

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

JAN 5 1989

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Chaves County Courthouse and Jail  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 400 Block Main Street N/Ahot for publication  
city, town Roswell N/Avicinity  
state New Mexico code NM county Chaves code 005 zip code 88201

### 3. Classification

<b>Ownership of Property</b>	<b>Category of Property</b>	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of New Mexico Thematic Group  
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]* \_\_\_\_\_ 12-29-88  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs,  
State or Federal agency and bureau State of New Mexico

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. *Beth Boland* *2/15/89*  
 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 of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Government/Courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Government/Courthouse

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Beaux Arts

foundation Not visible

walls Brick

roof Not visible

other Concrete

Ceramic tile

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY

The Chaves County Courthouse is a basically rectangular building constructed of yellow brick with a large, green-tiled central dome. Its eclectic Classical styling appears to be influenced by the Beaux-Arts school in plan and detailing. It is in excellent condition. Moderate remodeling of the original structure and major additions at the rear have not obscured its historic appearance. The Chaves County Jail, which included quarters for the sheriff, was originally a small, separate building southeast of the courthouse. It was constructed at about the same time as the courthouse, of similar materials, in a style which is compatible with but much simpler than that of the larger building. Later additions have connected the jail to the courthouse, so that today only the east (main) and a part of the north facades are visible. These, however, have not undergone significant alteration.

DESCRIPTION

Chaves County Courthouse

This courthouse is situated in a Shelbyville-style court square on Main Street in downtown Roswell. It is an impressive building, of two stories plus a basement which is partially above ground and a green dome which rises from the center of the roof, towering over even the tallest vegetation. Located across Main Street from City Hall and the Roswell Post Office, it is the dominant feature in a two-block area devoted to civic structures. The main entrance to the courthouse is on the west side of the building and is approached from Main Street by a thirty-two-foot-wide, concrete walkway ending in two flights of broad, low stairs.

The main (west) facade is strictly symmetrical, in five parts, consisting of a central section which contains an entry vestibule, a slightly recessed bay on either side of the central section, and slightly projecting corner wings. The entire building has a denticulated cornice. The above ground section of the basement is constructed of horizontal bands of overlapping brick. Most windows are original, although those in the basement have been replaced with aluminum windows.

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The recessed entry is bordered by two-story columns, two complete and two partial, which are unfluted and topped by Ionic capitals. The centrally-placed main entry door is wooden, two-leaf, with full glazing, and topped by a seven-light transom. Both the door and each of the two windows on either side of it are framed by brick pilasters with Doric capitals acting as impostes for classically detailed, concrete archivolts. The arch span is filled with smooth concrete blocks, embellished with a garland and shield bas relief. Above the first floor windows is a horizontal band of strung garland bas-relief. Above the main entry door and flanking windows, the second floor windows are rectangular, 4/1, placed in pairs above the lower windows and in a triplet over the door. Above the cornice of the entry section is an attic floor with two 10/10 and two 6/6 wood sash windows.

The recessed bays on either side of the entry porch have three round-arched windows on the first floor and five rectangular windows on the second. The projecting corner sections have a single arched window on the first floor with a band of garlands in bas-relief above, and three 4/1 windows on the second floor. On either side of these corner-windows are two, two-story brick pilasters topped with concrete Ionic capitals. Along the roof line of the corner sections, a parapet alternates brick and balustrade sections.

The most distinctive feature of the building is its green-tiled dome which springs from an eight-sided concrete base, decorated with garlands of fruits and flowers, which is in turn supported by eight-sided brick walls which rise from center of the roof and are topped by a denticulated cornice.

The north and south facades of the building contain a symmetrical but simpler arrangement of the same motifs as the main facade, with arched windows on the first floor and rectangular windows on the second. The rear, or east facade, is obscured by later additions, built in 1954 and 1974, which now connect the original jail to the courthouse.

