

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 4 1987

date entered JUN 18 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and or common County Courthouses of New Mexico Thematic Group

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheets for individual properties. not for publication

city, town See continuation sheets. vicinity of

state New Mexico code 35 county See continuation sheets. code

3. Classification

|  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Category</b>                                    | <b>Ownership</b>                          | <b>Status</b>   | <b>Present Use</b>                             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> district                  | <input type="checkbox"/> public           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied          | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture           | <input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" 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 Multiple owners. See continuation sheets.

street & number

city, town vicinity of state New Mexico

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Courthouse- See continuation sheets.

street & number

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New Mexico Historic Building Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Various - See continuation sheets.  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records NM Historic Preservation Division  
228 East Palace Avenue, Room 101

city, town Santa Fe state New Mexico 87503

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# 7. Description

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|                                    |                                       |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Condition</b>                   |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input 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 _____                             |

See continuation sheets for individual properties.

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## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

County Courthouses of New Mexico

7. Description: The County Courthouses of New Mexico are located throughout the state of New Mexico. The eligible significant courthouses date from the earliest period of New Mexico as a Territory (1846) to the Depression era of the 1930's. Represented in the group are three Georgian Revival style, one World's Fair Classic Style, one Second Empire style, two Richardson Romanesque style, one Second Renaissance Revival style, three Greek Revival style, three Art Deco style, and one Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. It is a large and varied group, and representative of a large and varied state. These courthouses represent every geographic region, every period of New Mexican history since it became a territory, and virtually every town type (the exception being the Indian pueblo). All of the former and present county courthouses in the state were studied, a total of 47 in 34 counties. Twenty which maintained their historic integrity were included in the eligible group. However, the Luna County Courthouse which is individually listed on the National Register, and the Dona Ana (in Old Mesilla), Colfax (in Cimarron), Lincoln (in Lincoln), Grant, and Taos county courthouses which are in National Historic Districts were not included in the Thematic Group (please see the end of this section for the reasons the 27 others were not included). The McKinley County Courthouse, built in 1938 and of exceptional significance, is included in the nominated group.

It is expected that additional important but not exceptionally significant courthouses built between 1938 and 1942 will be evaluated for addition to the Thematic Group as they reach fifty years of age.

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The State of New Mexico is located in the extreme southwestern United States, bordered on the north by Colorado, on the east by Texas, on the south by Mexico, and on the west by Arizona. The state's many mountain ranges which run in a north-south direction, are located in the center of the state from Colorado to Mexico, and on the western edge of the state. The remainder of New Mexico is made up of river valleys and high desert plateau. This variety of landforms within the state creates many climatic zones, each with its own special characteristics. This mix is also reflected in the variety of building types and materials, which meet the various needs, and which utilize the various resources, of each zone.

Anglo-American exploration of this region began in 1806, with the journey of Zebulon Pike. His written description of the area attracted others, and by the 1850's the United States government had sent topographical engineers James Abert and Willian Peck to map the state. New Mexico was not the scene of much action during the Mexican-American War, but became a Territory of the U.S. at the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which ended the war in 1847. Boundaries of the new territory were in dispute until the Gadsden Purchase of 1853. New Mexico remained a territory until 1912, the year it became a state.

The county system in New Mexico began in 1850 just after the state became a Territory. The boundaries of the counties changed often over the years, growing to a total of 34 counties in 1983 with the formation of Cibola County out of the western portion of Valencia County.

The county courthouses of New Mexico reflect its tri-cultural history. In some cases their style and materials reflect their geographic location within the state. The earliest courthouse in the eligible group was built prior to 1855 as a residence, in the vicinity of Old Mesilla. This courthouse represents the very earliest period of United States government influence in New Mexico. It was used as the Dona Ana County Courthouse from 1855 until 1885 and is built of adobe in the Territorial Revival Style. Its siting reflects its Spanish heritage because it faces the main plaza, the European antecedent to the American court square.

