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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Office and Banking House of the West Feliciana Railroad Company

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Depot Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Woodville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Wilkinson

CODE

157

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Woodville Civic Club

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 605

CITY, TOWN

Woodville

STATE

Mississippi 39669

\_\_ VICINITY OF

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Chancery Clerk

Wilkinson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Woodville

STATE

Mississippi 39669

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

DATE

1976

\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on Depot Street around the town square, the Office and Banking House of the West Feliciana Railroad Company is a two-story stuccoed brick building in the amphiprostyle temple form. Approximately forty feet square and forty feet to the peak of the hip roof, the building's cubic proportions immediately reveal its vernacular inception. Divided into five equal bays, the front and rear elevations are enriched by hexastyle porticos in the Tuscan order supporting a gallery at the second floor level, and above, an entablature reduced to its simplest form, one wide fascia. Interestingly, this entablature returns to the facade and blends into the pilaster strip as if the two members were one. The formation of this continuous element rising from the veranda floor, following the portico, and dropping to the floor at the other end heightens the applied effect so common to porticos in Greek Revival structures. On the front elevation the facade is pierced by doors in the second and fourth bays on the first floor, with windows filling the remaining positions, while at the second floor level at all openings are French doors with transoms, allowing full access to the gallery. The rear elevation features doors in the third and fifth bays on the first floor; in the first bay, however, the window is expressed by a shallow stuccoed reveal. Oddly, the second floor has only four bays, eliminating the second bay entirely, but including two inner pairs of French doors, and windows in the end bays. Windows throughout the Banking House are six-over-six double-hung sash, and all openings are without architrave or other exterior trim, in keeping with the heavy, restrained character of the building. One of the two original chimneys remains and lightens somewhat the bold silhouette of the building, but only the gallery's iron balustrade with its light geometric lines details the exterior.

The tone of the interior is also massive and restrained, but with decorative emphasis on wooden members and surfaces. All rooms are plastered and have a standard ceiling height of fourteen feet. The original floor plan, now slightly altered, featured a large banking room across the front half of the first floor, backed by two offices and a corner stair hall entered from the rear veranda. At the southeast corner of the banking room is the original vault with a handsome iron door unit cast in Grecian motifs. Windows and doors on the first floor are enframed with broadly molded architraves. An elliptical stair, housed in its own room, combines turned balusters, delicate brackets, and a dramatic flair at both the foot and head to create an amazingly graceful statement in this otherwise severe interior. On the second floor, the woodwork is a lighter, symmetrically molded window and door trim, with impost blocks and molded panels below the window sills. Including the stair hall there are five rooms on the second floor: two large front rooms, three smaller at the rear. In two rooms, the fireplaces have retained their wooden mantels with Tuscan columns supporting a paneled frieze and a shelf. Original hardware is intact on all doors throughout the building, including the vault. Flooring on the first floor is of twentieth century vintage, but the wide pine flooring on the second floor is original.

Though the Banking House has been allowed to deteriorate, it is in good structural condition and is being restored by the Woodville Civic Club to house its museum of Southern decorative arts.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      1834

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The West Feliciana Railroad, the first interstate line in the South, was a joint venture of Mississippi and Louisiana planters seeking a more efficient means of transporting their cotton to the river. Initiated in 1828 and constructed in 1836-42, it is the oldest railroad in the Mississippi Valley, and its 1834 Office and Banking House stands as the third oldest extant railroad building in the United States, built within the first five years of American railroad construction. It was the first railroad in the South to adopt the English Standard Gauge of four feet, eight and one-half inches.

The railroad was established by an act of the Louisiana legislature, signed by Governor Andre B. Roman on March 25, 1831. On December 20 of the same year, Governor Gerard C. Brandon of Mississippi signed a legislative act incorporating the railroad, which was to extend from the Mississippi River landing at Bayou Sara, Louisiana, to Woodville, Mississippi. Interior cotton planters, previously limited to the use of oxen, would then have a much faster means of transporting their bales to the river.

The Mississippi charter named the following officers: Joseph Johnson, president; Edward S. McGehee, J. L. Trask, J. Ogden, C. S. Kellogg, S. S. Boyd, George H. Gordon, Charles C. McDermott, and J. L. Louis, directors; and B. L. C. Wailes, cashier. Books for subscription were opened in June, 1832, under the supervision of Judge Edward S. McGehee, and the sum of \$1,500 was subscribed the first day. On December 23, 1833, the Mississippi legislature passed an act to grant the company full banking privileges, with headquarters in Woodville. Railroad and banking business was carried on at the Woodville office of C. S. and H. D. Kellogg, two attorneys deeply involved in the affairs of the railroad. Stockholders met at the courthouse before 1834, and payment for stock was made at the Woodville branch of the Planters' Bank or at the "Branch Bank of Louisiana, at St. Francisville" (Woodville Republican, Aug. 23, 1834). It was in 1834 that the railroad company constructed its handsome Greek Revival Office and Banking House. On December 13, the first notice of a stockholders' meeting at the Banking House appeared in the Woodville Republican, although the company did not acquire full title to the property until May 16, 1836 (Deed book K:14).

