1 NAME

Lafayette County Courthouse

2 LOCATION

Court House Square

3 CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>_WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
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<td>_GOVERNMENT</td>
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<td>_BEING CONSIDERED</td>
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4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Board of Supervisors of Lafayette County

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Office of the Chancery Clerk
Lafayette County Courthouse

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

<table>
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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.
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, judic peace 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.

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

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**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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<tr>
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**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.

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**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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**

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**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

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**DIRECTOR OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

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**ATTEST**

**KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**
9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


PHOTO NO. 17 - 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
PHOTO NO. 2

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
PHOTO NO. 3

LAFAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Oxford, Lafayette County, Mississippi

Michael W. Fazio

April, 1977

Three Rivers Planning and Development District

Exterior from the south

AUG 1 5 1977

SEP 2 3 1977