Although not a full-blown example of a Beaux-Arts building, the courthouse suggests the influence of Beaux-Arts styling, in much attenuated form, by its strictly symmetrical, five-part facade organized around a dominating central entrance, by the clear delineation of these sections by having them occupy various planes, including projecting corner wings, and by the unification of the whole with a strong Classical cornice. Other apparent influences of the style are the use of both arched and rectangular windows and the consistent placement of one type on the first floor and the other on the second, as well as the placing of pilasters on either side of windows or groups of windows. However, the double, two-story pilasters surrounding the

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windows of the corner wings are the only suggestion here of the frequent use of double columns in Beaux-Arts buildings. Also typical are the flat roof, the varying heights of the roof line, and the use of attic windows and balustrade sections in the parapet. Although devoid of the figured sculpture and excesses of decoration characteristic of the Beaux-Arts movement, the building displays such typical motifs as shields, medallions, and garlands.

The interior of the building is dominated by the central, domed lobby open to the first and second floors. The floor of this lobby is covered with ceramic tile in a concentric pattern of geometric designs. The lobby area is eight-sided with four openings to surrounding hallways and four minor walls with arched niches. Second story arched balconies supported on columns decorate the dominant walls. The tops of the arches of these four balconies support the foundation of the dome. This lower portion of the dome is embellished with a concrete bas-relief of strung garlands. Above this area is a horizontal band of fixed wood windows separated into triplets by short, wooden piers. The dome itself is separated into eight sections, divided by vertical elements ending at the apex.

The rest of the interior of the building contains administrative offices and a second floor courtroom. The interior stairwell which rises from the lobby is embellished with a decorative iron railing.

This courthouse is in exceptionally good condition with only moderate remodeling of the original structure. Clearly distinguishable additions at the rear have not significantly diminished its historic integrity.

Chaves County Jail

The Chaves County Jail, which also included the Sheriff's dwelling, was originally a small, separate, flat-roofed, two-story building constructed at about the same time as the courthouse and located southeast of it. The additions of 1954 and 1974, which connected it to the courthouse, have obscured its west and a portion of its north facades, and an addition of 1983 has almost completely covered the south side of the building.

As shown on the Sanborn Insurance Map of 1913, the building was originally T-shaped and composed of two distinct sections, of which the entire second floor was devoted to the jail. The top of the T faced Virginia Avenue, the east boundary of the courthouse property, and contained the sheriff's dwelling on the first floor. The first floor of the section which projected

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west toward the courthouse, forming the stem of the T, contained the service area for the jail and the sheriff's residence, principally a kitchen and laundry.

Like the courthouse, this smaller building was constructed of yellow brick and has Classical detailing. The east facade of the building, which faces Virginia Avenue, and was originally the entrance to the Sheriff's dwelling, is symmetrical in three parts with a slightly recessed, central, entry section. The entry is covered by a flat-roofed, one-story porch which has four pairs of doubled, square, brick supports. These are echoed by doubled brick pilasters flanking the recessed entry section. The symmetrically placed windows are all rectangular. Those on the first floor are without adornment except for lug sills. However, the three in the recessed section, on the second floor above the entry porch, are topped by a frieze decorated with garlands and are separated by paired, brick pilasters topped with Ionic capitals. The two windows on each of the corner wings are crowned with a simple, bracketed molding. A denticulated cornice runs around visible sections of the building. Above it the parapet wall, though solid, is varied by indentations.

Although the building can no longer be seen in its entirety, those portions which are still visible have not been significantly altered.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally  statewide  locally

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Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1911-1938  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rapp, I.H. and W.M. Rapp Co.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

SUMMARY

The 1911 Chaves County Courthouse, designed by Isaac Hamilton Rapp, is architecturally significant as a rare example both of Beaux-Arts influenced styling in New Mexico, and of a courthouse built on a monumental scale in the state. Further, the courthouse is an important representative of the work of Rapp, a prominent architect of the time who completed many commissions for public buildings in a variety of styles then popular throughout the country. Many of these buildings have been destroyed or remodeled beyond recognition, and until recently this architect has been remembered, if at all, for his work as a progenitor of the Spanish Pueblo Revival style. The jail, originally a separate building but now joined to the courthouse by additions, was built at about the same time, in a much simpler, though compatible style. A dedicated effort is currently being made by a local committee to maintain and restore the courthouse which has seen seventy-six years of continuous use as the Chaves County Courthouse.