By the 1870's, cattle and sheep ranching had become an important part of the state's economy. Cimarron is located in the heart of this historic activity. By 1870, this town had enough population to become the county seat of Colfax County. The building selected for use as a courthouse is a New Mexico Vernacular Style structure, first built as a residence.

Through the 1870's, economic booms associated with cattle ranching attracted eastern and European interests into the state. Transportation

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through the area improved, and eastern ideas and imported architectural styles began to filter into New Mexico. In 1882, Springer superceded Cimarron as the Colfax County seat. The county built a simple, two story, Second Empire Style courthouse, an imported style which was popular in eastern courthouses in the 1870's. At this same time, in the more remote area of Lincoln, New Mexico, a Folk Territorial Style adobe building fashioned from a store was being used as the courthouse.

During the last decade of the 1800's, New Mexico experienced extensive growth in railroad transportation. Las Vegas in northeast New Mexico, was located along the main route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line, and absorbed many eastern influences. The railroad also brought eastern influences into smaller, surrounding towns. The small town of Puerto de Luna was located near enough to Las Vegas and the Southern Pacific Railroad to have been influenced by ideas arriving from the east. In 1891, Puerto de Luna became the county seat for Guadalupe County. A Las Vegas architect was hired to design a Richardson Romanesque Style courthouse, a style similar to courthouses being built in the east in the late 1880's. By 1909 Santa Rosa superceded Puerto de Luna as the Guadalupe County seat and the county built its second Richardson Romanesque Style courthouse. This building is very similar to a 1912 courthouse built in southwest Texas. This similarity between eastern New Mexico county courthouses and those of western Texas continued through the 1940's.

During this same period the 1893 World's Fair Classic Style also became popular throughout the country. This trend is reflected in the 1909 Union County Courthouse located in the northeastern part of New Mexico, and the Luna County Courthouse located in the southwestern part of the state. The railroad imported the taste for these eastern styles, and made it possible to obtain plans and materials.

Other remote areas chose imported styles. In 1917 Rio Arriba County built a Second Renaissance Revival Style courthouse while Chaves County, Dona Ana County and later De Baca County, built Georgian Revival Style buildings. By the 1920's, New Mexico had two Greek Revival Style courthouses, one in Harding County, and one in Hidalgo County. Greek Revival architecture has long represented authority in Europe and the United States and as a result, this style has been popular for courthouses through many eras.

In the 1930's the most popular architectural style in the United States was Art Deco; this was as true in New Mexico as in other states. The Public Works Administration era of courthouse building in the United States is typified by its use of the Art Deco Style. All of the Art Deco

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Style courthouses in New Mexico were built in the 1930's, many with funding from the Public Works Administration.

These Art Deco Style courthouses are similar to civic buildings of this era in Texas and Arizona. Several contain regional symbolism including thunderbirds, zias (the New Mexico state symbol; a stylized sunburst), sculpted Indian faces, cattle brands of the counties and geometric Indian designs. As evidenced in PWA designs throughout the U.S., this ornamentation was constructed as low bas relief or in other two-dimensional media.

New Mexico has an unusually strong history of regional building styles. The PWA approach to design reinforced this regionalism; five New Mexico PWA era courthouses were designed in Spanish-Pueblo Revival Style, two were Territorial Revival Style, and five were Art Deco with regionally influenced details.

The boundaries of the County Courthouses of New Mexico Survey follow the 1985 boundaries of New Mexico, and do not attempt to include all the parts of the southwestern United States which were once a part of New Mexico. Within these boundaries there are 47 identifiable courthouses, 20 of which were determined to be eligible (1 of these 20 is individually listed and 5 are in listed districts) and 14 of which are being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. As indicated in the descriptions of individual buildings, each of these structures has important characteristics. For the most part each is located in a separate county and therefore each has a local history as well as a role in New Mexico history.

The following table outlines why the remaining 27 courthouses are not considered eligible at this time.

