontal directional emphasis, planar surface treatment, rectangularity in composition and stability in appearance (Baigell 1966: 198). All of these traits are exhibited in Haviland's design of the Essex County Jail. The jail hugs the ground to a great degree by virtue of its Grecian proportions, continuous horizontality and flattened door surround (Photo #2). The windows correspond to the jail's rectilinear shape and there is relatively little ornamentation to prevent the exterior walls from serving merely as the outer envelope of the volume. The overhanging pyramidal roof is brought into play as a major architectural element effectively closing the composition. Rather than imitate ancient Greek prototypes, Haviland chose to design a Greek building for modern day usage, evoking a classical spirit while avoiding specific Greek forms. Although somewhat altered by the removal of the cupola and chimneys, the jail complex conveys the qualities of Haviland's design and is a unique architectural treasure in the city of Newark.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet 9.1.

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 # NJ-758
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Essex County Department of Public Safety

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 1.52 acres Elizabeth, NJ Quad

UTM References

A 18 569000 4510500
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____ _____ _____

B _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____ _____ _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The site of the building is Block ~~399~~, bounded by Wilsey Street on the south, New Street on the east, Newark Street on the west and the city railroad tracks on the north.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes land historically associated with the Essex County Jail.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ulana D. Zakalak, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee date August 15, 1990

street & number P.O. Box 1066 telephone (201) 622 - 4910

city or town Newark state New Jersey zip code 07101

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2 Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

Although Haviland was a follower of the Pennsylvania system of incarceration, it is not known what system was utilized in the Essex County Jail.

John Haviland received his early architectural training in England as an apprentice of James Elmes, and as a member of the Imperial Corps of Engineers in St. Petersburg. Finding no opportunity for advancement in Russia, Haviland immigrated to the United States in 1816 (Gilchrist 1961: 137). Working mainly in the classical style, Haviland did most of his work in Philadelphia and New York. He established a reputation for his designs of public buildings such as churches and theatres but especially prisons and penitentiaries. Along with Eastern State Penitentiary, Haviland was responsible for the Western State Penitentiary in Pittsburgh, Trenton State Prison, Trenton, New Jersey, the Rhode Island and Missouri State Prisons and the New York Hall of Justice, often called "the Tombs" (Withey 1956: 308). Haviland's most notable non-prison works include: the Moses Moody Villa, Haverhill, Massachusetts; Cridland Villa, Philadelphia; First Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, both in Philadelphia; Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (now Philadelphia College of Art); Franklin Institute (now Atwater Kent museum), Philadelphia; and the Philadelphia Arcade.

The Essex County Jail is significant as the oldest government building in the county and one of the oldest buildings of any kind in the city of Newark. In the summer of 1836, the year the city of Newark formally incorporated, Essex County and the municipality agreed, in a joint venture, to erect a government center that would serve both as county court house and city hall. Here also were to be placed the county jail and poor house. The project was to cost \$71,000 of which the city's share was \$27,000. John Haviland was hired to design the courthouse and the jail. The courthouse was constructed in the Egyptian style and stood until 1907. The estimates and offer of the architect for erecting the City and County prison amounted to \$30,000, of which the city had to pay \$6,000 (Folsom 1925: 164, vol.1). A site was chosen away from the Courthouse and the central business district, in an industrial area at the weigh-lock of the newly opened Morris Canal. The jail was completed in 1837.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

Haviland's jail stood intact for 50 years before the Essex County freeholders decided to fund additional jail space. The new wings and additional support buildings were designed by local architects who utilized architectural detailing prevalent at the time of construction, such as corbelled entablatures, brownstone lintels and sills and cast iron bosses. Although the buildings are generally utilitarian in appearance, their ornamentation adds character and visual quality to the complex.

Little of the non-Haviland complex can be seen outside the prison wall. The twelve foot high brownstone walls block a pedestrian level view of the Jail and serve to unify all of the interior buildings. The entablatures and rooflines of these interior buildings can be viewed only at a short distance from the complex, such as from across the street.

