

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: <u>89002113</u>	Date Listed: <u>12/28/89</u>	
<u>Contra Costa County Courthouse Block</u>	<u>Contra Costa</u>	<u>CA</u>
<u>Property Name</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>State</u>

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Gary Federman
Signature of the Keeper

12/28/89
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

The acreage is less than one.

Discussed and concurred in by California SHPO on December 28, 1989.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

2113

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NOV 13 1989

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 18). 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 Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
other names/site number Finance Building

2. Location

street & number 625 Court Street N/A not for publication
city, town Martinez N/A vicinity
state California code CA county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94553

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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.

Kathryn Guatieri 11-8-89
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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.
 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:) _____

Greg Edelman 12/28/89
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Courthouse
Jail

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Government Offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Beaux Arts

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Vermont Granite Block
walls Vermont Granite Block

roof Steel

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Contra Costa County Courthouse Block consists of the classically inspired county courthouse and jail and a low granite retaining wall which runs around much of the property, all dating to 1901. The two-story, with raised basement, courthouse is faced with rough cut granite block. A monumental flight of granite steps leads to a two-story Ionic columned portico with a pediment. At the roof line, above a frieze and bracketed cornice, a balustrade runs around the building. Originally, a short tower projected from the center of the roof and was surmounted by a dome. This feature was removed in 1957 after earthquake damage. The nearby jail is a small flat roofed rectangular building of rough cut granite block. This building is little changed except for a 1944 annex addition of poured concrete and steel.

The 1901 Contra Costa County Courthouse is a dignified structure of Vermont granite which was designed to represent stability and permanence. This Classical Revival building and the granite 1901 jail, with its 1944 addition of concrete, occupy almost the entire Courthouse block bounded by Court, Main, Pine, and Escobar streets. They are surrounded on all four sides by a 1901 low, rounded granite curbing which rises directly from the sidewalk. The curbing was part of the original design. Wide granite steps lead to the portico of the courthouse with its four smooth, granite Ionic columns. Above these is an enclosed pediment with a plain field of brick. The parapet is broken at its four corners and across the front by balustrades. The roof is not visible. Projecting slightly, the center section of the building is set off from the wings by engaged, plain, rectangular Ionic columns. Toward the center and on each side of the entrance are Ionic pilasters, two to a side. The sides and rear of the courthouse are plainer, but some ornamentation is maintained. The wide rear door leads directly to the back of the jail.

There are 30,000 square feet of floor space in the courthouse, which has a full basement on the ground floor, a main or first floor, and a second floor. The concrete foundation ends at ground level. Above is a 4'6" footing. The exterior walls are granite. Interior walls are brick and steel covered with lath and plaster. Heavy finely-dressed stone lintels above the basement windows are incorporated into a belt course, of which there are three. The narrowest form sills for the first floor windows. The cornerstone is on the southwest. The architrave has three parts. The frieze is plain. Above it

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

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
<u>Politics/ Government</u>	<u>1901-1939</u>	<u>1901</u>
<u>Architecture</u>		
	Cultural Affiliation	
	<u>N/A</u>	
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
<u>N/A</u>	<u>Havens & Toepke</u>	
	<u>Mosser, William S., & Son</u>	

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

The Contra Costa Courthouse Block is significant in the area of government under Criterion A as the center of government for Contra Costa County from 1901 until 1937. The two buildings are also significant in the architectural development of Contra Costa County under Criterion C as very good examples of classically inspired early 20th century public buildings. The courthouse continues to be a well designed and executed example of classicism even without its original dome.

Contra Costa County was one of the original counties in the state, and Martinez always has been its seat of government. This city was well served by rail and water transportation. It was important agriculturally, and industrial development there was expanding. However, Martinez was not centrally located, and by 1900 it was being challenged by rival cities with central locations and with growing populations. In addition, the courthouse had been condemned following the earthquake of 1868, and the crumbling brick jail was the scene of several escapes. The County Clerk and Recorder's Building, old store house, and minor structures all were inadequate and needed replacing.