NON-ELIGIBLE COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF NEW MEXICO

| <u>County</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Comments</u>                           |
|---------------|-------------|---|
| Bernalillo    | 1926        | Too Altered. 1963 Remodeling, new facade. |
| Catron        | 1969        | Not historic.                             |
| Cibola        | c.1960's    | Not historic.                             |

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NON-ELIGIBLE COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF NEW MEXICO (CONT.)

|                                      |               |  |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Dona Ana-<br>Amador Hotel            | c.1850        | Too Altered. Major interior and exterior remodeling.           |
| Admin. Bldg.                         | 1937          | Jail additions alters courthouse.                              |
| Court Jr. High                       | c.1950's      | Not historic.  |
| Eddy                                 | 1938          | Not exceptionally significant. Re-evaluate 1988.               |
| Guadalupe(current)                   | 1940-46       | Not historic. No architectural merit.                          |
| Lincoln (current)                    | 1940, 1982    | Not historic. No architectural merit.                          |
| Los Alamos                           | 1967          | Not historic.  |
| Mora                                 | 1939 (1972-8) | Too Altered. Two additions obscure building form.              |
| Otero                                | 1954-55       | Not historic.  |
| Quay                                 | 1939          | Not exceptionally significant. Re-evaluate 1989.               |
| Roosevelt                            | 1938          | Not exceptionally significant. Re-evaluate 1988.               |
| Sandoval                             | 1928 (1975)   | Too Altered. Addition on front obscures facade, changes style. |
| San Juan-<br>Cty. Adm.               | 1950          | Not historic.  |
| Cty. Law                             | 1983          | Not historic.  |
| Cty. Jud. Cmplx.                     | 1982          | Not historic.  |
| San Juan (cont.)-<br>So. Main Street | c.1960        | Not historic.  |
| San Miguel                           | 1942          | Re-evaluate 1992.  |

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NON-ELIGIBLE COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF NEW MEXICO (CONT.)

|                             |         |   |
|-----------------------------|---------|---|
| Santa Fe-<br>Coronado Bldg. | c.1915  | Too Altered. 1940 remodeling<br>changed style. 1984 remodeling. |
| County Courthouse           | 1939    | Re-evaluate in 1989.  |
| Sierra                      | 1940    | Re-evaluate 1990.   |
| Socorro                     | 1940    | Too altered. Extensive additions.                               |
| Taos (Current)              | 1970    | Not historic.   |
| Torrance                    | 1966-67 | Not historic.   |
| Valencia                    | 1960    | Not historic.   |

# 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/<br>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               |   |   |  |

c. 1846 - 1938

**Specific dates** See cont. sheets.

**Builder/Architect** See continuation sheets.

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

County Courthouses of New Mexico

8. Significance: The county courthouses of New Mexico are a significant group of important civic structures located within the state. As courthouse structures, they are closely associated with significant events in local county history and the broader patterns of the history of New Mexico and the southwest. They embody the distinctive characteristics of governmental design with their prominent siting, their use of both regional and national architectural styles, their symbolic representation of a community's hopes and aspirations for the future, and their relationship to the concepts of justice and constitutionality. They share these important characteristics with their counterparts all over the country, differing mainly in historical and regional context.

These courthouses are nominated under National Register Criteria A and C. One courthouse, McKinley County Courthouse is nominated under consideration G as having exceptional architectural significance.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Item 9 continuation sheets and continuation sheet for individual properties.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property See individual continuation sheets.

Quadrangle name See individual continuation sheets.

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References See individual continuation sheets.

A 

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|      |         |  |  |          |  |  |  |  |  |
| Zone | Easting |  |  | Northing |  |  |  |  |  |

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## Verbal boundary description and justification

See individual continuation sheets.

