

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Santa Barbara County Courthouse

Other Name/Site Number: Historic Count Courthouse or Courthouse and Sunken Gardens

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1100 Anacapa Street

Not for publication:

City/Town: Santa Barbara

Vicinity:

State: CA County: Santa Barbara Code: 083

Zip Code: 93101

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: \_\_\_
Public-Local: X
Public-State: \_\_\_
Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): X
District: \_\_\_
Site: \_\_\_
Structure: \_\_\_
Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1
1
\_\_\_
\_\_\_
2

Noncontributing

\_\_\_ buildings
\_\_\_ sites
\_\_\_ structures
\_\_\_ objects
\_\_\_ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 13

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

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**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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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## 6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Government

Sub: Government offices  
Correctional facility

Current: Government

Sub: Government offices  
Correctional facility

## 7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals:

### MATERIALS:

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Stucco

Roof: Terra Cotta

Other: Stone (sandstone) corbels, medallions, arches  
Metal (wrought iron) grilles and finials

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****General Description**

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse is situated on an entire block within the downtown core of the city, a site of 450 feet by 450 feet for a total of 4.65 acres, and lushly landscaped with a wide variety of trees, shrubs, climbing vines, and flowers. A number of the mature trees on site were planted when the building was dedicated in 1929. The majority of the landscaping is contained within a semi-formal garden that frames a series of terraced lawn areas approaching the west façade where a public stage provides an outdoor performance venue. The landscape architect designed this series of terraced lawns to provide for public presentations, gatherings, community functions, debates and civic interaction. Among the plantings are 57 varieties of palms, Coast Redwoods (*Sequoia Sempervirens*), Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia X Soulangeana*), and Giant Sequoia (*Sequoiadendron Giganteum*).

The general design and layout of the courthouse follows a modified Spanish castle plan. The building is placed on the site so the most important rooms face south for natural heat to warm these spaces. There are many castle defense elements used on the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. The architect used these Andalusian-Spanish castle elements as metaphorical connections to the Spanish roots of Santa Barbara and many of the design details are also metaphoric of castle defense elements. The courthouse is the seat of government for Santa Barbara County, much like a castle is the seat of its ruler.

The courthouse complex is comprised of four buildings connected by either a bridge or arch, taking an overall form much like a capital "L."<sup>1</sup> The main façade of the building that faces Anacapa Street (south) stretches across the site some 370 feet. The Figueroa Street facade (east) is 356 feet and the Santa Barbara Street façade (north) is 161 feet. The building height varies from 40 feet up to 111 feet. The site changes in elevation by as much as four feet, dropping to the East. The sunken gardens drop below the level of the main arch entry paving by six feet.

The general "L" shape of the building protects the garden.<sup>2</sup> The clock tower observation deck<sup>3</sup> rises 88 feet above the ground entry level. This height provides for the best defensive vantage point across the garden, the main entrance, and outer points in the approach to the courthouse. The Rotunda, located at the intersection of the Anacapa and Figueroa wings, provides both a secondary defensive tower to the garden and an additional keep. A roof passage provides access to the alarm bell located at the outside southeast corner of the building. The northeast corner of the courthouse is defended by means of a turret with lancets, machicolations and embrasures.

**Individual Buildings Comprising the Overall Complex**

Andalusia architecture arranges the architectural elements in an asymmetrical style. Building form, mass and detailing all vary; often this variety occurs on the same elevation, giving the impression that the building is unorganized, haphazard and whimsical. The total building area is 148,000 square feet of interior space. Each building is referred to by its function, beginning with the Hall of Records, service annex, main administration and court building, and finally the jail.

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<sup>1</sup> Because these buildings were constructed at the same time, and are interconnected by arches and bridges, they are considered as one building for the purpose of the National Historic Landmark designation.

<sup>2</sup> Also called a bailey in castle terms.

<sup>3</sup> El Mirador and also keep.

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Hall of Records

The Hall of Records is a 60-foot square building located at the northwest corner of the lot at the corner of Anapamu and Anacapa Streets. It is 44 feet high, including three usable floors which comprise over 8,400 square feet, the basement, main and second floors. The entire building is surrounded by a stone-lined drainage swale metaphorical of a castle moat. In 1991, when an ADA access ramp was constructed between the service annex and the Hall of Records, this "moat" was interrupted. A 45-foot diameter skylight covered over in 1966 when the courthouse underwent its first interior remodeling, tops the building. The skylight structure was left intact with solid panels being placed in its frame. The Hall of Records building is four feet narrower than the service annex because the 1880 stone jail building remained in operation during construction, which required this smaller footprint.

The main entry to the Hall of Records is gained at its southwest corner by means of an arched portico. This is reminiscent of the 1880 Hall of Records, which had a similar approach. The south façade is simple in form, as are the remaining three sides of the building. What belies this simplicity is the rich, yet sparse detailing, beginning with the entry arches. These sandstone arches are uneven equilaterals with one springer higher at the corner than the other in the same plane. The higher springers come to rest on a three-foot round sandstone shaft with an Acanthus column capital detail set under a square abacus. The arch archivolt is quoined, which continues to the eave line at the corner as a quoin bond. At 19 feet above the entry floor is an ornately detailed wrought iron Spanish pendant lamp with leaded glass supported by a serpent. The lower springer comes to rest upon a square pilaster of the same width as the architrave. Each pilaster continues horizontally around the base of the building forming a sandstone plinth. Where the plinth reaches the ground, a concrete swale forms a path for rainwater 18 inches in width terminating at a small 4-inch wide stonewall. This gives the building the sense of a castle moat.

To the east of the corner on the south elevation (toward the arch) are three large ceramic tile plaques marking the visits of Europe's Royals. The first of those visits was by Albert the First, King of Belgium, Elizabeth, Queen of England and the Duke of Brabant, in October of 1919. The next royal visit occurred in October 1924 by the 12th Duke of Arba, the 10th Duke of Berwick and the 15th Count of Monterrey. Their visit was on the occasion of the 322nd anniversary of the naming of the Santa Barbara Channel. The last royal visit occurred in March 1983 when Elizabeth II, Queen of England, and the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan, stayed in Santa Barbara.

The only ornate wrought iron window grille is found on the south elevation near the southeast corner. This grille is attached to the stone window surround by wrought iron studs with rosette attachments that hold the grille off the wall by eight inches. The top of the grille is fashioned with a hammered copper California Bear. All window surrounds are plaster etched to resemble stone.

The east façade faces the Service Annex. The two buildings are 10 feet apart, connected by a bridge at the second floor. The bridge is a point of defense and a postern (a private or back entrance) for mid-building passage with guard lookout covered with heavy wrought iron bars. The detailing at the opening, which occurs on both sides of the bridge, provides for deflection of arrows shot from a ground assault, by means of a lip. The bridge is supported by means of an arch with stone quoined archivolt.

With the construction of an ADA access ramp of stone to match the plinth, the 10 foot landscaped space between these two buildings became a place where visitors could view this elevation. The top of the ramp terminates at a gothic arched door matching the original on the north elevation. This provides an additional postern.

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The north elevation that faces the sunken garden (or bailey) has its primary element as a gothic arched postern with stone architrave. Above the postern on either side are lancets, one with a stone surround and higher than the other. A larger lancet, near the middle of the wall, opens into a void area behind the interior vault.

The west elevation has the stone plinth continuing as it rises up and around each window opening in a gothic irregular quoined arch detail. Each of the first floor windows has a very simple wrought iron open grille attached so that the grille stands six inches from the stone face. The most significant elements on the Hall of Records are the defensive doors, best seen from the sidewalk through nineteenth-century stone gateposts. The 13-foot tall defensive doors protect another set of doors just 4 ½ feet inside the entry portico. These doors would have been protected by portcullis and machicolation in a castle. Each door is 4 feet wide and 13 feet tall with hammered copper panels (Repoussé) depicting California history. There are a total of 30 panels, the largest of which was placed at the bottom rail of each door, twice the size of the others. Albert Yann (Hungarian artist) executed the panels under the direction of the architect to capture California history. The panels include: the Tree of Life; a large eagle that represents the State (as used by the early Spanish explorers); the Spirit of California (a female figure); Saint Barbara; Father Junipero Serra (founder of the Santa Barbara Mission); Spanish Ships; Padres and Soldiers; Forty-Niners raising the "Bear" flag; and John J. Fremont raising the U.S. flag with pioneers, miners and prospectors in observance.

### Service Annex

The service annex measures 64 by 68 feet, is 46 feet tall, and includes three full floors, but no basement, comprising 11,500 square feet of usable space. There is, however, a small mechanical space within a concrete enclosure that resembles a basement. The service annex has richer detailing than that of the Hall of Records which includes balconies, wooden shutters, large wrought iron grilles, lancets, quatrefoils and a roof top concealed patio. The south elevation gives the illusion that the building is only two stories in height—while the north elevation realistically indicates three full floors by a series of random and irregular window or door openings.

