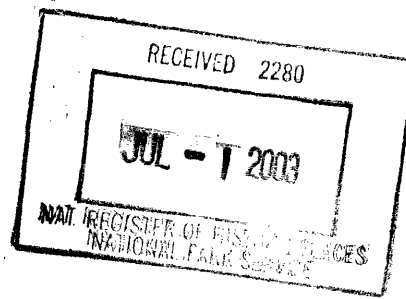


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Lander County Courthouse
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 122 Main Street N/A not for publication
city or town Austin N/A vicinity
state Nevada code NV county Lander code 015 zip code 89310

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally X statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronald M. Jones SHPO 6-26-03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other (explain):

[Signature] 8/14/07
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
GOVERNMENT	courthouse
GOVERNMENT	correctional facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE	monument

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Category	Subcategory
GOVERNMENT	government office
COMMERCE	organizational
RECREATION AND CULTURE	monument

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	Stone
walls	Brick
roof	Metal
other	Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past fifty years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1871-1953

Significant Dates

1871

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bell, Daniel P. (architect)

Bliss & Mahony (general contractor)

Coalley, William (brick and stone contractor)

Moulton, H. (plasterer)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 0.17 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1 11	494010 4371160	3 11
2 11		4 11

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>J. Daniel Pezzoni</u>	date	<u>June 1, 2003</u>
organization	<u>Landmark Preservation Associates</u>	telephone	<u>(540) 464-5315</u>
street & number	<u>6 Houston St.</u>	zip code	<u>24450</u>
city or town	<u>Lexington</u> state <u>VA</u>		

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Lander County</u>	telephone	<u>(775) 635-5195</u>
street & number	<u>315 South Humboldt</u>	zip code	<u>89820</u>
city or town	<u>Battle Mountain</u> state <u>NV</u>		

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 1

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description

Summary

The 1871 Lander County Courthouse is located at 122 Main Street in Austin, Lander County, Nevada. Austin is situated at an elevation of approximately 6,600 feet above sea level in Pony Canyon near the northern end of the Toiyabe Range and near the geographic center of the state. The town lies in the watershed of the Reese River, a tributary of the Humboldt River, and it is served by US Highway 50. The northeast-facing, two-story courthouse is constructed of brick and exhibits Greek Revival-style influence in its design. A standing-seam metal front-gable roof, a symmetrical five-bay front elevation, and a decorative cast-iron balcony are other notable exterior features. Inside, the building has a double-loaded corridor plan with original jail cells on the first floor and a courtroom on the second floor. The courthouse was decommissioned in 1979 when the Lander County seat was moved to Battle Mountain but is still used for county offices.

Exterior

The courthouse is constructed of brick laid in Flemish variant American bond on the front and American bond on the other elevations with extensive modern repointing. Three batches of brick, each subtly different in color, were used in the construction of the southeast and southwest elevations. This variation may be related to the availability of brick during construction or it may represent the combining of mismatched lots of brick as an economy measure; the variation is not evidence for three phases of construction, as evidenced by documentation. Six interior brick chimneys rise on the perimeter walls, two each on the southeast, southwest, and northwest elevations. Running across the base of the front gable is a wide band of corbelled brickwork that creates a tympanum effect in the gable above. The foundation is constructed of granite with a finely dressed but unincised cornerstone at the east front corner.

The centered front entry has wood and glass panel double-leaf doors with a paneled embrasure and granite threshold. Above it is a second-story entry with similar doors and a six-light transom. This entry opens onto a balcony with a Gothic Revival-style cast-iron balustrade and modern decking and metal brackets. The first- and second-story front entries are flanked by large six-over-six windows (taller on the second story) with jack-arched heads and granite sills. Similar windows extend down the side elevations. Several windows on the first-story southeast elevation have strap-iron bars or mesh associated with the jail cells within.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 7 Page 2

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

In the front gable is a circular vent with radial louvers skewed like the vanes in a turbine. Spanning the vent is a cross beam that supports the bottom end of a wooden flagpole. The flagpole is square-section at the base but tapers to a rounded section near the top and is capped by a metal finial. Below the front gable runs the inscription "Lander County Court House/1869" in modern gilded letters. The courthouse has a wooden cove cornice and wooden raking cornices with cyma profiles. Other exterior features include a latrine vent pipe on the southwest elevation, a bricked-up entry and modern cylindrical cage fire escape on the northwest elevation, and a fire siren on the roof ridge.

