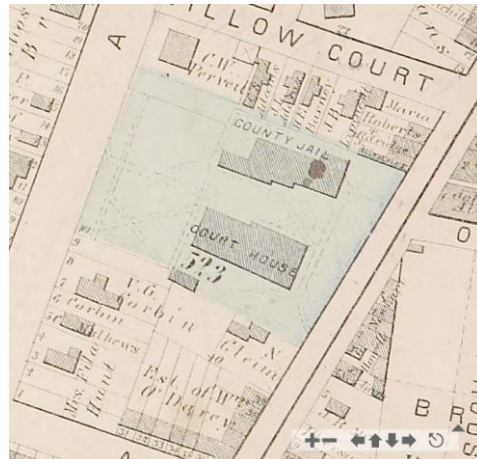


The First Hudson County Court House Newark Avenue, between Baldwin Avenue and Willow Court (northwest of the Brennan Court House)



Early 20th century postcard of the 1845 Hudson County Courthouse building which was located on Newark Avenue slightly west of the 1910 structure. The old jail building can be seen on the right.

Courtesy, Jersey City Free Public Library



Detail from the 1873 Atlas of Hudson County showing the location of the old Hudson County courthouse (1845) and nearby jail.

Credits: [New York Society of Model Engineer's Library, Rich Taylor Collection](#) and [Historical Maps of New Jersey](#) site of Rutgers University



Postcard circa 1910 showing the Greek Revival style 1845 Hudson County Courthouse in the foreground. Rising behind the old building the corners of the large white 1910 Beaux Arts style courthouse can be seen in the background.

Courtesy, Jersey City Free Public Library



Detail from the 1919 Atlas of Jersey City and Bayonne. The 1845 court house building was taken down in 1912. It stood on the open space between the 1910 courthouse and the old jail.

Credits: [New York Society of Model Engineer's Library, Rich Taylor Collection](#) and [Historical Maps of New Jersey](#) site of Rutgers University

The Classic Neo-Greek revival building fronted by six Doric columns with a pedimented temple-front opened March 11, 1845. The structure was designed by William Kirk and Thomas Thomas, carpenter, and William Brown, mason, as the lowest bidders, were awarded the contract for construction. It served as the first permanent Court in Hudson County after its formation by the New Jersey legislature in 1840. Multiple building extensions, including a Hall of Records, were constructed as needed in line behind the original structure until it was replaced by the [Brennan Hudson County Court House](#) replaced in 1910.

Hudson County had been a part of Bergen County from its colonial origins. The location of the Bergen County Court House in Hackensack and its distance from residents in the southern parts of Bergen County to Bergen Point, presently Bayonne, weighed in the decision to establish the separate County of Hudson. Eventually, Hudson County was created out of the southern end of Bergen County by an act of the state legislature on February 22, 1840. The new county consisted of three separate municipalities, Jersey City, Bergen, and Harrison.

Although each town wanted to be the County seat where the Court House was to be built, when put to a popular vote, Bergen won the day. For the five intervening years, the court sessions were held in various temporary locations such as the Lyceum Hall in Paulus Hook, and the Newkirk House at Five Corners. In February 1843, the northern part of the new Hudson County was designated as a new municipality called North Bergen as it was essentially the northern part of Bergen Township. Its southern boundary was the New Jersey Railroad cut and it included all that part of modern Jersey City north of Journal Square including Five Corners. A great procession and conerstone laying ceremony was held on The cornerstoone was laid on October 17, 1844 by John Tonele, jr., Director of the Board of Chosen Freeholders at that time.

According to Winfield:

"In the stone were deposited the newspapers of the day, published in New York, Jersey City, Newark, Trenton, &c., Reports on Education, School Fund and Finances of the State and county, several coins, a parchment roll containing a list of all the county officers, the Governor, State officers, the President of the United States, and other officers of the General Government." (Winfield 1873 p 335).

The 1845 Court House and the later Hall of Records addition once stood in the open space between what is now the Brennan Court House and the Hudson County Administration Office Building.

On January 19, 1912, contractor Thomas Hill purchased the rights to demolish, disassemble, and remove the old court house building from the site for seven hundred dollars. During the actual demolition, which began in February of the same year, much was revealed about the original construction of the old Court House. Hill could then resell the demolition debris as builders materials such as the \$500 worth of brownstone from the exterior walls of the building. or incorporated the salvaged building materials into new structures. The Hall of Records was relatively new structure built around 1892 and contained \$5,000 dollars worth of iron girders as well as a large quantity of green colored Newfoundland sandstone which served as exterior facing for the Hall of Records.

Among the treasures uncovered by Hill was the original cornerstone of the old court house from 1844 which he was found on June 6, 1912 during the later phases of the demolition. The contents were disappointing, containing only disintegrated papers and two coins from the early 1830's.

As they were pulled down, the construction techniques used to build the stately columns were revealed. Each was actually hollow, constructed by a ring of bricks pointed inward and the fluted column exterior was created using concrete. An ornamental cast iron ornamental lamp with five glass globes was left standing and undamaged by the demolition work. The original structure was 75 feet in length and some years later an additional 75 feet was added making a total of 150 feet in length. Bronstone construction on a traprock foundation. The Hall of records was a fourth stage. 1834 and 1831

By: Carmela Karnoutsos
Project Administrator: Patrick Shalhoub