HISTORY OF THE CHAVES COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND JAIL

Created by an act of the Territorial Legislature in 1899, Chaves County was carved out of enormous Lincoln County, which covered the entire southeast quarter of the state, at the request of the growing number of citizens in the Pecos Valley who felt it a hardship to travel the distance to the county seat at Lincoln. The community of Roswell, with a population of 343 citizens, was the largest settlement in the new, predominantly rural county, and was therefore designated the county seat. The county was named in honor of Jose Francisco Chavez, a prominent member of an old Spanish family whose distinguished career in the military and in politics included service as a Major in the United States Army during the Civil War, and three terms as a Territorial Delegate to the United States Congress.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Approximately 4 acres.

**UTM References**

A 

1	3
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5	4	4	5	2	0
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3	6	9	5	2	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property consists of Block 11 of the Original Roswell Townsite, and is bounded on the west by Main Street, on the north by Fifth Street, on the East by Virginia Avenue, and on the south by Fourth Street.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary encompasses the city block which historically contained the Chaves County Courthouse, jail, and surrounding grounds.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Corinne P. Sze (additions and revisions) Gregory T. Hicks (original nomination)  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date September 1988  
street & number 1042 Stagecoach Road telephone (505) 983-5605  
city or town Santa Fe state New Mexico zip code 87501

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The bill creating Chaves County, stipulated that it would begin to function as soon as the necessary building was erected and county officers elected. Captain Joseph C. Lea, who had bought the entire Roswell townsite in 1877, donated a block of land just east of his home for the county courthouse and jail. The first Chaves County courthouse, a Richardson Romanesque building, was completed in 1890, but stood for less than two decades.

Having developed upon the site of a natural rest and watering stop on a busy cattle trail in the late 1860's, the town of Roswell began as a supply post first for passing cattlemen and then for the ranchers and farmers who settled in the Pecos Valley in ever-increasing numbers. The population of Roswell and the newly created Chaves County grew rapidly after 1890, the year of the coming of the railroad into the Pecos Valley and of the discovery of artesian water, a seemingly inexhaustible and easily accessible source of an otherwise very limited resource. By 1900 the town had grown to 2,049 inhabitants and the whole county to 4,773. Ten years later, when the new courthouse was underway, the population of the county had swelled to 16,859 inhabitants with 6,172 of these living in Roswell.

Thus less than twenty years after it was built the first Chaves County Courthouse was no longer adequate to the needs of the growing county. An "old bat cave that has done duty beyond the point of usefulness", was the characterization given by an editorialist in the local press urging support of the bond issue proposed to pay for a new courthouse, (The Roswell Register-Tribune, 4/27/1909). The timing of this dissatisfaction and the proportions of the building which resulted were not uninfluenced by the larger history of the Territory, specifically the promise of New Mexico statehood which was to become reality in 1912. In assuming the indebtedness necessary to build such a grand building designed by a leading architect of civic buildings in Colorado and New Mexico, the county leaders were aware that the proposed State Constitution, which was approved by the Territory in 1910, provided that when New Mexico became a state, county indebtedness would be assumed by the state. (Cf. N.M. State Constitution, Art. 21, Sec. 3). Thus the same editorialist reminded voters that the "bond issue will not be burdensome distributed over so many, and in the event of statehood it will disappear from the map", (RR-T, 4.27/1909; cf. 6/8/1909).

