

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**



**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 GRAHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 800 Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Safford N/A vicinity of congressional district 04

state Arizona code 04 county Graham code 09

3. 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Graham County

street & number 800 Main Street

city, town Safford N/A vicinity of state Arizona

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Graham County Courthouse

street & number 800 Main Street

city, town Safford state Arizona

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date N/A federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

A two-story, Neo Classic style building, the Graham County Courthouse was constructed in 1916. The courthouse is centrally located in the commercial district of Safford, a small city of 6,000 in southeastern Arizona. Safford serves as the county seat of Graham County, a primarily agricultural region with the larger towns concentrated within the Gila River Valley.

Architecturally, the Graham County Courthouse features a symmetrical facade oriented around a central pediment which frames the main entry. The facade has not been altered, and the building clearly conveys its original appearance and displays a high degree of architectural integrity. Located at the western end of Main Street, the courthouse faces east onto a landscaped public square and functions as the visual terminus of Safford's principal commercial avenue.

The main block is a two-story, flat-roofed composition resting on a raised basement of concrete that carries the main floor seven feet above grade. The wall surfaces are faced with El Paso pressed red brick and contrast in texture with the smooth concrete foundation. Overall, the building measures 83x62 feet with a one-story, 17'x49' brick wing on the north elevation and a short rear ell.

The architectural design focuses on the central bay of the facade, accentuated by a projecting portico featuring a pediment with a wide brick entablature. Both elements are supported by in antis Doric columns flanked by brick piers. The name "Graham County Court House" is written in raised letters across the entablature. The pediment is centered within a stepped parapet which extends above the height of a parapet balustrade that embellishes the roofline. Contrasting with the brick walls, the cornice on the pediment and a block cornice articulating the roofline are of white-painted galvanized iron, a material commonly used for ornamentation at the turn of the century.

The portico is approached by a flight of stone steps which emphasize the recessed entry and complement the sense of monumentality exhibited by the facade. The entry contains solid-panel glass doors topped by a transom and flanked by single 1/1 windows. These windows and door openings are repeated on the second story which has identical fenestration.

The two outer bays on the facade flank the entry portico. Both bays contain paired 1/1 windows set within a recessed spandrel panel which visually links the two stories. The windows have projecting brick sills, a treatment common to all elevations.

The south elevation has five symmetrically-spaced bays defined by recessed spandrel panels containing paired windows. In the center bay, a former side entry was closed and infilled with air conditioning and mechanical systems during a 1976 renovation. A stone stoop is still intact, indicating the former location of the entry.

The north elevation is similar to the south elevation with the exception of the interior bays on the second story. The central bay does not have a window, and the windows in the two flanking bays are topped by transoms which pierce the architrave and extend into the brick entablature below the cornice. These enlarged windows correspond to the location of the courtroom. A one-story, brick wing (17'x49') added ca. 1976, extends from the center bay, again obscuring the original side entry but with a minimal impact on the overall integrity of the building.

The rear elevation was altered by the 1978 demolition of the jail, an unadorned, two-story ell (29'x49') due to its poor structural condition. The jail was not a primary architectural element and its loss does not impact the building's architectural merit.

(See Continuation Sheet)

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The rear elevation now consists of a short, two-story ell occupying the center three bays. The flanking end bays have paired windows similar to the side elevations. The location and shape of the former jail are evidenced by demolition scars on the rear wall of the existing ell. An exterior brick stairwell was appended to the rear of the ell when the jail was removed.

On the interior, the main staircase features the original wooden balustrade and newel post. Wooden wainscoting, moldings, interior doors and door trim are all intact in the main hallways, allowing the public areas to convey the historic essence of a turn-of-the-century space.

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/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates Constructed 1916 **Builder/Architect** Lutgerding & Eagan, Inc/Lescher & Kibbey

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary/ Historical Background:

The Graham County Courthouse in Safford, Arizona is significant for its architectural relationship with the state's other county courthouses and as a symbol of the permanent establishment of Safford as the county seat of Graham County. Erected in 1916, the courthouse is a dignified example of early twentieth century Neo Classic architecture distinctive within both the city of Safford and Graham County. It correlates stylistically and temporally with the widespread application of the Neo Classic style for county courthouses throughout the state, as well as for public buildings nationwide during the early twentieth century. The Graham County Courthouse was designed by Lescher and Kibbey, an architectural firm from Phoenix known for its public buildings constructed throughout Arizona during the early twentieth century. The courthouse is still used for its original purpose and remains an intact example of the Neo Classic style.