The southwest corner of the service annex begins with the continuance of the stone plinth as it approaches the main arch. There are three over-scaled windows with ornate wrought iron grilles in the middle of the first floor wall. These openings form a somewhat enclosed balcony, large enough for an average size person to stand. They however were not designed for human access because the only passage is by awning windows. Over these windows are three small square windows with wooden shutters. These small windows, one above each of the larger ones below it, act as an embrasure against the assault of enemies. At the southwest corner and off of the second floor, is a concrete balcony with ornate wrought iron railing and a canvas awning structure. The eave line is articulated with wood rafter tails secured to the concrete roof structure with bolts.

The main arch starts at the southeast corner of the service annex at the intersection of the plinth and stone fountain. As the plinth wraps around the east elevation, it broadens to form the base and rear support of the Spirit of the Ocean fountain. The architect retained the services of Ettore Cadorin, and charged him with the execution of five stone sculptures, all seen on the south elevation. The largest work is the fountain, composed of two youths (a brother and sister) holding a dolphin fish. The backdrop of the fountain is carved seaweed in the sandstone rear wall.

The east elevation of the service annex forms one wall of the main arch interior. The stonework of the plinth increases in size and scale to form the base of the arch then continues down the east elevation. It rises and falls as it travels around doors and windows. There are two defensive openings on this elevation, one lancet and an embrasure high on the wall above the entrance. Between the entrance and this embrasure is a large quatrefoil

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with multiple molded layers and a wrought iron grille embedded at the innermost mold just forward of the glazing wood frame. To the north of this opening is a lancet for the defense of the main entrance. At either side of the entrance are two large windows with plaster hoods and sills that rest upon the stone plinth. An intricate wrought iron grille guards the window. North of the entrance is a stone seat which is integrated into the stone plinth. As the plinth passes through the arch the depth of each stone varies from just a few inches to feet. This provides platforms to hold terra cotta flowerpots and other temporary adornments during celebratory feasts.

The north elevation is the most detailed of the others in this section of the building, which includes details such as a wooden balcony, a broad stone plinth, a row of lancets, wooden shutters and wrought iron grilles. At the northeast corner, the garden side arch plinth and architrave widen to encompass the first window opening on this side of the building. The northeast corner is reinforced with a carved granite buttress, 3 ½ feet tall. The stone plinth that began at the Hall of Records ends at the arch plinth.

The window is topped with a plaster hood and stone sill, which is part of the plinth. A simple wrought iron grille protects the opening. There are three large first floor windows, each with wood shutters and slightly lower than the plinth-engaged window. The second floor window openings are all lancet in shape, deeply recessed and provide bailey side defense. The third floor windows are composed of two square openings, like embrasures. Toward the northwest corner and at the third floor a heavy wood balcony allows two pairs of doors to open out onto the bailey. The wood guardrail obtains additional support from a wrought iron vertical support that rises to the height of the door opening before attaching to the building by means of an ornately detailed bracket.

The west elevation faces the east elevation of the Hall of Records and is the simplest of the Service Annex façades. There are a number of unassuming window openings with no adornment. The stone plinth begins again at the southwest corner.

### Main Arch

The Main Arch provides both a physical and architectural connection from the Service Annex to the Main Administration and Court Wing. The south elevation of the Main Arch of the main façade is the most recognizable of all the courthouse elements. The 28-foot stilted architrave separates the Service Annex and Main Building. The Impost (which receives the end of the arch and distributes its thrust) is 12 feet above the stone path that passes under the arch and is marked by a stone ledge, 8 inches in depth. Rising out of the articulated stone plinth are two 20-foot tall Corinthian columns, one on either side of the arch. The arch piers are a continuation of the stone plinth that surround the building, quoined as it rises vertically to a height of 39 feet above the entry walk and spans the arch to become the entablature. The frieze is dotted with 4-inch square dentils. Above the cornice rest two sculpted figures by Ettore Cadorin; Ceres, goddess of agriculture; and Athena, goddess of industry. The two figures frame an inscription: "DIOS NOS DIO LOS CAMPOS EL ARTE HUMANA EDIFICO CIVDADES". ("God hath provided the ground, Man has built the town").

At 45 degrees in each direction from the arch center, are two sculpted medallions executed by Ettore Cadorin (1872-1952) representing the economic engine of California. The left medallion intricately illustrates the icons of industry. The right illustrates elements of agriculture and minerals. On the dado of the right pedestal is a carved sandstone heraldic shield with an etched castle. Just to the right of the shield is a recessed observation window with heavy wrought iron grille. Above the Main Arch is a large quatrefoil opening, deeply recessed with wrought iron grille protection. Near the ridge of the roof is an embrasure with a missing shutter. To the right at the intersection of the eave and vertical rise of the clock tower is a cast stone corbel of facing angel figures holding a leaf.

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The rake gently slopes up the ridge to a height of 63 feet above the entry path and is supported by heavy concrete rafter tails, which resemble large corbels. The 1,900 square foot space between the entablature and the rake comprises the fourth floor, once the office of the District Attorney.

The rear arch is much simpler than the main front arch. The architrave is irregular as it broadens from the top to the bottom. A large sculpted stone titan is located at the apex. Each arch pier has additional sculpted elements. Above the arch are a series of grilled openings, resembling a loggia, which provide a place of defensive protection for the lower arch. A large lip provides a protective element against ground-launched assaults.

### Administration and Court Building

This represents the largest part of the building, two legs placed at right angles with a Rotunda at the intersection facing the garden and a square tower facing Figueroa Street. These two legs are referred to as the Anacapa Gallery and the Figueroa Gallery. The Anacapa Gallery is 206 feet by 64 feet. The Figueroa Gallery is 332 feet by 69 feet. The building height varies from 58 to 72 feet. The total usable space equals 96,200 square feet comprised within four floors, including a full basement. The basement under the Figueroa Gallery provides secure parking for court judges and maintenance staff.

### Anacapa Gallery: Street Side

Beginning at the northwest corner at the base of the main arch and moving east across the south façade, brings us to the main door of the courthouse. A pair of heavy wood doors, 3 by 8 feet each provide direct access into the ornately tiled main lobby and stair. The pull handles of these doors form elongated lion bodies, with the head of the lion comprising the top. Above the apex of the door is a lancet. Above and right of the lancet is a defensive wrought iron hoard, which also has a wrought iron frame for a decorative canvas awning, used to display the castle colors.

The main arch architrave descends toward this door opening to create a smaller arch that continues down around the opening to the plinth begun at the Hall of Records, which then continues to the southeast corner forming a stone buttress quoined as it rises 30 feet above the ground.

The clock tower, situated between the main arch and the mural room loggia rises 111 feet above the entry path at the ground level. The structure is 28 feet square with a clock face on each of its four sides. At six o'clock is the line of the interior space that houses the clock works. There are no openings other than for the clock hand and speaker mechanisms. The observation deck (El Mirador and also Keep) is 88 feet above the ground level walk below and extends past the tower wall to form a machicolation. A heavy wrought iron guardrail and vertical support bar encircle the tower floor. The roof extends another 23 feet to its peak. The north elevation of the El Mirador contains one column and two pilasters with an embrasure above and to the east. The south elevation has three such columns, one of which forms the outer corner and roof support.

The strongest feature of the south elevation of the main building is the loggia above the first floor. The loggia provides an outdoor space for the Board of Supervisors meeting room (Mural Room). Four Tunic-type columns support a heavily massed roof raised above the main roof 36 inches. The floor of the loggia is also 36 inches above the interior floor level that places the entire loggia composition between the second and third floors. The depressed three-centered architrave is shadowed with a light flat relief that terminates at each column in a scroll. At each end of the loggia is a pilaster where the architrave resolves in a blended surface with the main exterior face of the building. Four 14-foot windows centered at each arched opening provide ambient daytime



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light to the interior space. An intricate wrought iron vertical support, one located at each pilaster and column provide support to a 62-foot long ornate guardrail. Located at each end of the loggia are concrete rainwater gargoyles. As the floor level of the loggia extends from the vertical surface of the primary wall it provides a metaphorical machicolate.

Continuing east from the Loggia is the main stair entry to the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor. The stair and door are grand with a heavy terra cotta tiled hood over the door supported by concrete rafter tails. Near the top of the wall are a series of windows with wood shutters. One of these windows is placed over the Clerk-Recorder-Assessor door like an embrasure. Nearing the southeast corner of the building there are three equilateral surface arches with one of them feathered to blend with the main wall. The first of these three arches has a broader springer than the other two. These arches rest upon the stone plinth as it makes its way to the building corner. Above these arches is a wrought iron balcony with large window opening.

