

# Superior Court of California County of Solano

Chambers of  
D. SCOTT DANIELS  
Presiding Judge  
Department Six

Hall of Justice  
600 Union Avenue  
Fairfield, CA 94533  
(707) 207-7306  
FAX (707) 207-7706

September 16, 2011

Hon. Brad R. Hill  
Presiding Justice  
Court of Appeal, Fifth District  
2424 Ventura Street  
Fresno, California 93721

RE: Superior Court of Solano County  
SB 1407/Old Solano Courthouse

Dear Justice Hill:

Renovation to the historic Old Solano Courthouse is currently moving forward as one of the 41 SB 1407 projects. This project envisions a working civil courthouse with three courtrooms and chambers, a civil clerk's office, civil mediation center, jury assembly room and associated staff spaces.

The Old Solano Courthouse was built in 1911 and is an exemplary model of Beaux Arts Classical architecture. As indicated on pages 185-186 of *Courthouses of California, An Illustrated History*, the October 1917 issue of the *Architect and Engineer* considered the structure to be one of the best works of chief architect E.C. Hemmings. "The main façade of this building is beautified by a series of Ionic columns which give it a monumental feeling and at the same time is suggestive of a public edifice."

According to an historical article from the Vacaville Heritage Council, "More than six thousand residents gathered on the steps of the new courthouse on July 14, 1914, to celebrate the dedication of the courthouse, which was the biggest event the county had seen in those days. The orator of the day was the Honorable C.F. Stern, State Highway Commissioner, accompanied by Senator B.F. Rush and the Liberty Goddess, Miss Della Sherburne of the Wednesday Club. The dedication ceremony, sponsored by Fairfield and Suisun residents, businesses and the Board of Supervisors, cost nearly \$6,000."

This structure was used as a courthouse from 1911 until 1972, when the Court was relocated to a remodeled high school across the street. The Solano County Board of Supervisors and County government offices utilized this building from 1972 until 2005, when the County vacated the building to occupy a new government center in Fairfield.

The building has been vacant since 2005. Title was recently transferred by the Solano County Board of Supervisors to the State for \$1.00, with the agreement that the structure would return to a working courthouse.

This project, ranked in the Immediate Need priority group of the Trial Court Capital-Outlay Plan, has been the top priority for the Superior Court of Solano County for the Court's Facilities Master Plan and the top priority for improving access to justice and facilities in the Court's Strategic Plan. The judges have diligently worked on this project for over ten years and have been fortunate to have the support of the local Board of Supervisors, State Legislators and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The project is currently slated to cost \$25,418,000. On a comparison basis to other SB 1407 projects, this is one of the most affordable projects. On a cost per courtroom basis, this is the third lowest of the 41 projects. In overall projects of this scale, this is arguably the most cost effective project.

This project is currently in the Design Development phase. The total funds spent to date are \$790,000. There are only a handful of projects that have spent more to date than this project. The Administrative Office of the Courts and the local Court have spent numerous hours and resources to get the project into the Design Development Phase. Failure to move this project forward would result in a great loss of resources. The Design Development phase is expected to be completed by December 2011. The project could immediately proceed into Working Drawings and proceed to construction with a completion and occupancy date in 2013. With the current schedule, this will be one of the first SB 1407 projects to be completed.

The State currently is the owner of the building. Maintaining this empty building and adjacent parking lot would result in an estimated expense of \$1.50 per square foot, pursuant to figures provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts in documents submitted to the Court Facilities Working Group. Additionally, if the State fails to renovate this property within five years, the asset would revert back to the County. This would truly be a lost economic opportunity for the judicial branch.

Not only is the project cost effective, the Superior Court of Solano County is overcrowded and has a need for these courtrooms. The Court currently has 24 authorized judicial positions with an assessed need of 32.6 judicial positions. The Court does not have adequate courtrooms for all of its judicial officers. The renovated Old Solano Courthouse will be used for one AB 159 judgeship and two new judgeships from the last 50 sponsored by the Judicial Council. Additionally, the Court currently has two judicial officers in inadequate hearing rooms and does not have a permanent space to hear small claims or traffic at the Vallejo courthouse. The Court could easily make use of these courtrooms even without the two new judgeships.

Renovation of the Old Courthouse will allow the Superior Court of Solano County to transfer the court's civil operations to the Old Courthouse, which will allow the Court to consolidate leased space in the Hall of Justice. Currently, the Court leases office space

from the County and has a use agreement for the Court's Self Help Center. Assuming the Court is able to shift the current leased office space, the Court will save \$67,632 per year in lease costs. Although the County is generously providing the Court with 2,070 square feet of office space for the Self-Help Center, the Court needs to relocate the Self-Help Center prior to the County requesting a lease for this space. The value of this space is estimated at \$30,892 per year.

This project is not only valuable to the Superior Court of Solano County; this project is valuable to the entire judicial branch and to the history of the State of California. There are few remaining historic courthouses throughout the state and this is the only project which seeks to return a historic courthouse to a working courthouse.

The structure has many of the original finishes and fixtures in the public areas and the two original courtrooms, including granite cladding, metal windows, marble flooring, marble staircase, marble wainscoting, plaster walls and ceilings, decorative trim, light fixtures and the original clock in the main entry. To the degree possible, the renovation will restore the historic features in the public areas and the two courtrooms. I am attaching a number of photographs of the exterior and the interior of this building for your review.

