

78 ESSEX STREET

19 August 87

JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302

Mr. James W. Hyres  
Hankin and Hyres, Architects  
528 White Horse Avenue  
Trenton, NJ 08610

201.332.6536

Re: Ocean County Courthouse  
Tom's River, NJ

Dear Jim:

I am very pleased to enclose a report on the restoration of courtroom no. 1.

Our conclusion is that either Hunterdon or Burlington Counties would make a good model for the judge's bench. However, I lean towards Burlington because it's the real thing, as opposed to a reproduction.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I hope I can be helpful on other occasions as well.

Sincerely,

  
Beth Sullebarger

Enclosure

✓ cc: Polly Miller

Hope you're enjoying  
your summer!

best  
Beth

78 ESSEX STREET

BURLINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
RESTORATION OF COURTROOM NO. 1Assignment

The assignment was to perform research and make recommendations for the restoration of Courtroom no. 1, in the Ocean County Courthouse in Toms River, New Jersey. In particular, guidance was desired for the provision of an appropriate three-person judge's bench, c. 1850, either through the location of an extant bench of the period, or through photo documentation.

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Research

A. At the Jersey City Public Library, all available sources were consulted on the Hudson County Courthouse, which was reputedly a model for the Ocean County Courthouse. While exterior photos confirmed that the two courthouses were almost identical stylistically, no photos or descriptions of the interior were found.

B. At the Office of New Jersey Heritage in Trenton, various sources were consulted, including the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) index, several County surveys, and a publication entitled A Courthouse Conservation Handbook, published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. These sources narrowed the search for a courthouse of the same period within New Jersey which might exist as a potential source for an extant bench to two possibilities: the Hunterdon County Courthouse (1829), and the Burlington County Courthouse (1797). In addition, A Courthouse Conservation Handbook provided us with a preliminary bibliography which was explored further at the State Library.

C. At the State Library in Trenton, HABS documentation was checked for the two courthouses listed above, and a number of publications relating to courthouses and courthouse design were consulted. These publications included the following:

Courthouse, edited by Richard Pare (Horizon Press, 1978)

The American Courthouse; Planning and Design for the Judicial Process, (University of Michigan, 1973)



A Guide to the Construction and Renovation of Court Buildings, (Institute of Judicial Administration, 1958)

Historic Courthouses of New York State: 18th and 19th Century Halls of Justice Across the Empire State, by Herbert Alan Johnson (Columbia University Press, 1977)

Postcards of New Jersey County Courthouses, compiled by C. Wolff.

This research led to photographs of two period benches, one in Wayne County, New York (1854) and one in Greene County, Georgia (1848-49) (Plate 3 in Courthouse, by Richard Pare.) However, both these examples were one-person benches.

D. Investigation of HABS documentation indicated that the Hunterdon County Courthouse (Flemington, NJ) was the best physical source to explore. Although this building predates the Ocean County Courthouse by approximately twenty years, it was also in the Greek Revival style. A trip was made to Flemington, and photographs were taken of the interior of Courtroom # 2, one of the original courtrooms. (See attached photographs.)

The existing bench in this courtroom was installed in 1928, according to officials at the courthouse, and provides seating for three judges. Its simple, straightforward design seems to indicate that it was part of a sensitive restoration of the courtroom. An earlier bench was shown in a historic photograph, on display in the courthouse, taken at the time of the Lindbergh kidnapping trial. The photograph, from a newspaper, shows the original bench differed little from the existing bench.

E. A site visit was also made to the Burlington County Courthouse in Mt. Holly, which dates from 1797. According to Carter Jones, of the Burlington County Cultural and Heritage Commission, the judge's bench is probably original to the courthouse. (See attached photographs.) This bench originally seated three people and was adapted to seat five by adding tables at each end behind the continuous rail. Although it predates those at Flemington, New York and George by fifty years, it is stylistically similar.



### Conclusions

Published materials about courthouses and their design, in an historical context, are severely limited. Therefore, examples in other regions were investigated as well as New Jersey examples. This approach was appropriate because there is very little regional variation in courthouse design.

During the 19th century, courthouses and other public buildings were designed predominantly in the Greek Revival style, serving as formal public statements of the new republic, and differed little from state to state. Lack of regional differences is further explained by the fact that especially prior to the Civil War, most buildings were based on designs from pattern books, which were widely available.

All the examples cited--Wayne County, NY, Greene County, Ga. and Hunterdon and Burlington Counties, NJ--have similar benches--built of fine wood and simple in design, with panels and molded trim. Nevertheless, we believe that it is most appropriate to use either the Burlington or Hunterdon County courthouses as a model for Ocean County because they are historically appropriate, local and available for inspection and measuring. Moreover, the other two examples seat one person rather than three.