Construction of the West Feliciana rail line, begun in 1835, was not an easy task. When many large landowners refused the line a right-of-way across their property, the Mississippi legislature passed an amendment making it possible to build the railroad in almost any situation by a simple court procedure. Labor was also a problem. One contractor absconded with the payroll of his Irish laborers, who in turn sued the railroad for back wages in the amount of \$350,000. The court settlement reduced the claim to a mere \$.06½. This unpleasantness made it difficult for honest contractors to hire laborers. To compound these problems, the original estimate of \$10,000 per mile for construction soon rose to almost \$25,000 a mile.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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8 - SIGNIFICANCE

By 1836, the company began to recover, and construction was once again under way.

The first eight miles from St. Francisville, Louisiana, were completed by 1836, and the first published schedule of rates appeared in the January 16, 1836, issue of the Woodville Republican. The rates were based on transporting freight by other means to the railhead, where it was loaded on the railroad to be forwarded to the river. In October, 1842, the Republican announced that the railroad would be completed into Woodville within the month, and on October 13, the first train to complete the trip between St. Francisville, Louisiana, and Woodville, Mississippi, entered the town amid great excitement. "Planters and their families came from miles around to witness the thrilling spectacle of a puffing iron horse drawing a train of cars. The town put on its gala attire and celebrated 'the greatest event in Woodville's history' in fitting style" (Corliss, p. 258). Regular service on the West Feliciana was begun on October 20 of the same year.

The West Feliciana prospered until the Civil War, when it was pressed into Confederate service. "On April 23, 1861, the railway's directors passed a resolution providing free transportation to Confederate military companies and war material" (Estaville, p. 99). The company issued paper notes ranging from ten cents to twenty dollars, and toward the end of the war, people of the region turned to West Feliciana Railroad "money" as a medium of exchange. Finally, the railroad was reduced to mule-power operation, when under military orders its only remaining locomotive, "Escape," was dismantled to provide copper and other metals for the Confederate forces. By 1865, the railroad had ceased all activity, "its right-of-way a mass of woods and brambles, its bridges and ties rotting away and its rails but 'two streaks of rust'" (Corliss, p. 259).

For twelve years, the West Feliciana lay in ruins, and by the 1870s its banking office had become a boarding house. In 1875, the track was repaired, and once again steam engines were running on the road. The railroad continued in operation until 1888, when it was purchased by the Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railroad. In 1892, its stock was purchased by the Illinois Central Railroad (now part of the Illinois Central Gulf), and it has been operated by that company until the present. The Banking House during this decade became the Woodville post office, and remained in this use until 1949. Railroad business was conducted in the small depot constructed ca. 1910 adjacent to the rail line. The Banking House later served as the county welfare office until its purchase by the Woodville Civic Club in 1973 for restoration and development as a museum.

The West Feliciana Office and Banking House is significant as the key structure in one of the most important concentrations of railroad history in the Deep South and in the nation. So far from the rail centers of the east coast, this rural region of Mis-

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Mississippi and Louisiana exhibited amazing foresight in railroad development, its efforts contemporary with those in the American railroad capital of Baltimore and equivalent English cities. Socially, politically, culturally, and industrially, Mississippi was still a frontier, with approximately one-half the land in the state still owned by Indian nations. Only a small fraction of the state was in the hands of private owners. The determination of a few farsighted planters from both Mississippi and Louisiana assured the West Feliciana's charter in 1831 as the first interstate railroad company in the southern United States. Its Office and Banking House, though architecturally significant, is more important as one of the three oldest extant railroad buildings in America, as well as Mississippi's second oldest existing banking house.

9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Corliss, Carlton Jonathan. Main Line of Mid America: The Story of the Illinois Central. New York: Creative Age Press, 1950.

Estaville, Lawrence E., Jr. "A Small Contribution: Louisiana's Short Rural Railroads in the Civil War." Louisiana History, vol. 18, no. 1 (Winter 1977).

Meeks, Carroll L. V. The Railroad Station. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Subject File. Railroads--West Feliciana.

Reed, Merl E. New Orleans and the Railroads: The Struggle for Commercial Empire, 1830-1860. N.p.: Louisiana State University Press for the Louisiana Historical Association, 1966.

"West Feliciana a Century Old." Illinois Central Magazine, March, 1931.

Woodville (Miss.) Republican. 1833-1842, 1924.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Acts and Supplemental Acts of the Legislatures of Louisiana and Mississippi, Incorporating the West Feliciana Railroad. . . . Woodville, Miss.: Wm. A. Chisholm, 1835.

