

ALAMANCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Historical Sketch

Alamance County was formed in 1849 from Orange County, and Graham was designated as its county seat. Its first courthouse was built in 1849, of brick, and remodeled in 1882, 1888, and 1889.¹ The building was in use until 1924 when the citizens of Alamance built a new one after resolving a disagreement over the location of the structure. The county commissioners had intended to use a block containing several businesses as the location for the new courthouse, but in 1923 W. J. Hicks, a merchant, "had said that he would contest in the courts the right of the commissioners to condemn the entire block in which is located his store building for a Court House site." The argument was solved when the architect, Harry Barton of Greensboro, displayed his plans "showing the size of the proposed new courthouse." Harry Barton (1876-1956) was a former native of Philadelphia whose offices were located in Greensboro for most of his career. He was noted for planning public buildings including many of the courthouses of North Carolina. He is well remembered for his use of Neo-Classical design and rich materials in construction and ornamentation. After examining Barton's plans, the commissioners then voted unanimously to locate the new structure on the site of the old. The new building cost approximately \$250,000.²

Architectural Description

The Alamance County Courthouse is an imposing three-story stone building located on a hexagonal plot in the center of Graham's commercial district. The Neo-Classical Revival building was designed in 1924 by Harry Barton of Greensboro. Barton, a native of Philadelphia, is noted for his sophisticated handling of the Neo-Classical style in public buildings, as exemplified in his other county courthouses of the same era. Cumberland, Guilford, Johnston and Surry county courthouses exhibit Barton's formal treatment of the classical style. The sophisticated and richly detailed Alamance County Courthouse is the most impressive building of Graham, as it commands the skyline of the town from the major streets which lead to its steps. Its scale, style, and materials blend well with the town's commercial buildings, many of which are contemporaries of the courthouse. The courthouse's symbolic siting and official appearance make it the major landmark of Graham.

The Alamance County Courthouse is dominated by a hexastyle portico carrying an entablature which bears the inscription "Alamance County Courthouse." The tall stone columns have acanthus and palmette capitals. This

¹Fred A. Olds, Story of the Counties of North Carolina (Oxford: Oxford's Orphanage Press, 1921), p. 11.

²Alamance County, Minutes of the Board of County Commissioners, Vols. 10-11, 1912-1918, Minutes of May 17, November 5, 1923.

order is repeated on the other elevations of the building in order to continue the main facade scheme around the building, as its hub-like location makes the building visible and accessible from all sides. The flat roof is concealed by a parapet wall above the main entablature of the building. Windows are linteled, and are capped by stone cornices and lintels with keystones. The four entrances to the building have elaborate entablatures resting on scroll consoles decorated with a crest of anthemion and palmette antefixes.

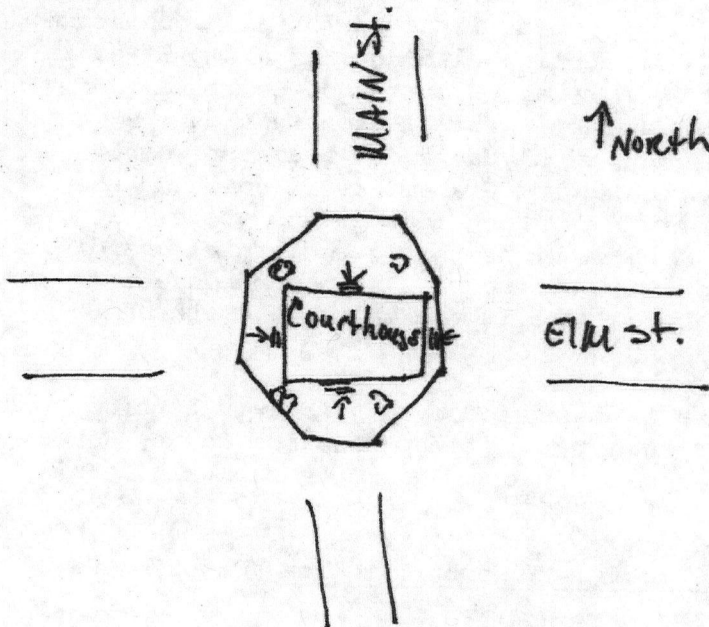
The first floor contains offices divided by wide cross halls which meet at an octagonal circulation space. A marble medallion radiates from the center of the octagon, and the rest of the floor is laid in mosaic tile. At the ends of the halls are stairs with iron railings which lead to the courtroom. This chamber is characterized by fine wood trim in the classical style. Although Barton integrated his decorative theme into all aspects of the building, such as columnar iron lamps which frame the entrances to the courthouse, he focused his interior decoration on the courtroom. Robust moldings, pedimented overdoors, cornices, and raised paneled doors and wainscots enrich the room. Although renovations have been made to the interior, it retains much of its original finish.