After a close election, Martinez remained the county seat. It was decided all buildings in the courthouse block should be removed and a courthouse and jail worthy of the county should be erected. They should be built to last far into the future and, to express Contra Costa's pride and confidence, they should be imposing.

When another county building, the Hall of Records, was erected in 1933, the courts were moved to that location, leaving mostly finance functions in the 1901 edifice. The 1901 courthouse officially was renamed the Finance Building in January 1966. It is still used as the County Finance Building today. While the jail is currently used to store county records (all prisoners were removed from both the 1901 portion of the jail and the 1944 addition with

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Munro-Fraser, J. P.
History of Contra Costa County
San Francisco, CA, W. A. Slocum, 1882
p. 222, 626

Hulaniski, J. (ed.)
History of Contra Costa County
Berkeley, CA, Elms Pub. Co., 1917
p. 323, 121

Historic Record Co.
History of Contra Costa County, California
Los Angeles, CA, Historic Record Co., 1926

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

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 _____

UTM References

A

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8	9	0	1	1	5
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1	6	9	5	4	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Assessor's Parcel Map of Martinez 1888 (attached).
Bounded on NW by Escobar St., on the NE by Pine St., on the SE by Main St., on the SW by Court St., in Martinez, CA.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire city block that has been historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Staff, Contra Costa County History Center, Betty Maffei, Director

organization Contra Costa County Historical Society date 1-27-89 8-15-89

street & number 1700 Oak Park Blvd. Rm. C-5 telephone 939-9180

city or town Pleasant Hill, CA state CA zip code 94523

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are dentils surmounted by egg and dart molding. These are handmade of steel, as is the main cornice. Under the overhang are corbels of acanthus design separated by recessed panels. The overhang, corbels, and dentils of the pediment correspond to those on the front. There is no frieze on the other three elevations. The rest of the entablature is the same as on the front. Above the courthouse entrance is a recessed, arched, multiple-light window surmounting a wide central light with two narrow sidelights. Below this short window is part of the narrow belt course. Below that is a recessed panel with "ERECTED A.D. 1901" in raised stone. Modern glass doors which replaced copper-clad doors in the 1930s are set in glass panels above and to the sides. Copper door frames and window sash were replaced in the 1930s. The Building Department's notes state: "Materials in the air due to the proximity of the Shell refinery and a smelter has caused the copper to deteriorate badly." The recessed doorway is flanked by two plain, one-story Ionic columns on each side. Outside these are plain, rectangular, engaged ones of Ionic order. The rear entrance is directly opposite the main entrance. Recessed above it is a panel with no inscription. A large, recessed window breaks the belt course. It is arched with multiple lights and a wide three-part window with sidelights below. Above all is a stone arch with keystone. Window placement on the east side of the building is harmonious but not symmetrical. On the main floor, there are tall narrow windows on each side of the entrance arch. Windows on the north do not correspond to those on the more symmetrical south side. On the upper floor, there are three windows, a recess, one tall window, and additional windows. On the main floor, placement is the same, except for a window below the recess on the upper floor. Three windows are on the ground level, directly below those above. One tall opening extends to the foundation and is sealed by a heavy metal grill. In the place of one of the south windows is a ground level entrance. The front basement windows are protected by a retaining wall.

Inside the first floor of the courthouse is a wide hall. Directly opposite the front entrance is a staircase, half-turn with landings, leading to the basement and second floor. It has rectangular metal newels, thin rectangular metal balusters, and metal handrails. Pressed metal appears on the newels and risers and above some of the stairways. All floors are steel covered with concrete overlaid with vinyl tile. The hall wainscoting is rosy brown marble. Above is Philippine mahogany paneling. The sheriff's office was in the basement. Most offices were on the first floor. The courtroom, clerk's and district attorney's offices, and the supervisors' offices were on the second floor.

The flat courthouse roof is of steel, concrete, asphalt, and gravel. Originally, there was an elaborate steel dome. It was removed in 1957 because it had sustained so much damage from various earthquakes. It was determined

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by the county architect that it was in precarious condition. The removal did not change the roof-line, and it is felt by the county building department that the building looks better without the dome and has not lost any of its integrity.