The west wing (1890), the women's wing (1895) and the north wing (1909) were constructed in response to a growing need for jail space and changing attitudes towards incarceration. When the Essex County Jail was first constructed, prisoners were not segregated by offense, age or gender. Witnesses were also incarcerated side-by-side with the criminals. The construction of the three new wings allowed the juveniles and women to be separated from the hardened criminals, and the recalcitrant from the first time offender. The design of the wings provided for the grouping of the prisoners within the center of the buildings with catwalks and wide corridors along the exterior walls. Along with extended through-floor windows, this arrangement allowed the greatest amount of natural light to enter the core of the buildings as well as circulation and adequate viewing angles for the security of the guards.

In contrast to the brownstone used by Haviland, the additions are of brick with simple brownstone detailing. They are, however, massive, horizontal and ground-hugging in scale, complementing the original structures. The penal atmosphere of the complex is further enhanced by the medieval maze-like entanglement of the various buildings leaving only enough open space for exterior walkways between buildings. These walkways serve a dual purpose, that of providing natural light into the interiors. Circulation in the complex occurred almost exclusively within the interiors which are all interconnected on the first and second floors and through an

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4 Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

elaborate system of narrow tunnels in the basement. The exterior walkways were used mostly for access to the support buildings such as coal deliveries to the power plant.

Although the newer buildings outnumber the Haviland structures, they play a secondary, albeit complementary, role to the original Jail, which continues to visually dominate the complex and the surrounding streetscapes.

The jail was used primarily as an institution to which committed offenders were sent for short terms, where the sentenced confinement was generally not more than 9 months. The total capacity of the jail was 368 prisoners and admissions were approximately 4,500 per year, ranging from drunkenness to homicides. Management was vested in a warden, under the sheriff's supervision, plus a freeholder board committee of five members (Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders 1953: 48). The jail was closed in 1970 when the new County Jail was built; the building was in use as the county Bureau of Narcotics until several years ago when it was vacated. The future use of the jail is currently under discussion.

The Essex County Jail was recorded by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1967.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

9. Major Bibliographic References

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- Cunningham, John T. Newark. Newark, New Jersey: New Jersey Historical Society, Revised and Expanded Edition, 1988.
- Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. County Government in Essex, New Jersey: An Outline of Its Origin, Its History and Its Functions Today. Newark: Essex County Board of Freeholders, May 1953.
- Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. Proceedings. 1881 - 1909.
- Folsom, Joseph F., ed. The Municipalities of Essex County, N.J. 1666-1924. 2 volumes. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc.
- Gilchrist, Agnes Addison. "John Haviland Before 1816." Journal. Society of Architectural Historians, October 1961.
- Shaw, William H., comp. History of Essex and Hudson Counties. New York: Everts and Peck, 1884, 2 volumes.
- State of New Jersey. Report of the Prison Inquiry Commission to Governor Walter E. Edge and the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey. Trenton, New Jersey: January 1, 1918, Volumes 1 and 2.
- Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Company, 1956.
- Newspapers
- Bennett, Cliff. "Shower Baths Now Stand in Jail's Gallows Corner, Last Hanging at Jail in 1902." Star Ledger, 8 January 1950, n.p.
- "Essex Jail Does Best to Offset Handicaps." Sunday Call, 12 July

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

1931: n.p.

"Remains of Dungeon Cells in Original Jail." Unidentified xerox in the Newark Public Library vertical file, dated by the library to circa 1907.

Miscellaneous

Historic American Buildings Survey, "Essex County Jail," New Jersey No. 758.

Lathrop, J.N. et al., comps. Atlas of the City of Newark, New Jersey. 2 volumes. Philadelphia: A. H. Mueller, 1911.

New Jersey Institute of Technology, School of Architecture, "Old Newark Group" drawings in the collection of the Newark Public Library, New Jersey Reference Room.