Address: G. Cranford Amick, Chairman, Alamance County Commissioners
 Alamance County Courthouse, Graham, N. C. 2753

Acceage: less than one acre

UTM reference: 17/644040/3992600

Verbal Boundary description: The courthouse is situated in the center of Graham on an octagonal plot bounded by Elm and Main Streets.



Property

North Carolina Courthouses Thematic Group

State

N.C.

Working Number

12.12.78.4763

TECHNICAL

Photos

#62

Maps

57

CONTROL

rl

OK 12.14.78

HISTORIAN

57 county courthouses ranging from early 19th century to 1930s. Significant in long time associations with ~~the~~ commercial, political and legal activities in the community. Some questions on integrity of subject, justification on 1930s examples. Needs call for minimal information.

CAVE / ACCEPT

DOUBLE 3/6/79

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

The inventory forms contain adequate descriptions and statements of significance yet lack conveyance of the courthouse sites and their importance. In many buildings are being nominated. I think we should return for proper completion.

RECALL
3/6/79

ARCHEOLOGIST

1930's structures justified in continuation sheets; additional photos received. Brunswick Co. Courthouse has suffered some loss of integrity but retains missing fenestration, bellry symbolizing public building - would accept but defer to architectural historian opinion.

ACCEPT 5/8/79
DOUBLE

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

articulate presentation of significance of these courthouses.

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

one apparently eligible property held back because of county opposition, but I cannot see rejecting entire thematic or exclusion of one property.

Accept
Lebovich
5/10/79

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up

6-5-79

Send-back

Federal Register Entry

Re-submit

Entered

MAY 10 1979

5/10/79



NEGATIVE NUMBER N-77-1-202

PHOTOGRAPHER Mary Lee

MAY 10 1979

PHOTO DATE 1/26/77

SUBJECT Alamance Co. Courthouse

*North Carolina Courthouses
Thematic Group
~~Covington~~ County
#13 of 62*

FROM DIVISION OF
ARCHIVES & HISTORY,
RALEIGH, N. C.

