

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI _____

Trinomial # _____
NRHP Status Code _____

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 446 Second Street, Yuba City

P1. Other Identifier: Sutter County Courthouse

*P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted *a. County Sutter

and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

*b. USGS 7.5' Quad _____ Date _____ T _____ ;R _____ ; _____ 1/4 of _____ 1/4 of Sec _____ ; _____ B.M.

c. Address 446 Second Street City Yuba City Zip 95991

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone _____ ; _____ mE/ _____ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)

APN: N/A

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The courthouse at 446 Second Street in Yuba City was constructed 1899 in the Neo-Classical style. The building is located near the front of the parcel on the west side of Second Street, facing east within a commercial area.

This two-story government building has a rectangular floor plan. The façade is symmetrical and the building sits on a concrete foundation. The courthouse has a concrete block structural system and is clad in smooth stucco. The building is covered by a side-gabled roof with an intersecting pediment clad in composition shingles with slightly-overhanging boxed eaves. An octagonal cupola is located on the center of the roof ridge and is clad in fishscale shingles. The faces of the cupola have a combination of arched double-hung wood-sash windows and vents. Along the roofline there are decorative wood brackets and dentils.

(continued page 2)

*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP14. Government building

*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (Isolates, etc.):

*P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures or objects)



P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) View looking northwest at the façade and south elevation, July 18, 2006

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Sources: Historic Prehistoric Both circa 1900, visual observation

*P7. Owner and Address: unknown

*P8. Recorded by: Name, affiliation, and address) Laura Gallegos
Galvin Preservation Associates Inc.
1611 S. Pacific Coast Hwy. Suite 104
Redondo Beach CA, 90277

*P9. Date Recorded: April, 2006

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe) Intensive Reconnaissance

*P11. Report Citation: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none.") Sutter County Historic Survey (Galvin Preservation Associates, 2005-2007)

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure & Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photographic Record Other (List) _____

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Recorded By: Laura Gallegos *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 446 Second Street, Yuba City
Date: April, 2006 Continuation Update

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*P3a. Description:

The primary entry is located at the façade. It consists of a partial-width porch located beneath the intersecting pediment, supported by four Doric columns. The steps and landing are concrete with metal handrails leading to double metal doors. Other entrances to the building are visible on the south elevation. The entry to the south elevation is not visible but is accessible via a concrete stair and landing. There are nine windows on the façade and they are asymmetrically spaced. Five of the nine windows are located beneath the porch. Four windows are doubles consisting of double-hung wood-sash windows with half-moon windows over the top. The fifth window is located directly above the front door and consists of a pair of double-hung wood-sash windows with a half-moon indentation above. Other windows throughout the building consist of paired double-hung wood-sash windows with half-moon windows above. All of the windows throughout the courthouse have arched lintels.

Landscaping elements include a lawn, mature trees including palm trees, and other shrubs. Other features of this property include a concrete walkway leading from the sidewalk to the front entrance.

Alterations to the building include large additions to the north and west elevations. It appears that the addition on the west elevation was constructed prior to the north in a modest Streamline style with a concrete-block structural system. Windows on this addition include metal-sash fixed windows. The later north addition was constructed in a Mid-Century style with a zigzag roofline and metal-sash fixed windows are located directly beneath the roof line on the façade. The condition of the building is good.

Pictured in Thompson and West's *History of Sutter County*, between pages V and 9.

Profiled in *The Survivors* by Janet R. Sullivan and Mary-Jane Zall, 1974, page 54.

The Sutter County Courthouse

The Sutter County Courthouse, located on Second Street, Yuba City, was built in 1899 on the site of two previous courthouses, both destroyed by fire. The first building was constructed in 1858 but burned in 1871; the second structure was completed in 1873, but, also ill-fated, it burned to the ground in 1899. After a slight delay because of difficulties with the insurance company, which balked at the supervisors' claim of \$20,000 for a total loss, a settlement was made and the Courthouse was again rebuilt. It was, except for certain decorative details, an exact replica.

The architectural style of the Courthouse – with its two-story Tuscan columns supporting the portico, its tall “eyebrow” windows, and its balanced façade – is basically Classical Revival. The second-story veranda, which the building possessed until fairly recently, was typical of the buildings in the Old South. But the Italian influence is strong, too, in the elaborately bracketed roof line, the embellishments, and the quoins resembling stone blocks on the corners of the building. The octagonal cupola is an ornamental Victorian addition. And so the Courthouse seems to be a rather charming blend of a variety of styles. Best of all, it has been preserved in almost its original state and reflects the nature of civic architecture in the 1870's.