Alexander, Edwin P. Down at the Depot. New York: Bramhall House, 1970.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .50 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1   5	6   6   2   3   0   0	3   4   4   3   0   5   0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The bank is located on a perfectly rectangular lot bounded on the north by Bank Street for a distance of approximately 175 feet and on the west by Depot Street for a distance of approximately 55 feet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gregory B. Free, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 571

CITY OR TOWN

Jackson

DATE

May, 1977

TELEPHONE

(601) 354-6218

STATE

Mississippi 39205

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE X

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Elmer B. Hilliard*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

August 8, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

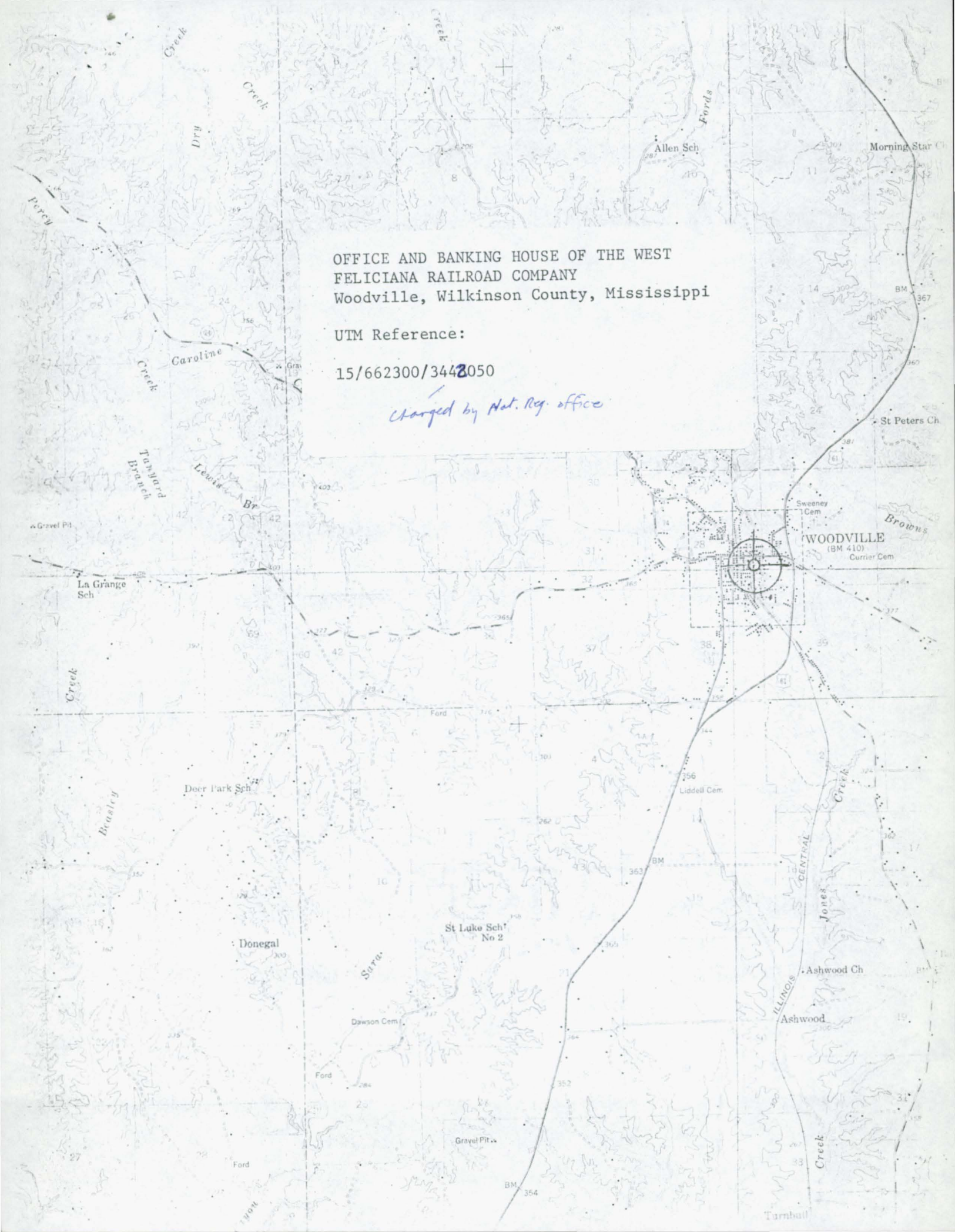
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

OFFICE AND BANKING HOUSE OF THE WEST  
FELICIANA RAILROAD COMPANY  
Woodville, Wilkinson County, Mississippi

UTM Reference:

15/662300/3448050

*Charged by Nat. Reg. office*





MAYORAL OFFICE  
GEORGE W. B. ...

The City of ...



Photo No. 1 - OFFICE AND BANKING HOUSE OF  
THE WEST FELICIANA RAILROAD COMPANY

Woodville, Wilkinson County, Mississippi

Gregory B. Free

April, 1977

Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History

Looking east at facade (west elevation)



Photo No. 2 - OFFICE AND BANKING HOUSE OF  
THE WEST FELICIANA RAILROAD COMPANY

Woodville, Wilkinson County, Mississippi

Gregory B. Free

April, 1977

Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History

Looking northeast at south elevation