Similar to the historic courthouses in Riverside, Orange, Santa Clara and Napa counties, this building truly is a gem to the California Judicial Branch. This is a project which will bring pride to the entire judicial branch facilities program and is worthy of funding and completion under SB 1407.

If we can answer any additional questions concerning this project, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 707-207-7027 or Brian Taylor, Court Executive Officer, at 707-207-7467.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Scott Daniels". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

D. Scott Daniels  
Presiding Judge

Cc: Office of Court Construction and Management  
Hon. Paul L. Beeman, Assistant Presiding Judge  
Chris Patton, Regional Administrative Director  
Brian Taylor, Court Executive Officer





# **Forensic Work Photos**











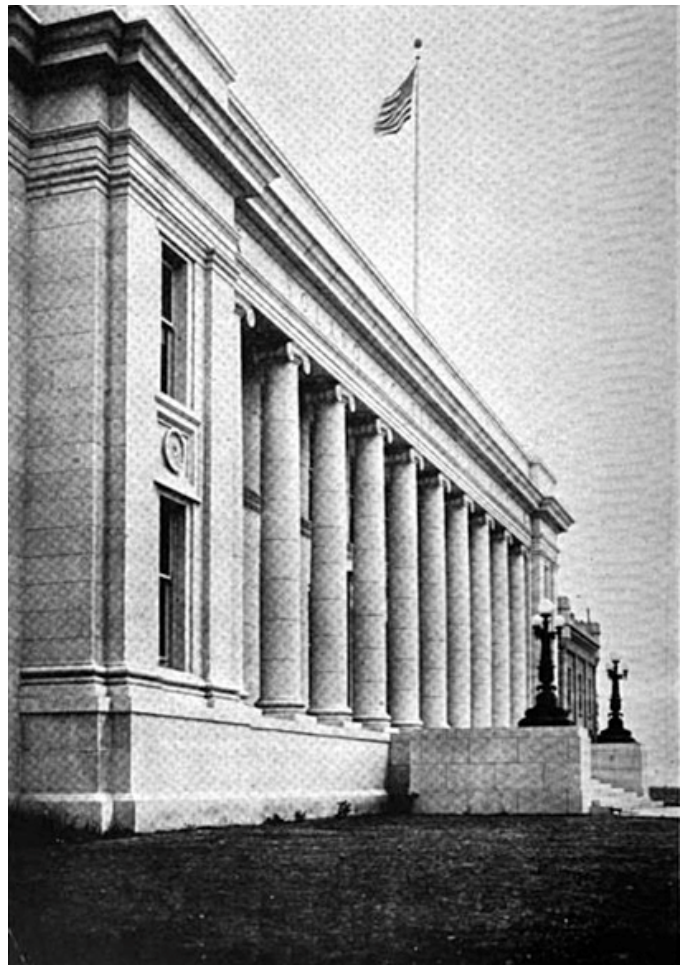




# Historic Photos

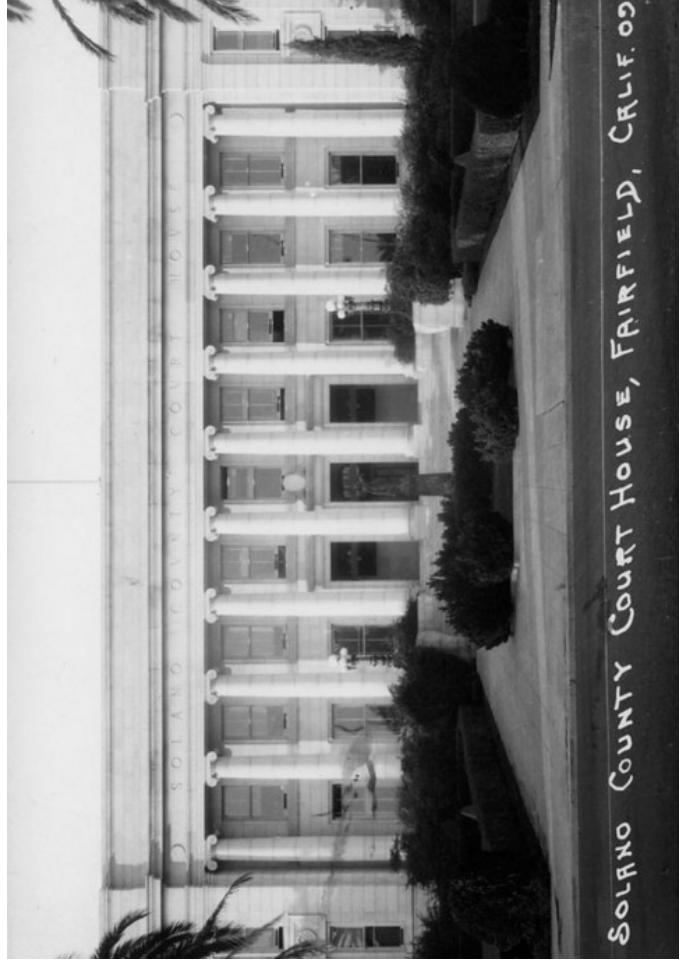
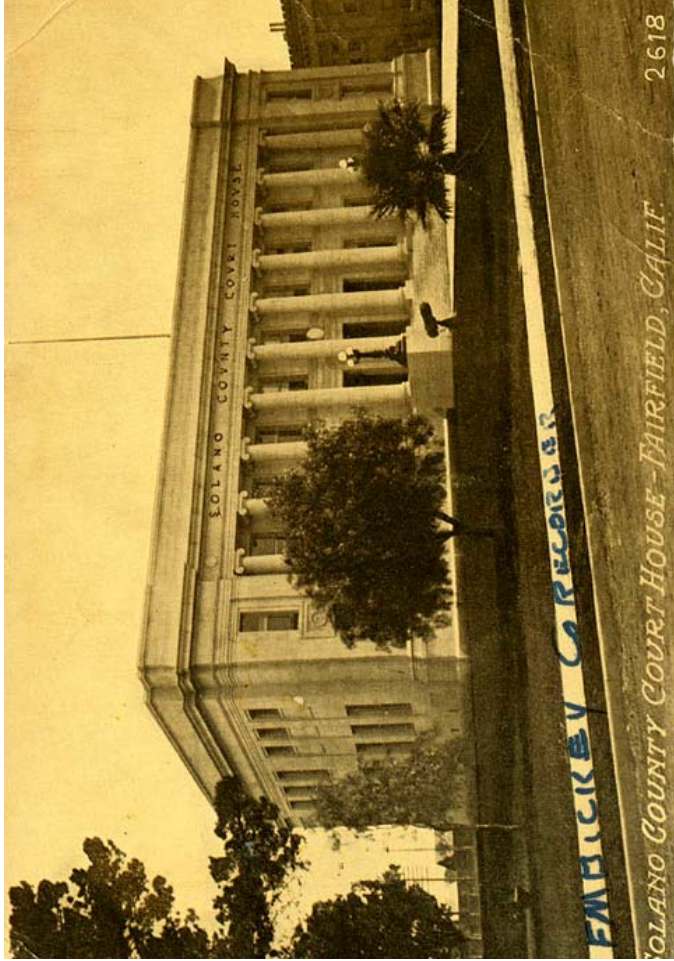
