This building is described in detail by Mary Hanna Stewart in the July, 1962, issue of the *Sutter County Historical Society Bulletin*.

Yuba City became the county seat of Sutter County in 1856. The site had fluctuated between Oro, Nicolaus, Auburn, Vernon, and Yuba City since 1850. Oro was a “paper” city on the Bear River, not far from Nicolaus, on a tract of land purchased from General John Sutter by State Senator Thomas Jefferson Green, who hoped to establish a splendid metropolis on this location. He persuaded the State Legislature to declare Oro the county seat when Sutter County was formed in 1850. Green built a small zinc structure, where the first meeting was held on a hot May day. It was a first and a last!

Later that same year, the site was moved to Nicolaus for a short time, then to Vernon, then to Auburn, and back to Nicolaus. As the size and prosperity of these ambitious river towns diminished, and after Auburn became the seat of Placer County, the logical choice narrowed down to Yuba City, which was showing promise in 1856 of becoming a substantial community.

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Sutter County Historical Society Quarterly News Bulletin, July 1962, page 3

SUTTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Sutter County, Yuba City, California
Mary Hannah Stewart
January 12, 1962

Note: Quoted material in the section on the history of the building is taken from the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors, Sutter County, unless otherwise stated.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Original and Present Owner: Sutter, County, California Original and Present Use

The structure was originally built to serve as the county courthouse and office building: it still serves in this capacity. At one time it contained a ward for the mentally ill in addition to the offices and facilities more usually associated with a courthouse. It now houses, among others, the county audio-visual department, the offices of the District Attorney and the Justice of the Peace, the Sheriffs office, and that of the Superior Court Judge.

Construction

The building is constructed mainly of brick and plaster. It is built on soft ground, which becomes quite saturated during a rainy winter. For this reason it has a spread foot to retard the settling and sinking of the walls. It is built on slightly raised ground and for that reason has not been flooded as have nearby buildings. At some time in its history steel rods were inserted at the level of the second floor. They run north and south through the length of the building; their ends can be seen at the intersections of the "grid".

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first Sutter County Courthouse in Yuba City was built in 1858 on the lot where the present courthouse now stands. This building was destroyed by fire in December of 1871, and the County Board of Supervisors immediately started upon plans for the erection of a new courthouse. It was completed early in 1873. But it too was ill-fated, for in 1899 it almost completely burned. After a delay due to a slight disagreement with the insurance company, it was rebuilt almost exactly according to the original design. This last structure still stands (2nd and C Streets, Yuba City), and though somewhat altered through the necessities of convenience and repair it possesses all of the stateliness of the original.

There are several valid reasons for considering the Courthouse built in 1873, even though it was destroyed. There is a great deal of evidence that the building now standing is almost an exact copy of the original one. It was built by the same contractors as the first. There is no mention of new plans for the building in the Supervisors Minutes. There is evidence that the insurance company wanted to rebuild it exactly as it had stood. (*Sutter Independent*, May 19, 1899; Editorial). And perhaps the most easily accessible and undeniable evidence is an old lithograph in *The History of Sutter County, California*, published in 1879. There are very few changes between this building and the present one which cannot be accounted for. But the most important reason for considering the early building is that without a knowledge that without a knowledge of it, the various architectural styles incorporated in the present Courthouse are inexplicable. They appear illogical and out of step with accepted classifications if one considers only the later building. Since the two buildings must be considered as an architectural entity, the most interesting and entertaining history of the first cannot be discounted.

Immediately after the original Courthouse was destroyed in December of 1871, the county clerk was directed to advertise for bids for the construction of a new courthouse. On February 8, 1872 the plans of Joseph Gosling were accepted. The contract was awarded to the company, Swain and Hudson for the low bid of \$19,200.00 on April 3, 1872. Construction commenced immediately.

In the months between April and November there is no mention of the details of construction, though there is ample evidence that it was proceeding. For example: on August 24, 1872 the Board ordered that the clerk's vault in the new Courthouse be fitted with bookcases and pigeon holes "in a proper and workmanlike manner." On October 7 Swain and Hudson were allowed \$4,000 on the contract for the Courthouse. On November 4, a committee was appointed to furnish the Courthouse, and on November 12 Mr. S.J. Stabler was "authorized and appointed to affect an insurance upon the Courthouse, in one or more good and responsible fire insurance companies upon the cheapest and best terms possible."

By February of 1873 the Courthouse was ready for landscaping. "It is ordered that W. W. Perdue and W. J. Craddock be and they are hereby appointed a committee to procure suitable trees and to superintend the putting them out in front (East and South sides) of the Courthouse Courthouse, and make a gate on the South line immediately fronting the North and South Hall."