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

state N/A code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

state N/A code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory T. Hicks, President

organization Gregory T. Hicks and Assocs. P.C. date April 1987

street & number 112 Second St. S.W. telephone (505) 243-7492

city or town Albuquerque state New Mexico

# 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 Thomas W. Melan

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 4-29-87

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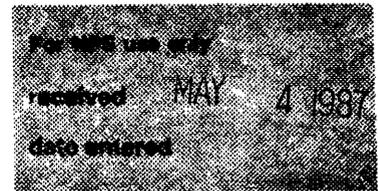
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Beth Groves date 6/18/87  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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The local administrative and judicial unit in New Mexico, under Spanish and Mexican rule, was known as the *alcaldia*. In 1718 there were seven such jurisdictions, by 1823, they had increased to fourteen *alcaldias*. A governmental reorganization in 1844 (on the eve of the Mexican American War) created seven counties. The boundaries of the *alcaldias* and subsequent counties were not surveyed or precisely drawn; instead they were generally recognized by topographic breaks such as mountains or cliffs, and were partially bounded by unsettled frontier.

When the first territorial assembly of the United States administration defined counties in 1851, it recognized the seven Mexican counties of 1844 (from North to South, Taos, Rio Arriba, Santa Ana, Santa Fe, San Miguel, Bernalillo and Valencia) and added two new counties in the southern part of the territory (Socorro and Dona Ana). Boundaries were also more precisely defined. Most of the counties were long rectangles which stretched from the Texas boarder on the East to the California border on the West. (Arizona was not created out of the New Mexico Territory until 1863.)

Between 1860 and 1921, these original counties were gradually reduced in size as twenty-three new counties were defined, and one, Santa Ana, was dissolved. Usually, the creation of a new county recognized settlement and population growth associated with farming, ranching, mining and railroad development. Five counties which were created in the late 1880s and early 1890s, for instance, reflected railroad development and resulting ranching and mining activities. Another seven counties, formed at the turn of the century, reflected the success of federal homesteading policies. In some cases, however, counties were created based only on the promise of development, which, in some cases, was never fulfilled; four of the counties never passed six thousand in population and, today, three have less than three thousand residents. Two counties have been created since the Second World War: Los Alamos (1949) and Cibola (1982).

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Location of county seats, and therefore county courthouses, was often a hotly contested issue. The county seat was the governmental center for the county, creating a need for services which meant almost instant social and business success for the selected community. County seat status often coincided with location on the most up-to-date transport system in use at the time, as well as social status within the state. All these advantages made the county seat a desirable designation. The choice of the county seat involved economic and political influence within the state. New Mexico had two serious county seat battles, one in Colfax county, and one in Lea county.

Traditionally the earliest courthouses in New Mexico, and in the United States in general, were temporarily housed in existing structures. This pattern developed because the county seat was most often designated before the town could erect a building. Sometimes it occurred because the municipality could not afford to build a structure; however county seat status often led to enough prosperity to erect a courthouse. The temporary use of existing structures held true in New Mexico as evidenced by the courthouses at Old Mesilla\* (1855), Cimarron\* (1870's), and Lincoln\* (1874); all of which are vernacular, multi-use structures remodeled into courthouses. In each of these cases, however, the town never built a courthouse. As other communities in the county eclipsed these in growth, the county seat was moved to the more prosperous or larger community. Economic stagnation may have been disappointing for these original communities, but it is likely that these buildings would have been inadequate in the face of the county's growth and space needs. The repeated courthouse building campaigns which occurred in the more prosperous communities would have meant the destruction of these fine older structures.

When a community planned a courthouse, the decision of where to locate the courthouse within the community was made very carefully, particularly if it was to be the first courthouse built. The siting of the structure was generally very prominent, on a hill, in the center of town, or at a centrally located intersection. It was often located in a place which had been "reserved" by the city fathers, and often involved a court square of some type.

The idea of the court square came from European town planning, where prominent civic buildings were often located adjacent to large, landscaped open spaces or public parks. These parks served as common "front lawns" to all the adjacent buildings surrounding the square. As this idea was transferred to the United States by immigrants, it was modified to suit the views of the Americans. Outside of New England and some Spanish settlements, the prominent civic structures were located in

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the center of the open space or park, creating a court square with the courthouse as the focal point. Around the court square, the most important and prestigious local businesses were usually located.

