

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 14 1979
DATE ENTERED JUL 23 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Sussex County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Corner of High and Spring Streets

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Newton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

13th

STATE New Jersey

___ VICINITY OF

CODE 34

Sussex COUNTY

037 CODE

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Donald Welcome,
Sussex County Board of Chosen Freeholders - County Administrator

STREET & NUMBER

County Administration Building - 39 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Newton

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sussex County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Newton

STATE

New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory (2204.3)

DATE

1960

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Historic Preservation,

109 W. State St.

CITY, TOWN Trenton

STATE
N.J.

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 present Sussex County Courthouse, rebuilt in 1847 on the foundation of an 18th century building and facing the Green, belongs in the category of early American civil architecture and represents the Greek Revival style. This well proportioned temple form stands as a symbol for democratic and republican government. Fowler and Andrews were the builders under supervising local architect, Amos A. Harrison.

The 60.6 x 45 foot building is composed of two principal stories plus an attic and high basement. The classic portico with six Doric columns is atop monumental stone steps which vary in number as the street slopes. Above the columns, the wooden pediment is designed in low profile expressing dignity and serenity. A pedimented projection lends interest to the west facade. All exterior corners are decorated with pilasters.

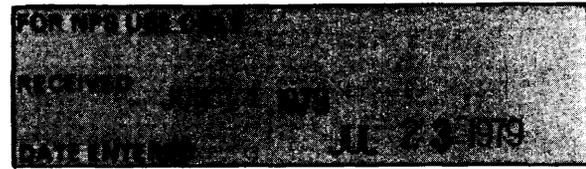
The octagonal domed cupola, representing the badge of official usage and public character, surmounts the roof at the intersection of the gable with the main roof. The cupola contains louvers on alternate sides that are flanked by pilasters. The domed symmetry allows for identical facades on all sides and indicates straight forward internal arrangement and large formal stairways. The public stairway enhances the lobby giving dual access to a landing, at the site of the original 1761 doorway, and thence to the second floor courtroom. The wooden stairways have simple detailing and offices flank the first corridor.

The west side entrance doorway appears to have been salvaged from another building at a much later date, but is a handsome assembly in its own right. Two adjacent basement windows were added at the same time, but subsequently a number of the original side and rear windows on the second floor were removed and the openings closed. Gable end chimneys remain visible as in original structure, although unusable. The interior of the two courtrooms were altered in mid-20th century, but the stairs and the hallways are intact and retain their characteristic simple detailing.

The original 18th century building facing the Green was erected under the direction of Abe Van Campen, Jacob Starn and John Hacket. It was built of local uncut stone and was considered to be a unique courthouse - a massive stone building devoid of ornament. The front entrance was halfway between the first and second floors and was reached by dual flights of brick steps. These steps were retained until 1847. Chimneys on the gable ends were flush with the interior walls. Unfortunately, original floor plans are not known to be in existence.

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Sussex County Courthouse
Newton
Sussex County New Jersey 034

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Description

In 1847 the building was rebuilt. The new building is in Greek Revival temple style. The building was white plaster over the original stone. This color remains today.

The remaining features of architectural interest are found in the attic portion of the structure. A hand made wooden device was installed in the attic in 1864 for the purpose of circulating cool air throughout the building. This remains in place but is no longer used. In the attic, too, can be seen the original east walls and chimneys. A bronze plaque denotes: Built 1765 and rebuilt 1844.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
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 1761, 1847

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In Newton, situated in northwestern New Jersey midway between the Delaware and Hudson rivers and south of Tri States point, the Sussex County Courthouse dominates the skyline as it stands adjacent to the Public Green. Since construction in 1761 the courthouse has been in daily use as the traditional seat of Sussex County government. Attention is focused today on the building as a representative example of Greek Revival style of public architecture and combined with the public Green, maintains a dominate position as the focal center of a growing community, giving the town its character and its importance as the county seat.

GOVERNMENT

Sussex County was formed in 1753 but it wasn't until 1761 that the first structure was built in Newton to house the Sussex County court and jail. Records, however, indicate a log jail was located in Johnsonburg and court was held in nearby Amos Pettit tavern as early as 1753.

The General Assembly in Perth Amboy granted on December 12, 1761, the request to build a courthouse and jail on the "plantation" of Henry Hairlocker and within one half mile of his residence. His was the only house within the limits of the village of New Town. Hairlocker's house was located on property owned by Jonathan Hampton whose measurement southward put the site in the meadow near a stream. Inasmuch as it would have been inappropriate to put his majesty's officia justicae exactly at the foot of a hill, and precisely over a stream of water, 3 or 4 chains were thrown in for good measure and the building was placed partly up the hillside at the present site. By this act, Newton became the county seat. Very shortly after the opening of the courthouse, several dwelling houses were built nearby and adjacent the Green. And from that time there has been a steady growth in business, wealth and population with the town's commercial businesses, hotels and professional offices centered around the Green.

Architecture

As it stands the Sussex County Courthouse is one of the best examples of Greek Revival architecture in the county and is one of the finest Green Revival form public buildings in New Jersey.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Snell, James P. History of Sussex & Warren Co. 1881
Minutes of Sussex County Freeholders 1762-1900
 Moody, James Lt. James Moody's Narrative of His Exertion & Suffering in the Cause of Government Since the Year 1776. London 1783

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .75

QUADRANGLE NAME Newton West QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	5 2 0 6 8 0	1 5 1 5 1 2 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies City Block 403, lot 15 and is approximately 50' X 60' in size.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

(Terry Karschner, Office of Historic Preservation, Trent 10/1978 609-292-2023)

NAME / TITLE
 Myra Snook

ORGANIZATION
 Sussex County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER
 82 Main Street

CITY OR TOWN
 Newton

DATE
 10/1978

DATE
 383-6010

TELEPHONE

STATE
 New Jersey

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE x 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.