A bond issue for \$125,000 was eventually approved and the old courthouse was auctioned off at a public sale for \$580 with the buyer accepting the responsibility for removing the building. The new courthouse was completed on the same site in 1911 by the contractors Lyon and Axtell, following plans and specifications prepared by the firm of I.H. Rapp and W.M. Rapp Co., at a total cost including furnishings of \$164,000. (Roswell Daily Record, 10/7/1937)



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Once the building itself was completed considerable work remained to lay out the grounds in worthy fashion. It was envisioned that appropriate beautification would require that a lawn be set in bluegrass and that the surrounding land be graded from the level of the sidewalk, all around the building, up to the capstone of the foundation. Also every tree then standing would have to be cut down so that new trees "of great number and variety (can) be set out at the proper points to obtain the artistic effect rather than in rows as at present". (The Roswell Record, 11/17/1911; cf. The Roswell Register-Tribune, 6/11/1909) The completion of the courthouse grounds took some months and the formal dedication of the building did not take place until the spring of 1912. In reporting this event, the leading newspaper of New Mexico's capital city called the building "the most magnificent courthouse in the state." (Santa Fe Daily New Mexican, 5/2/1912)

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCEArchitect:

The Chaves County Courthouse has architectural significance as the work of Isaac Hamilton Rapp of the firm of I.H. and W.M. Rapp of Trinidad, Colorado, a leading architectural firm of the day in Southern Colorado and New Mexico, responsible for many major commissions for courthouses, schools, churches, banks, business blocks, and other civic and commercial buildings in the two states, including the New Mexico Territorial Capitol in Santa Fe (dedicated, 1900) and the Governor's Mansion (1908).

In a recent monograph, Carl D. Sheppard has assembled details of I.H. Rapp's career and has put together a chronological list of the architect's documented buildings. The information provided here is based on that publication. Rapp, whose active, professional life in the Southwest spanned roughly the years 1889 to 1920, settled in Trinidad, Colorado from his native Illinois by 1888. There he and C.W. Bulger entered into a partnership as "Architects and Superintendents, specializing in Public Buildings". (Sheppard, p. 12) In 1892, Bulger departed and Rapp was joined by his brother William Morris Rapp, in a firm called I.H. and W.M. Rapp. A.C. Hendrickson joined the Rapps in 1909.

Isaac Hamilton Rapp, the head of the firm, was apparently its designer while his brother kept the books, and Hendrickson oversaw construction. The business flourished in the latter years of the nineteenth century and the

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first two decades of the twentieth. After the deaths of his two partners in 1920 and 1921, I.H. Rapp apparently retired from active work, performing only a few commissions, until his death in 1933. (Sheppard, pp. 13-15)

Although the firm's main offices always remained in Trinidad, Colorado, by 1900 an office was established in Las Vegas, New Mexico. I.H. Rapp also had a home in Santa Fe in the early 1900's. (Sheppard, p. 15, 27) In addition to designing major buildings in Trinidad, Colorado, the Rapps were responsible for many public buildings in New Mexico, primarily in the towns of Las Vegas, Roswell, and Santa Fe, after Albuquerque the territory's three largest cities in that order in 1910. Rapp designed in the variety of Medieval and Classically-based revival styles then or recently popular in other parts of the United States. In addition, beginning in 1908, he was a major contributor to the birth of the regionally-based style which came to be known as the Spanish Pueblo Revival.

Rapp's large body of work in nationally-favored, revival styles has long lacked recognition because of its later eclipse first by a regionalism which disdained New Mexico architecture not based on local historical styles, a movement which Rapp himself helped to inaugurate by designing some of the first buildings in the Pueblo Revival Style, and then by modernism which rejected the romantic values of styles not based on function. Many of his earlier civic buildings have been destroyed (such as the Governor's Mansion and the Union County Courthouse), or remodeled to regional correctness (*i.e.*, the New Mexico Territorial Capitol and the former Santa Fe County Courthouse). The Chaves County Courthouse thus remains an important representative of his accomplishments in styles other than the Pueblo Revival.

Style:

Although the area which was to become Chaves County was settled later than other regions of New Mexico predominantly by non-Hispanic ranchers and farmers, coming mostly from Texas, Missouri, and other Midwestern states; nevertheless, until the arrival of the railroad in 1890, most construction in this dry, flat, treeless region was of adobe using techniques developed by the Spanish from Indian prototypes, in the other areas of New Mexico which they had originally settled. With improved transportation and larger population, styles and building materials current in other regions of the country quickly came into the Pecos Valley, and particularly to its leading town.