In New Mexico, there are examples of the European and the American siting. Courthouses which were located in areas of heavy Spanish influence tend to have the European siting (Old Mesilla\*, Taos\*), while the others tend to be situated on American-style court squares. Six courthouses in New Mexico are located on a roadside. These tend to be in the more rural localities where site planning ideas were slow to arrive and where the roadway represented the lifeline of the community.

In the U.S., the court square takes many forms. The first recorded court square dates from the 1700's and is located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This square is defined by four roads which intersect the court square in the middle of each of the four sides. This type of square clearly creates a prominent position for the courthouse, but makes circulation around the square awkward. This early type of square, called the Lancaster square, is rare west of the Mississippi River, and never appears in New Mexico. The second type of court square to appear was pioneered in Shelbyville, North Carolina, and provided a partial solution to the traffic problems of the Lancaster Square. The Shelbyville square was defined by four roads which ran along the edges of the square, with outlets at the corners. With this configuration there were eight inlets and outlets from the square, all occurring at the corners. This type of square was very popular in New Mexico, with 17 courthouses located on a Shelbyville square. The third and most recent type of court square was located in Harrisonburg, Pennsylvania, and was half Lancaster and half Shelbyville. The configuration of this square had two roads which ran along opposite sides of the square with inlets and outlets at the corners, and the other two sides had inlets in the middle of the block. Modified versions of Harrisonburg squares appear in Grant County\* and Luna County\*.

The idea of the court square was to provide a siting for the courthouse which would create the most prominent and impressive building location in town, symbolically elevating justice to the highest possible regard. Location of the courthouse in the center of the court square usually led to facades which were impressive on all sides. The American type court square generally conveyed this respect and prominence in the community, except that in the west, the most important focal point of towns (whether or not they had court squares) was usually the railroad. In some cases, the western court square became the second most important feature of the town, exemplifying the values which governed the early west; economic survival first, justice and civic pride second.

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The surroundings of the courthouse and square were traditionally commercial, located to take advantage of the traffic in the vicinity of the county buildings. In New Mexico, this tradition is more of a trend, appearing in only 14 of 26 examples, with residential surroundings being the case in 8 examples, and mixed use appearing in 4. This also is true in New England, where the Village Green is often surrounded by residential structures. Some of the county seats in New Mexico are so small that there are not enough commercial structures to surround the courthouse. By including domestic buildings around court squares in New Mexico, the courthouse appears large in size and scale relative to its surroundings.

County courthouses are an important symbol of community pride, stature, prosperity, and confidence in the future. As symbols of their county's importance, the local citizenry planned their courthouses to be outstanding in size, style, quality of materials, and ornateness of architectural detailing. This was to exemplify the idea that "the majesty of law dominates the mundane pursuits of business". With design control in the hands of the community, county courthouses became expressions of current values and future hopes. In New Mexico, this is particularly evident in Colfax County (Springer), and Guadalupe County (Santa Rosa and Puerto de Luna).

The prominent siting and architectural style of the courthouse were carefully considered design intentions of the community. Courthouses were rarely built in the architecture of the times. More often they relied on grand architectural styles of the past; architecture which created a respectable presence due to its use through time. This idea is well represented in the early courthouses of New Mexico. From the Second Empire Style Courthouse in Springer (1882), until the beginning of federally funded courthouses in the 1930's, New Mexico built courthouses in Richardson Romanesque, World's Fair Classic, Second Renaissance Revival, Georgian Revival, and Greek Revival Styles. In many New Mexico towns, these courthouses were the only imported style buildings in the community. This contrast added to their significance.

The architecture of the Public Works Administration era of courthouse building explored contemporary design themes based on regional influences. These buildings were larger and more massive but simple in detail. Such understatement mirrored the difficult times in which they were built and the "pared-down" Art Moderne and International Styles currently popular. The public emphasis was on looking ahead to the future, instead of to the past. In New Mexico, the PWA era courthouses are all either Art Deco Style, or the regionally significant Spanish-Pueblo Revival or Territorial Style.