Newark Public Library vertical file: Essex County Prisons and Prisoners.

Robinson's Atlas of the City of Newark, New Jersey. New York: 1926.

Van Duyne, Harrison and D. H. Sherman. Insurance Map of Newark, New Jersey. Newark: Harrison Van Duyne, 1868.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number P Page 1

Essex County Jail, Newark, Essex County, NJ

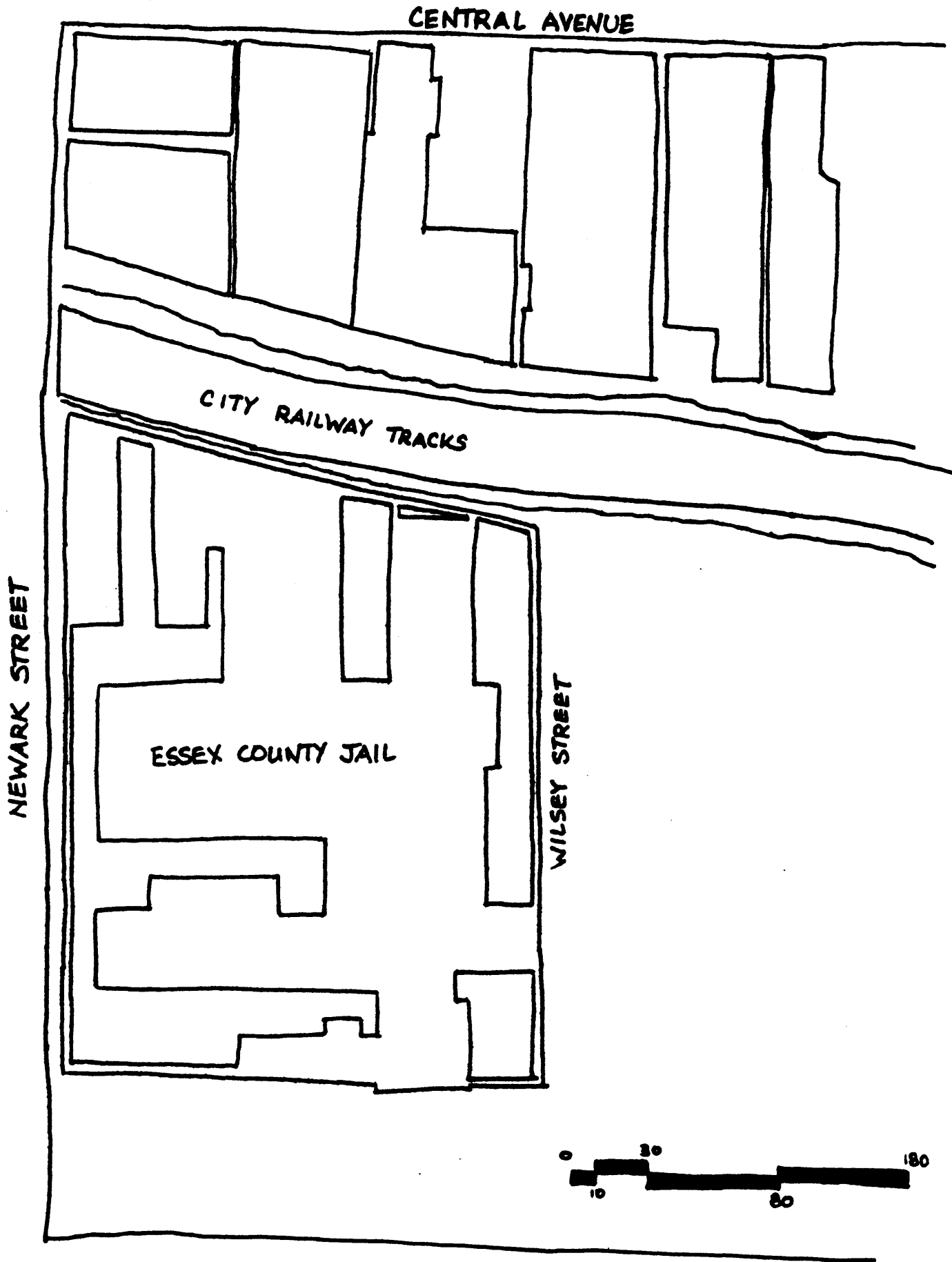
Photographs

The following information is the same for all of the photographs listed:

- 1) Name of property: Essex County Jail
- 2) City and state: Newark, New Jersey
- 3) Photo by: Gerry Weinstein, Photo Recording Associates
- 4) Photo taken: August 2, 1990
- 5) Location of negative: Photo Recording Associates
40 W. 77th Street 17B
New York, N.Y. 10024

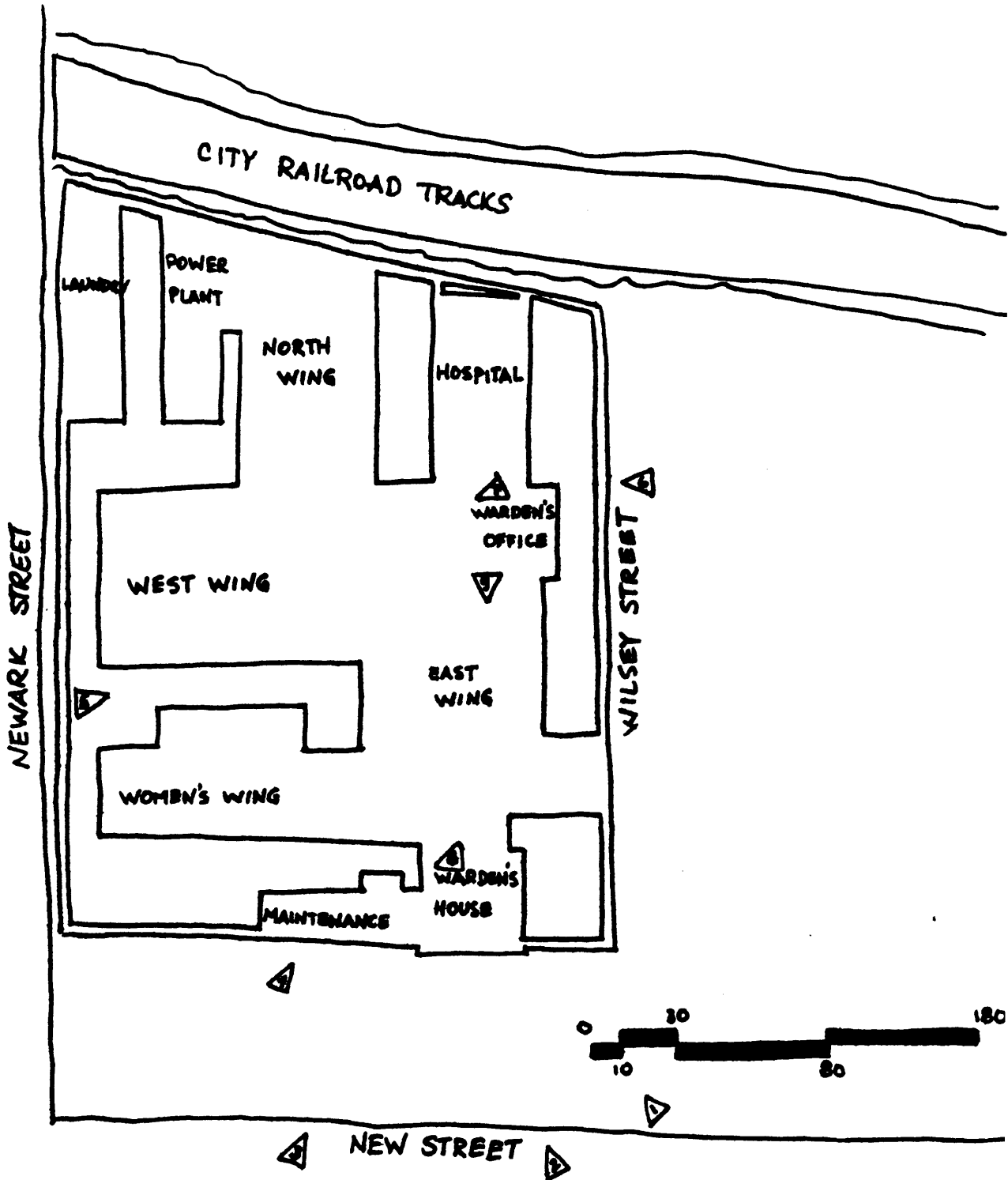
6) & 7) Descriptions of views indicating direction of camera:

- Photo 1 of 9: Historic view of the Essex County Jail, camera pointing northwest, c. 1885. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library.
- Photo 2 of 9: Historic view of the Essex County Jail, camera pointing north, c. 1885. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library.
- Photo 3 of 9: Historic view of the Essex County Jail, camera pointing east, c. 1926. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library.
- Photo 4 of 9: View of warden's house and women's wing, camera pointing east.
- Photo 5 of 9: View of west wing from courtyard, camera pointing northeast.
- Photo 6 of 9: View of warden's office, camera pointing west.
- Photo 7 of 9: Interior of warden's office, intake room, camera pointing west.
- Photo 8 of 9: Interior stairhall, warden's house, camera pointing west.
- Photo 9 of 9: Interior of east wing (original jail), view from second floor looking down, camera pointing south. Steel 1907 jail cells on right, entrance to east wing in background, shower baths in foreground.



SITE PLAN: ESSEX COUNTY JAIL
21 WILSEY STREET
NEWARK, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

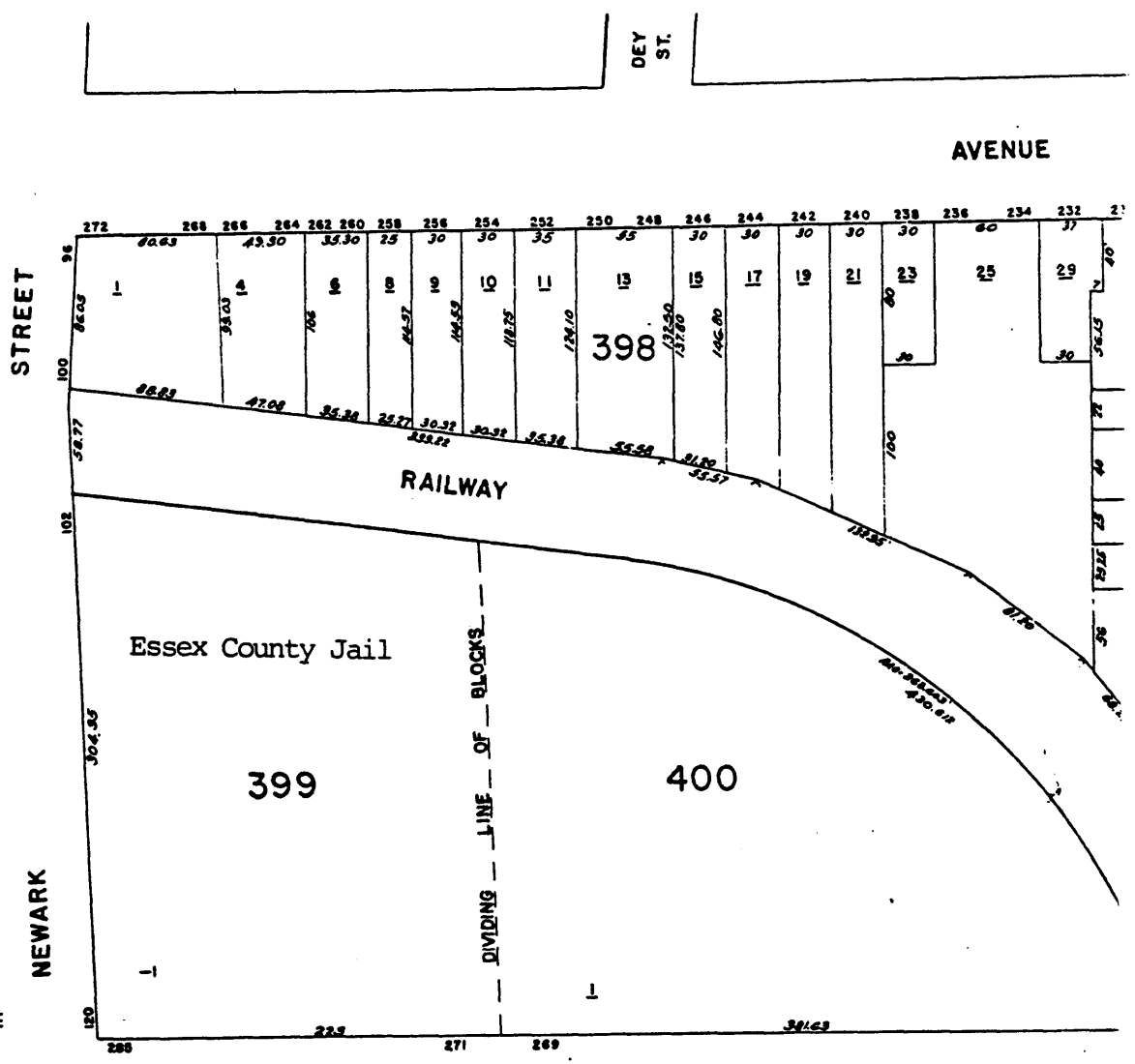
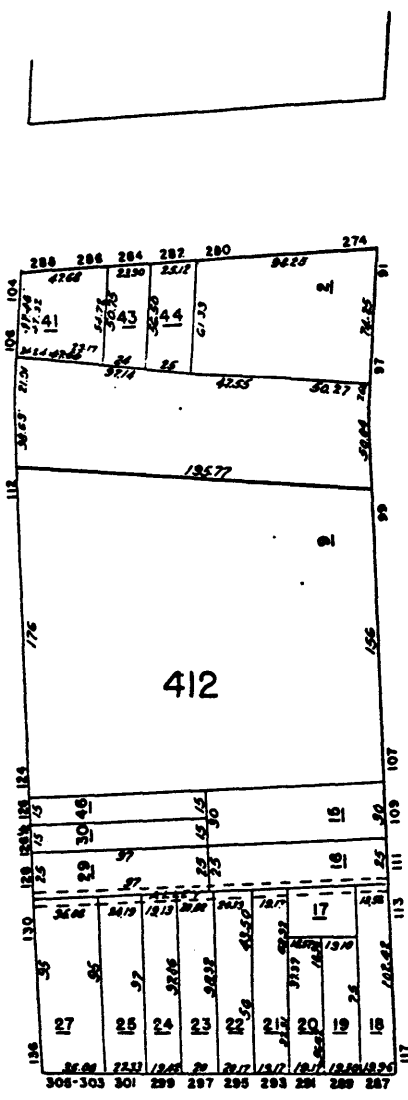
PREPARED BY:
ULANA D. ZAKALAK
AUGUST 15, 1990



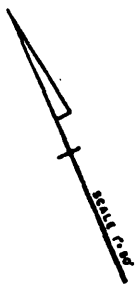
△ = PHOTO NUMBERS

ESSEX COUNTY JAIL
21 WILSEY STREET
NEWARK, ESSEX COUNTY
NEW JERSEY

PREPARED BY:
ULANA D. ZAKALAK



7



Essex County Jail, Newark, New Jersey