When in 1909, the county leaders felt the need for a new and larger courthouse, a style was chosen which would be a potent symbol of the county's prosperity and of its cultural connection with Texas, the Midwest, the rest of

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the United States, and ultimately with non-Hispanic Europe, rather than with the Indian and Hispanic heritage of other sections of New Mexico which had characterized its own architectural beginnings. Ex-Governor Herbert J. Hagerman, speaking at the dedication ceremonies of the building, voiced the desire for this recognition clearly: "And if Europeans were to come into this city and see this magnificent building they would be astonished to think of such a structure in what they still regard as the wild and woolly west of America. But this building will advertise the county. It is the best in the state and will stand long as a monument to our prosperity." (The Roswell Record, May 7, 1912)

Thus in style the Chaves County Courthouse and Jail more closely resemble buildings of similar function in Texas and other states to the north and east. The courthouse is a rare example in New Mexico of such a building on a monumental scale in a style which was used only infrequently there. Not long after it was built the courthouse was called by the New Mexico historian Ralph Emerson Twitchell, "the finest structure of the kind in the Southwest". (Twitchell, III, p. 133)

The small jail and sheriff's quarters, designed in a simpler but compatible style, was always overshadowed by the larger main building and is now partially obscured by additions which connect it to the courthouse. Nevertheless, it bears witness to the original arrangement of buildings on this courthouse square.

These buildings, now joined, are in full use today as the courthouse of Chaves County, although the jail function has been greatly expanded through additions. Therefore, the period significance is arbitrarily terminated at the fifty-year limit.

Remarkable in its own time and setting, and still impressive today, the courthouse remains a valuable testimony to the aspirations of the people of Roswell and Chaves County at the time of New Mexico statehood, and a singular and significant example of the work of Isaac Hamilton Rapp.

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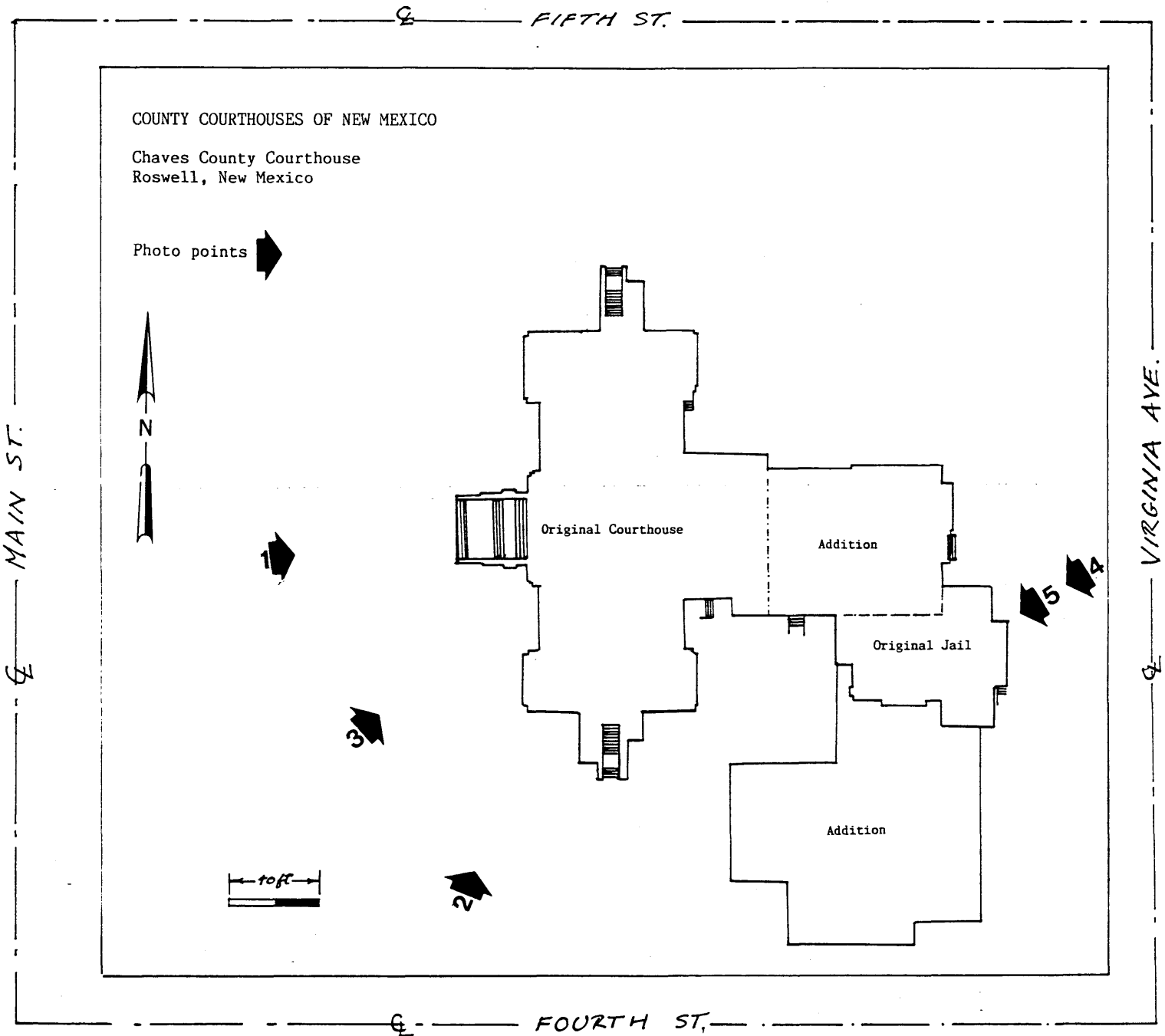
Roswell Register-Tribune

