

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THEME Architecture

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**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 Chowan County Court House

AND/OR COMMON

Chowan County Court House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER East King Street, head of the Green

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Edenton

\_\_ VICINITY OF

First

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

North Carolina

037

Chowan

041

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Chowan County

STREET & NUMBER

Office of the County Commissioners, County Court House

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Edenton

\_\_ VICINITY OF

North Carolina

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, CHOWAN COUNTY REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Chowan County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

County Court House

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Edenton

North Carolina

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE North Carolina Inventory of Historic Properties

DATE

in progress

\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Archives and History, Survey and Planning Section

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Raleigh

North Carolina

# 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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chowan County Court House stands on the north side of East King Street about one block east of the central business district of Edenton, North Carolina. The building faces south across East King Street toward a small park, known as Court House Green, and the shore of Edenton Bay. In the immediate vicinity of the court house are a number of the city's oldest houses, many of them of architectural and/or historical significance.

Erected in 1767, the Chowan County Court House is a two-story building with a T-shaped plan and a one-story semicircular apse at its center rear. The main block of the building is approximately 68½ feet wide and 30 feet deep; the rear leg of the T is 33 feet wide and projects 17 feet. In each angle of the main block and the rear leg is a one-story office addition, date uncertain. The court house is constructed of brick laid in Flemish bond with wood trim painted white.

Exterior detailing on the court house is distinctly Georgian but in general of the simplest. The five-bay front facade is dominated by a three-bay (33 feet) projecting pavilion topped by a classic pediment. The main entrance, at the center of the pavilion, is flanked by Doric pilasters carrying an entablature and a triangular pediment. Windows--9/9 sash on the first floor, 9/6 on the second--are topped by flat brick arches. A belt course marks the second floor line and a cornice ornamented with modillions forms a continuous line below the hipped roof.

The most ornate exterior feature is the two-stage wooden cupola with ogival roof surmounted by a tall weathervane. The lower stage is square and carries a clock on each face, those on the east, south, and west framed by open pediments supported by slender brackets. The upper stage is octagonal and has round-arched, louvered openings set in molded surrounds with keystones. The rear slope of the roof is broken by a slender chimney on either side of the cupola.

The first floor of the court house is devoted almost entirely to a large courtroom. In the semicircular apse on the rear (north) wall of this room is a high-backed, pedimented judge's chair, similar to that in the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg prior to 1747. The courtroom was altered somewhat, probably between 1840 and 1850, when the original floor was covered with wood and six columns were put in as support for the floor above; however, the dado of the apse, the balustraded railing, and the judge's chair are unchanged. The courtroom is flanked by two offices on the east and an office and the stair hall on the west.

(Continued)

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1767

BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown (see below)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chowan County Court House in Edenton, North Carolina, is a two-story brick structure with a T-shaped plan and a one-story semicircular apse at its center rear. Erected in 1767, the Court House is one of the most notable Georgian public buildings in the United States and probably the finest surviving example of the type in the Southern colonies. Maintained in excellent condition, the Chowan County Court House is little-altered and retains most its original interiors. The building still serves as the county court house and is also open to visitors during regular business hours.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Edenton, known as Queen Anne's Town until its incorporation in 1727, dates from 1658 and was North Carolina's first permanent settlement. In 1715 the colony's Assembly passed an act providing for the construction at Edenton of a court house in which its sessions could be held. That building was completed in 1719. The second and existing court house was erected in 1767.

The architect of the Chowan County Court House is unknown. However, it has been attributed to Gilbert Leigh, who is believed to have come originally from Williamsburg, Virginia, and who was living in Edenton at the time the building was constructed. More recently, the court house has also been attributed to John Hawkes, who was brought from England to design Governor William Tryon's Palace at New Bern, North Carolina (completed in 1769 or 1770).