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The location of the courthouse functions within the building follows a prescribed pattern. The courtroom itself was usually located on an upper floor, often the second. This allowed for a grand staircase to be ascended on the way to court and a symbolic rise to justice. It also created a natural separation of space between the public below and the jail and required security above. The upper floor jail was probably given that position for proximity to the courtroom, to thwart escape attempts and to prevent outside communications with prisoners. Convenience undoubtedly controlled the first floor location of the administrative functions; these service areas had to be easily accessible to the public.

In New Mexico, there are a number of variations on this general pattern. Twenty of the county courthouses in New Mexico have a second floor courtroom, twenty-four have administrative functions on the first floor, but only nine have an upper floor jail. A popular location for jails in New Mexico, both traditionally and presently, is in a separate but associated structure. This may be due to the unlimited land available in many New Mexico communities; it was less expensive to build out than up. This arrangement also provided a literal separation between the public monument and the jail.

Floor plan shapes are related to architectural style in New Mexico; all courthouses with vernacular styling have a linear floor plan, all courthouses using imported styles have more complex T-shaped floor plans.

The two main floor plans led to a variety of interior configurations, although functions were often similar. The typical courthouse interior had the first floor offices arranged around a corridor, with public stairs leading from the lobby to the second floor courtroom. On the first floor were offices for the treasurer, assessor, county commissioners, county clerk, sheriff, road superintendent and school superintendent. Most early courthouses had a courtroom, judge's chambers, justice of the peace office, vault, law library, court reporters' room, witness rooms, and a jail, on the upper floors. Later courthouses often included space for WPA administrators, agricultural extension agents, health office personnel, farm security agents, and a jury dormitory.

Lobbies and courtrooms are often the only architecturally decorated interior spaces. The courtroom was typically designed to represent the concepts of justice. The courtroom was elevated to the second story and the judge and jury were elevated within it, to give a sense of dignity and focus to the room, and to emphasize the solemnity of the court of law. High ceilings, extensive architectural detailing and formal seating heightened this impression. The courtroom was separated into public and

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private areas for both symbolic and security reasons; the judge, jury, and prisoners entered through private doors at the front, the public entered through doors at the rear, and the two realms remained separated by a formal railing.

Because courthouses were built for very specific functions, many of which increase as counties grow, courthouses as a group are threatened with remodeling, expansion, abandonment, or demolition. Changing patterns in county services have led to greater space needs for administrative functions such as agriculture, human services, welfare, and health programs. In the last several decades, dependence on the automobile and the resultant urban sprawl, has created a trend to move the courthouse functions from Central Business Districts to the outskirts of towns where there is ample room for parking.

With increasing county services and litigation, contemporary needs require more and larger facilities for judicial functions and county support. Changes in heating, ventilating, air conditioning, and electrical requirements are leading to major interior renovations. Many courthouses have poorly designed acoustics which require changes. Increased energy costs have created threats to these historic courthouses as doors and windows are replaced and insulation is added. Governmental regulations have led to the addition of handicap ramps and elevators to create accessibility to the handicapped. And, a more violent society has led to greater security needs for these buildings.

In New Mexico the social and physical threats to historic courthouses are very real. Almost all of the 47 courthouses surveyed have been somewhat altered, particularly on the interiors. Seven courthouses in New Mexico were ineligible for nomination due to alterations which destroyed their architectural integrity. Many others have been lost to neglect, unsympathetic remodeling and demolition. Of the 14 nominated structures, 11 are still used as courthouses, 1 is used for other civic functions, 1 is used as a museum, and 1 is used for religious functions.

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-Raton

The building has handicap access and an elevator, and is in excellent condition with only minor remodeling.

8. Significance: The Colfax County Courthouse in Raton is architecturally significant as an excellent example of the Art Deco Style as interpreted by R.W. Vorhees and Townes and Funk architects, and historically significant for its association with the Public Works Administration era of courthouse building in New Mexico.

