United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

   historic name Guilford County Office and Court Building
   other names/site number Old Courthouse Building

2. Location

   street & number 258 South Main Street (corner Green Drive)
   city, town High Point
   state North Carolina code NC
   county Guilford code 081 zip code 27260

3. Classification

   Ownership of Property
   ☑ private
   ☐ public-local
   ☐ public-State
   ☐ public-Federal

   Category of Property
   ☑ building(s)
   ☐ district
   ☐ site
   ☐ structure
   ☐ object

   Number of Resources within Property
   Contributing Noncontributing
   1 0 buildings
   0 0 sites
   0 0 structures
   0 0 objects
   1 0 Total

   Name of related multiple property listing: n/a

   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ☑ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

   In my opinion, the property ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

   Signature of certifying official
   State Historic Preservation Officer
   State or Federal agency and bureau
   Date 10-28-88

   In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☑ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

   Signature of commenting or other official
   State or Federal agency and bureau
   Date

5. National Park Service Certification

   I, hereby, certify that this property is:
   ☐ entered in the National Register.
   ☐ See continuation sheet.
   ☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
   ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
   ☐ removed from the National Register.
   ☐ other, (explain:)

   Signature of the Keeper
   Date of Action
6. Function or Use
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
- GOVERNMENT: government office, courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
- COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

7. Description
Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
- Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
- foundation: BRICK
- walls: BRICK
- roof: CONCRETE
- other: OTHER: built-up (tar & gravel)

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

As part of a small cluster of extant Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings at the intersection of South Main Street and Green Drive in downtown High Point, the former Guilford County Office and Court Building is representative of commercial and governmental structures built in High Point and other large North Carolina cities during the 1930s. The building faces east on South Main Street, across the intersection from the 1932 Art Deco Post Office building.

A number of features typically associated with the Art Moderne style characterize this building, designed in 1937 by prominent local architects Louis F. Voorhees and Eccles D. Everhart. The two story brick structure is laid in Flemish bond, symmetrical in massing and detail, and accentuated with molded concrete trim. Its three-part horizontal cubical massing is enlivened with a minimum of surface ornamentation. Typical of the style is the lack of columns and classical entablature, although stylized classical decoration embellishes the entrance bays facing Main Street. That facade is dominated by the strong vertical emphasis of the three central bays.

The stylized entrance, although thoroughly modernistic in its effect, alludes to the classical motif of earlier governmental buildings in Guilford County. The entrance is defined by three concrete pillars, or unornamented pilasters without capitals, which extend above the roofline. Between the pillars are recessed vertical window strips containing metal-sash windows, some designed to prop open for ventilation. Each of these three central bays is crowned by a stylized concrete figure in low relief symbolizing the major economic activities of the High Point area: furniture, textiles and farming. The focus of the front facade is its metal Art Moderne doors accentuated with symmetrical square designs and crowned with a bowed metal transom bearing the county's name. First and second floor windows have concrete surrounds; beneath the first floor windows are fluted concrete panels resting on a concrete water table which encircles the building.

See continuation sheet
The three-part emphasis of the main facade is maintained on the building's southern side, facing Green Drive. Two rows of narrow vertical windows are part of a concrete trim pattern which repeats the vertical effect of the main entry and relieves the structure's squarish proportion. Below the water table is a centered basement entrance trimmed in concrete and flanked by a window on each side.

The northern facade duplicates the southern with the exception of a basement entrance. The rear of the building, facing west, lacks the vertical emphasis and concrete trim of the other facades, but retains the three-part massing with a five-bay central block. Features include two simple basement entrances, a second floor door leading to a fire escape, and a balcony outside a second-floor window, which apparently never served a door. The built-up tar and gravel roof is not visible from street level.

**Interior**

The interior was extensively renovated in 1962 at which time much of the large open space formerly used for courtrooms and other county administrative offices was divided into smaller offices. However, much of the interior retains original modernistic characteristics. The first floor lobby is particularly interesting with its terrazzo floor, entrance door, streamlined metal stair rails and pilasters. Other typically Art Moderne features such as door guards and recessed windows with rounded corners remain in the building's second floor lobby and public spaces and reflect architectural details of public buildings in the late 1930s throughout much of the nation.