The small open space on which the court house fronts is known as Court House Green. Reserved as public property in 1712 when Edenton was laid out on its present plan, the green was the site of the 1719 court house. About the time of the American Revolution, this land was cleared for use as a drill ground. By 1800, it had become the small park which it is today.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuance Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES Lat.  $36^{\circ} 03' 28''$  Long.  $76^{\circ} 36' 30''$

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuance 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 Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, Historian, 10/69

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service</u>	<u>3/12/75</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C. 20240</u>

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE

**Landmark Designated:** 5/10/70  
date

**Boundary Certified:** 5-17-76  
date

**Chiel. List & Arch. Surveys**

**Boundary Approved:** 5/24/76  
date

Acting Director, OHP

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: [Signature] 11/24/78  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

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The major portion of the second floor of the court house is occupied by the assembly hall (also used as a ballroom), containing original full-height paneling and a complete entablature. Measuring 30 by 45 feet with a 13 foot high ceiling, this was said to be the largest paneled room in the colonies. Individual panels, hand-carved in white pine, are 33 inches wide, 48 inches long, and 1½ inches thick. The assembly hall is flanked by a Masonic Room (Unanimity Lodge) on the east and an office and the stair hall on the west.

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Edenton Woman's Club. Guide Book: Colonial Edenton and Chowan County  
(Edenton, 1975).

Morrison, Hugh. Early American Architecture (New York, 1952).

Parramore, Thomas C. Cradle of the Colony: The History of Chowan County  
and Edenton, North Carolina (Edenton, 1967).

Waterman, Thomas T. and F. B. Johnson. The Early Architecture of North  
Carolina (Chapel Hill, 1941).

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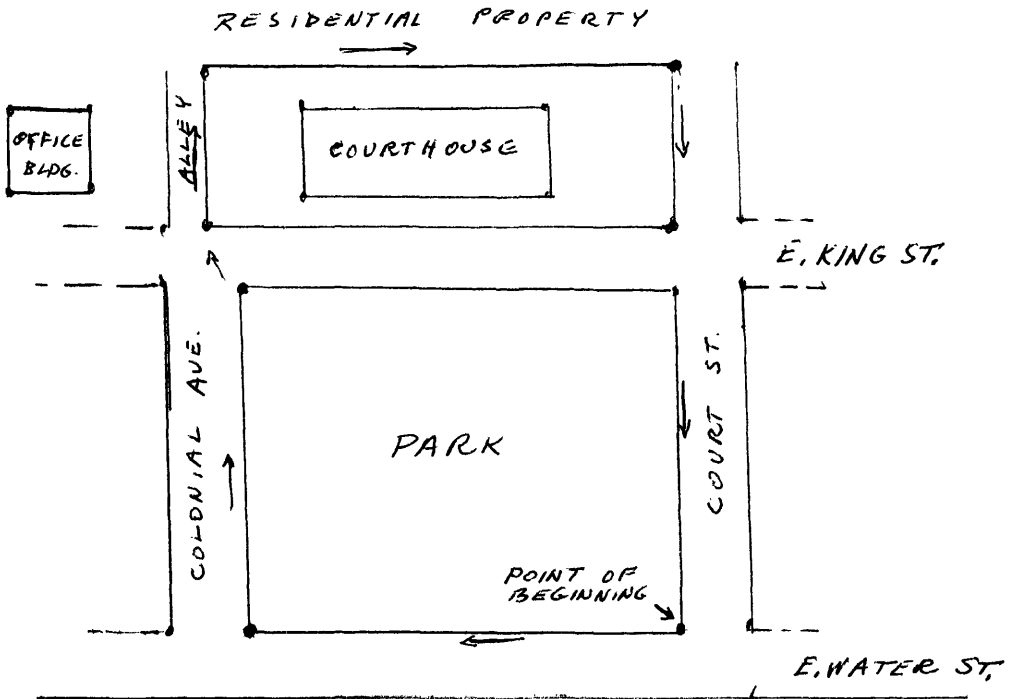
DATE ENTERED

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Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the Chowan County Court House--including the building itself and the adjacent Court House Green--are defined as follows: beginning at the intersection of the west curblinè of Court Street and north curblinè of East Water Street; thence, westerly along the north curblinè of East Water Street to its intersection with the east curblinè of Colonial Avenue; thence, northerly along the east curblinè of Colonial Avenue and its extension (the east edge of an alley running between the County Court House and the office building next west on East King Street) to its intersection with the southern line of residential property located immediately north of (behind) the Chowan County Court House; thence, easterly along said southern line extended to the west curblinè of Court Street; thence, southerly along the west curblinè of Court Street to the point of beginning.

CHOWAN COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE  
EDENTON, N. C.



EDENTON BAY