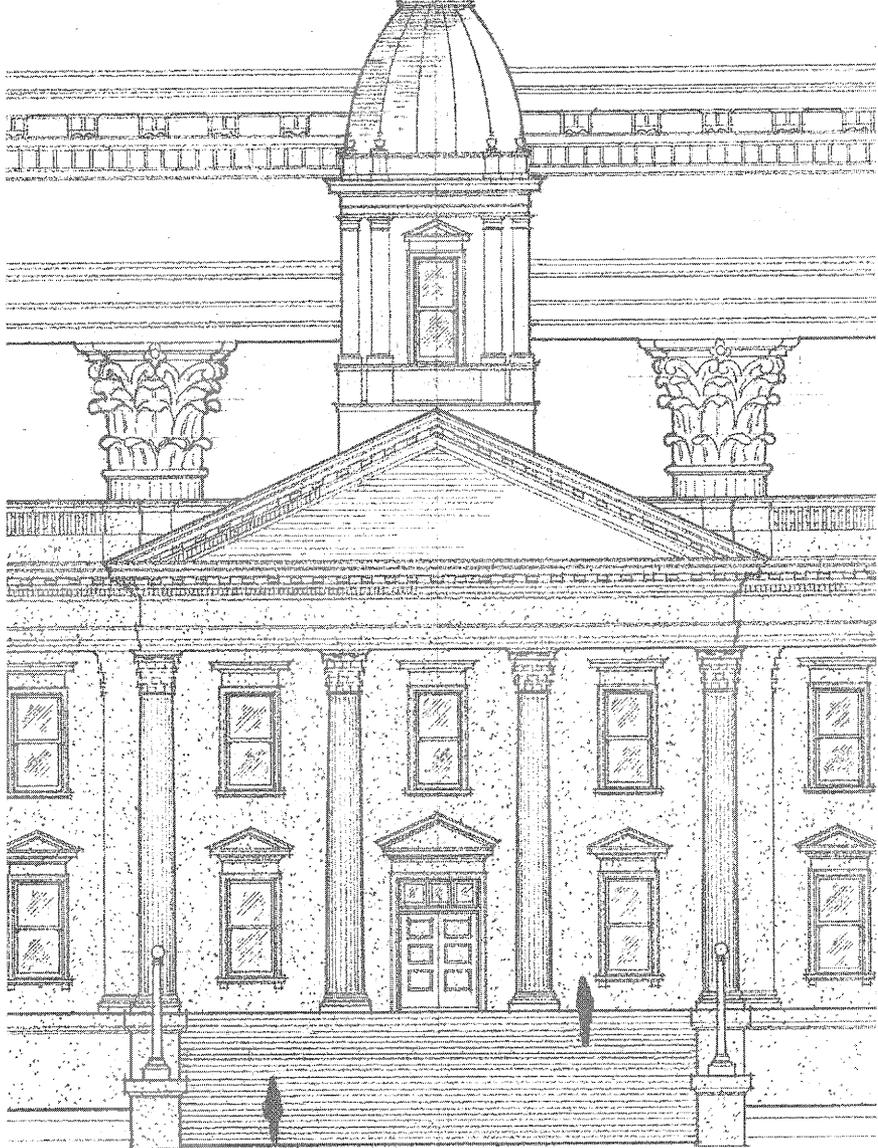


BUILDING JUSTICE:

HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY

PERSPECTIVES ON

CALIFORNIA'S COUNTY COURTHOUSES



The Place of Justice: California's County Courthouses

Note: This is the first of two exhibits of photographs of historic and contemporary courthouses in California counties. Photographs of courthouses in the 39 counties of the First, Second and Third Appellate Districts are exhibited here.

Tangible Symbols of Our Democratic Values

What is a *courthouse*? A powerful word, *courthouse* evokes images of guilt or innocence, punishment or exoneration, new families formed or marriages ended, and disputes resolved according to law. Courthouses are places where facts become evidence, where law is analyzed and applied, and where legal and equitable resolutions to controversies are the intended and expected results.

Californians who have never participated in a trial – as litigants, legal counsel, or members of a jury – may have come to the courthouse on business with state or local government. Throughout California's history, courthouses have been places of record where documentary evidence of marriages, property ownership or taxation could be found. Developing towns and cities focused their ideals and attention on courthouses, giving them central and prominent locations for ease of citizen access.

The design of county courthouses has varied with locations, resources, historical periods and architectural trends, but the symbolism of county courthouses is constant: they represent government elected by the people. They are places of justice.

California's Appellate Districts

Courthouses in California's 58 counties are the locations of the Superior Court where trials are held. At the conclusion of a trial in the Superior Court, the parties may appeal the court's

judgment or decision. An appeal from a trial court judgment can be taken to the California Court of Appeal. When established by a constitutional amendment in 1904, the Court of Appeal was organized into three appellate districts. Continuous growth in the state's population was accompanied by a significant increase in the number of appeals, and the legislature subsequently redrew the 1904 boundaries to establish three additional appellate districts. The courthouses pictured in this exhibit are from the 39 counties located in today's First, Second and Third Appellate Districts.

The 20 justices of the First Appellate District, located in San Francisco, hear appeals from Superior Courts of 12 northern coastal counties. The Second Appellate District, with 32 justices sitting in Los Angeles and Ventura, hears appeals from four densely populated southern counties. In Sacramento, the 11 justices of the Third Appellate District hear appeals originating in 23 counties in the northern and central regions of the state.

In the First, Second and Third Appellate Districts, more than 20 million residents of 39 counties are served at more than 100 Superior Court locations. From July 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006, more than five million cases were filed in the Superior Courts of the 39 counties. During this period more than 14,000 appeals were filed in the First, Second and Third Appellate Districts.