Interior: First Floor

Typical interior features include plaster on brick and plaster on lath walls, beaded board ceilings, vinyl tile or carpeted floors, molded door and window surrounds, and molded and plain baseboards. Most woodwork has rich red-brown mahogany graining over earlier yellow and brown (yellow pine?) graining. Most doors are four-panel with porcelain doorknobs and two-light transoms. A wide corridor extends from the front entry the length of the courthouse with offices on either side. About midway down the corridor is a one-run stair with a heavy, tapered, octagonal-section newel with torus moldings and brown-gold graining. The turned balusters are painted or stained dark brown and the molded handrail has a bright maple stain. Under the stair is a closet with a vertical beaded board and plaster and lath enclosure and a beaded batten door. On the corridor's northwest wall is the ca. 1988 exhibit "Lander County Line: Folklife in Central Nevada." At the end of the corridor is an entry with a door with five horizontal panels, a two-light transom, and a cast-iron BLW lock box with a July 21, 1863 patent date. Next to the rear entry is a modern elevator with a paneled wood interior.

The second first-floor room on the southeast side appears to have functioned as the jailor's office, perhaps in conjunction with the first or east corner room. A reinforced door of heavy beaded batten construction leads from this room into a narrow corridor along which jail cells are ranked. The door has iron sheathing on the jail side, two heavy crossbars that can be padlocked on the office side, and a transom with iron strapwork bars and heavy mesh. An iron box built into the face of the door could be used to pass meals and other items without opening the door, and a barred opening above it could be used for visual inspection and conversation.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 7 Page 3

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

The jail corridor has a vertical board wainscot and a beaded chairrail with evidence of original or early dark green paint. Four cells open off of the corridor, each with iron doors with iron strap work-barred windows, vent holes at their bases, and strap hinges. One door has an oblong plate inscribed "Nutting & Son/Makers/417/Market St., S.F." At the south end of the corridor is an original or early latrine behind a wood-paneled stall partition open at the top and bottom. The latrine's toilet has been replaced with a water heater. Modern men's and women's rooms entered from the center corridor have been created out of a cell or cells at the south end of the cellblock.

The first-floor front north room historically functioned as the clerk's office. Its woodwork is grained in imitation of oak rather than mahogany. The records vault has a heavy metal door manufactured by the Diebold Safe & Lock Co. of Canton, Ohio, and also labeled with the name of Diebold's distributor, the M. G. West Co. of San Francisco, California. The vault itself has a barrel-vaulted concrete ceiling and is used to store the state's most complete run of the *Reese River Reveille* newspaper. The two offices in the rear west corner have been combined into one, joined by a wide opening with a paneled lintel.

Interior: Second Floor

The second floor is similar in plan and finish to the first floor, although the center corridor is shorter since it terminates at a courtroom that occupies the north end of the building. The courtroom is entered through double-leaf five-plus-five panel doors with gilded handles and a five-light transom. A judge (now justice of the peace) and jury platform occupies the west end of the room, separated from the spectator benches by an early twentieth century oak bar with a low railing supported on rectangular-section balusters. The juror chairs and brass foot rests date to the same period as the bar; above them runs a beaded coat hook rail. At the east end of the courtroom is an Acorn Oak stove, and on the northwest wall above the judge's desk is a now unused stove flue hole. The judge's quarters occupy the west corner and contain wood and glass bookcases, a beaded board partition, and a metal stove back with stenciled arabesques. The south corner room is presently occupied by The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET 7

Section 7 Page 4

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 7 Description, continued

Site Features

In front of the courthouse is a terrace with a stone and concrete retaining wall and steps and modern metal railings (in a March 1878 newspaper article the terrace was referred to as an "esplanade"). The granite stonework consists of dressed capstones joined with wrought-iron staples above coursed rubble. The stone retaining wall steps down and continues northwestward along the sidewalk. Attached to this section of wall is an early 1960s bronze plaque commemorating the Pony Express. The plaque was placed by the National Pony Express Centennial Association and depicts an express rider sculpted by M. Brackenridge. Resting on the lawn above the wall is a large granite boulder with multiple drill holes. This boulder (listed as a contributing object in the resource count) was used for Fourth of July drilling contests. Miners competed in the contests, which were held during the nineteenth century and as late as the 1940s.