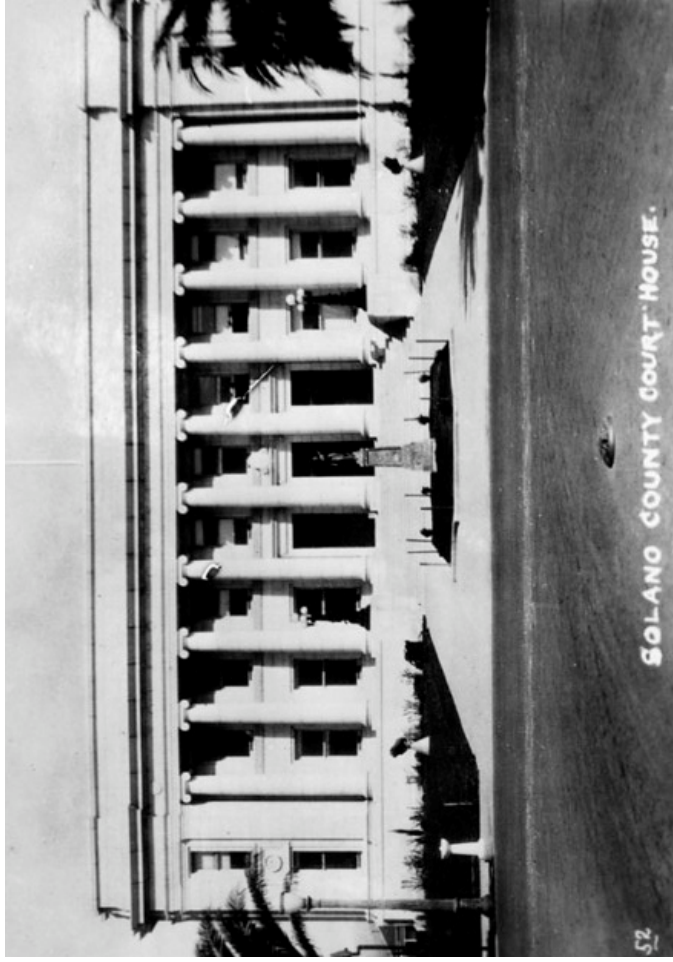
FAIRFIELD CALIFORNIA



Solano County Courthouse & Jail, Fairfield, Calif. A-54

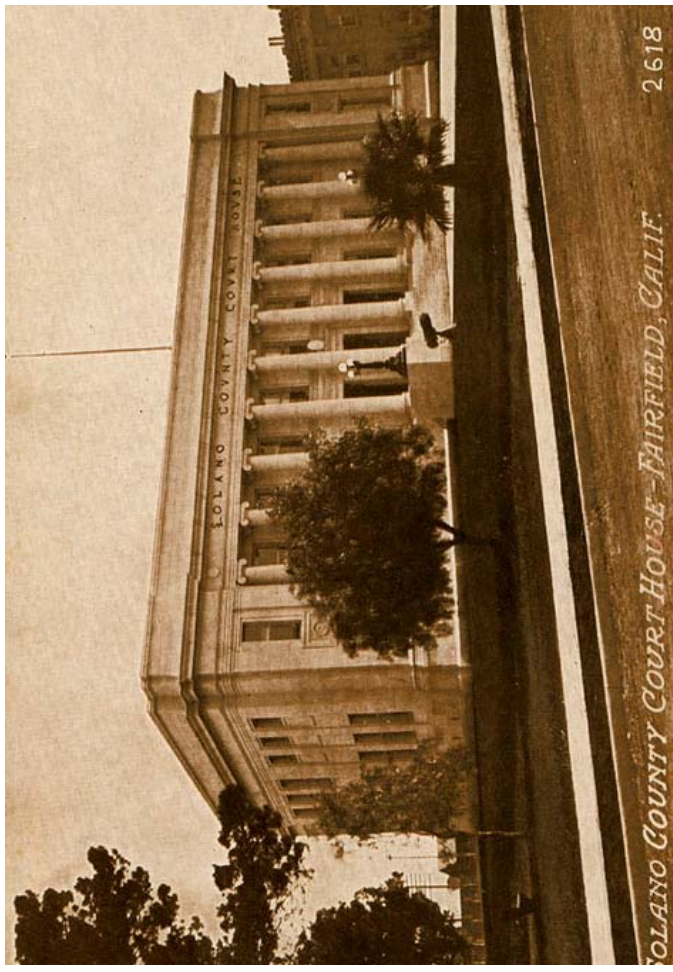