In 1966, the Hall of Records (1931) was remodeled and named the courthouse. The 1901 courthouse now bears the name "Finance Building". This fine building, which people felt should be built to last 50 years, is still an impressive structure after almost 90 years and continues to function as a vital part of the center of government for Contra Costa County.

The 1901 jail is a granite block which harmonizes with the courthouse. It faces Pine Street, where its one entrance is located. Wide steps lead from the sidewalk to a concrete landing. To the left, seven narrow, granite steps lead to the metal double door. This door has long, narrow window panes at its top and long, narrow wooden panels on each side. A recessed multiple-paned arched window surmounts the doors and panels. Below the plain metal parapet is leaf and dart molding. This and the entranceway are the only features relieving the massiveness of the structure. The roof is steel and concrete covered with asphalt and gravel. Ductwork appears above the parapet. Where elevation permits, there are three belt courses of rough granite placed to correspond to those on the courthouse. All windows are barred and screened. Those in the basement are square; on the first floor they are long and narrow, and on the top floor they are shorter. On the Pine Street side, shorter first floor windows flank a taller one.

The yellow 1944 jail annex is poured concrete and steel. It is a rectangle extending from the north side of the old jail. From the street, a ramp leads to the basement where prisoners were booked, deliveries made, and a garage located.

The granite jail was built in 1901 to house 38 inmates. It had the most modern cells for its time. In the basement were a storeroom, shower room, lavatory, and kitchen. On the first floor were the jailer's office, his bedroom, and six cells. On the upper floor were seven cells, a women's cell, a detention room, and the "insane ward". Eventually, 200 prisoners were housed in this area, and county planners pushed through construction of the 1944 annex despite wartime shortages of materials. In addition to the basement facilities, it contained additional cells, two dayrooms, and an exercise yard on the roof. All windows are barred and screened. The entire jail complex has a feeling of security and solidity. The 1901 granite jail has maintained its integrity except for the attached 1944 annex.

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completion of a new correctional facility in 1981), the present County Board of Supervisors in April 1988 voted to explore the possibility of razing the 1944 addition, turning the historic 1901 jail into a museum, and seeking placement on the National Register for the old jail and courthouse (Courthouse Block).

Through its long history, the 1901 courthouse and jail complex has served first as the major county government headquarters and in later years as offices for the important financial functions of the county. It was also the first building in a governmental complex that has given the community of Martinez a handsome and economically advantageous center. As a result of the decision to make this building an imposing and lasting structure, today over 7,000 employees of Contra Costa County live and work in the City of Martinez.

The county courthouse and jail were very early examples of the Classical Revival in Contra Costa County, and they illustrate the important associative qualities of stylistic revivals. In the late 19th and early 20th century, classical styles were chosen because they were easily recognizable and understandable. Roman architecture stood for justice and Greek architecture for government. Classical buildings told a story and upheld a moral and were, therefore, ideal for representing the growing confidence of the county seat.

The Board of Supervisors visited many other courthouses. Eventually, the Board decided on an expensive Classical Revival structure with a prominent dome, giving it a Beaux Arts feeling. This was in keeping with the style of other buildings of the period. The sheriff toured all jails in the state and determined his should be the most modern and the finest. For structural reasons, it was not possible for the jail to be on the top of the courthouse as originally planned. Instead, it was built close to the courthouse in a design that harmonized with it.

William H. Toepke, architect of the courthouse, did the designs for such impressive San Francisco buildings as the Mackey Building, the Doe Estate Company, and the Hornlein Investment Company. His partner, Charles I. Havens, was famous for plans for the old Flatiron Building in San Francisco and San Mateo's Union High School.

The jail architect, William S. Mosser, was well known at this period within both governmental and commercial circles. Among his many designs were plans for the Santa Barbara Courthouse, the San Francisco Maritime Museum, and Inglenook Winery and Beringer House in St. Helena, California.