That the final polishing of the new Courthouse went on under the capable direction of Mr. Perdue is shown by the notations in the minutes of the following months. May 7, 1873: "It is ordered that W. C. Coates, the jailer, be and is required to take prisoners now in jail and all others that hereafter be confined therein, out of the Jail and have them work on the Courthouse yard, streets and c. and other public matters when necessary, cultivating trees, repairing fences, whitewashing, cleaning windows, etc. and that W. W. Perdue be appointed a committee of one to direct such work." November 5, 1873: "It is hereby ordered by the Board that W. W. Perdue be and he is hereby appointed a Committee of One, to have built in the Courtyard a wood house, size, style and c. to be left with said committee, and to make his report in the matter, together with cost of same, to this Board at its next regular meeting." At that same meeting Mr. Perdue and James Thomas were "appointed to have built forthwith a fine wall, twenty—six feet high for the protection of the Courthouse, on the

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North line of the Courthouse block, and that they have the same done in a good, substantial workmanlike manner, and to the best advantages of the county." (There was once a stable on that side of the Courthouse and it is interesting to speculate whether it was in existence at that time.) And finally on May 7, 1874, the county clerk was authorized to purchase a "suitable flag" for the Courthouse.

With the winter rains of 1874 trouble started; trouble which has been familiar to the majority of the succeeding occupants. On Thursday, November 5, 1874 the sheriff was ordered "to have the roof of the Courthouse, around the cupola repaired as to prevent leakages."

There is no mention of the Courthouse in the Supervisors Minutes until the following winter when instead of leaking the building apparently settled. For on December 14, 1875, the county clerk was directed "to advertise in the Sutter Banner for two weeks and in the Sacramento Daily Union for one week for sealed proposals to raise and repair the Courthouse." On February 7, 1876 the following proposal from the company Turton and Know was considered. "Gentlemen, the undersigned hereby propose to level up the Courthouse and put in a new and larger foundation in accordance with the plans and specifications on file in the Clerks office, and furnish all tools and materials therefor for the sum of \$4,200. and will raise the same four (4) feet above the present level, and brick up the walls with new foundation and repair all damage caused by raising for the sum of \$6,700... Or will agree to raise the building six feet for the sum of \$7,950." The proposal was taken into consideration and on February 9, 1876 the Board of Supervisors accepted the first plan.

The story of the building from then until it burned in 1899 is essentially one of repairs. The cupola was again leaking the next winter, for more repairs were ordered on November 13, 1876. The minutes state, "the said contractor insures the same not to leak for twelve months." There must have been a few startled or upset people petition of the taxpayers asking the improvement of the court yard be received and placed on file." In the next paragraph W. F. Peck was authorized to spend \$400.00 "fixing up and improving the court yard." Other entries in following years are concerned with various repairs, patching plaster, whitewashing and painting. There were two entries made during this time which are of interest: in January of 1894 money was allotted for a telephone for the sheriff's office and in April of the following year there was an allowance made for electric lights for the Courthouse.

On April 21, 1899 the Courthouse was almost completely destroyed by fire. There were certain difficulties in the settlement of the insurance. The county had a policy for \$20,000 in case of total loss, with an option to the company to rebuild if they so choose. The county claimed a total loss as the building was completely destroyed aside from part of the walls which they maintained were unsafe to use. (Even then they found their facilities somewhat inadequate and wanted to modernize and expand them.) The insurance company balked at this claim for a total loss and instead claimed their right to rebuild the courthouse. There was a great deal of controversy over the matter and several editorials were written about it. This excerpt from the May 19, 1899 issue of the Sutter Independent is illustrative of the problem: "If they desire to rebuild the Courthouse, all well and good, but the Supervisors will never accept a building erected on the walls as they now stand. They must be torn down as they are unsafe." On Friday, June 23, 1899 a satisfactory adjustment of the insurance was made, and a little less than a month later a contract was awarded to Swain and Hudson for the rebuilding of the Courthouse. (It is not known whether the old walls were allowed to remain.) There were a few changes made from the former plan: the county jail was expanded and a court added to it, an "insane ward" was included, and there were certain decorative details added or changed which do have some significance in connection with architectural styles. Nonetheless the new building was and is essentially the same as the original.