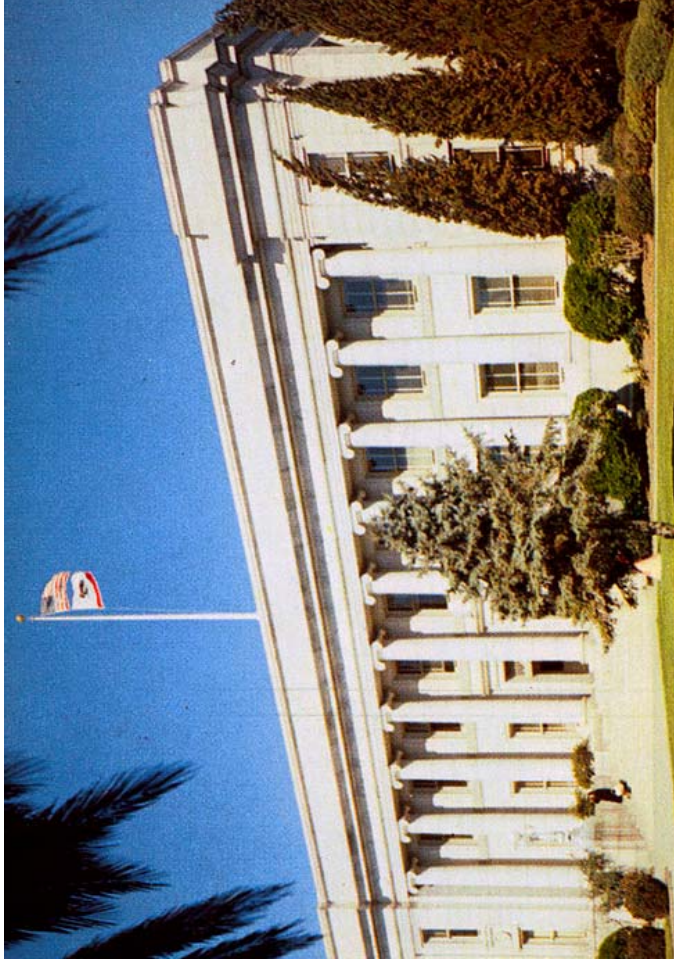


Solano County Courthouse, Fairfield, Calif. A-69

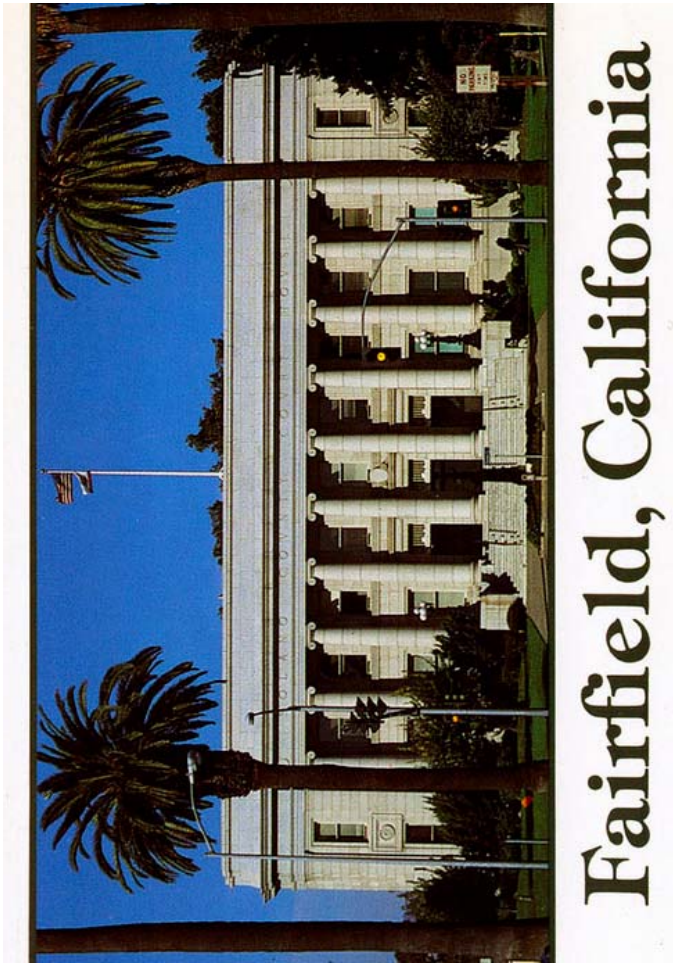
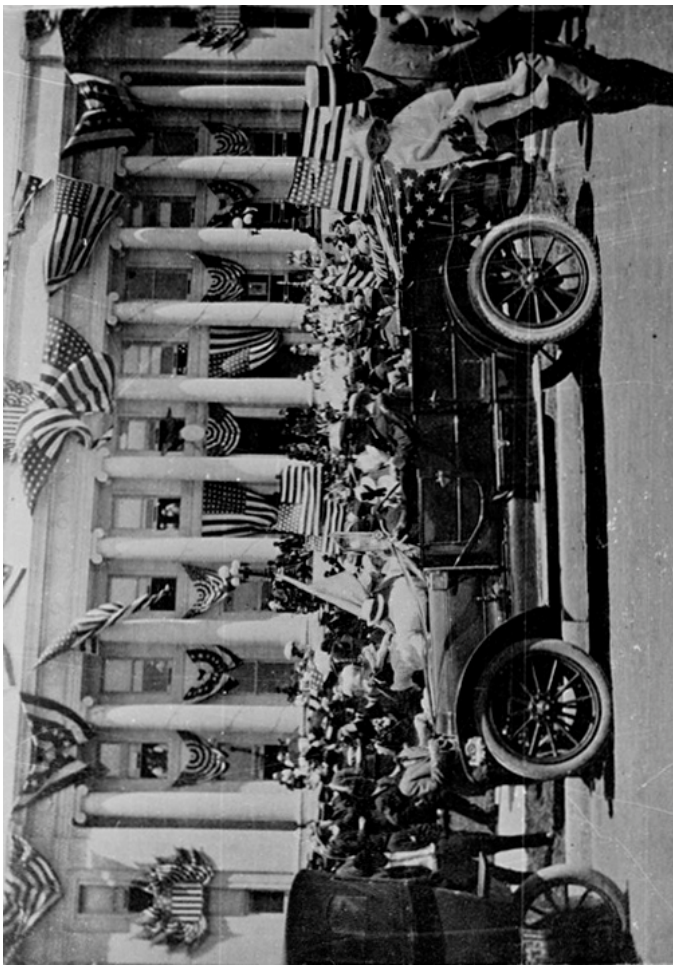


