

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED AUG 15 1977

DATE ENTERED

SEP 23 1977

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
☒

Lafayette County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Court House Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

First

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Lafayette

CODE

071

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Board of Supervisors of Lafayette County

STREET & NUMBER

Court House Square

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi 38655

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Chancery Clerk
Lafayette County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Court House Square

CITY, TOWN

Oxford

STATE

Mississippi 38655

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

DATE

1975

FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL ☐

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

CITY, TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi 39205

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lafayette County Courthouse is a three-story stuccoed masonry structure located on a grassy square in the center of Oxford, Mississippi. The original five-bay rectangle was extended in 1953 by the addition at each end of one larger bay which repeated the original endwall elevation. Projecting from the center bay of the south and north elevations are pedimented porticoes with Corinthian columns raised on arcades scored in imitation of ashlar masonry. The two original bays on each side of the porticoes are divided by pilasters rising the full height of the structure from the water table to support a bracketed wooden cornice. Segmental arched windows at the ground level of the original block change to semicircular arched at the upper level, and both are replaced on the additions by smaller sash, flat head fenestration. To complete the composition, a square, tin-domed cupola with clock faces above paired, semicircular arched windows is located on axis. Unfortunately, the recent application of shingles to the cupola base produces an unpleasant contrast of old and new. By referring to the 1871 architect's drawings and old photographs, it is possible to identify other minor changes to the exterior. Multiple brick chimneys have disappeared; additional coatings of stucco have obscured the original texture of the porticoes; and the small windows in the base of the cupola have been covered by new materials.

The interior ground floor plan consists of a hallway running the length of the building, with rooms to either side. An elegant stairway with subtly curving rail and turned balusters is the principal feature. Stone walls are intact, most of the original moldings are in place, and the original courtroom furnishings remain. Many of the original interior finishes, however, are poorly maintained or modified. Vinyl tile is seen throughout; the courtroom and several other areas have new acoustical tile ceilings; and new fixtures of generally poor quality have been installed. The 1953 additions approximately doubled the interior space of the structure.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
☒ 1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	☒ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1871

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

S. Boling

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lafayette County Courthouse is a locally significant example of the architectural eclecticism which appeared in post-Civil-War Mississippi. One of the oldest courthouses in the state and continuously in use since 1871, the structure is also significant as the focal point of local government in Lafayette County.

Lafayette County was created on February 9, 1836, as a part of the division of lands ceded by the Chickasaw Indians. A rude temporary courthouse was replaced in 1840 by a permanent masonry structure (see Sobotka, p. 37). During the Civil War, at the time of Van Dorn's raid on Holly Springs, Gen. Ulysses S. Grant bivouacked his troops there. In 1864 the courthouse, along with most of the business district of Oxford, was razed. Work on the present courthouse was begun in 1871, and in 1873 the building was occupied.

Prepared by an obscure architect, S. Boling, the extant original architect's drawings are signed and dated the fourth day of April, 1871. Reliance on the traditions of the Greek Revival, which so completely dominated the architecture of prewar Mississippi, is seen in the Corinthian porticoes and the large pilastered frontispieces. The heavily bracketed cornice, arched fenestration, and prominent cupola are concessions to the more current Italianate taste.

Author William Faulkner, whose permanent home from childhood until death was Oxford, found in the courthouse and its surroundings the prototype for the center of his mythical town of Jefferson in Yoknapatawpha County. In Requiem for a Nun he describes the square:

. . . the courthouse in its grove the center; quadrangular around it, the stores . . . school and church and tavern and bank and jail each in its ordered place. . . . But above all, the courthouse: the center, the focus, the hub; sitting looming in the center of the county's circumference like a single cloud . . . musing, brooding, symbolic and ponderable, tall as cloud, solid as rock, dominating all: protector of the weak, judicate and curb of the passions and lusts, repository and guardian of the aspirations and the hopes . . . (p. 40).

Standing on the site of the original Lafayette County courthouse, the late nineteenth century structure presides over the commercial square of Oxford and symbolizes a stability and continuity extending over almost 150 years of local government.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Faulkner, William. Requiem for a Nun. New York: Random House, 1950.

Jackson. Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Subject files.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	6
2	6
8	2
2	5

⁴⁰⁰
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

3	8
0	5
2	5
0	0

⁵⁰⁰
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The court square is bounded on the north by Jackson Street, on the south by Van Buren Street, and on the east and west by Lamar Street.

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

Michael W. Fazio, Professor of Architecture

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi State University

DATE

May 5, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Drawer AQ

TELEPHONE

(601) 325-5372

CITY OR TOWN

Mississippi State

STATE

Mississippi 39762

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

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

Charles Whittington
DIRECTOR OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST: *Walter Cole*
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9-23-77

DATE

9-23-77

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Oxford. University of Mississippi Library. Mississippi Collection. Architect's drawings of Lafayette County Courthouse, dated April 4, 1871. Negatives and prints on file, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

Sobotka, John C., Jr. A History of Lafayette County, Mississippi. Oxford: Rebel Press, Inc., 1976.



PHOTO NO. 174-LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi
Michael W. Fazio
April, 1977

Three Rivers Planning and
Development District
Exterior from the north

AUG 15 1977

SEP 23 1977



PHOTO NO. 2⁷⁴ LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi

Michael W. Fazio

April, 1977

Three Rivers Planning and
Development District
Exterior from the east

AUG 15 1977

SEP 23 1977



PHOTO NO. 3⁰⁷⁴ LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi
Michael W. Fazio
April, 1977
Three Rivers Planning and
Development District
Exterior from the south

AUG 15 1977

SEP 23 1977



PHOTO NO. 4¹⁴ LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi
Michael W. Fazio

April, 1977

Three Rivers Planning and
Development District
Exterior from the south
(Central block only)

AUG 15 1977

SEP 23 1977