Before the 1962 alterations, the lobby and a large tax office dominated the first floor, with clerks' offices to the north and the sheriff's offices along the southern wall. The second, or top floor had a lobby at the front above the first floor lobby, entered from streamlined Art Moderne stairways on either side. The northernmost of these remains. Two sets of double doors led to the walnut-panelled courtroom whose bench was to the south. The doors and panelling were removed in 1962. Along the southern wall of the building were the jury room, bathrooms, holding cells, and the judge's chamber. To the north were offices of the municipal judge and clerk. The basement held the furnace to the north, some jail cells, and, to the south, the "Farmers' Room."

A recent major renovation project has sensitively adapted the building for modern office use. The project removed partitions added during the 1960s renovation and repaired the damage of a 1980 interior fire. The lobbies have been reclaimed; the tax office and courtroom have been converted into law offices along with the other early office spaces. The basement is used for offices of the High Point Convention and Visitors Bureau.
The Guilford County Office and Court Building today is an important link in the architectural heritage of downtown High Point. It remains an integral part of the Art Moderne and Art Deco character of the South Main Street area which developed during the 1930s as High Point was establishing itself as one of the major cities in North Carolina.


2. Ibid.

8. Statement of Significance

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

- [ ] nationally
- [ ] statewide
- [x] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria

- [x] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

- [ ] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] E
- [ ] F
- [ ] G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architecture</th>
<th>Politics/Government</th>
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Period of Significance

- 1937-1938

Significant Dates

- 1937-1938

Cultural Affiliation

- n/a

Significant Person

- n/a

Architect/Builder

- Everhart, Eccles D. and Voorhees, Louis F.
- Stewart, R. K. and Son

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

The Guilford County Office and Court Building is significant both architecturally and for its importance in the history of Guilford County. The building was designed in 1937 by local architects Eccles D. Everhart and Louis F. Voorhees, and built by R.K. Stewart & Son, local contractors. With its notable Art Moderne and stylized classical details and abstract sculpture, it is an excellent example of the Art Moderne style in governmental buildings throughout the nation in the late 1930s and an important element in the cluster of Art Deco/Art Moderne buildings around the intersection of South Main Street and Green Drive in downtown High Point.

When the building was dedicated in January of 1938, it was considered by local political leaders to be one of the most significant events in Guilford County governmental history. Completion of the building cooled an intense period of political and governmental competition between Greensboro, county seat and largest city in the county, and High Point, a rapidly developing manufacturing and marketing center, and second largest city in the county. This struggle was so intense that during the period 1911-1913 it erupted into a serious effort to form a new central North Carolina county with High Point as its county seat. After its completion the building housed offices for a number of Guilford County administrative and judicial departments, and later its courtroom was designated for terms of Superior Court. The building is the only site outside of a county seat at which terms of North Carolina's Superior Court have been held.

The period of significance ends with the building's completion in 1938, since this is the only year in which the building meets the fifty-year-old criterion.

Criteria Assessment:

A. Associated with the political and governmental struggle between the two Guilford County cities of Greensboro and High Point during the first half

- [x] See continuation sheet
of the twentieth century and with the effort to establish High Point as the
seat of a new central North Carolina county, which characterized this
struggle at its most intense period. The building is also associated with
the statewide movement to promote efficiency and reduce costs in local
governmental operations which was popular in the mid 1930s.

C. Embodies the form and characteristics of Art Moderne architecture in
government buildings throughout the nation and is an important element of
the Art Deco/Art Moderne area of downtown High Point.

**Politics/Government Context**

Although construction of a new county building in High Point was not
approved until November, 1936, the intense political bickering between
citizens of High Point and Greensboro over the organization of county
government, which eventually brought about construction of the building,
can be traced to the early years of the twentieth century. During the
decade 1900-1910, due mainly to its development as a national furniture
manufacturing center, High Point's population more than doubled with an
increase from 4,163 to 9,525. Although Greensboro, with a population of
15,895, was a larger city in 1910, High Point's rate of growth had been
much faster over the last decade. As their growing city began to rival
nearby Greensboro in terms of population and economic prosperity, many High
Point citizens and civic leaders began to demand more control over county
governmental operations.