SOLANO COUNTY COURT-HOUSE.

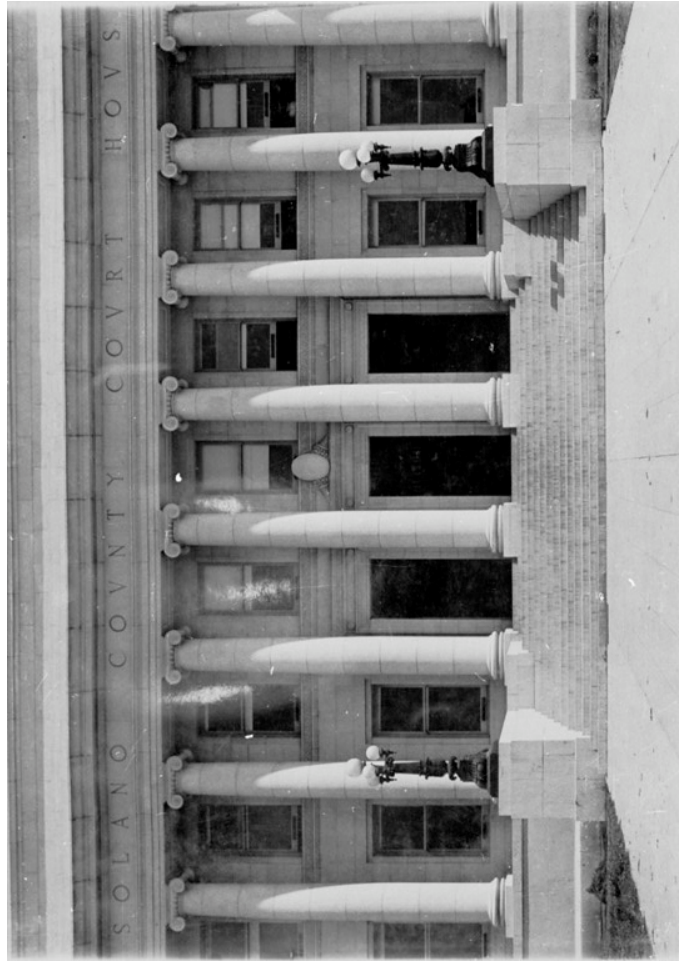
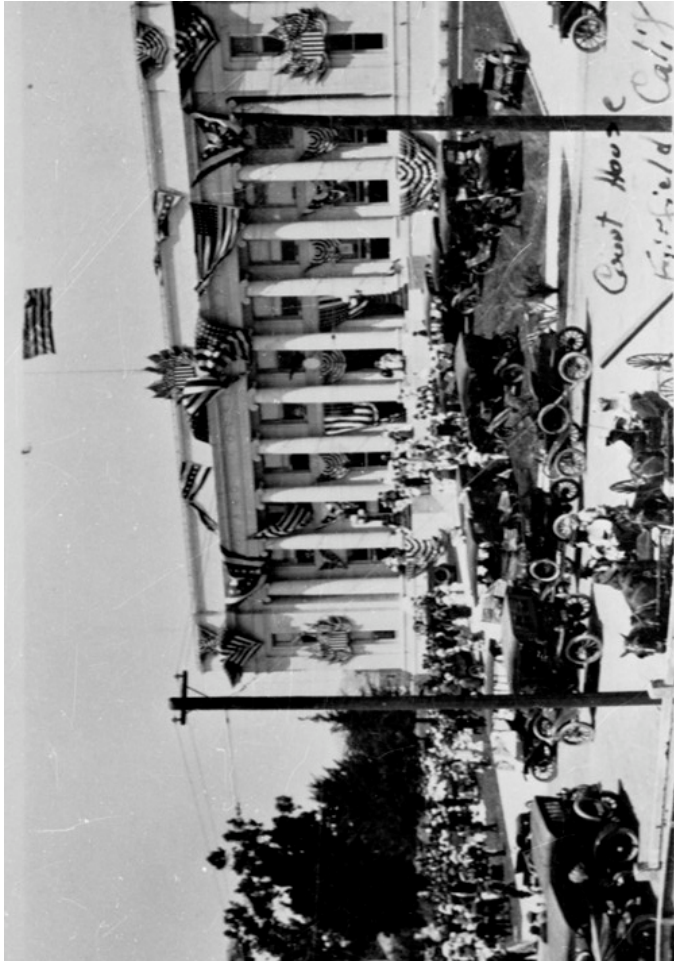