### Recommendations for Restoration

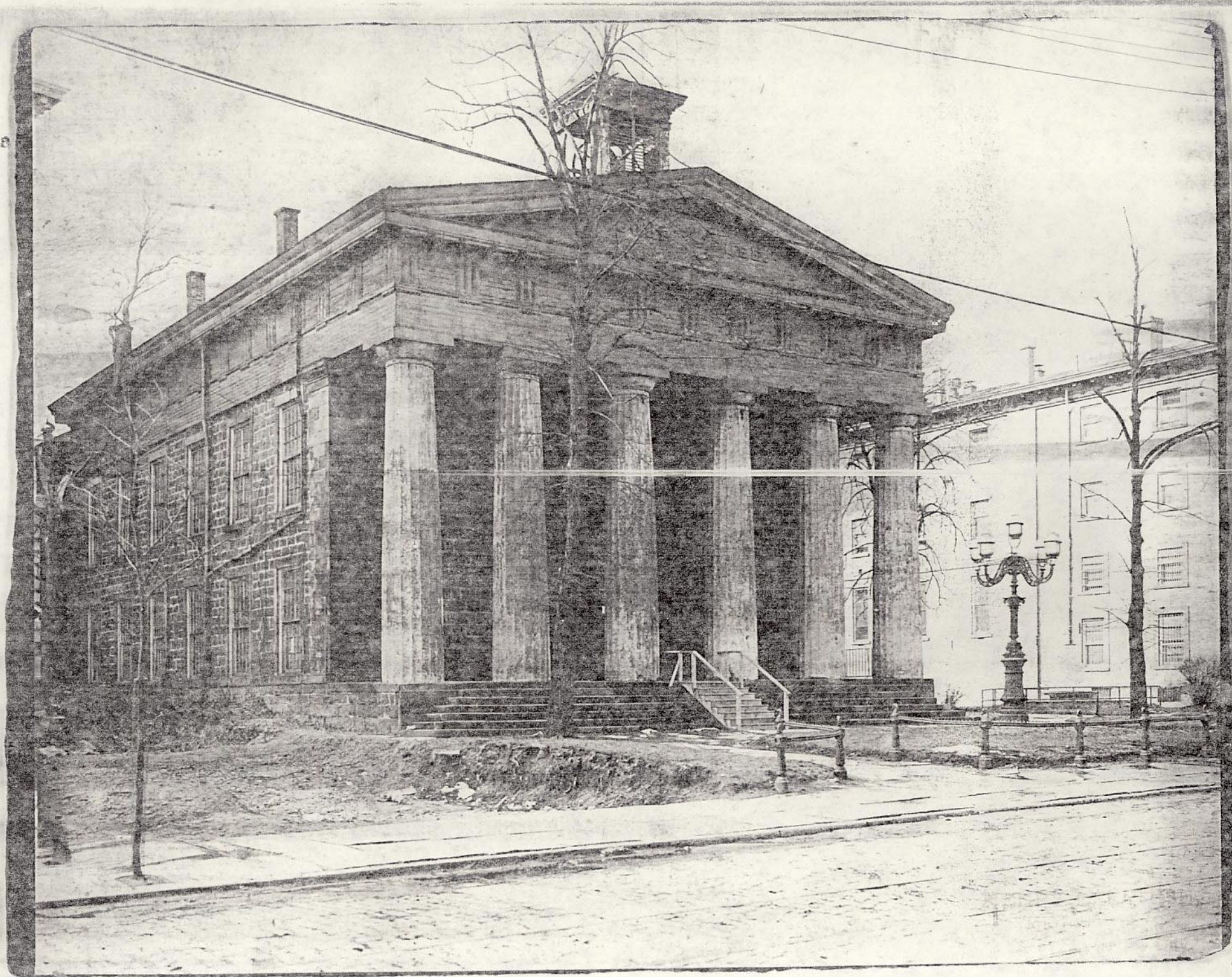
1. Remove partition wall between courtroom and alcove, carefully retaining structural arch, columns and capitals (Photos #1 and #4). Salvage door and door surround on courtroom side. Restore structural arch and capitals to historic appearance.
2. Restore door opening on west side of alcove, to match corresponding existing opening on opposite wall (Photo #3). Relocate salvaged door and door surround from demolished partition wall to outside of new opening. Reconstruct door surround on inside to match existing opening on east wall (Photo #5).
3. Fill in non-original window at center of alcove, removing all trim (Photo #2). Remove radiator.

4. Remove wood panelling from alcove walls, carefully leaving cornice intact (Photo #2 and 4). Install new chair rail to match either existing chair rail in courtroom (Photo #6) or adjacent room (Photo #7). Paint white, or blue to match courtroom.
5. Remove hung ceiling in alcove. Patch plaster and paint white. Reopen oculus, install new glass, and light from above.
6. Remove carpeting. Refinish floor or install new wood floor as required.
7. Install new 3-person judge's bench, based on Burlington County or Hunterdon County example.