This rivalry grew so intense that by 1911 it resulted in the development of
a serious movement to establish a new central North Carolina county, with
High Point as its county seat. In January, 1911, state Senator A.H. Boyden
of Randolph County introduced a bill in the North Carolina General Assembly
calling for the creation of Piedmont County from portions of Guilford,
Randolph and Davidson counties. Several attempts to form new counties had
been initiated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
which resulted in the creation of Scotland County in 1899, Lee County in
1907, and Avery and Burke counties in 1911. The latter two, considered
during the same session as the effort to establish Piedmont and four other
new counties, were the last counties created in North Carolina.

The effort to establish Piedmont County, called a "monstrosity" by one
state legislator because of its unusual serpentine shape, was supported by
a group of influential High Point civic boosters. Among the leaders of
the group were J. Elwood Cox, a local banker; Fred N. Tate, an influential
furniture executive; and J.J. Farriss, respected editor of the High Point
Enterprise. These men held to a philosophy that recently created counties
had functioned well and that wealth and population growth should be the
major factors considered in establishing new counties, rather than
Despite the efforts of this influential group of High Point leaders who spent an entire week in Raleigh trying to win votes for their cause, the proposal to create Piedmont County was defeated on the floor of the House of Representatives by a vote of 54 to 43. According to contemporary newspaper reports, as well as local historians, most legislators thought that the creation of the new county was unnecessary, supported by only a handful of citizens, and would do serious harm to the counties from which it was formed. Also instrumental in the defeat of the Piedmont County proposal were the fears of Democratic legislators who controlled the General Assembly that the new county might become a Republican stronghold.

Although the proposal to form Piedmont County with High Point as its county seat was defeated in the General Assembly, the competition between Greensboro and High Point remained intense, and the effort to establish High Point as the seat of its own county remained alive in that city. In 1913 J.J. Farriss, editor of the High Point Enterprise, and other civic leaders returned to the General Assembly with a proposal to establish Aycock County with High Point as its seat. Again, High Pointers claimed that their city was large and prosperous enough to justify its establishment as a county seat. Supporters of the proposal also complained of the inconvenience of traveling to Greensboro for county affairs. However, the newly completed Greensboro-High Point Road defeated that issue and the proposal died without coming to the floor of the General Assembly for a vote.

Constant political bickering between High Point and Greensboro continued during the two decades following the 1913 defeat of the Aycock County proposal. A referendum to construct a new ten-story county courthouse in Greensboro failed in 1915 due largely to efforts against the measure in High Point where it was defeated by a vote of 1,201 to 47. High Point citizens, however, supported the construction of a new county courthouse in 1918. In spite of High Pointers' support of the new courthouse in Greensboro they still believed that they should have a greater voice in county governmental affairs. According to Alexander Stoesen, a Guilford County historian, High Point, "...being a city with a population greater than many North Carolina counties...often felt short-changed."
Historical Background

High Point citizens began to make progress in their efforts to secure a greater role for their city in Guilford County governmental activities with the election of Joe F. Hoffman, Jr., to the Guilford County Board of Commissioners in 1935. Hoffman, a High Point druggist, began an active campaign to secure a county building for High Point soon after his election. In November, 1936, due to Hoffman's "constant hammering" the Guilford County Board of Commissioners approved the construction of a new High Point county building. The commissioners approved an innovative plan calling for the purchase of the W. G. Bradshaw home on South Main Street from local businessman C. Clair Conner for not more than $32,000, provided Conner would loan the county the money needed to purchase the lot, demolish the house and build a new building not to exceed $100,000 in cost. The plan also called for the county to assume title to the building and obligation for the loan only after the building was completed. The news of approval of a new county building for High Point was welcomed by High Point civic leaders as evidence that Guilford County government, long dominated by Greensboro interests, would provide a greater role for the City of High Point. This feeling was evidenced in an editorial published in the High Point Enterprise which states, "...Apparently it dawned there (Greensboro) that High Point is an important city to Guilford" and, "Guilford has found a place for High Point on the map."