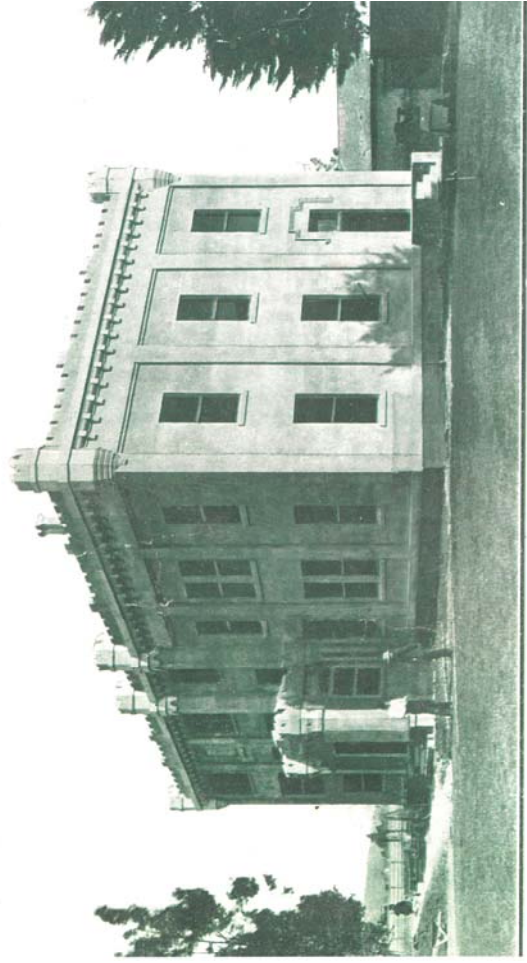
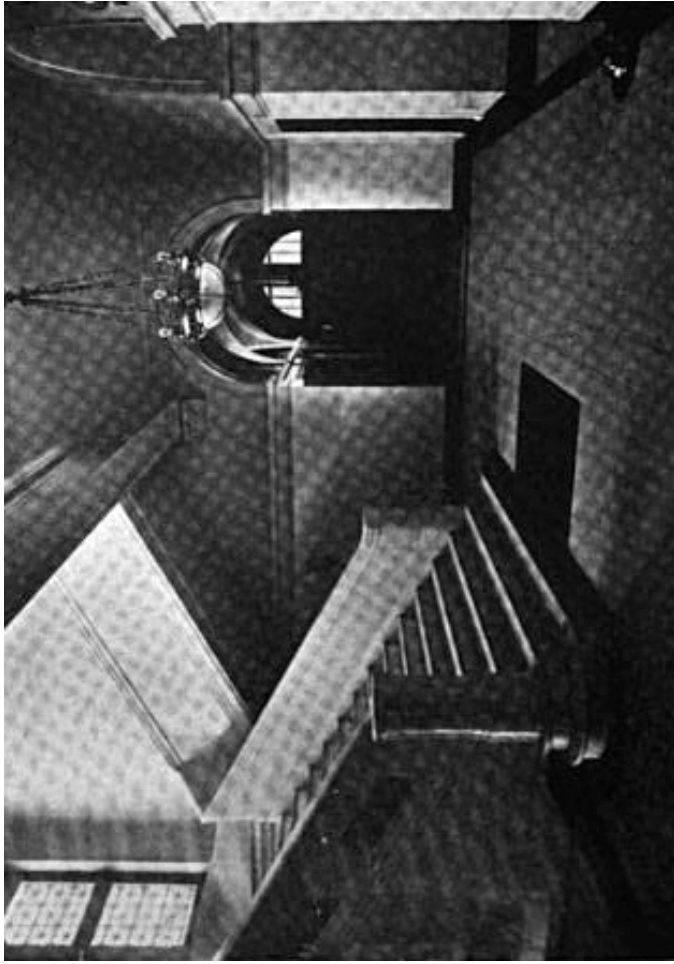