The Graham County Courthouse was built in accordance with the procedures and requirements for county courthouses first established by the Arizona Territorial Legislature in the 1860's. Governor John N. Goodwin created Arizona's first four counties when the territory was chartered in 1864, and as early as 1866, succeeding Governor R. C. McCormick was calling for the provision of courthouses and jails in each county. McCormick's efforts culminated in an 1871 law requiring each county to provide courthouse facilities. This law subsequently applied to the ten additional counties and made the courthouse a first priority for the new county governments.

The process for selecting the site of the county seat was also stipulated by legislation. In 1877 the Territorial Legislature enacted a law allowing the citizens of each county to vote for the location of the county seat. If desired, the question of moving the county seat could be brought before the Board of Supervisors by a petition of county taxpayers requesting a county-wide election.

The ultimate location of the Graham County Courthouse in Safford reflects this selection process. When Graham County was created in 1881, Safford, the area's only sizable village, served as the initial county seat. In 1883 the county seat was shifted to the smaller village of Solomonville, four miles to the east. During the 1890's, public agitation arose favoring relocation of the county seat once again on grounds that Solomonville was inconvenient for residents of Safford and the adjacent larger towns. Safford and Pima were proposed as alternative sites, and at an election in 1915, Safford was chosen by a comfortable margin.

Safford presented the logical choice for the county seat as it was already the primary trading center for the agricultural and mining activities of southeastern Arizona and was Graham County's largest municipality. With the advent of improved irrigation in the Gila River valley, the county's agricultural production rose and, during the early twentieth century, Safford continued to flourish as the region's commercial center.

(See Continuation Sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Dreyfuss, John J., Ed. A History of Arizona's Counties and Courthouses. Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1960.
Garrison, James W. and Garrett, Billy G., 1976 Calendar of Arizona Courthouses, First National Bank of Arizona, Phoenix, 1975.

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 1.135 AC
Quadrangle name Safford, Arizona **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED** Quadrangle scale 1:62,500
UMT References

A	<u>1 2</u>	<u>6 2 0 2 0 0</u>	<u>3 6 3 3 3 0</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Part of the SE 4 of the SE 4, Sec. 7, T7N-R26E, of the G&SRB&M, beginning 455' south of the NE corner of the SE4 of the SE4, thence south 230', thence west 215', thence north 230', thence east 215' to point of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas Rothweiler, Edited - Roger Brevoort, Architectural Historian, Arizona State Parks Board, Historic Preservation Section, March 1982.

organization Arizona State Parks Board date April 1973

street & number 1688 West Adams telephone (602) 255-4174

city or town Phoenix state Arizona 85007

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

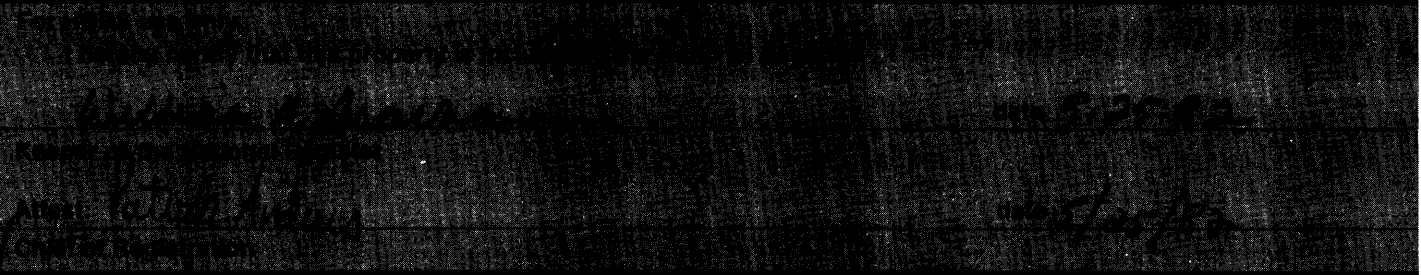
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Ann D. Pitbluff