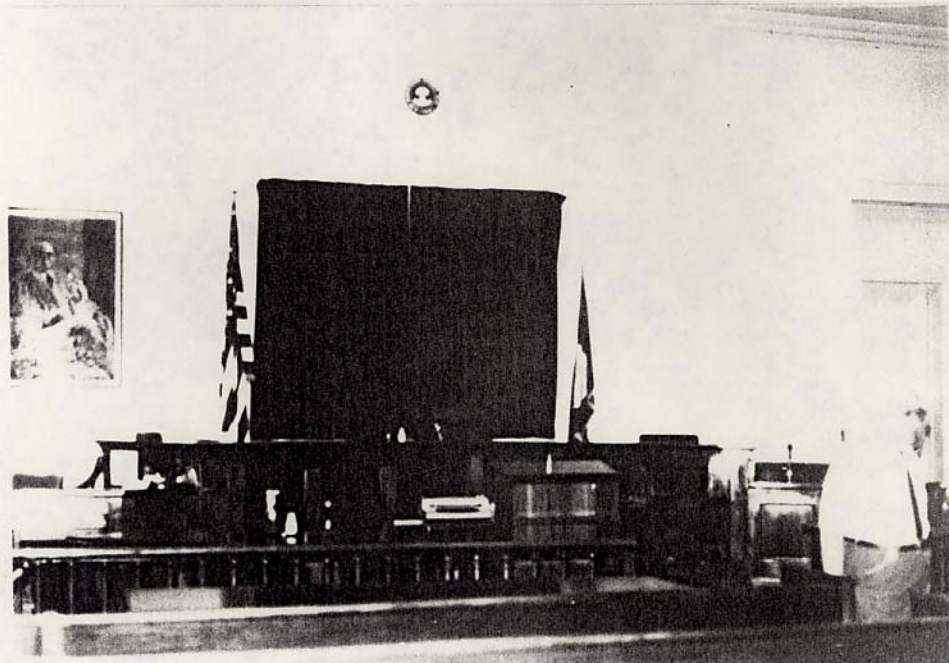
August 1987



VIEW OF HUDSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
(BUILT 1824-45, DEMOLISHED)

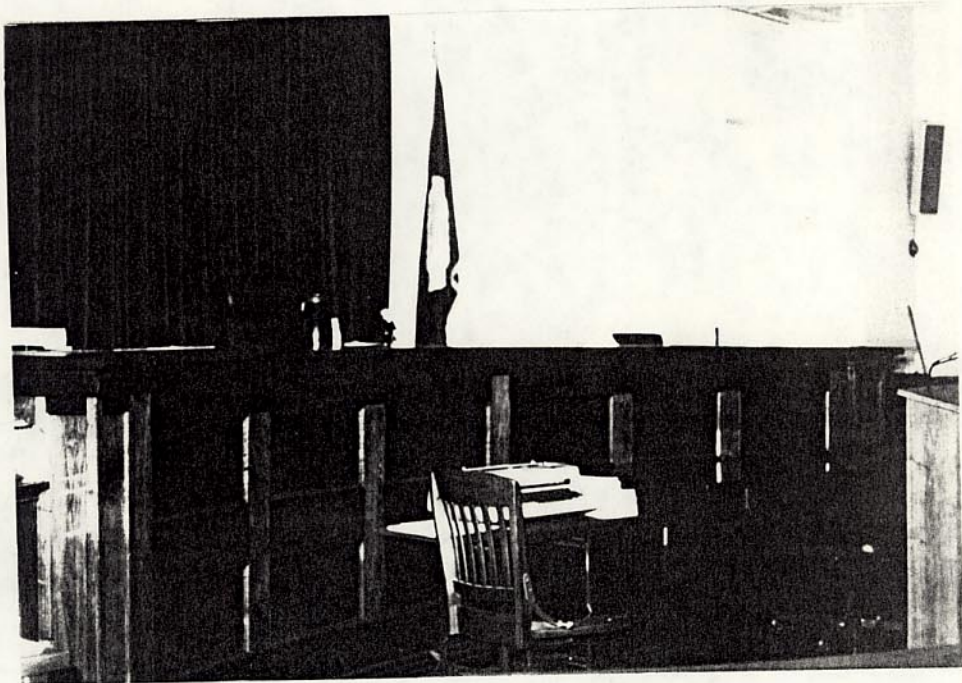
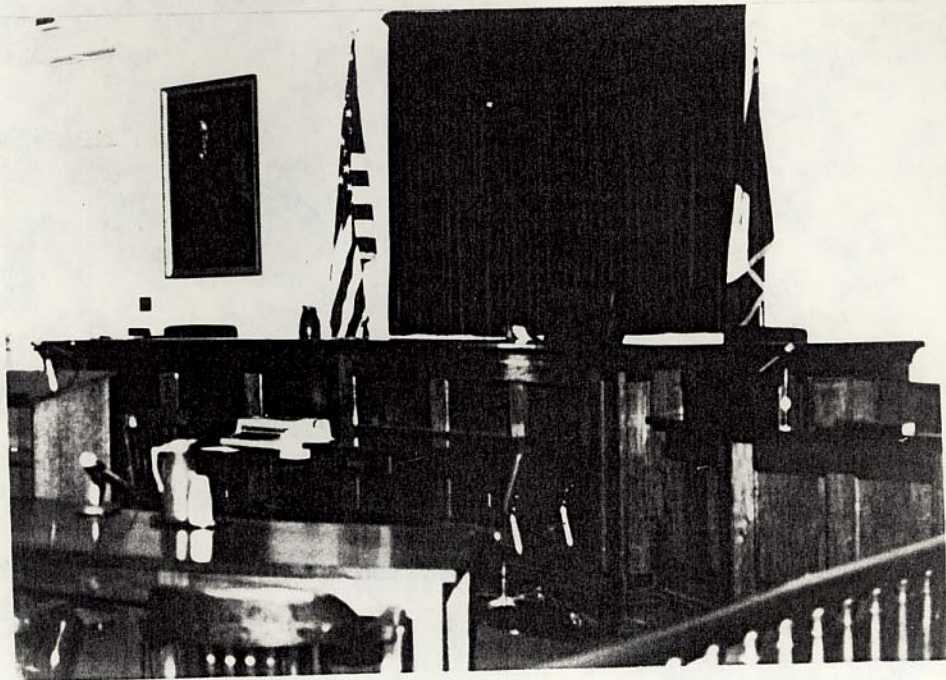