At the ground level are a number of wrought iron guarded openings into the basement. The terra cotta hipped roof terminates at an arched opening that provides a place for the only bell on the building. This brass bell once hung at the City's first fire station.

#### Figueroa Gallery: Street Side

Turning the corner and traveling east on the Figueroa Street elevation the stone plinth continues at the same height up and around the Lawyers Entrance Arch and finally terminates 10 feet beyond the arch base. The Lawyers Entrance is a major feature of this elevation. The over-scaled English arch is asymmetrically placed on the elevation with the tower element above, and the courtroom balcony to the right. The arch is equilateral in shape with a nine-foot springer, which causes the apex to be low and imposing. The heavy stone plinth intersects the arch springer before the arc completes. A deep portico provides shelter with the multiple heavy rib banding creating a heavy mass; this too contributes to the imposing felling of this arch. Each step leading to the door inside the arch has been set with proportion causing one to slow his gait. The interior of the portico is asymmetrical with a portion of the wall covered in stone, and the remainder covered with plaster. A leaded glass lamp hangs just off center of the apex. Two smaller arched window openings with stone column are also off center of the apex. The outer stone arch in part obscures the heavy wood door into the building.

Large over-scaled windows and a balcony represent the first of two original courtrooms. Above this balcony is a tower rising to a height of 70 feet above the ground entry bound at the cornice with an integrated stone detail. Stone finials, one at each tower corner with an épi, give this humble interior space a sense of grandness. Each corner finial rests, through the terra cotta roof tiles, upon a vaulting shaft terminating in a cast stone detail. At the center of this wall is a large cast stone coat of arms held by two heralders. The top of the shield has a guard in helmet with the face grille closed. There is an embrasure just below the cornice at the east end of the tower.

There are small window openings just under the rafter tails at a raised section of the roof forming the Law Library with its focal point of an over-scaled window opening and a balcony. Below this balcony is a gracious loggia and secondary main courthouse entry. Each of the heavy columns and pilasters supports a simple half-circle arch. A large window is centered in each arch. This is the most symmetrical elevation of the entire complex. A large rectangular window centers over the middle arch. Up near the eave are three embrasures. Large arched windows with a close woven mesh grille indicate the second courtroom. An intricate drip lip forms the base of these windows as well as a defense element. A lancet sits below these windows. Three additional square windows are centered below each of the courtroom windows. Heavy wrought iron tie plates are placed mid-wall centered at each window pier.

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The stone plinth begins again and forms the surface of low sprung arches that provide light and ventilation into the basement. A lancet appears near the eastern corner of the building.

The east corner of the building has a grand balcony with a machicolation, large column and heavy eave line and lowered terra cotta tiled roof. Large stone medallions accent the balcony edge. As the balcony turns the corner, it remains the dominant feature on the north elevation. The stone plinth continues to form the arched opening to the basement parking area. There are two lancets and an embrasure before the building corner to the west.

### Figueroa Gallery: Garden Side

The west elevation of the Figueroa Wing presents another intricately detailed façade. Near the Bridge of Sighs are a number of lancets. Along the second floor are large windows in a regular pattern, culminating in a grand Spanish manor door with heavy terra cotta tiled hood. The height of this elevation rises to 72 feet above the sunken garden. Near the north end is an intersecting arcade with catwalk and lancets. Each pilaster terminates the arch with a cast stone angle face. This begins the arrangement of elements that comprise the processional stair and public stage area.

The processional stair continues on either side of the public stage, framing a graciously arched opening into the building, in alignment with the eastern entrance. Above this garden side entrance, is a balcony formed by the processional stairs with a grand manor door with heavy corbelled and terracotta tiled hood. The grand door is comprised of two large raised paneled wood doors with lion head door escutcheon plates. A Cuerda Seca tiled surround frames these grand doors, inside and out. On either side of the door surround are hammered copper wall scones depicting Santa Barbara history. The opening above the grand door provides ventilation for the mechanical room in the attic space. The vent is surrounded by a plaster drip mold. At the ground level is a hidden stair leading to the basement. The grand balcony, processional stairs and middle landings provide interior space for restrooms and janitor support areas.

At the junction of the Figueroa and Anacapa Galleries is a Rotunda element with machicolated roof, large support columns and a grand oval window at its center. This is also referred to as the "inside-outside stair" and provides a great source of ventilation for the building. It continues to be a favorite of courthouse visitors. A lancet is located at its base and an embrasure just above the arcade. A wrought iron guardrail frames the edge of the exterior portion of steps, which end as they reach the vertical wall, and continue to rise inside the building. At the ground level is a intricate wrought iron gate providing access to the gardens.

### Anacapa Gallery: Garden Side

The dominant feature of this elevation is the archway. The intersection of the Rotunda and Anacapa Gallery is the beginning of the Mural Room Loggia composed of five elliptical arches, one for each Board of Supervisor. The exterior wall is 3 feet thick with a heavy molded horizontal band extending 18 feet beyond the right pilaster terminating in a cast stone corbel. This extension is deep enough to form a plastered shelf for terra cotta pots. A 17-foot diameter rosette dominates the largest expanse of plastered wall. The multiple recessed rosettes draw attention to an 8-½ foot diameter stone detailed leaded glass opening. The glazing is configured with multiple colors and casts a romantic shading on the Mural Room Lobby on its interior. The roofline continues the low sloping rake found on the street elevation, with heavy concrete rafter tails. Just below the large rosette is a rectangular window with intricate wrought iron grille with heraldic scroll and sword base at the top cap.

### Jail

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The jail is 94 feet by 45 feet, and varies in height from 68 to 97 feet. The total usable space equals 23,600 square feet comprised within six floors, including a full basement. The basement provides support office and shower/locker space for the Sheriff operations.

The north elevation (Santa Barbara Street façade) contains a cornucopia of metaphorical castle detailing. The stone plinth that began at the Hall of Records appears once again here as it rises at the east corner in the form of a postern stair up to a metal studded heavy wood door. The scale of the plinth quickly rises to 19 feet above the ground to intersect with the vertical base of the stone arched entry. Contained within the stone plinth is a lancet. Above this lancet is the English translated version of the inscription over the main arch. The stone plinth finally comes to a conclusion at the northwest circular corner of the jail. Above this section of the plinth, are four over-scaled windows with plastered hoods and heavy wrought iron grilles. The stone archway is formed with sandstone quarried from the Refugio Canyon area of Santa Barbara. Many of the very large stones have seashell fossils throughout. At the base of each arch stilt is a carved granite buttress with this inscription on the stone archway: "DIS CITE JUSTITIAM MONITI," or "Learn Justice From This Warning".

Above and slightly off center of the arch is a large intricate cast stone breastplate shield. To the left of the arch is a lancet, and to the right an embrasure. Framing all of these elements is a cast dripstone projecting from the vertical wall surface 12 inches. The outside edge is smooth and slightly angled, while the inside edge is articulated with round berry shapes at a regular rhythm. The northeast corner of the building soars 95 feet above the walkway, transitioning into a 24-foot square tower. The terra cotta tiled hip roof is supported by a heavy dentil eave. A concrete and stone turret dangles at the northeast corner, with a copper capped roof reaching 95 feet with a weather vane extending another 4 feet. Heavy leafy corbels with a terminal base of a guards head hold the base of the turret while a cast stone cornice hold the top. The cornice provides a strong base for the copper cap. The guard appears to be laughing. A lancet in line with the building corner, and centered on the turret wall, provides a defensive vantage point. A large heavily guarded window with strong plaster molding is centered on the tower wall. There are two such windows, one on the north, and one on the west elevation.

The tower drops to intersect with the roof with its wood rafter tails, 67 feet above the walkway. Just below the eave line are six embrasures with light molded detail at the arch opening springer. The roofline drops again by six feet at the northeast corner as the eave line transitions from terra cotta tile to an intricate cast stone cornice detail wrapping the entire east elevation to return an equal distance on the north elevation. Just below this cornice are two large heavily guarded openings.

Between the stone plinth, first floor windows and the cornice are a number of lancets and embrasures. The original entry plaza was reconfigured to accommodate ADA accessibility, with a new pair of stairs toward the west and north. The building can be approached from the street through a pair of eighteen-century gateposts. A new access ramp, matched in material to the existing plaza stone, terminates at the sidewalk between two eighteen-century gateposts.

The west elevation is dominated by three elements: the cast stone cornice, a large geometric tracery and finally a large cast stone heraldic breast plate held on two processional guards. Each corner of the building is a circular column rising to and through the cornice to terminate in a round terra cotta tiled cap. The stone cornice wraps in a circular shape as well as it travels around the building. Above the cornice, on the west elevation is a rafter-tailed eave "pop-up" in the main roof. The stone breastplate is blank. A lancet is just below the breastplate. A large wrought iron grilled window is just off center with the building at the first floor.