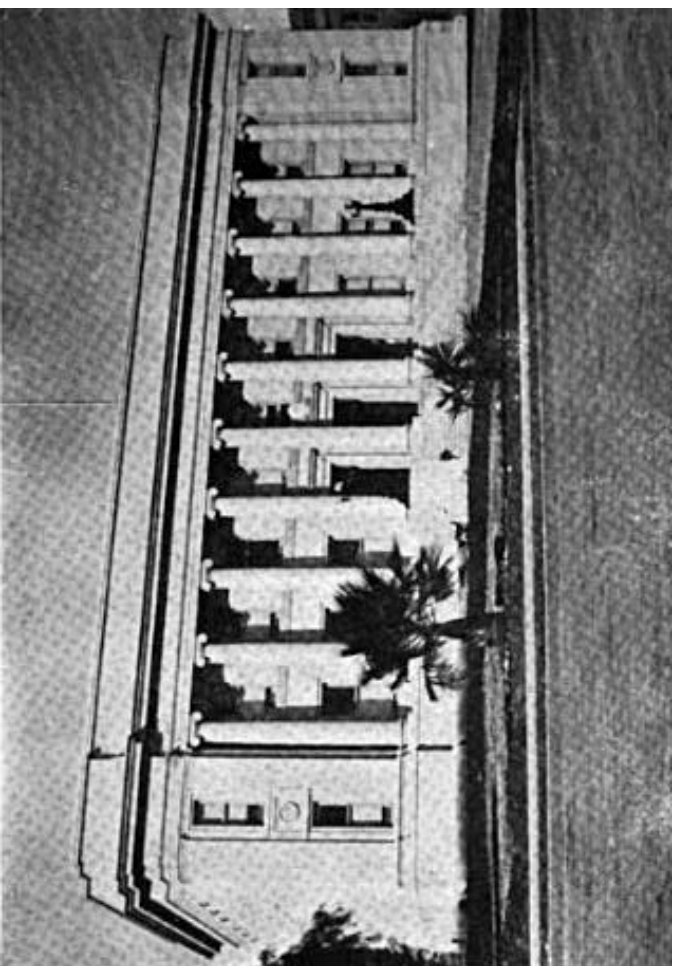




COUNTY JAIL, FAIRFIELD, CAL.

PUBLISHED FOR  
MRS. W. S. CROCKER,  
SUISUN CITY, CAL.