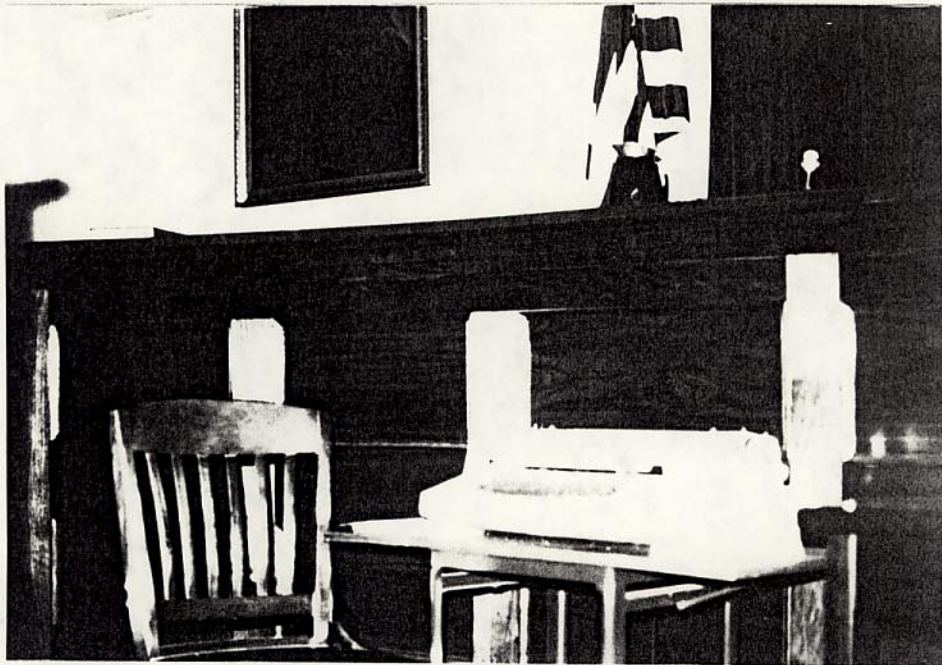
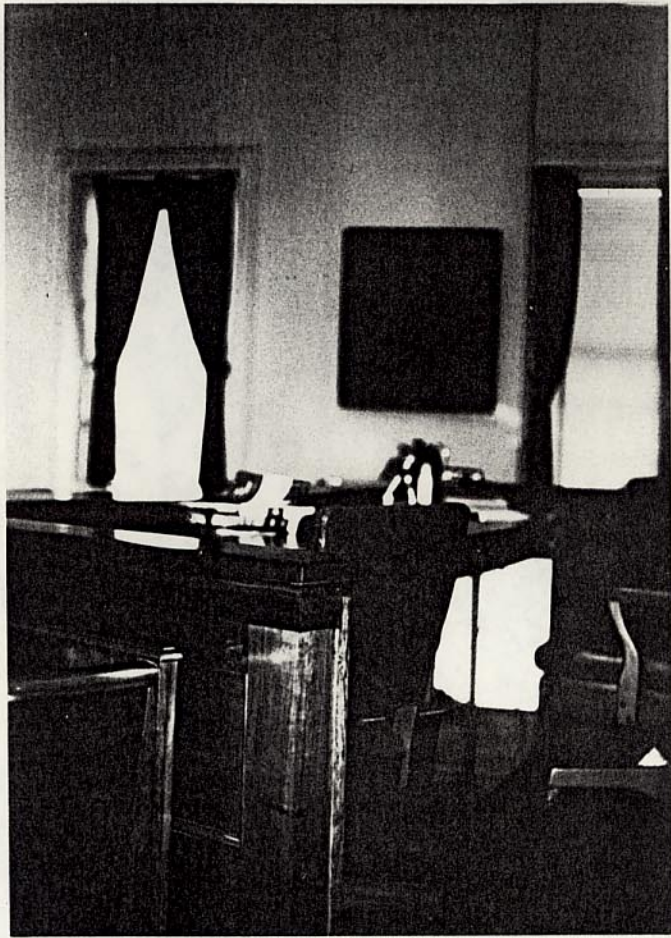
VIEWS OF HUNTERDON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH





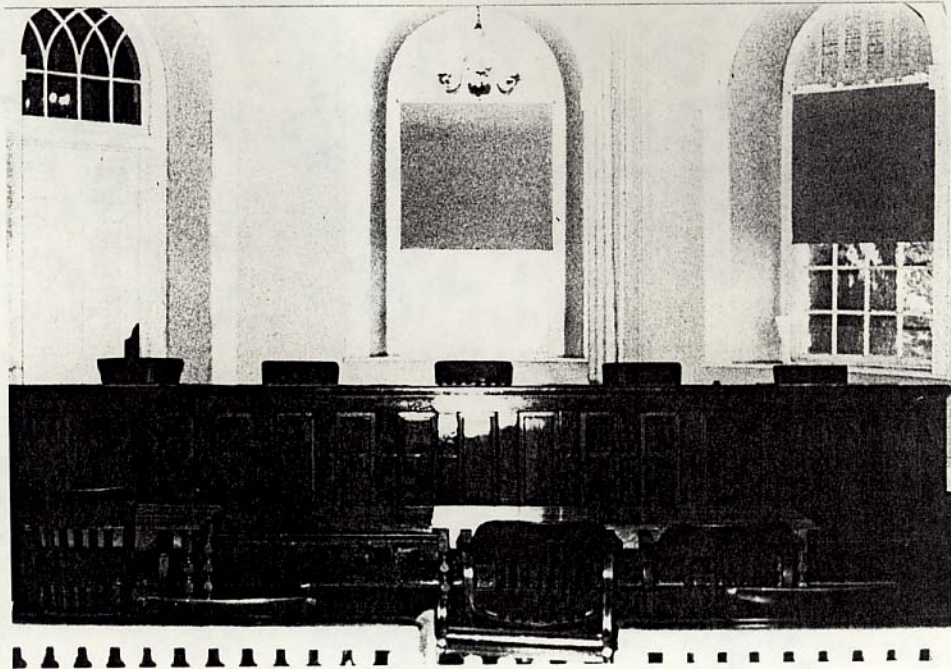
VIEWS OF HUNTERDON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH





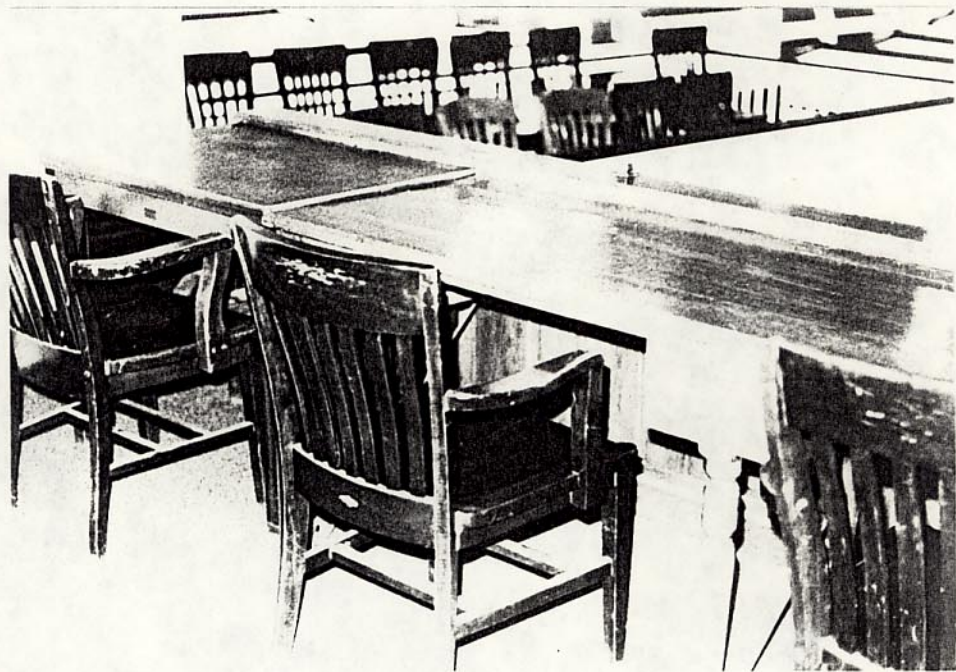
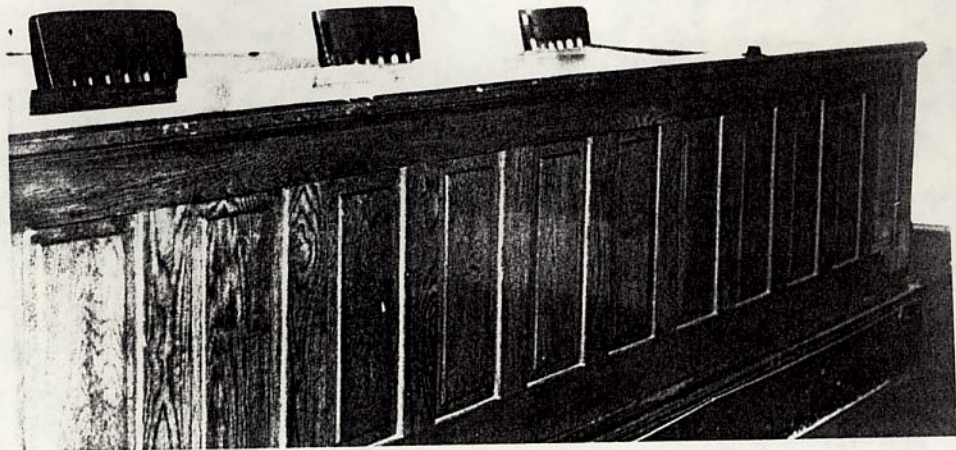
VIEWS OF HUNTERDON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH





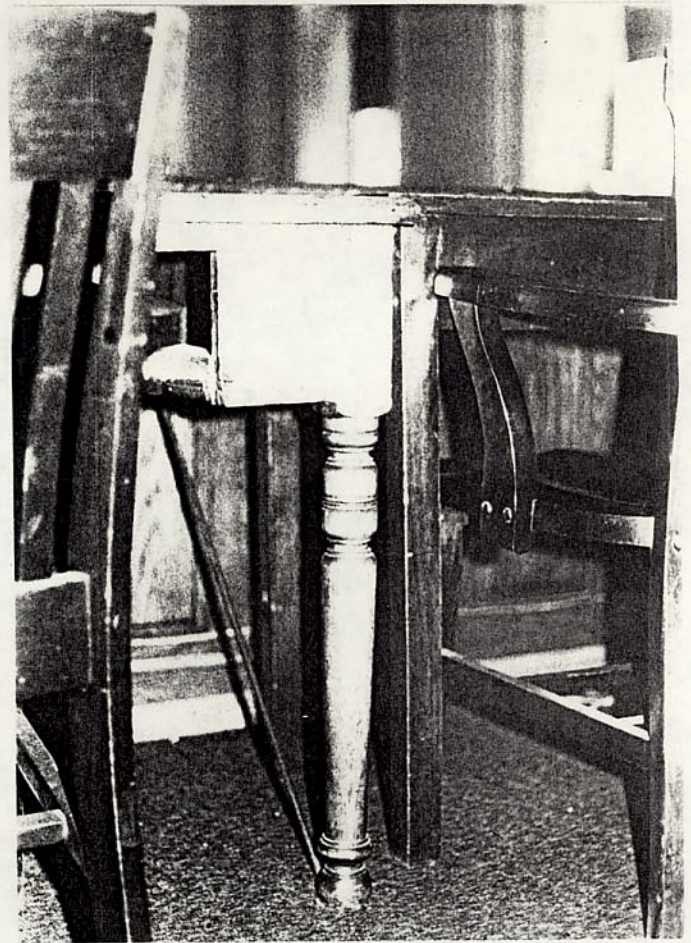
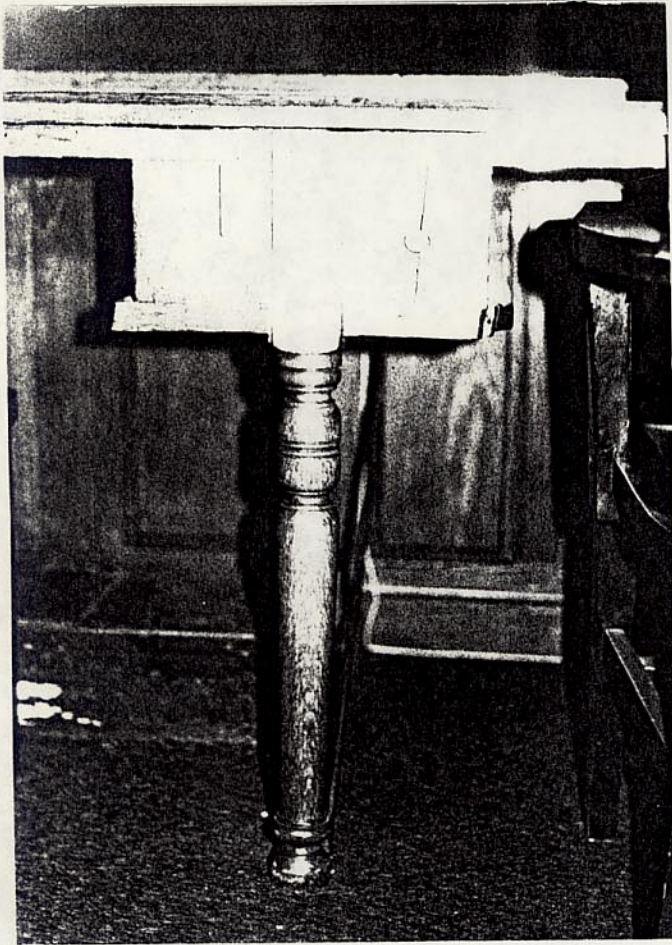
VIEWS OF BURLINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH





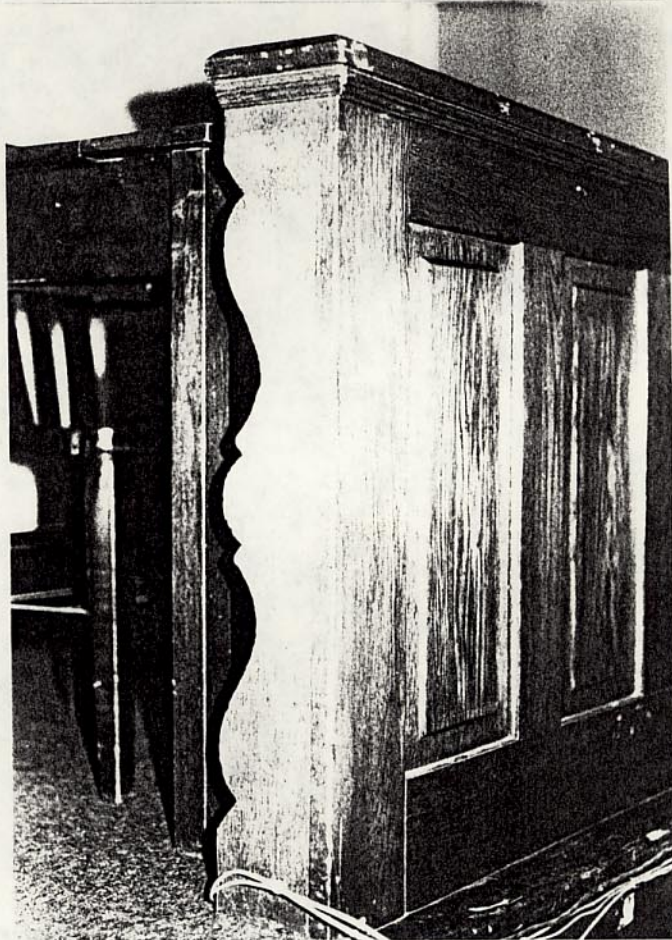
VIEWS OF BURLINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH



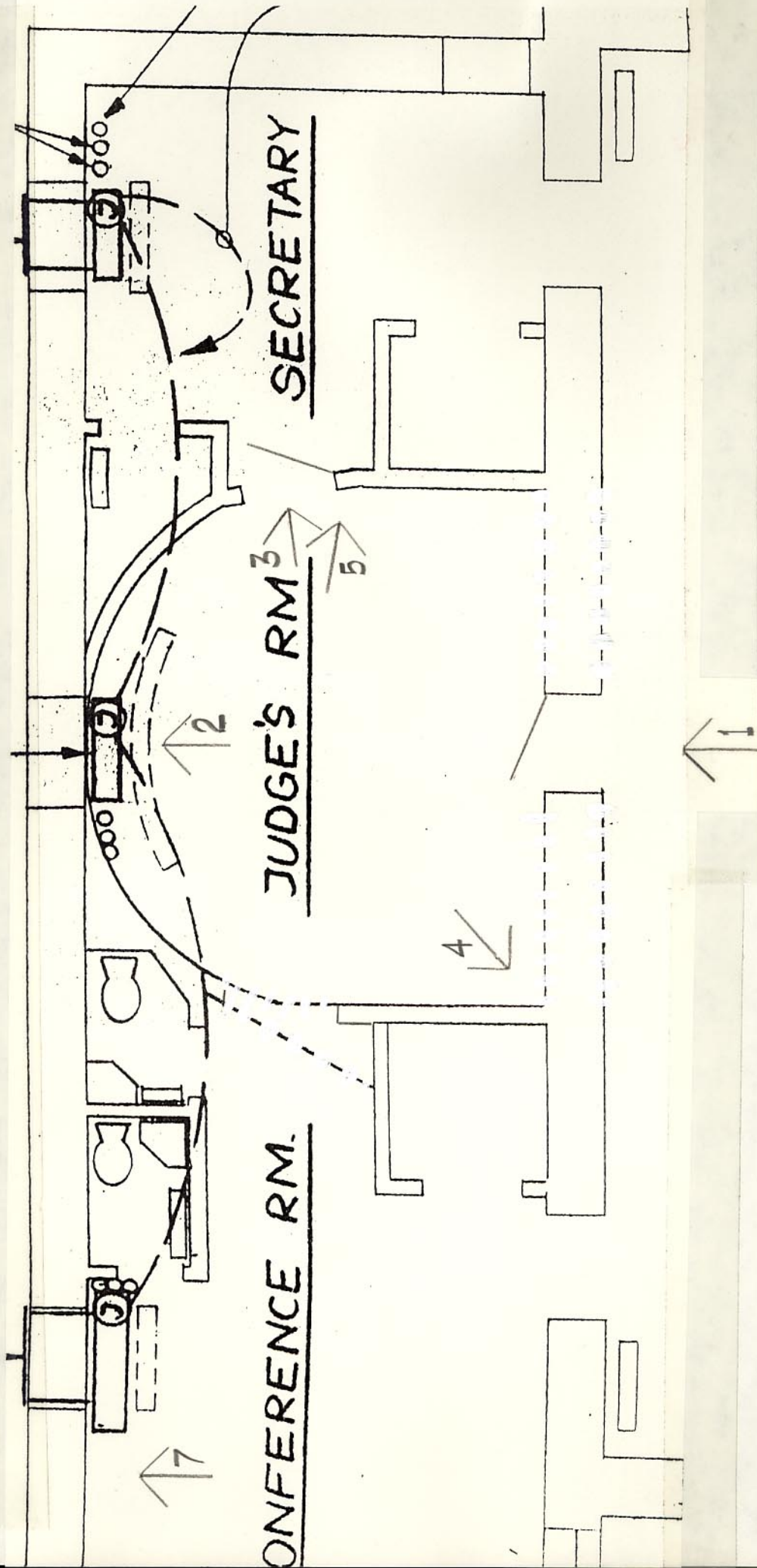


VIEWS OF BURLINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH



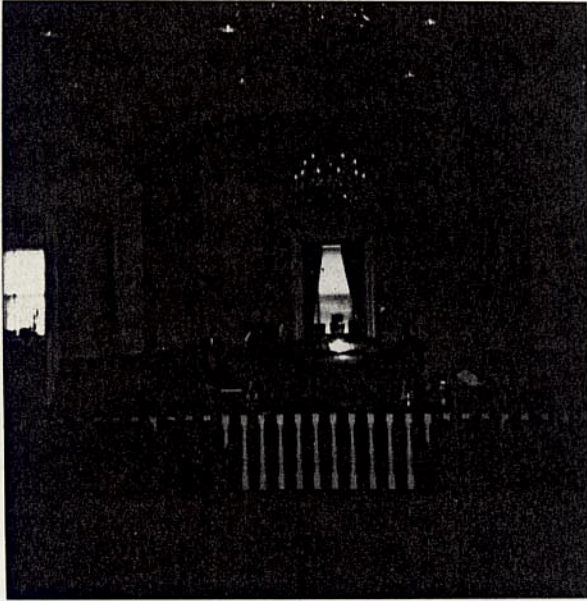


VIEWS OF BURLINGTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
JUDGE'S BENCH



OCEAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE: COURTROOM NO. 1  
 PHOTO LOCATION PLAN





1. Courtroom no. 1



2. Window, Judge's Office

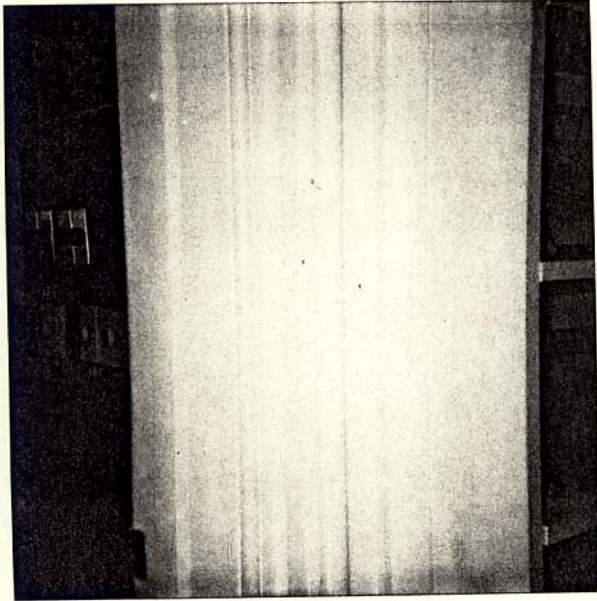


3. Side door, Judge's Office

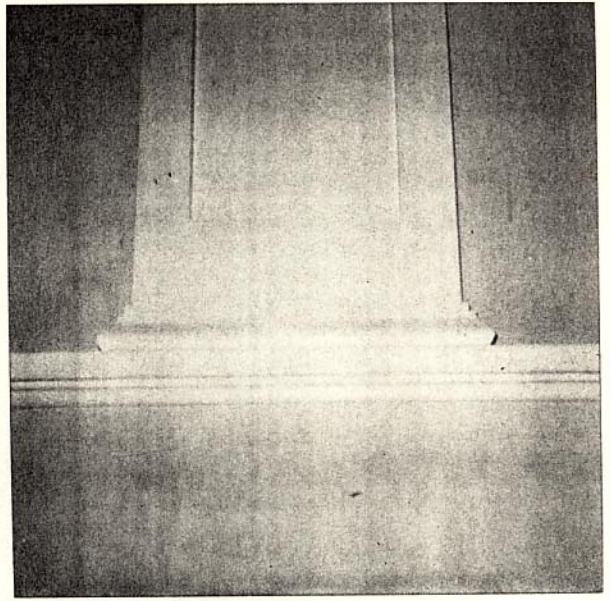


4. Pilaster, Judge's Office

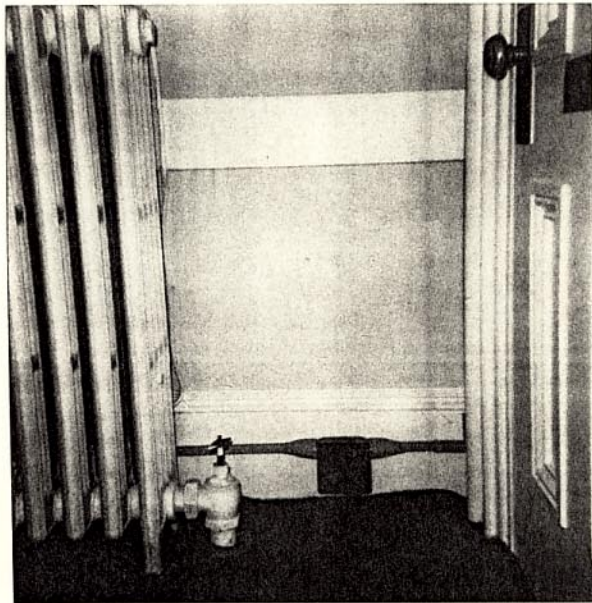




5. Door Surround, Judge's Office



6. Chair rail, Courtroom no. 1



7. Chair rail & Baseboard, Side Office

VIEWS OF OCEAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
COURTROOM NO. 1