Historic Courthouses in California's First, Second and Third Appellate Districts

Nine historic courthouses, still in use today, have served their counties since the nineteenth century, in Colusa, Glenn, Mono,

Napa, Nevada, Placer, Siskiyou, Sutter and Trinity counties. Of the 13 historic courthouse buildings that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, six continue to serve the courts today, in Contra Costa, Lassen, Marin, Mono, Napa and Santa Barbara counties. Historic courthouses in Placer, San Francisco and Trinity counties are in locales designated as historic districts by the National Park Service.

Courthouse Construction and Renovation Today

Eight twentieth century courthouses were built or occupied before 1950, and 17 were built or occupied between 1950 and 1980. New or additional court facilities have been built in many counties, and other improvements such as remodeling and expansion have also been completed. Superior Courts in the majority of counties have multiple locations to serve county residents. Additional space, including courtrooms, has enabled the Superior Courts to carry out their complex responsibilities in all cases arising in civil, criminal, family, juvenile, probate, and small claims matters.

Despite this progress, the aging infrastructure of California's courthouses is a serious challenge to the administration of justice. The Office of Court Construction Management, Administrative Office of the Courts, reports an urgent need for construction and renovation in California's court buildings, and provides these illustrative examples.

- There is just one courtroom for every 15,432 Californians.
- Because of a lack of courtroom space, more than 23 court facilities are in trailers.
- 25 percent of courtrooms have no space for a jury box.

- 41 percent of court facilities have no way to bring in-custody defendants to courtrooms without using public hallways where the defendants pass by witnesses, potential jurors, victims, and other court users.
- 68 percent of court buildings do not have up-to-date fire and life safety systems (including sprinklers, proper exits, and emergency lighting).
- 78 percent do not have adequate access for persons with disabilities.

The Trial Court Facilities Act ((Stats. 2002, ch. 1082 (Sen. Bill No. 1732)) is intended to ensure that all Californians have equal access to safe, secure and adequate court facilities. In accord with this legislative intent, the Judicial Council has authorized a continuous program of improvements to court facilities, including new construction where necessary.

Californians come to their courthouses to exercise their constitutional rights. Legislative enactments, together with the Judicial Council's direction and guidance, assure the provision of safe, secure and accessible court facilities. In the words of Chief Justice Ronald M. George:

Our judicial system does not need, want or expect palaces. But it does deserve facilities that are secure, well maintained, and adequate to serve the public's needs.

Additional information on the status of California's courthouses is available at: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/>.

PHOTOS, POSTCARDS & PUBLICATIONS EXHIBITED

Images of contemporary and historic county courthouses in California's First, Second and Third Appellate Districts appear in Vitrines Two through Seven. Historic county courthouses are depicted in selections from a set of postcards developed by the Administrative Office of the Courts in 2000. The postcard series replicates the "Temples of Justice" exhibit, which can be viewed in the Judicial Council Conference Center and on the California Courts Web site at: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/trial/historic/.

VITRINE TWO: FIRST APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- First Appellate District, San Francisco
- Alameda County
- Contra Costa County
- Del Norte County
- Humboldt County
- Lake County

VITRINE THREE: FIRST APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- Marin County
- Mendocino County
- Napa County
- San Francisco County
- San Mateo County
- Solano County
- Sonoma County

VITRINE FOUR: SECOND APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- Second Appellate District, Los Angeles
- Los Angeles County
- San Luis Obispo County
- Santa Barbara County
- Ventura County
- *Courthouses of California (2001) and California Court Houses (2000)*

PHOTOS, POSTCARDS & PUBLICATIONS EXHIBITED, CONT.

VITRINE FIVE: THIRD APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- Third Appellate District, Sacramento
- Alpine County
- Amador County
- Butte County
- Calaveras County
- Colusa County
- El Dorado County
- Glenn County

VITRINE SIX: THIRD APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- Lassen County
- Modoc County
- Mono County
- Nevada County
- Placer County
- Plumas County
- Sacramento County
- San Joaquin County

VITRINE SEVEN: THIRD APPELLATE DISTRICT COURTHOUSES

- Shasta County
- Sierra County
- Siskiyou County
- Sutter County
- Tehama County
- Trinity County
- Yolo County
- Yuba County



HON. RONALD M. GEORGE

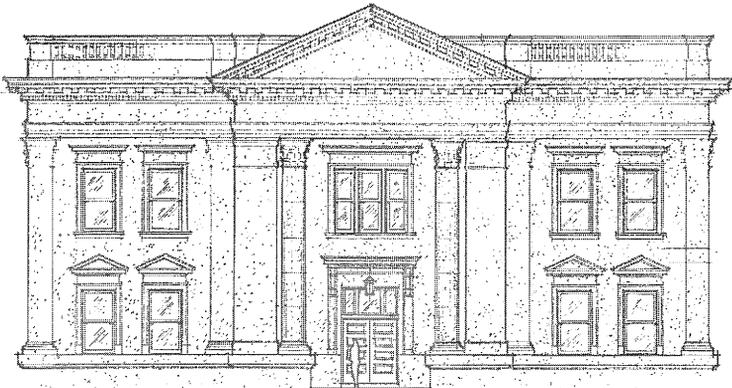
Chief Justice of California

HON. WILLIAM R. MCGUINNESS

*Administrative Presiding Justice, Court of Appeal,
First Appellate District*

MR. WILLIAM C. VICKREY

Administrative Director of the Courts



CALIFORNIA JUDICIAL CENTER LIBRARY

*Serving the California Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal,
First Appellate District*

455 Golden Gate Avenue

Room 4617

San Francisco, California 94102-7013

415-865-7178

reference@jud.ca.gov

January 2008

© California Judicial Center Library