In January of 1903 a judges chambers was provided in the Courthouse. The building was re—roofed in 1915, and sometime in the early twenties the basement was dug out to provide for more space. On June 5, 1922 a contract was made with I.C. Evans for an addition to the Courthouse and for the remodeling of the tax collector's and treasurer's office. In early July of 1941 there was a motion and a contract to remove the cupola, and an investigation of the front porch and plans for its repair, if necessary, were ordered. There was enough objection from the citizenry to save the cupola, and the porch remained unchanged at that time. In 1947 the interior of the Courthouse was remodeled. This resulted in the construction of two stairways and a private office. Within the last decade the second story veranda was removed and the steel columns now present were put in its place. At the beginning of last December a new annex was opened. This is an extension at the north end of the building and it connects with the north hall. Stylistically it is so far from the Courthouse itself that it can, and should be, considered a separate building. In that light it is not so condemnable as is sometimes thought.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

General

The Sutter County Courthouse is a typical 19th Century building in its incorporation and blending of many various architectural styles and influences. It is indicative to a certain extent of the 19th Century desire for increased ornamentation of surface. It also reflects the long tradition of Baroque focus and Classical motifs present in American public buildings. Because it is a good example of these traditions and tendencies, as well as a pleasing building in itself, it is of architectural value and significance.

Exterior

The Courthouse is based upon late Baroque concepts of design which employed a center of focus in the design and an organization of elements in a minor—major—minor rhythm. The portico is confined to the center front of the building and is quite prominent, thus creating a strong central focus. This focus is further emphasized by the number of windows, both in the front and at the side of the building. In the front there are four windows, two on each side of the central door which is further emphasized by fenestration above it. There are three side windows now; originally the center window was a door. It was similar to the front door and was the central focus at the side. Even as a window it continues to be the central point for it possesses a complete hood mould which the other lower windows do

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not. The division of the surfact of the building into three sections on the sides and into five sections across the front further strengthens the Baroque focus.

The influence of the Classical Revival movement is quite strong in the building's decoration and design. Before the second story veranda was removed there were two varieties of Tuscan columns present in the portico. Those of the first story were unfluted, those of the second fluted. The use of the Tuscan column indicates a Roman rather than a Greek influence, and the fluting of the columns of the second story is indicative of the fact that in the American adaptation of Classical orders and motifs there was not always an insistence upon the archeological correctness. The present columns are also Tuscan and while they greatly strengthen the Classical influence upon the building they tend to emphasize and make more obvious certain inconsistencies and incongruities in style. Because they are so strongly Classical and so dominant, they tend to exaggerate the Gothic influence and the incongruity of the cupola. They tend to destroy the delightful blend of inconsistencies which the building once was. The pediments and cornices are exceptional for their attention to purity in proportion and detail. The architrave has three divisions, the frieze a very correct dentil course, and the modillions are quite correct in their proportion and shape.

The reticular framework of the surface of the building is difficult to classify. The horizontal could perhaps be considered a variant of the string course and the vertical as very much simplified influence which was coming into vogue at the time the building was designed. In this case the extreme simplicity of the framework when compared with accepted examples of the Stick style can be explained. When the building was built the Stick style might not have yet developed the ornateness in that particular area shown in later examples, and it would have been simplified to make it suitable for a public building of some importance which was based primarily on Baroque and Classical elements. It is probably best though to consider this framework as an indication of a desire for a regularity and focus of space in keeping with the Baroque basis of the building, and also an indication of the desire for a more ornamented surface which was typical of the 19th Century.

The combination of Classical and Gothic characteristics was not uncommon in the mid—century and later in California. In the Courthouse the Gothic influence is evident in the shape of the windows and the hood moulds over them. These shapes are neither those of the lancet nor the Tudor arch but rather a derivation from both, a characteristic which is indicative of the distortion which elements of adopted styles tended to undergo as they became more widespread in time and distance. In the first building the windows were of a slightly different design than they are at the present time. The repetition of the arch form in the pane emphasized the Gothic character of the window and added grace which the hood moulds need to avoid appearing slightly awkward. This change may have been made when the building burned in 1899.

The cupola, like the reticular framework, is an element of the building which defies precise classification. It repeats the Gothic fenestration in the body of the building. It contains brackets rather than modillions under the cornice. A fact indicative of the gradual dissolution of the more correct Classic and Gothic forms. Originally it was covered with clapboards, but sometime between the original construction and the fire these were replaced with shingles. It occupies the place a Classical dome would occupy, it serves no real purpose, and in fact, it creates a certain special discrepancy in the unity of the building. It is not unique for similar octagonal structures are found perched on the tops of many of the buildings of this period throughout the Valley and Foothills.

There are a few other features which should be mentioned in connection with the various stylistic influences upon the building. The quoins at the corners of the building add a certain visual stability. They were used extensively in buildings influenced by Italianate or Mannerist sources, but they are not indicative of them unless found in conjunction with other like characteristics. The second story veranda which the building possessed until fairly recently was an influence from the old south where it was developed as an aid to comfort as well as an element of architectural style.