Extending from the northwest elevation of the courthouse are concrete foundations dating to the 1970s. These were poured by Laurence and Spencer Saralegui for an addition that was never built. Near the northwest boundary of the nominated area stands a row of mature ponderosa pines. The courthouse stands in a deep well excavated out of the canyon wall below South Street. The well is lined with a high sloping granite wall. Concrete steps rise with the northwest side of the wall. Between the wall and the courthouse is a modern portable storage shed (not enumerated in the resource count). A concrete driveway extends along the southeast side of the courthouse, separating it from a 1970s one-story cinder-block building used by the Lander County Sheriff's Department (not included in the nominated area).

Integrity Statement

The Lander County Courthouse preserves very good integrity from the period of significance. The principal exterior and interior character-defining features are all in place, as are such rarely surviving features as the jail cells and latrine. Interior modernizations have included the installation of vinyl tiles and carpeting over the historic wood flooring and the painting of walls that were, at least ca. 1900, wallpapered in some rooms, but these changes do not detract from the character of the historic spaces. The immediate courthouse surroundings are characterized by a mix of historic stone walls and mid-twentieth century and later buildings. Adjacent blocks retain the nineteenth century buildings that form the fabric of the Austin Historic District in which the courthouse stands.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 8 Page 5

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance

Summary

The 1871 Lander County Courthouse, located in Austin, Nevada, is significant as the seat of government for Lander County for most of the county's history. Lander County, formed in 1862, originally established its seat in Jacobsville, a vanished community several miles west of Austin. With the explosive growth of Austin in 1863 the county government moved to the more prosperous town, and in 1871 this two-story brick courthouse was erected by general contractors Bliss & Mahony to a design by Daniel P. Bell. Architecturally the building is notable as the only surviving Greek Revival courthouse in Nevada. The interior features a decorative stairway, grained woodwork, and original jail cells with barred doors. The seat of county government was moved to Battle Mountain in 1979, but the old courthouse in Austin continues to serve as county offices.

Applicable Criteria

The 1871 Lander County Courthouse meets Criterion A and is eligible in the politics/government area of significance as the historic seat of government for Lander County. The property is also eligible under Criterion C as the only surviving Greek Revival courthouse in Nevada, and as a representative of a style that is now rare in the state. Also of architectural significance is the building's well-preserved interior details and original jail. The period of significance extends from the date of the building's construction and substantial completion in 1871 until 1953, the National Register fifty-year cut-off (the building is not of exceptional significance for the period after 1953). The building is eligible at the state level of significance. The building is located in the Austin Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Information in support of eligibility appears throughout this section.

Acknowledgments

A number of organizations and individuals assisted in the preparation of this report. The nomination was sponsored by Lander County (the property's owner) and the Austin Historical Society with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the Nevada Commission of Economic Development, and it is one of ten nominations prepared for prominent historic landmarks in Austin in 2003. Assistance was provided by Allen D. Gibson, Deputy District Attorney, Lander County; Christy Caronongan, Administrative Assistant, Lander County Executive

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET⁷

Section 8 Page 6

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

Director's Office; Ray H. Williams Jr., Ray and Irene Salisbury, Phillip "Poncho" and Joan Williams, and Joy Brandt with the Austin Historical Society; Ray "Ramey" Williams III, Austin; Dee Helming and Herbert Wallace "Wally" Trapnell, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Estelle Shanks, Austin; and Mella Rothwell Harmon, Architectural Historian/National Register Coordinator, Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.

Historic Context

The early histories of Lander County and Austin are closely related. Silver was discovered in Pony Canyon in May 1862 and within a year the population of the nascent community of Austin and its immediate vicinity stood at nearly 1,000. The rapid growth of the Austin vicinity as the principal population center in central Nevada, and the prospects for future silver mining wealth in the region, prompted the formation of Lander County out of Humboldt County in December 19, 1862. The county took its name from Colonel Frederick W. Lander, Chief Engineer of the Overland Stage and Mail Company route (the successor to the Pony Express route). The pre-existing community of Jacobsville was chosen as the temporary county seat. Located in the Reese River Valley about six miles west of Austin, Jacobsville grew up around a station on the Pony Express route, and by the end of 1863 it had developed into a sizable town of perhaps as many as 400 people and 50 homes.¹

Jacobsville was a substantial community by 1860s Nevada standards but not as large nor as aggressively boosterish as nearby Austin. By the summer of 1863, according to one account, Austin's highly fluid population was said to have numbered 10,000 persons. Although this figure is probably too high, it seems likely that Austin's population peaked at between 5,000 and 10,000 during the 1863-64 period, making it far more populous than its older neighbor Jacobsville. Consequently, when the question of moving the county seat came to a vote on September 2, 1863, Jacobsville was outvoted and Austin became the government center for a vast area encompassing approximately a third of the Nevada Territory (Lander County then included Elko, Eureka, and White Pine counties). The frame county courthouse, built by Virginia City builder J. A. McDonald in Jacobsville in 1862, was moved (by McDonald) to Austin in late 1863 where it was erected on

¹ Hall, *Romancing Nevada's Past*, 46, 94-95; Neu, "Austin Historic District;" Abbe, *Austin*, 56, 64; and "Welcome to Austin."