Deputy
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *[Signature]* DATE *5/9/79*
 TITLE Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Environ. Protec. DATE May 9, 1979

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

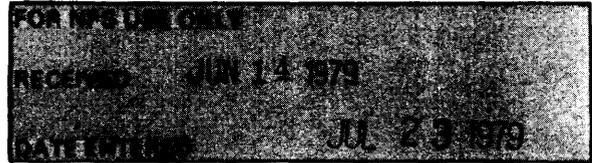
[Signature]
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE 7-23-79

ATTEST: *[Signature]*
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION DATE July 26, 1979

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

Significance

In 1844 the plan of improvement and repair intended that the courthouse be so altered and repaired so as to make it in every way decent and respectable in its appearance and comfortable and convenient within. November 26, 1844, court opened in the remodeled courthouse. According to the Sussex Register "The addition of a new story to the building is a decided improvement. The court room has been remodeled. Indeed the whole exterior of the building presents a pleasing and somewhat imposing appearance; its added height, handsome roof and cupola, and massive pillars in front have worked an entire change of the primitive fabric; still simplicity of design is palpable at first glance." Cost was \$5,000. This Greek Revival building showed the level of community affluence attained at that time as ascertained by the ornateness of architectural details and quality of building materials.

On January 28, 1847, the interior of the courthouse burned due to a faulty flue in the prisoners compartment. The Freeholders voted to rebuild on the same site since a large quantity of materials remained in the old walls and it would be less expensive. According to the deed these public grounds would be forfeited if not used for said purpose and it would have needed an act of legislature to change the site. Contained in the remodeled building on the first floor were the Clerk's, Surrogate, Sheriff offices, and main chambers. The basement contained 2 cells, the Sheriff's family apartment and the furnace. In 1864 two additional cells were added in the basement area. These were used until 1868 when a new jail was erected adjacent to the west of the courthouse. While this jail was demolished in the 1890's the replacement jail facility was demolished in early 1979.

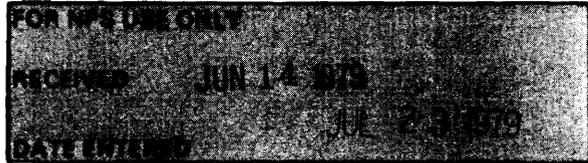
History

The area known today as Newton was designated on maps as Sussex Court House, because of the dominance of this building and its Public Green, until the town was officially formed in 1864. The building has a commanding view of the town and has attracted business and commerce to the town. The town became the crossroads for commerce and travel throughout the county and it was here the Morris Turnpike and the Newtown-Deckertown Turnpike crossed. Later roads were built in the county specifically to bring produce from the farmlands to the county seat for shipping on the railroad.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE

3

Significance

The county seat was vital to colonial history. From the steps of the courthouse, soldiers were recruited for the local militia, who were to maintain the forts from the Delaware Water Gap to Port Jervis. County arms were collected to be repaired and lodged in the courthouse. Prominent landholders passed the courthouse enroute from Walpack to Provincial Congress at Trenton and Philadelphia.

On December 14, 1776 General Horatio Gates crossed the county from Isaac Van Campens, Walpack, to Sussex Court House and left Benedict Arnold there to continue on with the troops while Gates went on with a small guard. Arnold left on the 15th and reached Washington and his troops at Trenton on December 22. General George Washington passed through Sussex Court House several times and once stayed with Colonel Anderson, whose property fronted on the Public Green. January 24, 1777 in a letter from Easton John Adams says that yesterday, "We have passed through Sussex County where the Tory stronghold of Sussex Court House stands." Count Pulaski maintained his headquarters at Sussex Court House during 1778. From July 1777 the courthouse held prisoners of war, deserters, and state prisoners.

A noted Tory by the name of James Moody whose job it was to recruit men and destroy powder magazines, maintained his headquarters for a time in the Newton area. During July 1780, when one of Burgoyne's soldiers was confined to the Sussex jail along with other prisoners, Moody entered town at night with 6 men. He told the jailor he had one of Moody's men to deliver into custody. When the jailor refused to open the door Moody threatened to pull the courthouse down around the keepers ears. Moody raised a war whoop to scare the townspeople, made his way into the jail, and released the prisoners.

In later years the courthouse remained the center of social activities. The building was used for the Presbyterian Church services during 1828 while their new church was being built and later the courthouse bell was used to call parishioners to Sunday worship. On December 24, 1861 Horace Greeley delivered a lecture on "Self Made Man" at the courthouse as there was no theater or opera house in town. Here too the public spectacle of hanging took place. Hanging was a popular sentence for crime and in one particular instance in 1862 John Cruver was hanged in the court room on

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE

4

Significance

gallows borrowed from Morristown. 200 people watched. Hangings in 1875, 1880 and the last in 1904 took place in the yard to the rear of the courthouse.

Politics/Government

The original 18th century structure was built in a town of less than 10 houses and today the site has become the cornerstone of a County complex serving 100,000 people. The Greek Revival courthouse and Green add to the sense of history and contribute to the richness of the community and county, giving lasting value and symbolizing the belief in self government and democracy.

While there have been no trials of national interest, the front entrance has witnessed thousands of person ranging from prisoners accused of murder and treason; litigants, both poor and wealthy; to the steady flow of citizenry conducting daily business. Over the years it has served all peoples.

The continual survival of the most important and symbolic area landmark is warranted. The conservation is vital to the retention of sense of time and community. As an irreplaceable environmental resource the building can continue to serve the public's interest as a visual element that unifies the community and recollects its proud origins. The courthouse and Green literally define the surrounding townscape. Less would be disruptive and unsettling to the community.