In December, 1936, the county commissioners approved the selection of local architects Eccles D. Everhart and Louis F. Voorhees to design the county building. The selection of Everhart and Voorhees, two of High Point's most prominent architects of the 1930s, was not surprising. They had worked on the design of the adjacent U.S. Post Office constructed in 1932 and had designed some of High Point's most notable structures, including the Thomas House in the Emerywood subdivision and St. Mary's Episcopal Church. Consulting engineer was William F. Freeman, and R.D. Tillson was
the landscape architect. Contractors were R.K. Stewart & Son. 28

The building was completed in little over a year at a total cost of $115,000, including land, equipment and construction costs, 29 and housed offices for a number of county departments which had previously rented space at different city locations. 30 The new structure, called a "handsome edifice" by the Greensboro Daily News, 31 originally housed offices for the county sheriff's department, the state highway patrol, and the county revenue, welfare and truancy departments. 32 Assembly rooms for various community organizations were also provided. 33 Most notable among these was the "Farmers' Room" in the basement level. This had its own exterior entrance and forty "opera chairs". 34 Although the building may not officially have been planned to function as a courthouse, an article in the High Point Enterprise reveals that even before the building's dedication discussions concerning its use for High Point's Municipal Court were underway. 35 After negotiations over the amount of rent the city would pay the county, the Municipal Court moved to the county building on April 4, 1938, paying a rent of $150 per month. 36

Attractively furnished and built "...with an eye to future growth," the building was dedicated on January 27, 1938, amid glowing statements from city and county dignitaries which emphasized the cooling of the intense political rivalry between Greensboro and High Point that had continued for most of the century. 37 George Stansbury, Chairman of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, claimed that the building's completion was evidence of the wonderful spirit of cooperation that existed among Greensboro, High Point and Guilford County government. 38 Commenting on the building's dedication, High Point mayor C.S. Grayson stated that it "...sealed the bond of friendship of Guilford's two great centers of population, to their greater cooperation in the future." 39 Evidently the editor of the High Point Enterprise also believed that completion of a new county building in High Point would have a calming effect on the political bickering between High Point and Greensboro and the effort to establish a new county which had characterized this squabbling at its most intense periods. He stated in an editorial that, "No doubt this old movement, revived ever and anon about a new county to be cut from Guilford, Randolph, and Davidson, with our furniture city as its seat, now ceases to move." 40

The construction of High Point's new county building required additional expenditures by the county during a period in which many local governments were attempting to reduce services and cut costs. However, an article published in the High Point Enterprise on the day the building was dedicated implies that the desire of county commissioners to provide better services for High Point citizens, while increasing efficiency and reducing operating costs, was the major factor which brought about the building's construction. The article points out that services offered by the county,
especially welfare services, were expanding and that the county needed additional space to house offices which had been spread out over the county. The county's welfare office, in particular, had greatly expanded its operations. From a staff of only three workers in 1935, the office had grown into a staff of eleven by 1938.

From 1938 the building housed county administrative offices as well as High Point's Municipal Court. A change of major significance took place in February, 1943, when the building became the State of North Carolina's 101st courthouse: the first building not located in a county seat which housed sessions of the Superior Court of North Carolina. This distinction was brought about by the passage of an Act by the North Carolina General Assembly which specifically provided for sessions of the state's Superior Court to be held in each city of the state which was not a county seat and had a population of 35,000.

This Act, which affected High Point and no other city, was carefully drafted by High Point legislators and civic leaders to give the city a great role in county judicial affairs. Evidently the political struggle between High Point and Greensboro was not completely ended by the construction of the county building, for efforts to secure Superior Court sessions were begun in 1937 while the building was under construction. Articles in High Point newspapers reveal that this issue was defeated in the North Carolina General Assembly in 1937 and again in 1941 due to the efforts of Greensboro legislators. The holding of Superior Court sessions in High Point was finally approved by the General Assembly in February, 1943. The issues used by the High Point supporters of this effort were the same ones used three decades earlier by some supporters of the new county movement. High Pointers still believed that they should not be subjected to the inconvenience and expense of the trip to Greensboro to participate in county affairs.