The southwest corner matches the northwest corner. The original first floor window was converted into a door

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opening with stairs down to the lawn as part of the 1991 ADA accessibility project. This door improved fire exiting from the jail. The widest variety of details are found on the south elevation of the jail. On the first floor are three large window openings with multiple hinged wrought iron grilles. Toward the intersection of the jail and the Figueroa Gallery are stairs to the jail postern and catwalk. Below this stair are two lancets. Another stair leads down from the garden to the north elevation and garage entry.

Above the three large first floor windows is a concrete half-circle balcony with wrought iron grille. Above the balcony is a heavily guarded round window. Along the second floor line are lancets with flat head details. At the third floor line are seven lancets with circular head detail. An over scaled window with heavy plaster molding, stone sill and head details, dominates this section of the wall. The fourth floor line is punctuated with heavy plaster molded, columned and wrought iron window openings. The fifth floor has three lancets. A machicolation projects from the main vertical wall with an unbalanced eave line perpendicular to the main jail roof. Three large lancets are located on this wall. Just below the eastern edge of the machicolation is a small lancet. The east elevation of the jail, like those of the Hall of Records and service annex, is difficult to view except by extreme angles. There are a number of embrasures and lancets. The *Bridge of Sighs* provides access to the jail and a pedestrian passage (bridge) provides access to the jail's main entrance and the Administration/Court Building. The vertical height of this elevation is 101 feet, because the basement floor has an exterior wall forming one face of the garden postern.

### Interior Spaces

Interior architecture is just as grand as the outside with hand painted ceilings, furniture and leather. There are five original rooms in the Courthouse that have remained almost unchanged since they were constructed: the Mural Room, Department 1 Courtroom, Department 2 Courtroom, Law Library and the first floor of the Hall of Records. Many other locations in the building remain the same as well, but are decorated with less detail than the ones mentioned above.

### Mural Room

The Mural Room is 40x70x30 feet high at the coffered ceiling. There are movable benches to allow the room to be used for other purposes than board meetings.

Dan Sayer Groesbeck executed the mural for the Board of Supervisor's Meeting Room. Every castle had a mural room where the ruler would receive guests and conduct the official business of State. While designing the Santa Barbara County Courthouse, William Mooser was quoted as telling the Chair of the Board of Supervisors that he was going to design a Throne Room.

The architect's direction to Groesbeck was to paint scenes that depict the early history of Santa Barbara. Beginning in the northwest corner of the room on the north wall there is a village setting of Native American Indians, this transforms into a scene of eight Native Americans and their dog looking over the landing of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542. Cabrillo, who never landed in Santa Barbara to raise the Spanish flag, is seen advancing up the beach with his men carrying supplies and a bold presentation of the Spanish flag. A heraldic shield is painted over the side door.

Next along the north wall are a group of Mexican and Native Americans held back by a Franciscan monk as they look up to the sky at an eagle within a star-burst. A child clings to the monk's robe for security; the Mexican flag flaps in the wind. Between this group and the next is a depiction of the story of the lost canon from the Presidio in 1790 and the reason Santa Barbara has a street named Canon Perdido. Next is an image of

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John Fremont with his troops descending the San Marcos Pass. The San Marcos Pass is now a major passage between the north and south areas of the County. The west wall has the construction of the Santa Barbara Mission in 1786, the tenth among twenty-one in California. Native Americans, Franciscan monks and other people are shown working on the mission. Two of the people appear to be actors from the 1920s.

Between each window are the words "Minerals", "Stock" and "Agriculture", indicating Santa Barbara's economic "engine." Above each window is the coat-of-arms or shield of each ruling nation that has controlled Santa Barbara, beginning with Franciscan monks, Spain, Mexico and the United States. The general background of the mural is a mountainous blue sky with scattered clouds over a "diapering" pattern.

The ceiling in the Mural Room is comprised of false plastered beams painted with a combination of "regular" paint and "Dutch-metal," which is a mixture of zinc and copper. Each original courtroom ceiling is completed in this fashion as well. The tile floor in the Mural Room is composed of hand-made terra cotta floor tiles made by Glading, McBean & Company, as the entire building floor tile is. The Mural Room Lobby has a collaboration of floor and wall tiles, wood columns, Mudejar ceiling, and an additional painting by Groesbeck and wrought iron gates before the space transitions into the loggia. The Rotunda, located just past the loggia is three-floors in height and some 50 feet tall. An intricate painted wall pattern by Smeraldi resembles a church in Spain where he grew up.

### Original Courtrooms

There are two original courtrooms, each similar, with a Mudejar ceiling, wrought iron details, hand-carved heavy oak furniture and hand-painted draperies. These rooms are as they were constructed with only the addition of features to accommodate current technology and ergonomic chairs.

### Hall of Records

The Hall of Records interior is as intricate, yet more unique than any of the other rooms in the courthouse, with its Mudejar walls and ceiling, fancy column caps and stone detailing around interior openings. The grand interior space rises 40 feet above the first floor, terminating in a 45-foot round skylight. This skylight creates the illusion that one is outside in an enclosed courtyard.

### Law Library

The Law Library is an elegantly detailed English room--from the stone quoined entry door with the scales of justice balanced on a Spanish scimitar--to the double vaulted ceiling painted blue with a Dutch-metal star pattern. On the north wall is a mural of early California and on the south wall is a mural of early Santa Barbara County.

### Flagpole

The courthouse flagpole is a doubled mast, 85-foot high structure. During the afternoon of August 4, 1846, the frigate USS *Congress*, which participated in several battles during the war with Mexico, put in to Santa Barbara and a landing party went ashore, encountering no resistance from the town. There was no flagpole to fly the United States flag, so a studding sail boom from the USS *Congress* was landed and soon the American flag fluttered from its peak. The upper section of the flagpole was later added to make the flagpole taller. It is believed to be from a Mexican sailing vessel from the same time period. The studding boom from the USS *Congress* is the bottom portion of the present flagpole. The flagpole was originally located at Plaza Del Mar,

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near the Potter Hotel. It was after the Potter Hotel burned down in 1909 and the area fell into disrepair that the community rallied to move the flagpole to the Courthouse.

Historic landscape features surrounding the Santa Barbara County courthouse are integral to its design and conception as an authentic Spanish-Mediterranean building. Landscape architect and native Santa Barbarian Ralph Stevens, designed with landscape while taking into account both the large scale of the building, and the semitropical Mediterranean setting. The shadows of the mature vegetation add a welcome dimension to the bright, white-walled surfaces of the courthouse. The garden is constantly enjoyed as a park by Santa Barbara visitors and residents, and provides a beautiful setting for weddings, performances, art shows, civic events, and festivals. Since the courthouse landscape's completion in 1931, some of the plantings have been removed to prevent damage to the building stemming from their roots. Portions of the paths have been redesigned to admit handicapped access. A list of approved plantings was established in 1991. The original 1872 surrounding sandstone wall is still in-place today and many of the stones from the 1872 courthouse and jail help form the terraced sunken gardens.

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse has retained its architectural integrity since no major changes have been made to its exterior features. In 1966 county administrative services moved into a new building across the street from the courthouse since the staff outgrew its original space. An interior remodeling was then conducted at the courthouse to provide for more courtrooms. Further remodeling in 1973 and 1983 resulted in four generic looking Superior Court courtrooms in addition to the original two opulent Spanish themed courtrooms. Alterations have been made to some of the other interior spaces but the overall decorative Spanish-Mediterranean design scheme remains intact. Interior spaces retaining original design integrity are: the main lobby, courtrooms one and two, the elevator lobby, corridors, stairways, Hall of Records and the Mural Room. The Mural Room is the former Board of Supervisors Assembly Room, and was preserved as a result of the Supervisors' action in 1974 to prevent modifications. More remodeling took place in 1991 to bring the courthouse into compliance with federal accessibility regulations. For this effort, internationally noted architect Charles Moore designed sensitive minor exterior modifications.