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 8 Page 7

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

Virginia Street a block north of Main Street. A man named Haven built a stone foundation for the relocated courthouse; in 1872 some of these stones were used to build a wall at the 1871 courthouse site (probably the front retaining wall).²

In the spring of 1871 the courthouse record vault caved in. The county commissioners met and decided that the frame courthouse was too costly to maintain and that it posed a fire hazard. By early June the commissioners had decided to build a brick replacement. According to the *Reese River Reveille*, the intention was to erect a "plain and substantial building, avoiding anything in the way of superfluity." This cost-consciousness was in part a response to criticism from Eureka. By the spring of 1871 Eureka had replaced Austin as Lander County's most populous town, and rivalry between the two communities became heated. The *Eureka Sentinel* reported a county commissioner had stated that the new courthouse initiative was intended to keep the county seat in Austin, a claim that the commissioner in question denied. It may be the Eureka residents resented having to pay for a facility that would not be located in their town and that they probably would not have use of over the long term. (In fact, Eureka County was created from Lander County in March 1873 with Eureka as the new county's seat.) One of the courthouse rationales put forward by the Austin paper during the debate referenced the recent incarceration, in Austin, of several miscreants from the other town. "Our jail facilities, too," reasoned the *Reveille*, "have become too small for the accommodation of our friends at Eureka."³

The commissioners let it be known that construction bids should not exceed \$25,000. The *Eureka Sentinel* asserted the courthouse could not be built for so low a sum. The *Reveille* consulted Richard Pearce, "a master mechanic of this place" and potential bidder, who claimed that \$25,000 was sufficient. The Eureka paper countered that Pearce appeared to have an inside track for the job. The Austin paper reprinted this criticism in its June 23 issue, juxtaposed with the announcement of the adoption of courthouse plans and specifications prepared by D. P. Bell. One of the first known projects of Daniel P. Bell (b. ca. 1830) in Austin is the 1866 Austin Methodist Church, for which

² Hall, *Romancing Nevada's Past*, 46, 95; Nevada State Historical Society, *Nevada*, 258-259; Abbe, *Austin*, 56; Angel, *History of Nevada*, 462; and *Reese River Reveille*, September 8, 1871 and January 13 and February 6, 1872.

³ *Reese River Reveille*, June 7, 13, and 20, 1871; Hall, *Romancing Nevada's Past*, 2, 15.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 8 Page 8

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

Bell served as the architect and superintendent of building. In November 1866 Bell ran unsuccessfully for county sheriff, and in the early 1870s he enrolled in a local Masonic lodge with the occupational title "machinist." There is evidence he built mills for processing silver ore as early as 1866. In May 1871 the county selected him to construct a bridge over the Humboldt River near Battle Mountain. Bell was paid \$75.00 for designing the courthouse, but his bid to build it was not accepted by the county.⁴

The county advertised for separate bids for the masonry and plasterwork and the carpentry, ironwork, and painting. Proposals were received from Peter Cavanaugh, the builder of the State Capitol in Carson City in 1869-70; D. P. Bell; Richard Pearce and William Veitch of Austin; J. W. Mahony and G. F. Bliss; William Coalley and H. Moulton of Austin; D. C. Sherlock, who bid only on the painting; and Patrick Lyon, who bid on the grading. Mahony & Bliss were chosen for the carpentry contract and Coalley and Moulton were awarded the masonry contract. With the contractors picked, the county moved on to the next contentious question: site selection. The commissioners appear to have originally favored a site on the hilltop above St. Augustine's Catholic Church for its views and prominence, but a critical letter to the editor shifted their attention to Main Street.⁵

In July 1871 the county began to purchase contiguous twenty-five-foot by hundred-foot town lots on the south side of Main Street between Virginia and Sixth streets. Three frame houses on the site were removed and grading commenced August 5. Prisoners in the county jail were probably used for the grading work, and the *Reveille* happily pointed out that Eureka inmates were helping to build a courthouse for Austin. The foundation was nearly finished by the end of August. On September 8, 1871 the *Reveille* reported on the cornerstone-laying ceremony to take place the following day and described the building to be erected:

⁴ *Reese River Reveille*, July 3 and November 17, 1866, and May 27, June 13 and 23, and July 11, 1871; Lander Lodge No. 172 Membership Roster; and Pezzoni, "Austin Methodist Church."