The building continued to provide office space for county departments and courtroom space for Municipal Court and Superior Court until 1962 (the Farmers' Room functioned as the Municipal Courtroom when the Superior Court was in session upstairs), when these functions were moved into a new county office and courtroom building in High Point. Renovations at that time partitioned the courtroom space for use by the Guilford County Department of Social Services, which occupied the building until vacated by an interior fire in 1980. The Old Courthouse Building remained empty until 1983 when it was rehabilitated and occupied by the present owners, the law firm of Wyatt Early Harris Wheeler and Hauser.

In December 1983 the building's facade, grounds, first and second floor lobbies, and stairways were granted historic property status by the Guilford County Joint Historic Properties Commission.
Endnotes

1. Minutes of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, November 16, 1936.


3. Greensboro City Directory, 1910, Richmond. Hill Directory Co., 1910, p. 12. High Point's rate of growth for the decade 1900-1910 was 120% while Greensboro's rate of growth for the same period was 55%.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.


12. Ibid.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid, p. 159.
23. High Point Enterprise, November 17, 1936.
24. Minutes, Guilford County Board of Commissioners, November 16, 1936.
25. High Point Enterprise, November 17, 1936.
26. Minutes, Guilford County Board of Commissioners, December 7, 1936.
29. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. High Point Enterprise, January 26, 1938.
33. Ibid, January 6, 1938.
34. Minutes, Guilford County Board of Commissioners, September 7, 1937.
35. High Point Enterprise, January 6, 1938.
37. High Point Enterprise, January 26, 1938.

41. Ibid, January 27, 1938.

42. Ibid, January 26, 1938.

43. High Point Beacon, February 18, 1943.

44. 1943 Session Laws and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly, Charlotte: Observer Printing Co., 1943.

45. High Point Beacon, February 18, 1943.

46. High Point Enterprise, January 9, 1938.

47. High Point Beacon, February 18, 1943.

48. Ibid.

49. High Point Enterprise, January 6, 1943.


51. Application for the Designation of a Historic Property (Guilford County Office and Court Building), Guilford County Joint Historic Properties Commission, 1983.

52. Ibid.
Application for the Designation of a Historic Property (Guilford County Office and Court Building), Guilford County Joint Historic Properties Commission, 1983.


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:

- owner

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: slightly over ¼ acre (approximately 0.55 acre)

UTM References

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is outlined in red on the enclosed Guilford County Tax Map #4, at Block 1, lot 9. The property consists of slightly over half an acre on the northwest corner of South Main Street and Green Drive in downtown High Point as described in Guilford County Deed Book 3297, page 149. The property is approximately 180.35' x 101.35' x 121.14' x 201.01' in size, with irregular shape at the SE and SW corners.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lot that has historically been associated with the courthouse property. Lot 9 today includes earlier lots 9 and 19.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Langdon Edmunds Oppenmann, Preservation & Planning Consultant (1988 work); Ray Manieri (1983 work)
organization:
date: July 1988
street & number: P.O. Box 829
city or town: Winston-Salem, NC
telephone: 919/721-1949
state: NC
zip code: 27102

Guilford County Deed Book 3297, page 149.

High Point Beacon, February 18, 1943.


High Point Enterprise, November 1 - December 31, 1936, January 1 - March 1, 1938.


Interview, Frank B. Wyatt (Partner), June 2, 1988.


Letter, Peter Kaplan (N.C. Division of Archives and History) to Frank B. Wyatt (Partner, Wyatt Early Harris Wheeler & Hauser), July 29, 1983.


Minutes of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners, 1936-1938.


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet  

Photographs  

With the nomination are six photographs as identified below. Each photograph is numbered on the back and keyed to this list.

Guilford County Office and Court Building  
High Point, NC  
Langdon E. Oppermann, photographer  
Date of photos: June 1988  
Negatives in possession of Ms. Oppermann

8 x 10  (1) Looking West (front elevation)
5 x 7  (2) Looking West (entrance bays)
5 x 7  (3) Looking North (side elevation facing Green Drive; shows entrance to "Farmers' Room")
5 x 7  (4) Looking Northeast (interior lobby floor and entrance doors)
5 x 7  (5) Looking North (interior staircase off lobby)
5 x 7  (6) Looking East (rear elevation)