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
 Nationally: X Statewide: \_\_ Locally: \_\_

## Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B\_\_ C X D

## Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A\_\_ B\_\_ C\_\_ D\_\_ E\_\_ F\_\_ G

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values  
 5. architecture, landscape architecture and urban design

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
 Art  
 Community Planning  
 Landscape Architecture  
 Politics/Government

Period(s) of Significance: 1926-1929

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: The William Mooser Company  
 Dan Sayre Groesbeck (muralist)  
 Ettore Cadorin (stone sculptures)  
 John B. Smeraldi (ceiling/walls/furniture painting)  
 Albert Yann (copper repouseè panels)  
 Gladding, McBean Company (terra cotta tiles)

Historic Contexts: XVI. Architecture  
 M. Period Revival  
 2. Spanish (Mission)

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**Summary

The Santa Barbara Courthouse is nationally significant for its architecture and is being nominated under Criterion 4. The original 1875-1888 neo-Gothic courthouse and Italianate Hall of Records and stone jail were badly damaged in an early morning earthquake on June 29, 1925. Afterward, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors determined to rebuild on the original site. The new Santa Barbara County Courthouse was termed "The grandest Spanish Colonial Revival structure ever built," by internationally noted architect Charles Moore in his 1984 book *The City Observed: Los Angeles*. Charles Moore also said,

The courthouse is equally impressive from every vantage point and is rich in wit, fantasy, and surprises. It is a treasure house of architectural and decorative devices—archways, towers, and loggias; tiled walls, vaults, and floors; wrought iron grills, balconies, and lanterns—in which nothing is repeated or exactly alike.<sup>4</sup>

Architectural historians continue to term the Santa Barbara County Courthouse as one of the most functionally successful and finest public examples of Spanish-Mediterranean design in the nation. The ambience of the building in its park setting makes it exceptional as a professional place of work and as a community center.

In addition, the Santa Barbara County Courthouse served as a prime catalyst for the community in its quest to remake itself to more fully reflect its Spanish roots. The city fathers had determined to create an atmosphere of old Spain by creating an architecture review board and providing design assistance to those commercial owners who agreed to remodel or rebuild their buildings in a Spanish Revival style. The choice of such a design for the new county courthouse in 1926 provided inspiration and impetus for the rest of the community.

The courthouse is principally the work of a San Francisco firm, the William Mooser Company. It was the state's oldest architectural office, founded in 1854 by a young Swiss immigrant. At the time of construction of the courthouse in 1929, the firm was headed by William Mooser, Jr. and William Mooser III. The latter was a graduate of the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and a seventeen-year resident of France and Spain. Other architects collaborated with the Moosers, including Joseph Plunkett of the Santa Barbara architectural firm of Edwards and Plunkett, designer of the nearby Arlington Theater (1929), another great monument of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Another often under-recognized designer was J. Wilmer Hershey, who also designed the original Spanish Colonial Revival buildings of San Clemente, California. The result is a beautifully integrated courthouse, which is actually four separate buildings including a five-story jail, sensitively related to a vast sunken garden of stone terraces and mature pines, palms, and redwoods.

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse successfully reinforces the concept that architecture reflects the social atmosphere of its time. The courthouse reflects the importance of local historical continuity, aesthetics, the role of an architecturally defined public realm, and the celebration of local material and craft. As a result of California's phenomenal growth in the twentieth century, the visibility and public role of every county courthouse in the state has evolved. The expansion of state and national governments, the influence of the

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Moore, Regula Campbell, and Peter Becker, *The City Observed, Los Angeles: A Guide to its Architecture and Landscapes*. New York: Random House, 1984.



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media, and the advent of a global economy have all made county courthouses less prominent centerpieces for community and citizenship than they had been in the nineteenth century. In Santa Barbara, the county courthouse has surmounted these eclipsing forces to maintain daily contact with a diversity of people in a way that few other government buildings do.

### Courthouse Role in Santa Barbara's Redesign

Santa Barbara was once the average American Victorian town, with little distinctiveness. However, "Santa Barbara today is a city refreshingly different from the typical American small city. Its citizens have set out to make a community not just beautiful, but distinctive. Taking as their motif the legacy of the old Spanish adobes, they have evolved a style of architecture as quaint as that of an old city in Spain, yet striking in its simplicity..." so wrote Frank J. Taylor, former Director of the Washington Bureau of the United Press.<sup>5</sup> The first concerted efforts at creating a New Spain in America occurred in 1909, when Charles Mulford Robinson (nationally renowned urban planner in the early 20th century) was retained to prepare a vision statement for the Santa Barbara City Council. While the original Santa Barbara courthouse was not among the buildings to be converted, the new courthouse is now the centerpiece and best example within the city of the community's vision for a New Spain.

Historic period revival architectural styles enjoyed a vogue in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the 1910s, designers George Washington Smith, James Osborne Craig, Reginald Johnson, and Carleton Winslow, among others, introduced the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style to Santa Barbara. Smith was an affluent former stockbroker who painted homes he observed on his travels through southern Spain. His wealthy friends asked him to design residences that looked like his paintings; as a result, his architectural practice began with large, private Santa Barbara estates. By 1922 his talent as a romantic designer of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture had spread throughout the state.

Despite George Washington Smith's successes with the Spanish Colonial Revival style, prior to 1920, the majority of buildings in Santa Barbara County still followed the pattern of many cities in the United States, Victorian or Gothic architecture transplanted by easterners. What remained of the original adobe buildings in Santa Barbara began to come under fire with pressure for newer buildings by property owners. However, such projects as Smith's Andalusian style Lobero Theater (a State Historic Landmark) in downtown Santa Barbara were celebrated with such acclaim that the community elites proposed a movement to redesign the entire city based on its design. The civic leaders set their minds to return the Victorian town back to its "Spanish roots."

In 1922 community leaders organized the Community Arts Association, whose efforts were directed at transforming the downtown Victorian commercial building facades into Spanish facades.<sup>6</sup> The Community Arts Association was composed of three elements; the Plants & Planting Committee, the Community Drafting Room, and lastly the Community Arts Council. Each of these groups were closely managed to effect citywide change. The Plants & Planting Committee was responsible for the systematic cataloging and planting of specimen trees in the area from the old Santa Barbara Mission to the Wharf. The Community Drafting Room was an effort to employ out-of-work architects and draftsmen, and it offered property owners free services if they considered converting their Victorian façade buildings to Spanish façades. The Community Arts Council was responsible for raising citizen's awareness of the benefits of the arts, with the Carnegie Foundation

<sup>5</sup> Frank J. Taylor, *Land of Homes* (San Francisco, Los Angeles and Chicago, 1928), 147.

<sup>6</sup> Henry D. Minot, "It's An Ill Quake." *Journal of the AIA* 13 (September 1926), 395, and vol. 13, November 1925, p. 408; Dr. David Gebhard, *Santa Barbara: The Creation of a New Spain in America* (University of California at Santa Barbara, 1982), 12.

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providing \$25,000 annually to fund these efforts.

From the determination of Bernhard Hoffmann, Pearl Chase and other city leaders, a strategy was mapped out to convert the look of Santa Barbara. However, at the reluctant pace the property owners were taking, it appeared that it would take years before any real transformation would occur. Then, on June 29, 1925, a 6.3 (Richter-scale) earthquake struck the city, killing twelve and making headlines around the world. Almost every building in the downtown commercial core of Santa Barbara was destroyed. Most Victorian buildings of this period had some amount of unreinforced masonry comprising the built façade, and it was this façade that collapsed into the street. While the event was devastating, the community saw the chance to realize its vision for a Spanish town. The civic leaders realized that this was an opportunity to rebuild in the new Spanish architectural style palette and establish the city's signature style. One building that could take the lead in this project was the new county courthouse.

By 1919 the 55-year old Gothic courthouse, Italianate Hall of Records and stone jail, had become inadequate to serve the local government and its people. A design competition was held in January 1919 to solicit ideas and proposals.<sup>7</sup> The statewide competition drew on the talents of many qualified architectural firms. There were a number of submissions, but none were selected at the time due to estimated construction costs. After the 1925 earthquake, however, the courthouse buildings had become unusable and had to be replaced. The William Mooser Company, the oldest architectural firm in California at the time, was selected to design the new courthouse.<sup>8</sup> After the contract was signed with the William Mooser Company to design and build the new courthouse, William Mooser III was assigned as Chief Architect.

William Mooser III had just returned from a seventeen-year sojourn in southern Spain. Designing the new courthouse was a natural extension of his experience gained while in Spain. He moved to Santa Barbara in late 1926, living in a house down the street from the courthouse site. Mooser was on site every day directing each worker as the building was executed. In addition, the community was very much involved in the project, as was the Chair of the Board of Supervisors. The design also had subsequent modifications by multiple committees of community designers. This collaboration received local newspaper exposure and set the stage for future architectural designs proposed within the community's commercial core.

Since the crucial formative years of 1922-1925, with the formation of the Community Arts Association, and the construction of the definitive Spanish Revival building, the county courthouse, the City of Santa Barbara has recreated its image with Spanish and Mediterranean architectural styles. Since the courthouse opened, few buildings in Santa Barbara's central business district have been built without a team of local architects well versed in Hispanic, Mediterranean, and historic period architectural styles providing design review. This review is required before a construction permit can be obtained.

The courthouse could have easily been designed in a streamline, modern style or simply replaced with a larger version of the previous buildings. The trend in public architecture during this time followed the general public desire for all things modern; many public buildings of this period had soft-round edges, were often made of raw concrete and had very little, if any, ornamentation. Cutting across this national trend, the Santa Barbara County Courthouse is an example of a romanticized public building that echoes its city's past.