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 5 April 1982



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The 1915 election firmly established Safford as the appropriate location for the county seat and immediately initiated a campaign to erect a new courthouse respective of the city's new status. The new building was also viewed by both county officials and residents as a final solution to providing a permanent administrative facility for the county government. As authorized by the Legislature, public bonds amounting to \$50,000 were purchased to finance the construction of the building which was to include courtrooms, county offices and a jail, in conformance with the 1877 legislative requirements.

In December of 1915, the County Board of Supervisors reviewed architectural plans from three architectural firms, selecting the design of Phoenix architects, Lescher and Kibbey. A construction contract in the amount of \$44,404 was awarded to the Phoenix building firm, Lutgerding and Egan, Inc. in March of 1916, with the contractors agreeing to use local labor and materials to the greatest extent possible. The courthouse was completed in six months and dedicated with much local celebration on Labor Day in September of 1916.

Historic Associations:

Two prominent Arizona judges began their careers at the Graham County Courthouse. Judge J. A. McAllister, the first Chief Justice of the Graham County Court, went on to be a justice in the Arizona Supreme Court, and Jesse A. Udall, a subsequent Chief Justice of Graham County, became the Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court. (Retired 1972)

Architectural Significance:

The Neo Classic design of the Graham County Courthouse embodies the democratic symbolism inherent in Neo Classic architecture and correlates the building with other county courthouses in Arizona built in the early twentieth century. Neo Classic architecture was intended to symbolize the nation's democratic origins and is associated with the upsurge of civic pride and nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century. The Neo Classic style emerged as the prevalent national style for public buildings and was considered especially appropriate for government buildings such as court houses, schools and city halls. This imagery is particularly appropriate to Arizona, which had only recently become a state (1912), and the citizens were eager to proclaim their statehood status. This enthusiasm is manifested in the architecture of the Graham County Courthouse.

From a statewide perspective, the widespread use of the Neo Classic style for civic buildings is well documented by Arizona's county courthouses. In the years between 1895 and 1918, ten Arizona counties erected courthouses, eight of which exhibit variations of Neo Classic architectural design. As a group, these buildings constitute a statewide expression of Neo Classic architecture and its use for public buildings in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Graham County Courthouse is integral to this cumulative statement.

The architects of the Graham County Courthouse, Royal W. Lescher and John Rinker Kibbey, designed numerous public buildings constructed throughout Arizona in the early twentieth century. The Mohave County Courthouse, built in 1915 in the north-

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western city of Kingman, was designed by Lescher and Kibbey and is a modest Neo Classic building architecturally comparable to the Graham County Courthouse. In addition, Lescher and Kibbey's influence was reflected by other buildings constructed in the Safford area. In 1916, while working on the Graham County Courthouse, they were commissioned to design elementary schools in the nearby communities of Thatcher and Klondyke.

The prominent location of the courthouse in Safford enhances its significance. The courthouse sits within a landscaped public square at the end of Main Street, a location which makes it a key architectural element of the surrounding downtown area. This siting not only highlights the building, but also magnifies both its historic and contemporary importance to Safford and Graham County as the symbol of the county government. Due to the building's continued use as the county offices and its intact architectural design, the Graham County Courthouse helps maintain the historic context and visual identity of downtown Safford.

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Ridgeway, William Ryder, "Graham County Courthouse: An Historical View". Private paper, 1978.

Ridgeway, William Ryder, Ed. Highlights of the Past: Safford, Arizona. Safford: Eastern Arizona Courier, 1974. p. 24-26.

Newspaper References:

Graham Guardian: "Plans Accepted for Court House". December 10, 1915, p.1:8.

"New Court House". December 24, 1915, p.1:4.

"Court House Contract Signed". March 10, 1916, p.1:6.

"Lescher & Kibbey To Make Plans". March 19, 1916, p.1:3

"Court House is Dedicated". September 8, 1916, p.1:4.