Concluding Remarks

From the very beginning the Courthouse has incorporated in its design a variety of motifs. These are primarily Classical and Gothic, but there are others present, as the shingles in the cupola and the cupola itself. All of these elements are organized around a Baroque focus.

The effect of the changes made in the windows and portico cannot be ignored. The removal of the arch at the top of the separate panes lessened the strength of the Gothic influence and tended to make the hood moulds more awkward in appearance. The change in the portico can be either good or bad depending upon what one wants of the building and desires it to be. If one is looking for historical accuracy, a delightful blend of 19th Century inconsistencies, and a more typical example of the architecture of the period, the change was not a desirable one. If one wants a more Classical building with all the dignity of that style, if one dislikes the clutter and inconsistency of the 19th Century, and if one is not particularly interested in historical accuracy, the change is for the better. It is judgement to be made by the individual, if it must be made.

Interior

At one time the plans for the original building were on file, but they may have been destroyed in the last flood or lost in the move to the new County Office Building. But this much is definitely known of the original plan: there was a corridor which ran north—south through the building and had a door at either end; the main entrance hall intersected this corridor and the stairs to the second floor were at the back of the hall. The offices opened into these halls. The plan appears to be a variant of the Georgian, adapted to a public office building. This organization of interior space is a holdover from the 18th Century in which building plans were regular, formal, with the plain focus in the central hall, and the interior space was largely determined by the exterior structure. Today the south end of the corridor has been

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turned into office space and the north end connects with the new annex. The interior is scheduled to be remodeled sometime this year, a move which should make the building more useable and add to the comfort and convenience of those who use it.

Not too much can be deduced about the interior design. Above the door to the courtroom and on a few other doors there are hood moulds of the same design as those over the windows. It is logical to suppose that this motif was carried throughout the building. The ceilings are quite high except for those in the basement which is uncomfortably low, due to the fact that it was probably not intended for use and was dug out in the early twenties to create more office and storage space.

Recorded By: Laura Gallegos *Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 446 Second Street, Yuba City
Date: April, 2006 Continuation Update



View looking south at the north elevation and addition



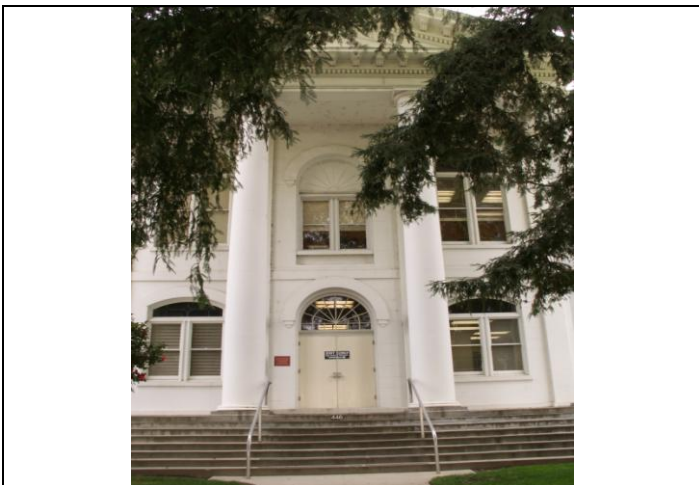
View looking southeast at the west elevation



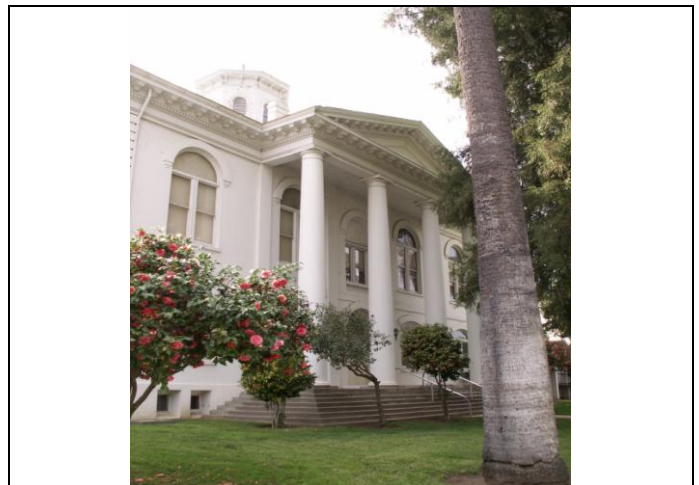
View looking northwest at the south elevation detail and cupola



View looking southeast at the façade steps



View looking west at the façade entry details



View looking southeast at the façade details with columns