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<sup>7</sup> *The Architect and Engineer* 59 (November 1919): 113.

<sup>8</sup> William Mooser II, owner of the firm was the second choice of the Selection Committee, but the favorite of the Chair of the County Board of Supervisors.

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Designed as a metaphor for a Spanish castle, which fit the vision begun in 1920 by community leaders (the Community Arts Association, now the Pearl Chase Society and Historical Society), the courthouse is virtually unchanged from 1928. The building has three towers, arches, yett (large wooden gates), machicolations, embrasures, lancets, hoards (exterior defensive balcony), turrets, mural room and Moorish paintings throughout. The sunken gardens would be in castle terms, an Inner Bailey. There are numerous stone sculptures, hammered copper repoussé, wrought iron grilles and six different arch types. The courthouse is at the center of the city's landmark district. From the Clock Tower, the Old Mission, constructed between 1782-86, is visible and is also still functioning in its original purpose as a parish church. A few blocks down Santa Barbara Street, east toward the ocean are the restored Presidio and de la Guerra home, the original site of the town's Spanish government in the late 1760s.

For almost 75 years, the grounds, buildings and contents of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse are still used for their original purpose—Courts and Public Administration—and loved by thousands of people around the world. William Mooser summed up the impact his building would have on the city in an article about community ideals—it was to be "...more Spanish than any hotel-de-ville in Spain."<sup>9</sup> The drive to recapture the spirit and look of an Old Spanish town continues as strong today as it did when it began in 1920. Santa Barbara was the first city in the United States to create a design review board, known as the Plans and Planting Committee. Although they had rocky beginnings in 1929, the Architectural Review Board and Landmarks Committee continues today. These review boards are charged by city ordinance to implement the vision of a new Spanish town in America.

Construction funds for the Santa Barbara County courthouse were appropriated by the Board of Supervisors after a successful bond election in July 1926. The design and construction budget was set at \$700,000.<sup>10</sup> Until the bond was passed, the architect was paid out of emergency funds established by the Board after the 1925 earthquake. The final cost of the courthouse was ultimately \$1,368,000. An unorthodox arrangement, masterminded by County Supervisors Charles Preisker and Sam Stanwood, paid the balance after the bond money had been exhausted. Fortuitous petroleum strikes occurred at Ellwood along the coastline of southern Santa Barbara County in 1928. Tax revenues from the oil-bearing lands were transferred to the courthouse fund allowing construction to proceed nonstop from commencement in October 1926 until completion in March 1929.<sup>11</sup>

Although the courthouse was completed and functional by March 1929, it was officially dedicated at the opening of the annual Old Spanish Days Fiesta on August 14, 1929 with many festivities and much praise.<sup>12</sup> Architect Mooser commended many of the construction contractors as his "co-artists," starting a continual series of local, state, national, and worldwide accolades for the building's appearance, which continues to this day.

The Santa Barbara County courthouse has a symbolic presence in the community and continues to be lauded as the local built environment's greatest asset.

In recognition of its architectural significance, the Santa Barbara County Courthouse was designated a City of

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in M. Urmy Seares, "A Community Approaches its Ideal," *California Arts and Architecture* 37 (June 1930): 71.

<sup>10</sup> The last payment on this bond was made in 1946.

<sup>11</sup> Local lore holds that Stanwood said to a local oil company executive, "We need a new courthouse and you are going to build it for us." Without the ingenious use of oil money, the courthouse could not have been finished as designed.

<sup>12</sup> The dedication plaque for the courthouse is set in mortar made from water obtained from each of the twenty-one California missions, and lime, sand and gravel from each of the California counties.

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Santa Barbara Landmark on July 13, 1982. On January 1, 1981, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and on August 18, 2003, designated a California State Historical Landmark.

### Courthouse Design

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse is nationally significant because it is a unique example of Spanish-Moorish Revival architectural style. It is unusual nationwide among county government buildings built in the first half of the twentieth century for its rural Andalusian detailing and design elements inspired by medieval fortresses. Additionally, it has retained its architectural integrity, except for a few minor modifications, since its completion in 1929.

Among the thousands of county courthouses across the nation, only a few display an architectural design derived from Old World Hispanic traditions. None of these buildings use an Andalusia fortress for a design inspiration, as does the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. Other extant courthouses which employ Spanish-derived architectural styles are:

Pima County, Tucson, Arizona  
31 W. Congress Street, constructed 1929

Terrell County, Sanderson, Texas  
100 West Hackberry Street, constructed 1905,  
remodeled into Spanish style 1930

U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building, Miami,  
Florida  
300 NE First Avenue, constructed 1933

St. Johns County, St. Augustine, Florida  
4010 Lewis Speedway, constructed 1888,  
remodeled 1967

Nueces County, Corpus Christi, Texas  
1101 Mesquite Street, constructed 1914

Sarasota County, Sarasota, Florida  
2000 Main Street, constructed 1927

Highlands County, Sebring, Florida  
430 S. Commerce Avenue, constructed 1928 (not  
currently in use)

Even though most of the above courthouses were constructed in the same period as Santa Barbara's, the exterior decorative elements on each of these buildings follow a high renaissance Spanish model with elaborate detailing, and an emphasis on verticality in the massing of the structure. Most have not employed a courtyard floor plan, but rather were constructed as standard "office block" building types. Few have significant landscape design elements associated with the courthouse building.

The Andalusian fortress model used for the Santa Barbara County Courthouse is spare in its exterior decorative details. Its massing is low while retaining a monumental scale. The surrounding landscape design is employed to dramatic effect to enhance and celebrate the community's appreciation of Southern California's acclimatized horticulture. These design elements are what make the Santa Barbara County Courthouse one of the most architecturally unique buildings in the nation.

### Architects Mooser and Hershey

Based in San Francisco, William Mooser Company was a wise choice for the Santa Barbara County Courthouse project. By 1900 the William Mooser Company had become one of the leading architectural firms in

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California, under the leadership of its founder William Mooser I (1834-1896). Many of the firm's projects centered around public improvements of one type or another. Three generations of Moosers have been principal of the firm over its 103-year history. While William Mooser II "Jr." (1868-1962) was the firm's principal when the Board of Supervisors chose his firm to design and construct the new Santa Barbara County Courthouse, it is William Mooser III (1893-1969) who is credited with the design and construction of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse, since his father assigned him as Architect-of-Record. The unique combination of engineering skills of architect Mooser II and the artistic/design skills of architect Mooser III culminated in an American treasure—the Santa Barbara County Courthouse.

By 1925, the firm was headed by William Mooser II who had been trained as an engineer. He had inherited the firm in 1896 from his father. William Mooser I (1834-1896) was born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1834. He studied architecture in his native land before arriving in San Francisco on October 10, 1854. One of his first jobs was at the Navy Yard designing naval structures, but he soon followed many other fortune seekers of his generation and set out for the gold mines of the Sierra Nevada. He briefly settled in Virginia City, Nevada, to practice architecture, designing and supervising the building of at least four substantial commercial buildings there.

In 1858 Mooser returned to San Francisco, at first joining pioneer architect Victor Hoffman in practice and then opening his own office in 1861. One early Mooser design still surviving, and one of San Francisco's oldest buildings, is the 1864 Pioneer Woolen Mill at Ghirardelli Square. It is now incorporated into the Ghirardelli complex designated in 1970 as San Francisco Landmark #30.<sup>13</sup> Mooser I entered into a few other partnerships during his San Francisco career, but a great deal of his work was lost in the fire which followed the 1906 earthquake.<sup>14</sup> Mooser was well respected in the San Francisco architectural community and was a founding member of the San Francisco Architectural Society in 1861. His son, William Mooser II, joined him in the practice in 1890, continuing the company name after his father died of kidney failure on November 17, 1896.

In 1900, during the Phelan mayoral administration in San Francisco, Mooser II became the first person appointed to the position of City Architect, responsible for the plans and supervision of all city construction. He was also in charge of the new Building Bureau and its building inspectors, and writing the first San Francisco building code. His son, William Mooser III (1893-1969), known as William Mooser, Jr. for most of his life, received his formal architectural training in Paris at the renowned École des Beaux-Arts and apprenticed with MacDonald and Couchot, later joining his father in practice for many years.

William Mooser II was in his late fifties when he worked on the Santa Barbara County courthouse project. His company had been active in the planning and construction of many residential, as well as public and commercial buildings, and the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors was especially impressed that his firm was experienced with courthouse complexes. Prominent among the firm's designs were courthouses for the northern California counties of Contra Costa, Nevada, Marin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne, as well as hospitals and schools.

