

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Burke	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Burke County Courthouse

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Courthouse Square bounded on the northwest by Union Street, northeast by Sterling Street, southeast by Meeting Street, southwest by Green Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Morganton

STATE North Carolina	CODE 32	COUNTY: Burke	CODE 12
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
County of Burke

STREET AND NUMBER:
Courthouse Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Morganton

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 32
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Burke County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:
Courthouse Square

CITY OR TOWN:
Morganton

STATE: North Carolina	CODE 32
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina

COUNTY: Burke

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Exterior: The Burke County Courthouse, built 1833-1835, is a square building, one story raised on a full-height basement, with exterior dimensions of 60' x 60' x 30'. The structure was constructed of native stone in the Classical Revival Style with two simple pedimented portico-porches on the southwest and northeast fronts. The four columns supporting each portico have capitals of the Roman Doric order. Under each portico are twin curved stairways which lead to the courtroom on the first floor. Each porch was partially enclosed with an iron railing. The 12-over-12 windows each had simple louvered blinds, excepting the palladian window on the northeast side. The hip-roof was originally surmounted by a cupola of the simplest design with louvered rectangular openings on each of the four sides with a pyramid roof. The double chimneys for the interior fireplaces were concealed within the walls on the northwest and southeast sides of the structure. When the Courthouse was remodeled in 1901 an elaborate cupola of the Baroque Style was constructed on the center roof replacing the former. The native stone exterior was covered with stucco and the trim work was altered by adding greater detail to the cornices, to the pediments, and fully moulded architrave frames were added around the windows and doorways. The two classical porticos were raised four feet to conform to the main roof line of the building and the four columns under each were blocked up accordingly. Full cast iron railings were also installed on the two porches. The double chimneys on the northwest and southeast sides were closed, partially dismantled, and two pedimented gables were constructed over to hide them from view. The 1901 remodeling project gave the Courthouse a more imposing appearance than the structure actually has. No exterior feature has been replaced or altered since the 1901 remodeling. The exterior of the structure is painted in light gray and trimmed with bright white.

Interior: The interior of the full-height basement floor of the Courthouse was originally cruciform in plan with four entrances, one on each side of the structure, with hallways leading from these to the center. Originally there were four offices on this floor (one in each corner), for the Clerk, Register, Accountant, and Sheriff. Each office measured 22 1/2' x 22 1/2' x 12', and had a corner fireplace of the simplest design. At some time prior to 1901 the entrances on the northwest and southeast sides of the Courthouse were closed, and the ends of the two halls leading from the center to these entrances were also bricked. The alterations left one hallway connecting the two portico entrances. The closing of the two entrances and halls provided additional office space for the Clerk and Register. The interior walls are plaster over native stone. Native stone was also used for the floors, which are as they were originally. The ceiling of each room and of the hallway is moulded metal of a style popular at the turn of the century. On the first floor over three-fourths of the space is devoted to the courtroom which is 60' x 50' and is 16' in height. The floor to the spectators gallery is inclined approximately five degrees from front to back. None of the original courtroom furniture is extant, the present furnishings and appointments date from the 1901 remodeling. Three rooms used by the Court Solicitors, Judge, and Jury are along the northwest side of this floor. Each room is 10' x 20' with 16' ceilings. The interior walls on this floor are plaster over native stone and the ceilings are moulded metal of the 1900 style.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Burke County, formed in 1777, was named for Dr. Thomas Burke (1747-1783) a member of the Continental Congress and Governor of North Carolina. The county seat was first called Morganborough, and was later changed to Morganton. A building was erected on Courthouse Square originally designated for this purpose in 1784, at which time a wooden structure was built. In the 1784 building on this site was the scene (1832-1833) of the trial and hanging of Frankie Silver (of the famous Frankie Silver Ballad) for the murder of her husband. An act enacted by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1830-1831 appointed a board of commissioners (James Murphy, Thomas Walton, Samuel C. Tate, John Corpening, and Isaac T. Avery) to supervise the construction of the present courthouse, and specified the maximum cost to be \$8,000. The building was completed in 1835 by James Binnie, a Scottish stonemason and craftsman, at a cost ultimately of \$15,000. Owing to the distance from which the largest and best locally cut stone was hauled (from a quarry five miles distant) with a team of oxen and mule making only one load per day, caused a delay of several years before the structure was completed. As a consequence, the contractor was bankrupted. The courthouse has been in continuous use since first occupied in 1835. The Minutes of the North Carolina Supreme Court indicate from August, 1847-1861, that the Supreme Court held its August Session each year in the Burke County Courthouse, the summer climate in Morganton being more tolerable than in Raleigh. In April, 1865, a contingent of Stoneman's Cavalry under General Gillam raided the building and destroyed a large portion of the county's records. The structure was remodeled in 1901. In the basement the building houses the offices of the Clerk, Register, Accountant, and the County Commissioners. On the first floor is the Courtroom, Judge's Room, and two anterooms for the Jury and Court Solicitors. The Burke County Courthouse is the oldest public structure still being used for its originally designated purpose in Western North Carolina beyond the City of Salisbury.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