⁵ *Reese River Reveille*, June 19 and July 11 and 22, 1871; Adkins, James, and Bernstein, "Nevada Architects and Builders," A5, A8, A14. Mahony may also have been spelled Mahoney.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET⁷

Section 8 Page 9

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

The new building, which is of brick with a substantial stone foundation, will be two stories high, with a front of 44 feet, a depth of 62 feet, and a height of 47 feet from the ground, and will be built in the Ionian style of architecture. The lower floor will comprise the Sheriff's, County Recorder's, District Attorney's, County Surveyor's and County Assessor's offices, four cells, and a jailor's room. The upper floor will comprise the District Court room, a jury room, a District Judge's chamber, and the County Clerk's office.

Within a few days the paper reported, "the court-house begins to look like a building." The outer and inner partition walls had risen five feet or more above the foundation and the granite window sills and iron doorframes for the jail cells were in place. November 8 marked the completion of the brickwork and, as the paper noted, "the tanners are putting on the roof, and the carpenters have about half of the elegant cornice in place."⁶

A tragic event occurred during the construction of the walls. On September 26 the brick and stone contractor, William Coalley (or Coaley), was injured in a fall. The sixty-year-old Coalley did not improve, and on October 4 he died from "congestion of the lungs." His obituary noted that he was a native of England, and it praised him as "an industrious, hard-working man, strictly honorable in his dealings, and highly respected by all who knew him." Work on the courthouse was halted for a few days after Coalley's death.⁷

The second-floor joists were laid in mid-October and the roof was completed and most of the flooring laid by November 21. Of the circular vent in the front gable, which served to keep condensation from forming on the inner surface of the tin roof, the paper surmised: "The little jewflicker [*sic*] in the front gable end--painted green--is probably intended to represent the wheel of justice; or, in view of the desperate uncertainty of the verdict of a jury, it may be an imitation of the wheel of fortune." According to the contract the courthouse was to be completed by January 1, 1872; on December 27 the last coat of plaster was applied to the walls, and the commissioners

⁶ Lander County Deed Book 39, pp. 566, 568, 569, 571; *Reese River Reveille*, June 26, August 5 and 30, September 8 and 13, and November 8, 1871.

⁷ *Reese River Reveille*, September 26 and October 5 and 10, 1871; "Austin Cemetery Records." The latter source identifies nephritis, inflammation of the kidneys, as the cause of Coalley's death.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET7

Section 8 Page 10

Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

appear to have been satisfied that the terms had been met. On January 13 the *Reveille* reported the cost of the building including furniture as \$25,000, and it praised Bliss & Mahony for the work. (It was noted, however, that the partition walls had cracked in a few places, and the editor expressed concern that the placing of the front elevation on sand rather than bedrock might lead to future problems.) On the evening of January 17 the new courthouse was "brilliantly illuminated" and opened to public inspection. In the clerk's office "a bountiful repast was spread and a fountain of sparkling Heidsick kept continually running during the entire evening." In his annual report the State Mineralogist declared Lander County's new courthouse "substantial and well arranged."⁸

The Sanborn Map Co. insurance maps for Austin provide details on the function and evolution of the courthouse over the following decades. The first two maps, dated 1886 and 1890, simply note that the two-story brick building contained a jail on the first floor. The 1907 map, however, provides a schematic floor plan and details aspects of the building's functional layout. The first-floor rooms on the northwest side of the center corridor served as offices, an office occupied the east front corner, and the jail took up the remainder of the southeast side. The east front corner room and the jail are shown as having a doorway between them, suggesting the room then served as the sheriff's or jailor's office. The courtroom was located on the second floor. Attached to the southeast side of the courthouse adjacent to the jail was a jail yard enclosed by eight-foot tall brick walls. At the yard's east end was a one-story brick woodhouse. The brick woodhouse appears to have replaced an earlier frame one constructed with lumber salvaged from the original courthouse. Both the brick jail yard and woodhouse were replaced before 1940 by a corrugated metal-fenced yard and a detached garage and storage building; these too are now gone.⁹

Austin rapidly passed through the three incipient developmental stages identified by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office as characteristic of the state's mining towns: the settlement stage (provisional architecture and haphazard organization), the camp phase (more permanent frame

⁸ *Reese River Reveille*, November 21 and December 27, 1871 and January 13 and 18, 1872; Smith, "Austin, Nevada, 1862-1881," 93. One account states that the courthouse cost \$30,000 (Adkins, James, and Bernstein, "Nevada Architects and Builders," A8).