William Mooser III became the key figure in the supervision of the Santa Barbara County courthouse project. Mooser III had a reputation as a brilliant artist and had traveled in Europe for seventeen years after his French

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<sup>13</sup> Most of the buildings in this complex were designed between 1899 and 1918 by his son, William Mooser II (1868-1962), for the chocolate manufacturer D. Ghirardelli Co. In 1962, the buildings were saved from demolition and rehabilitated into a retail and office complex.

<sup>14</sup> A group of Queen Anne style residences which Mooser I designed in 1893 at 2811-2821 Buchanan Street, remain, along with the home at 2702 California Street, which he designed in 1887 for carriage maker John Dupuy.

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training. Mooser III relocated to Santa Barbara with his French wife and two children to manage the courthouse project. He made daily decisions on all aspects of the design and construction from his office at 209 Anacapa Street. Father and son worked as a team with Mooser II attending important meetings in Santa Barbara and writing publicity articles about the project, and with Mooser III continuously on site, presenting drawings to review agencies, and supervising construction.

It was Mooser III, with his indispensable personal knowledge of the elements of Spanish architecture, who designed or selected many of the interior and exterior details for the courthouse. Both father and son endured the controversy, conflict and negotiation with various county boards and community leaders to produce the final result. Their temperaments and wisdom in allowing representatives from the county to have substantial input into the project eventually resulted in the building's final design.

After the destructive June 29, 1925 earthquake, the Santa Barbara Architectural Advisory Board convened on July 7 to review new and reconstruction projects for building code compliance. They often recommended changes in design to conform to the community's new concept of rebuilding in the Spanish architectural design palette. Frequently, they referred redesign projects to the Community Drafting Room for assistance. This design work center was composed of consulting architects who offered drafting assistance at no cost to architects and merchants for local projects that adopted the new Spanish motif. In the nine months following the earthquake, the Community Drafting Room reviewed and processed permits for 2,000 buildings.

J. Wilmer Hershey (1895-1926) was a member of the Community Drafting Room. Trained in architecture at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Hershey was credited by Mooser II for his courthouse concept as an informal Andalusian building rather than a formal Spanish building reflecting high renaissance decorative elements. Hershey had been asked to modify the Mooser firm's designs by local retired banker, real estate developer, and influential politician George Batchelder. By September 1925, Batchelder was faced with a tight deadline for construction cost estimates required for a November bond election to pay for the courthouse. Hershey's quick sketches became the basis for the courthouse design around a central courtyard producing an atmosphere reminiscent of romantic southern Spain. Hershey was paid for his work in the Community Drafting Room from July through October 1925, with a special payment in October for his courthouse contribution. He died in 1926 at age 31.

#### Count Ettore Cadorin, Sculptor

Ettore Cadorin (1872-1952) came to America in 1915, when he was engaged by Columbia University as a lecturer on Italian literature and art. Cadorin's work was well known by many of the elite in American society as they traveled Europe. When he came to this country and mounted an exhibit of his work at the Rheinhart Gallery in New York and at the St. Botolph Club in Boston, there was much interest. The critics favorably covered these exhibits and brought to Cadorin important commissions, like "Death and Resurrection" for the Woodlawn Cemetery (Los Angeles), the War monument for Edgewater, New Jersey, and the portrait bust of Caruso. The five pieces on the Santa Barbara County Courthouse were also a result of Cadorin's exposure in the early part of the twentieth century.

While in Venice, Cadorin executed two large statues in marble for the "Sansovino Library" or Royal Palace in the Square of St. Mark, the memorial to commemorate Wagner on the Palace Vendramin, the memorial to Benedetto Marcello for the Conservatory of Music, and other works of note. In addition, while in Paris, Cadorin executed a memorial for the cemetery of Montmartre, a statue of the royal princesses for the Queen of Italy, and others of leading personalities in the art and aristocracy of Paris and London.

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In 1917 Cadorin served in World War I on the Italian side—three years later he was called home by the Italian government and sent to the United States on an official mission to lecture on art subjects, and to organize an official exhibition of Italian art in America and of American artists in Italy. At some point after his arrival in America, Cadorin was invited to California to exhibit his work. This resulted in Cadorin establishing a studio in Santa Barbara across from City Hall. He also began to teach figurative art drawing and sculpture at the State College, now known as the University of California at Santa Barbara. He produced a number of sculptures for local patrons, including the Santa Barbara Cemetery, Mr. F. P. Knott, Mary P. Clark and others. While he lived, worked and taught in Santa Barbara, Cadorin received the Santa Barbara County courthouse commission to execute two statues (Justice and Ceres), two medallions (located on the triumphal arch), and the Spirit of the Ocean fountain sculpture.

In 1864 Congress enacted legislation that allowed each state to install statues of two of their distinguished citizens in the National Statuary Hall in the nation's Capital Building. As a result of Cadorin's work in California, specifically his Santa Barbara County courthouse work, he was selected in 1930 to execute a bronze statue of Father Junipero Serra, founder of the California Missions,<sup>15</sup> to place in Statuary Hall.

Albert Yann (Bela Janeau), Metalsmith

Albert Yann (1892-1987) received his early training under the watchful eyes of expert European metal-smiths. He was born Bela Janeau in 1892 in Budapest and began his career in metal work as an apprentice at the age of 14. While working in one of the leading metal shops in Vienna, his masters noticed the skill and care with which Yann executed his assignments. By the time Yann was eighteen, he left Hungary for the United States for a new life, escaping the rampant militarism of Emperor Franz Joseph's old Austria-Hungary. When he arrived at Ellis Island, the processing agent changed his name.

In the first part of the twentieth century the mass production of commercial manufacturing was well underway—this “new way” of creating the elements of architecture left little room for craftsmen, like Yann. As a result Yann worked in machine shops, finding little time to work on projects that called upon his “old world” skills.

It was not until Yann reach the middle of his life, that he was afforded more opportunities to express his craft and talent at metalsmithing. When Yann moved to Los Angeles, California, he found a lot of interest in his craft because the metal crafts are key to the authentic execution of Spanish and Mexican buildings—wrought iron railings, grilles, hammered metal lamps, wall plates, and more.

Albert Yann was a master metal-smith. His work was created from the finest metal working tools that could be found—all one of a kind, because Yann made every tool that he used. His art and artistry were evident in his tools, right down to the nails and screws that held the tools together.

When the Santa Barbara County Courthouse was being planned, the architects set out to find a master metalworker to execute the wrought iron rails, gates, grilles, wall panels and hammered copper panels (Repoussè) on the building. Yann was working in Santa Barbara at the time (1926) and when asked if he could execute the requested Hall of Records panels he agreed. As Yann recalls “...I was working in Santa Barbara when a salesman came to me looking for someone who could do metal art work. I am a coppersmith, Yann said.

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<sup>15</sup> Spanish control of Alta California began in 1769 when Fr. Serra (1717-1784) and Gaspar de Portola traveled north to San Diego from Mexico.

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I offered him a sample of my work. As a result, I was commissioned by the architects for the Santa Barbara County Courthouse to do the copper relief panels on the entrance to the new Hall of Records.”

Although the majority of his livelihood was from the fabrication of wrought iron gates, grilles, lamps and furniture for many Southern California buildings,<sup>16</sup> it is not clear from available records whether Albert Yann executed wrought iron elements in the courthouse. However, Albert Yann's artful depiction in copper relief of early California history contributes to the overall visual pleasure and architectural importance of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse.

### Giovanni (John) Battista Smeraldi, Master Painter

John Smeraldi (1867-1947), an artist who specialized in Italian Renaissance revival painting and interior design, is responsible for the Mudejar painting in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. Smeraldi was born in Palermo, Italy in 1867. He perfected his skills as a master painter in the Renaissance style while apprenticing in Rome.

After Smeraldi's immigration to the United States in 1889, his commissions consisted of lavishly decorated ceilings in many prominent public and private buildings. While on the East Coast of the United States, he worked on projects such as Grand Central Station in New York, and the Blue Room at the White House.

Smeraldi moved to Los Angeles in 1921 where he was commissioned to paint the ceilings for many of the public spaces in the proposed Los Angeles Biltmore. The hotel developers desired a building that echoed the Spanish roots of early Los Angeles. Smeraldi was responsible for decorative grisaille cameos throughout the Pasadena Civic Auditorium as well as the Mabel Shaw Bridges Auditorium. The Bridges Auditorium included a 22,000 square foot ceiling painting of the zodiac. In the Athenaeum on the California Institute of Technical campus in Pasadena, Smeraldi painted the wood beams and coffered ceiling panels with a rich array of floral and fruit arrangements, illusionist architectural details, fake “jewels,” and even seahorses.

The work in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse is estimated to have taken six months. Smeraldi's work is everywhere in the building, from the Mural room ceiling, department 1 & 2 ceiling, Hall of Records ceiling and walls, ceilings in the public hallways and underside of the main arch. One can find Smeraldi's touch on the furniture and draperies as well.