# **Recent Exterior Photos**



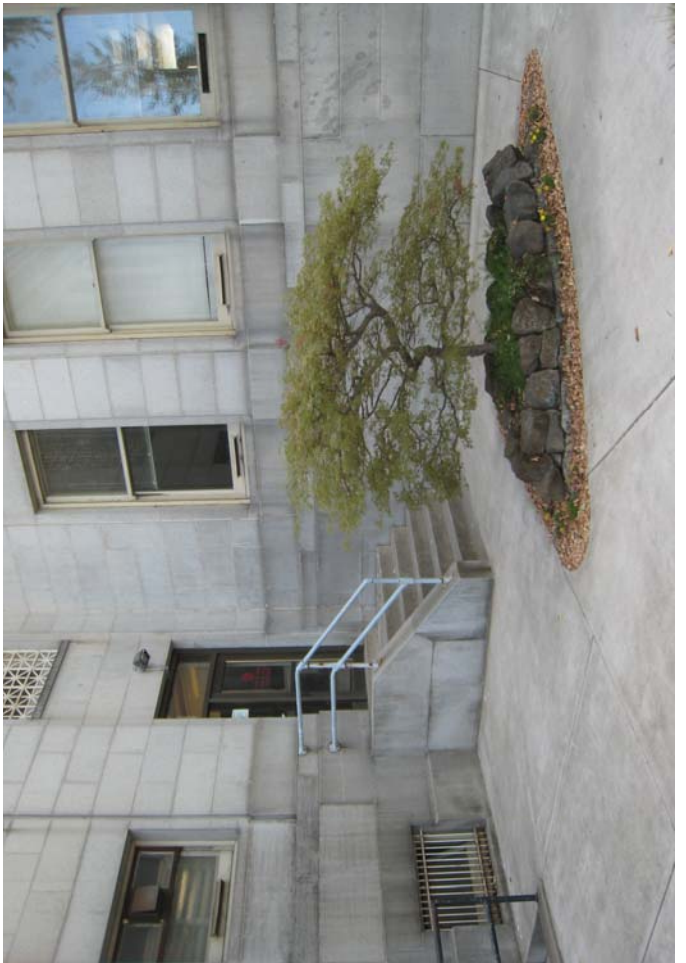




















# **Recent Interior Photos**

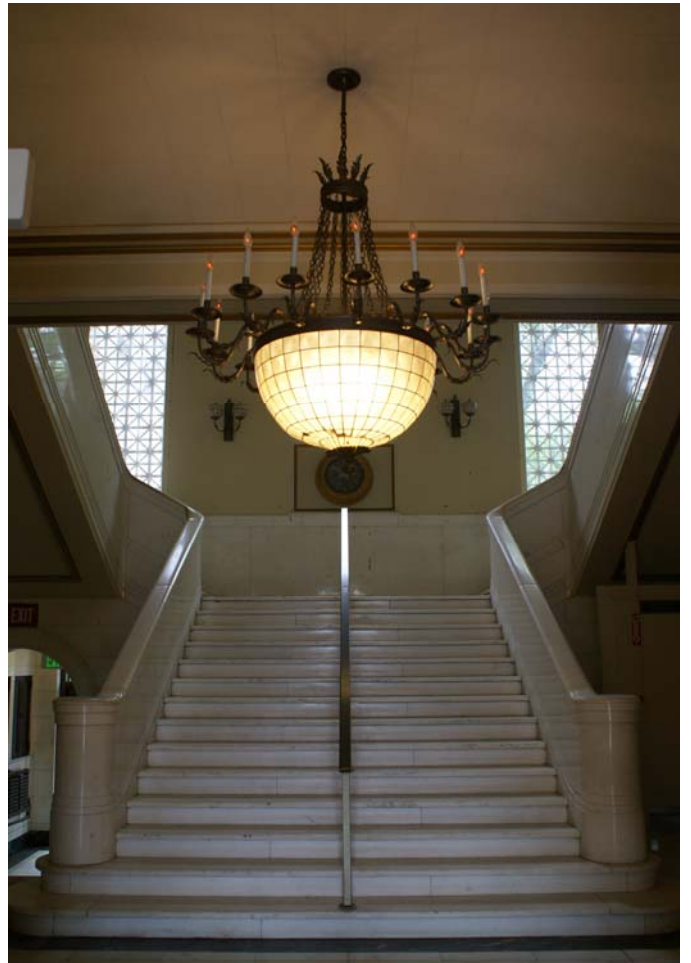




















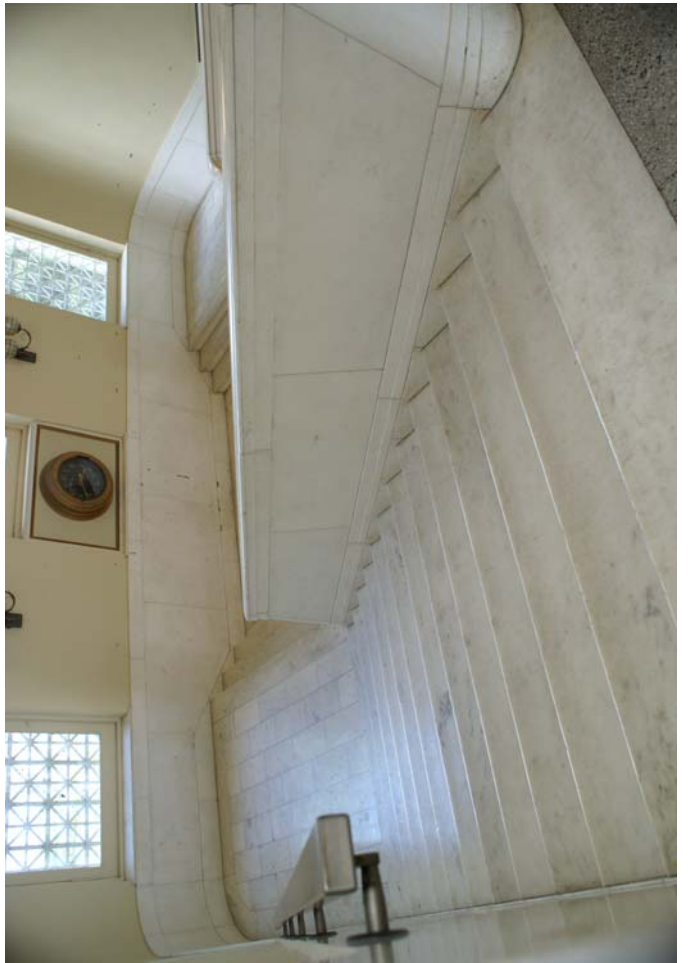
























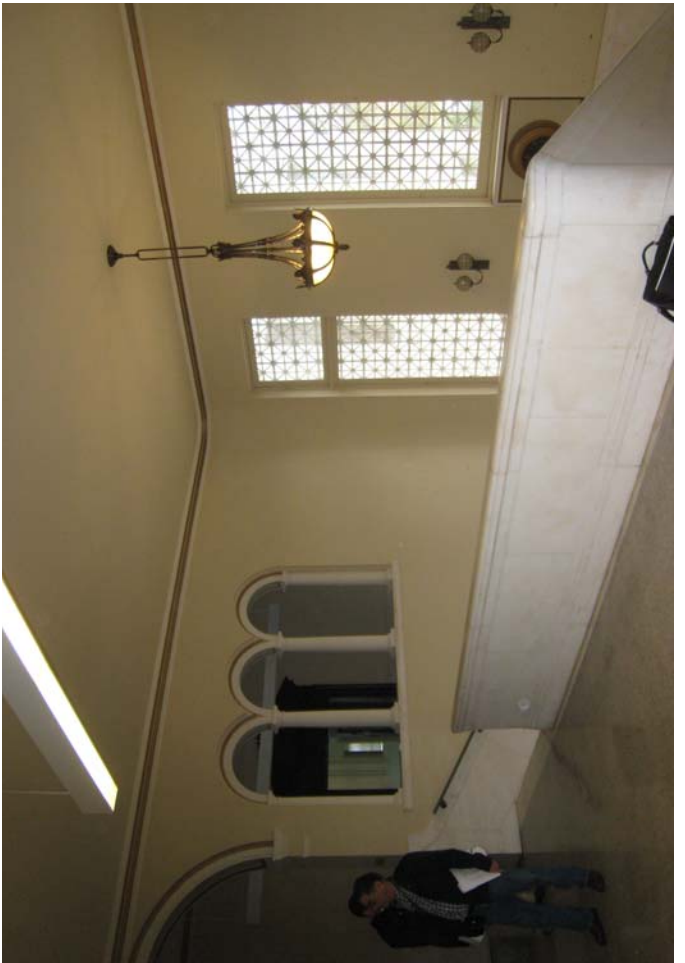






















# **Recent Site Photos**

