The courthouse architecture itself was an example of expert engineering. The dome survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and was finally removed only after it was weakened by the Bay Area quake in 1957. It had lasted for

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56 years. In his book "Guide to Architecture in Northern California", UC Santa Barbara professor of architecture, David Gebhard, listed the 1901 edifice as "...a notable Courthouse of 1901".

The arbitrary date of 1939 is chosen as the terminating date under period of significance. The buildings continued to be important in the area of significance; however, nothing of exceptional importance has occurred in the last 50 years.

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Bibliography

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- Collier, George C. The Court Houses of Contra Costa County. Typed copy.
- Contra Costa Gazette (Martinez). Issues from 1900-1906, incl.
- Contra Costa Standard (Martinez). May 19, 1944.
- Gebhart, David, and others. A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California. Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith, 1973.
- Gilbert, Bart, Superintendent of Buildings, County of Contra Costa, Martinez. Telephone interview. July 31, 1989.
- Historic Record Co. History of Contra Costa County, California. Los Angeles, CA: Historic Record Co., 1926.
- Hulaniski, J., ed. History of Contra Costa County. Berkeley, CA: Elms Publishing Co., 1917.
- Jones, Mary-Ellen, Archivist, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Telephone interviews.
- Leland, Carol to Members of the Board of Supervisors (Contra Costa County). Letter. February 2, 1982.
- Martinez News-Gazette. March 2, 1978.
- Munro-Fraser, J. P. History of Contra Costa County. San Francisco, CA: W. A. Slocum, 1882.
- Perry, Charlene, and others. Martinez A California Town. Martinez, CA: RSI Publications, 1986.
- Purcell, Mae Fisher. History of Contra Costa County. Berkeley, CA: Gillick Press, 1940.
- The Tribune (Oakland). September 13, 1981.

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Photographs

1. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: Clarence Compton
Oct. 1988
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Front view, facing NE
2. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Front view closeup, facing NE
3. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
NE view, slight angle showing view on right side front
4. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Lobby facing SW, bust of Sheriff R.R. Veale at right
5. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Lobby facing SW, showing entrance to offices at left
6. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Jail in front of courthouse, facing W
7. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Jail and Courthouse, showing 1944 addition to jail, facing S
8. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Front entrance of jail, with angle of 1944 addition to right, facing S
9. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 1
Alley between jail and courthouse facing SE
10. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: unknown
c. 1910
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Jail and courthouse, showing cupola and dome, facing SW

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11. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: unknown
c. 1919
Sheriff R.R. Veale's office, Basement of courthouse. Veale at desk.
12. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: Mrs. Ed Morgan
1901
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Building the courthouse, showing railroad tracks, facing NE
13. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: Albert E. Davies
1938
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Left, side of courthouse showing dome and cupola, facing NW
14. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: unknown
c. 1904
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Pine St. facing NW, showing courthouse with jail to back
15. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
Martinez, CA
Photog: Betty J. Maffei
Jan. 1989
Neg. Contra Costa County History Center
Alley between jail and courthouse, looking SE
16. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Jail, looking SW, showing ledge of staircase to courthouse in foreground
17. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Detail of pediment triangle of courthouse, looking NE

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18. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
SW corner of courthouse, showing detail of entablature
19. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Martinez Historical Marker, Contra Costa County Court House 1901
SW side of courthouse portico
20. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
NW corner of courthouse, showing detail of entablature
21. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Alley of jail and courthouse, looking SE
22. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Jail, NE view showing detail of leaf and dart on top floor
23. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Ceiling of courthouse inside stairwell, showing pressed metal
24. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Newel post of courthouse inside staircase, showing detail of swag
and pressed metal strip
25. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Alley between courthouse and jail, NW view
26. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Porch of courthouse, showing lamps and inscription over doorway,
looking NE
27. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Window on second landing of inside staircase of courthouse, facing NE

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28. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Front window in portico of courthouse, looking to NE
29. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Granite curbing along Escobar St. in front of NW side of courthouse,
looking NE
30. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Entrance to steps to courthouse, showing granite curbing, looking NW
31. Contra Costa County Courthouse Block
same as 15
Granite curbing along Court St. in front of courthouse, looking NW