Colfax County was founded in 1869 and named for Schuyler Colfax, then Vice-President of the United States under President Grant. The first county seat was in Elizabethtown, but by 1870 it had been moved to Cimarron where a New Mexico Vernacular Style residential building was used as the courthouse. After ten years in Cimarron, in 1882 the county seat was moved to Springer. There a small Second Empire Style building was constructed as the third courthouse. When the Santa Fe Railroad established Raton as a central division point, the town began to grow and quickly became larger and more influential than Springer. Raton citizens began to lobby for moving the county seat to their town, and after a bitter battle with Springer, they won. In 1897, a Richardson Romanesque Style courthouse was built in Raton for \$28,000. By 1935, the fourth Colfax County Courthouse was too small, and the citizens of Raton decided to apply for Federal funding through the Public Works Administration while also promoting a local bond issue for \$160,000. The bond issue passed, the federal funding came through at approximately \$100,000, and Raton hired architects Townes and Funk to design the new structure and architect R.W. Vorhees to supervise construction. Raton was the second municipality in New Mexico to take advantage of the PWA funds (Grant County was the first).

Townes and Funk were architectural partners, located in Amarillo and Albuquerque respectively. They were responsible for the Quay County Courthouse as well as twenty-six other courthouses including Potter County, Texas (Amarillo). R.W. Vorhees, an architect based in Trinidad, Colorado, was responsible for the Eddy County Courthouse, and construction supervision of the Colfax County Courthouse in Raton.

The Colfax County Courthouse in Raton is generally considered the second best Art Deco Style courthouse in the Southwest, after Bisbee, Arizona. Colfax County's distinction is warranted by its five-part facade and entrance pavilion, described by one writer to give it "dynamic centripetal movement horizontally as well as vertically".

9. Major Bibliographical References:

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County Courthouses of New Mexico

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10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of Lots 1-12, Block 3, Maxwell North Addition, Raton, New Mexico.

Quadrangle Name: Raton  
Quadrangle Scale: 7.5 minute

UTM References:  
Zone 13 Easting 549850 Northing 4084190

Acreage:  
Approximately 2.5 acres.

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name County Courthouses of New Mexico TR

State Chaves County and others, NM

COVER Beth Grosvenor 6/18/87  
Substantive Review

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- |      |   |                    |        |                              |                |
|------|---|--------------------|--------|------------------------------|----------------|
| 1.   | Chaves County Courthouse                  | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Boland</u>           | <u>2/15/89</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 2.   | Colfax County Courthouse                  | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor</u>        | <u>6/18/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| ✓ 3. | Colfax County Courthouse in Springer      | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland</u> | <u>12/7/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 4.   | Curry County Courthouse                   | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor</u>        | <u>6/18/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| ✓ 5. | DeBaca County Courthouse                  | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland</u> | <u>10/7/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 6.   | Dona Ana County Courts Building           | Substantive Review | Keeper | _____                        | _____          |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 7.   | Guadalupe County Courthouse               | Substantive Review | Keeper | _____                        | _____          |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| ✓ 8. | Guadalupe County Courthouse in Santa Rosa | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland</u> | <u>12/7/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 9.   | Harding County Courthouse                 | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland</u> | <u>10/7/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |
| 10.  | Hidalgo County Courthouse                 | Substantive Review | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland</u> | <u>12/7/87</u> |
|      |   |                    | Attest | _____                        | _____          |

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

Name County Courthouses of New Mexico TR  
State Chaves County and others, NM

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

- |       |                              |                               |        |                                      |
|-------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| ✓ 11. | Lea County Courthouse        | <del>Substantive Review</del> | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland 12/7/87</u> |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 12.   | McKinley County Courthouse   | <del>Substantive Review</del> | Keeper | <u>Beth Boland 2/15/89</u>           |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 13.   | Rio Arriba County Courthouse | <del>Substantive Review</del> | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| ✓ 14. | Union County Courthouse      | <del>Substantive Review</del> | Keeper | <u>Beth Grosvenor Boland 12/7/87</u> |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 15.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 16.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 17.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 18.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 19.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |
| 20.   |                              |                               | Keeper | _____                                |
|       |                              |                               | Attest | _____                                |