The Roswell Record

Santa Fe Daily New Mexican

#### Interview

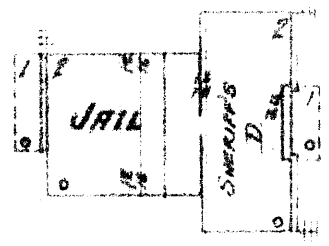
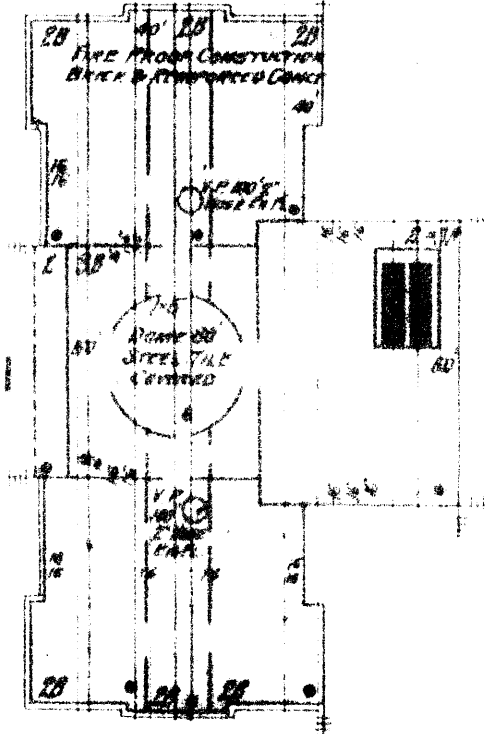
Lee Goodpasture 9/3/88



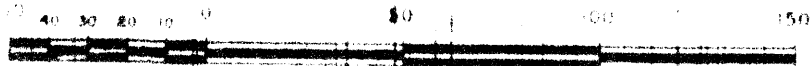
Sanborn Insurance Map  
Roswell, N.M.  
1913, P. 8

### CHAVES COUNTY COURT HO.

NEAR S. 4TH & W. 1ST STS.  
NEAR E. 4TH & W. 1ST STS.



Scale of Feet



E. 4TH

12

ST.

