

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 30 1979
DATE ENTERED SEP 10 1979

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

Chaffee County Courthouse and Jail Buildings Complex

AND/OR COMMON

Old Court House and Jail

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

501 East Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Buena Vista

VICINITY OF

3

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Colorado

03

Chaffee

015

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Town of Buena Vista

STREET & NUMBER

210 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Buena Vista

VICINITY OF

Colorado S1211

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chaffee County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Crestone and Poncha Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Salida

Colorado 81201

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites (08/04/0001)

DATE

Ongoing

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Colorado Historical Society; 1300 Broadway

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Denver

Colorado 80203

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Located on the northeast corner of East Main and Court streets in Buena Vista, the Chaffee County Courthouse and Jail Building Complex consists of two structures that reflect the Italian Villa style of architecture. Both buildings lie in close proximity to one another. The larger structure, the Courthouse, faces south toward East Main, while the much smaller Jail lies to the west along Court Street.

The Courthouse is a single detached structure made of brick set in courses of stretcher bond over a foundation of coursed ashlar. The building has two stories. The main or south facade has five bays as do both the east and west sides, but on the north is a one-story, rectangular wing added sometime after the original construction; it has a somewhat different architectural style and is rather unobtrusive, yet it has converted what was a square structure into a rectangular one. The south, east, and west facades all have a projecting central bay topped by a pediment with a decorated tympanum. The structure has a low hipped roof topped in the center by a sexagonal cupola.

The secondary elements give the Courthouse its distinctive architectural character. The tall, narrow windows are all two-sashed and double-hung, those on the projections being clustered in twos and threes. The openings on the first story are flat and decorated with a flat label; those on the second story are segmental and decorated with a segmental label. All the windows have lugsills. The main doorway also has a segmental label which lies above the architrave with a transom and double-leafed door. All the building corners including those of the projections are graced with quoins. At the roof line the eaves display a cornice that is boxed with frieze, and consoles. The cupola is topped by a weathervane.

The Jail reflects the same primary and secondary architectural features of the Courthouse, but is nonetheless a much smaller, less elaborate building. It has two stories and has three bays in each of the south (main), east, and west sides. Like the Courthouse, it has a one-story wing projecting from the north facade. This addition has five bays on both the east and west sides, none on the north, but it converts an essentially square building into a rectangular one. The fenestration and decorative elements are similar to but much less elaborate than those of the Courthouse--there are no projections, quoins, or pediments, and some windows are bricked and barred. This structure also has a low, hipped roof, one topped by a square open walk with an iron rail instead of a cupola.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1882 - present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT E. Fisher

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in the early 1880s, the Chaffee County Courthouse and Jail Complex is significant for its roles in law, politics, government, and education. It is also significant for its architectural features which reflect the Italian Villa style, here applied to a public building.

The events that brought the Complex into being began in 1880 when the state legislature created Chaffee County out of Lake County, site of the great mining camp of Leadville. At first, Chaffee County had its seat and court in Granite, a few miles north of Buena Vista, but late in 1880 the voters decided to award Buena Vista the right to have the permanent county seat. Granite, however, was reluctant to abide by the decision of the electorate, but on a night in 1881 some men from Buena Vista stole into Granite under cover of darkness and with an engine and flatcar spirited the county records to Buena Vista. With the town now established as the county seat, the commissioners contracted with a Mr. E. Fisher to erect a suitable courthouse and jail. Fisher was experienced in this work, having built a courthouse in Canon City for Fremont County. Why he selected this particular architectural style remains unknown, but in 1882 he completed both structures at the cost of \$50,000 for the Courthouse, \$15,000 for the Jail.

From this time forward, the Complex played a large role in Buena Vista. For many years the structures housed the county records, served as the seat of county government, and administered justice in civil and criminal cases. In 1928, however, the voters decided to remove the county seat to Salida, and after this, the Complex remained closed for some years, but when the local school district needed more space in a time of growing enrollment, it used the Courthouse for classes until new schools could be built. The buildings in the Complex then stood abandoned until the local citizenry decided to convert them into a museum and space for local meetings.

From an architectural perspective the Courthouse and Jail Complex reflects the characteristic elements of the Italian Villa style, most often applied to houses, but sometimes to public buildings. The cupola, quoins, hipped roof, bracketed eaves, pediments, and round-headed windows sometimes grouped in twos and threes are all features of this style and can be readily seen in the Courthouse and to a lesser extent in the Jail. This style had its American origins in the late 1830s and remained popular for some time thereafter, but as the Complex in Buena Vista was not erected until the 1880s, it suggests that the architect/builder Fisher or perhaps the county commissioners may well have designed the buildings on the basis of examples he or they had seen in the East many years before. In any event the buildings in the Complex reflect the slow penetration of older architectural ideas into an area that in the early 1880s was both newly settled and relatively isolated.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado.... (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1895).

Ruby G. Williamson, "Down With Your Dust": A Chronicle of the Upper Arkansas Valley (Gunnison, CO: B & B Printers, c. 1973).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.34

QUADRANGLE NAME Buena Vista

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	3	4	0	2	2	0	0	4	2	9	9	8	2	5
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

B

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

C

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

D

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

E

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

F

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

G

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

H

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jeanine Linner - Vice President

ORGANIZATION

Buena Vista Heritage

DATE

November 6, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

215 South Gunnison, P.O. Box 1414

TELEPHONE

(303) 395-8447

CITY OR TOWN

Buena Vista

STATE

Colorado 81211

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

William C. Townsend July 23, 1979

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Franklin Corral Shull

DATE 9-10-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *William H. Bralton*

DATE 9.7.79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Chaffee County Courthouse and Jail
CONTINUATION SHEET Building Complex ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

A tract of land located in the unplatted portion of the Town of Buena Vista, Chaffee County, Colorado, known as Courthouse Square, being described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the northerly boundary of Main Street and the easterly boundary of Court Street in the Town of Buena Vista; thence North 20° 35' 00" West 129.72 feet along the easterly boundary of Court Street; thence North 69° 29' 24" East 117.05 feet; thence South 20° 35' 00" East 129.57 feet to a point on the northerly boundary of Main Street; thence South 69° 25' 00" 117.05 feet along said boundary to the point of beginning, containing 0.34 acres, including building and improvements.