### Dan Sayre Groesbeck, Muralist

Dan Sayre Groesbeck (1879-1950) grew up in the last decades of the nineteenth century when the art of illustration, as a profession and as practiced by a number of talented artists, was at its height. Contemporaries include N. C. Wyeth (1862-1945), Frank Schoonover (1877-1972) and Jessie Willcox Smith (1863-1935). Groesbeck also played a key role in translating the printed illustration arts to the motion picture arts. He was particularly talented at adapting the traditional illustration techniques to the fluid format of motion pictures, and the demands of motion picture directors like Cecil B. DeMille and others.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Albert Yann is responsible for the wrought iron work at the Huntington Museum, the William S. Hart residence and museum, and numerous other buildings in Southern California. He is also responsible for the copper repoussé on the entrance gates to Scotty's Castle in Death Valley National Park.

<sup>17</sup> It was not until the early 1920s that Groesbeck “broke” into the motion picture industry, working on his first DeMille epic, *The Ten Commandments*. Over the twenty plus years that DeMille and Groesbeck collaborated, thousands of illustrations were created to aid the famous director in the production of landmark films that help to create the nation's view of California. It was the skilled hand of Groesbeck that translated ideas into motion picture reality.



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Prior to the Groesbeck motion picture years, the illustrator worked in the print media for national magazines like Harpers, Scribner's Monthly, Liberty Magazine and others. In addition to providing illustrations for monthly publications, Groesbeck also illustrated a number of books, including *Old Indian Days* (1907). On occasion Groesbeck provided illustrations for daily newspapers—including the *Los Angeles Morning Herald*, *London Graphics* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

By 1924, Groesbeck had become very successful, producing numerous works in a variety of formats: monotypes, paintings, illustrations and small scale murals. That year Groesbeck moved to Santa Barbara where he helped found the Santa Barbara Art League. It was also in 1924 that he received his first commission to produce a large scale painting "The Landing of Carrillo," for the County National Bank. The 10-foot by 13-foot painting now hangs in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse outside the Mural Room on the second floor. The 6,700 square foot mural in the Santa Barbara County Courthouse is the largest work of Groesbeck. Major museums and universities around the country hold Groesbeck illustrations, sketches, drawings and paintings. The largest such collection is at Brigham Young University. The Santa Barbara Museum of Art also has a number of pieces. The DeMille estate has a large collection of many rough drawings of movie characters and proposed scenes, produced while Groesbeck worked for DeMille.

### Legal Precedents Decided in Santa Barbara

Far from being just another beautiful public building, the Santa Barbara County Courthouse has been the location for national precedent setting legal cases. The most famous water rights legal case in the American west was decided at the courthouse in 1933: *Gin Chow v. City of Santa Barbara*. Superior Court Judge Frank C. Collier affirmed the appeal of the plaintiffs declaring their right to use of the waters of the local Santa Ynez River. Chinese immigrant Gin Chow and other riparian land owners brought the legal action to prevent the City of Santa Barbara from damming or diverting river water above their lands. The court decided that, among riverside property owners, the water rights of each "is confined and restricted to the amount of water reasonably necessary for useful and beneficial riparian purposes." This decision prevented the City from impounding so much water that it kept other property owners from using it. The case set a legal precedent for water rights decisions throughout the western United States.<sup>18</sup>

In 1985, longtime Los Angeles litigator Thomas E. Workman, Jr. won a 9-to-3 civil jury verdict for Reynolds Tobacco Company in Santa Barbara Superior Court, which was litigated at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse. Workman's courtroom opponent was the "king of torts," Melvin Belli, who represented the family of John Galbraith. John Galbraith was an important local resident and responsible for introducing the Thomson Seedless Grape to California. Belli argued that Galbraith, a three-pack-a-day smoker who died of heart disease, lung cancer and emphysema at age 69, had started smoking before cigarette packages carried health warnings, and that he was too addicted to stop by the time he learned of the hazards. Although many other similar cases were in various stages of litigation across the country in the mid-1980s, the Santa Barbara case was the first to go before a jury. The judge accused Belli of rushing the case to trial in order to reap nationwide "first-trial" publicity, but the trial still proceeded. Workman, himself a smoker of Reynolds-made Camel Lights, denied that Reynolds products were addictive or necessarily the cause of Galbraith's death, citing his "long and terrible medical history" of tuberculosis, chronic ulcers, pulmonary fibrosis and heart disease.

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<sup>18</sup> *Gin S. Chow v. City of Santa Barbara*, 217 Cal. 673, L. A. No. 12834. Supreme Court of California, April 3, 1933.

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Courthouse as Setting

The pilot and sixty-nine episodes of the *Owen Marshall, Counselor at Law* television series were filmed at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse from September 1971 until April 1974. The series starred Arthur Hill as Owen Marshall, and the crew used the courtrooms as well as the exterior of the building as background scenery.<sup>19</sup>

Summary

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse is one of America's finest and purest representations of Spanish-Andalusian architecture in a public structure. The building was completed in just under two years at a cost of \$1.3 million. The conception, design and construction of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse is the culmination of community spirit, county leadership, the work of artisans and craftsmen, and the will of a people to express their desire to return to their historic roots—creating a new Spain in America. This is an active working public building, but not just public business occurs here on a daily basis. The Sunken Garden continues to be the location of many regular community activities, including the annual Old Spanish Days fiesta, monthly summer concerts, receptions, and concerts by the Santa Barbara Symphony on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, in addition to hosting hundreds of visitors every day.

In 1990, during integration of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, Charles Moore, FAIA (Fellow, American Institute of Architects),<sup>20</sup> said of the Santa Barbara County Courthouse, "...that it was the finest twentieth century example of public architecture in the United States." The draw and power the building and grounds have over its citizens, here and around the world, is remarkable.<sup>21</sup>

The Santa Barbara County Courthouse is a unique and brilliant architectural design among public buildings in the United States and stands as the prized jewel of the city and county whose people it serves while delighting visitors. The myriad contributions of skilled architects, designers, artisans and craftsmen expressed their talents in this building and surrounding landscape with levels of skill no longer common in public buildings. The courthouse displays stunning individuality along with the traditions of Andalusia and early California, as well as the arts and crafts revival of the 1920s. The building has been greatly influential in setting the standard and perpetuating the City of Santa Barbara's image, and remains as beautiful today as it was when completed in 1929.

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<sup>19</sup> Other television productions that used the courthouse include *Crime of Innocence*, filmed in August, 1985, starring Andy Griffith, Ralph Waite, and Diane Ladd; *Brothers in Law*, filmed in October, 1985, starring Mac Davis and Robert Culp; and *Good Morning America* broadcast live from the courthouse sunken garden in November, 1995. The film *Steal Big, Steal Little* starring Andy Garcia was filmed at the courthouse in 1998 when the crew used both the interior and exterior extensively.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Moore, FAIA (Fellow, American Institute of Architects), was retained by the office of the County Architect with broad community involvement during the ADA integration project.

<sup>21</sup> Courthouse docent records indicate that approximately 5000 visitors from as many as 29 countries have toured the Santa Barbara County Courthouse within the last two years. Just like the early days of the city, when traveling to Santa Barbara, you would stop and pay your respects to the de la Guerra family, so visitors come to the courthouse to pay their respects to the community.

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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): Office of the County Architect, Santa Barbara  
 1100 Anacapa Street, Annex, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property:

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	11	251896	3812341
	11	251774	3812437
	11	251677	3812232
	11	251784	3812229

Verbal Boundary Description:

Being all of Block 123 according to Haley’s official survey map of the City of Santa Barbara, State of California. A portion of the Pueblo Lands of Santa Barbara Grant.

Beginning at the northeasterly corner of Block 123 and said point being the southerly corner of the intersection of Anapamu and Santa Barbara Streets; thence running southwesterly along the southeasterly line of Anapamu Street, 459.60 feet to the northwesterly corner of said block, also being the easterly corner of the intersection of Anacapa and Anapamu Street; thence at a right angle running southeasterly along the easterly line of Anacapa Street, 456.65 feet to southerly corner of said block and also beginning the north corner of the intersection of Anacapa and Figueroa Streets; thence at a right angle running northeasterly along the northwesterly line of Santa Barbara Street, 456.60 feet to the easterly corner of said block, also being the westerly corner of the intersection of Figueroa and Santa Barbara Streets; thence at a right angle running northwesterly along the westerly line of Santa Barbara Street, 456.65 feet to the point of beginning, being the northerly point of said block.

Also described as Assessor’s Parcel Number 029-161-01, 1100 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the city block containing the complex of interconnected buildings and landscape that have historically been part of and known as the Santa Barbara County Courthouse and which maintain integrity.

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
April 05, 2005