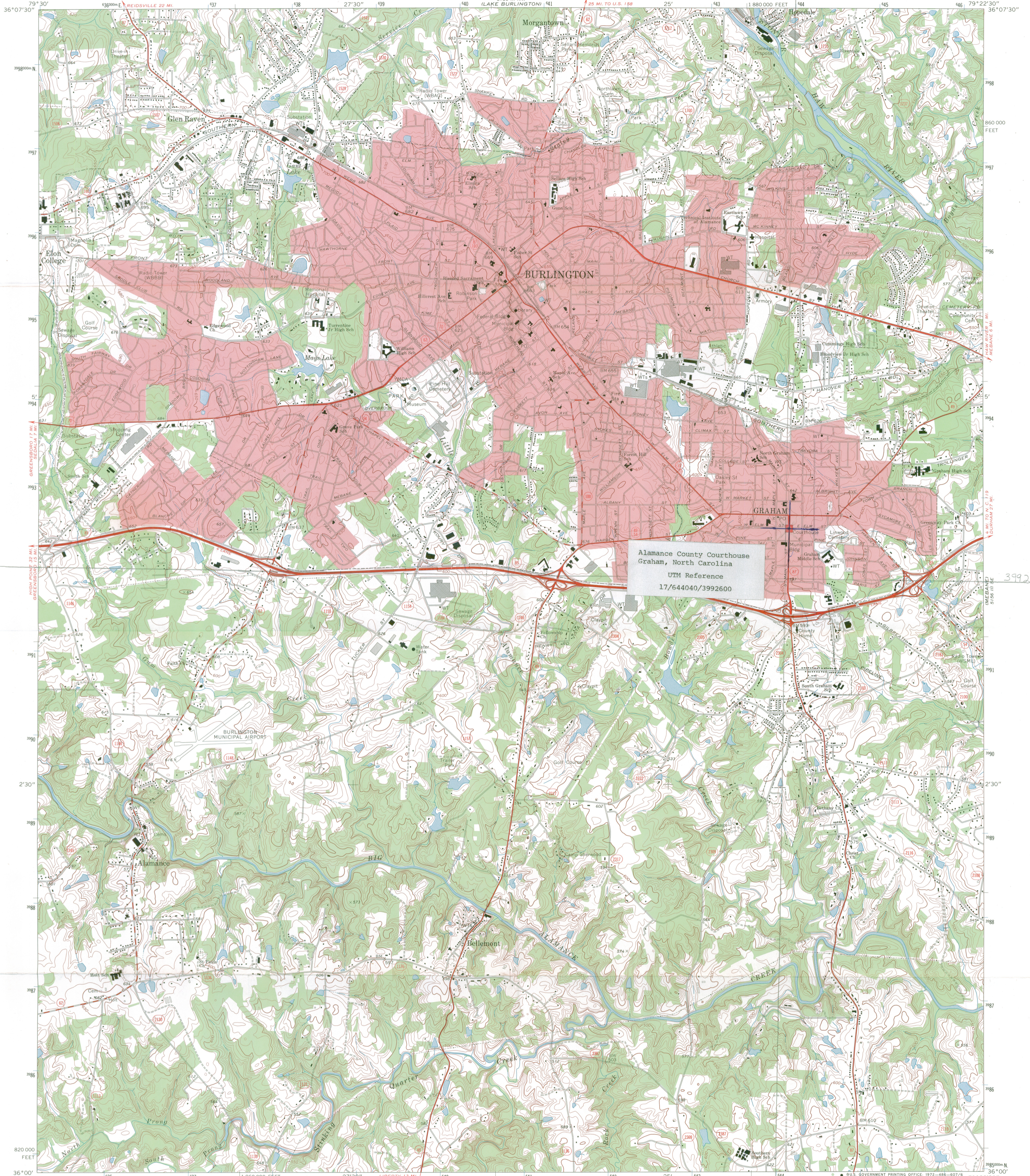
JAN 20 1978

MAY 22 1980

Alamance

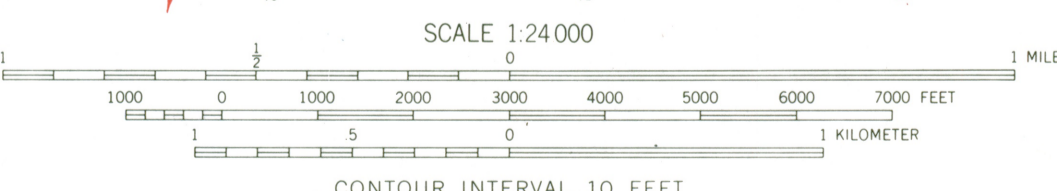
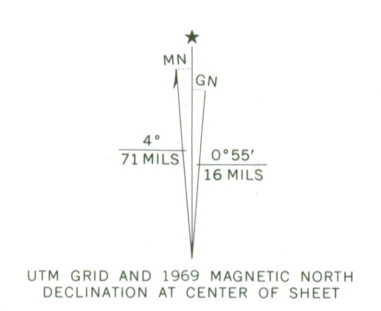
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION

DEC 12 1978



Alamance County Courthouse
Graham, North Carolina
UTM Reference
17/644040/3992600

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1967. Field checked 1969
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on North Carolina coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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NATIONAL REGISTER

BURLINGTON, N. C.
N3600-W7925/7.5
1969
AMS 5156 III SW-SERIES V842
MAY 10 1979

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