⁹ Sanborn maps; *Reese River Reveille*, February 6 and 9, 1872; and Estelle Shanks personal communication.

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Lander County Courthouse, Austin, Lander County, Nevada

Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

buildings and town platting), and the town phase (masonry construction, public buildings, established infrastructure, and stylistic sophistication). The substantial 1871 courthouse is indicative of the town phase of the community's development, a level that had been achieved by the mid-1860s. Austin also experienced, to a degree, a fourth phase of Nevada mining town development: partial abandonment, as silver mining decreased and the town's economy and population contracted at the end of the nineteenth century. Austin's status as a trade center for central Nevada prevented it from becoming a ghost town, but the town's population declined to between 700 and 1,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century and stands at about 300 today.¹⁰

The decline in Austin's fortunes and the rise of Battle Mountain at the north end of the county created pressure to move the county seat northward. The first skirmish occurred in 1919, followed by attempts in 1938, 1953, and 1978-79 to make Battle Mountain the county seat. The 1953 round generated some humorous exchanges between Austin's *Reese River Reveille* and the Battle Mountain paper, as reported in Oscar Lewis's folksy history of Austin, *The Town that Died Laughing*, and inspired the first preservation and local historic designation efforts in the town. Ultimately, in November 1979, Battle Mountain was designated the seat of Lander County, and the loss of the principal county functions was detrimental to Austin's economy. Despite the change, the old courthouse remains fully occupied by offices or branch offices of the county Assessor, Commissioners, Austin Township Justice of the Peace, Road Department, and The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce.¹¹

Architectural Analysis

The 1871 Lander County Courthouse is the only Greek Revival-style courthouse to survive in Nevada. The Greek Revival style emulated the architecture of classical Greek temples, and although it was most popular during the antebellum period its influence persisted after the Civil War. Those features of the Lander County Courthouse that display Greek Revival influence are the

¹⁰ Harmon, "How to Prepare Nominations," 8-9; Neu, "Austin Historic District;" Abbe, *Austin*, 58-59; and 1907 Sanborn map.

¹¹ "Welcome to Austin;" Hall, *Romancing Nevada's Past*, 66-67; and Lewis, *Town that Died Laughing*, 229-232.

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Section 8 Statement of Significance, continued

front gable, which is given a pedimented appearance by the band of corbelled brickwork at its base, and the simple detailing and five-bay symmetry of the front elevation. The circular gable vent is suggestive of an oculus window in a Greek Revival pediment, although round vents were not restricted to Greek Revival buildings.¹²

The Lander County Courthouse was regarded as an example of Greek Revival architecture at the time of its construction, as indicated by the description "Ionian" in the local paper. Greek Revival architecture was common in California during the middle decades of the nineteenth century but appears to have been rare in Nevada. Among the few locales where the style has also been identified is Virginia City and Buckland's Station in Lyon County. The building's austere Greek Revival styling may reflect in part the budgetary pressures and political circumstances of the building's construction, noted above.¹³

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¹² James, "State and County Government," 30-21.

¹³ *Reese River Reveille*, September 8, 1871; Nicoletta, *Buildings of Nevada*, 12; and Mella Harmon personal communication.

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Section 10 Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area corresponds to Lander County tax parcels 01-102-05-14, 01-102-05-15, and 01-102-05-16.

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Section 10 Geographical Data, continued

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated area correspond to the present boundaries of the three tax parcels on which the courthouse stands.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

1. 1. Subject: Lander County Courthouse (same for all photos)
 2. Location: Lander Co., Nv. (same for all photos)
 3. Photographer: J. Daniel Pezzoni (same for all photos)
 4. Photo date: March 2003 (same for all photos)
 5. Original negative archived at the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office,
 Carson City, Nv. (same for all photos)
 6. Description of view: Southeast and northeast (front) elevations. View looking west.
 7. Photograph number appears at beginning of entry (same for all photos)

2. 6. Northwest and southwest elevations. View looking east.

3. 6. First-floor corridor.

4. 6. First-floor cell door.

5. 6. Second-floor courtroom.