

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 8 1980

DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Old Wesson Public School Building

AND/OR COMMON

Oswalt Youth and Community Center

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wesson

VICINITY OF

Fourth

STATE

Mississippi

CODE

28

COUNTY

Copiah

CODE

29

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**3 CLASSIFICATION**
**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

X STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

X PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

X OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

X GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

X PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Town of Wesson

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wesson

VICINITY OF

STATE

Mississippi

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Chancery Clerk  
Copiah County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Hazlehurst

STATE Mississippi

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Statewide Survey of Historic Sites

DATE

1976

FEDERAL X 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

☐ EXCELLENT

☐ DETERIORATED

☒ UNALTERED

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ GOOD

☐ RUINS

☐ ALTERED

☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

☒ FAIR

☐ UNEXPOSED

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The old Wesson public school building, a brick structure with a high basement, consists of a two-story eleven-bay central portion flanked by three-story towers. Attached to the central portion is a two-tiered bracketed gallery with central entrances on both floors. Windows in the central portion have segmental arches; tower windows have round arches and are accented with corbeled drip molds. The corners of the towers are pilastered and project beyond the roof line. Corbeled tables adorn the frieze.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The old public school building at Wesson was, according to its cornerstone, "erected 1889; destroyed by fire 1890; rebuilt 1893." A locally important landmark, it is one of three remaining public buildings associated with the town's remarkable post-Civil War development and prosperity. The importance of the school derives from an architectural style which links it inextricably to the early significance of the town.

In 1866 Col. James Madison Wesson (1815-1899), a textile manufacturer, moved from Choctaw County, Mississippi, to Copiah County, where he founded a textile industry, the Mississippi Manufacturing Company, and fostered the development of the town that bears his name. The industry, subsequently known as the Mississippi Mills, employed several thousand people during its most productive period and was often cited as the "largest manufacturing institution south of the Ohio River and the South's best single example of post-war economic recovery." Before 1888 three substantial brick multistory buildings had been erected. Although demolished in 1920, photographs of these structures reveal a marked similarity in style to the old public school. It is locally believed that the design for the school was prepared by the mill's architect, a tradition supported by the mill's donation of land on which the school building stands.

The old Wesson public school was used for educational purposes until 1960. Soon thereafter, Wesson residents worked to preserve the school and to adapt it for use as a community center. In 1975 the community center was named to honor Mr. and Mrs. Frank Oswalt, local educators instrumental in the preservation of the school building.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Maddox, V. D. Nomination to National Register of Historic Places of Wesson Hotel,  
entered on the Register 1972.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.03 <sup>CS</sup> 10/16/80 ~~less than ten acres~~

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME Wesson, Miss.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 5 7, 4, 7 4, 3, 0 3, 5 1, 0 2, 2, 0

B                              

C                              

D                              

E                              

F                              

G                              

H                              

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See attached sketch map. <sup>CS</sup> 10/16/80

All of Square 22, Lots 3 and 4 of Square 23, and Lot 3 of Square 26,  
according to the official plat of the Town of Wesson, Mississippi.

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

Norman Chronister, Research Assistant

ORGANIZATION

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

DATE

October, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 571

TELEPHONE

(601) 354-7326

CITY OR TOWN

Jackson

STATE

Mississippi 39205

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL   

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 A. Williams

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE April 2, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Forrest W. Ray June

DATE 10/16/80

ATTEST: Carol Dubie

DATE 10/6/80

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

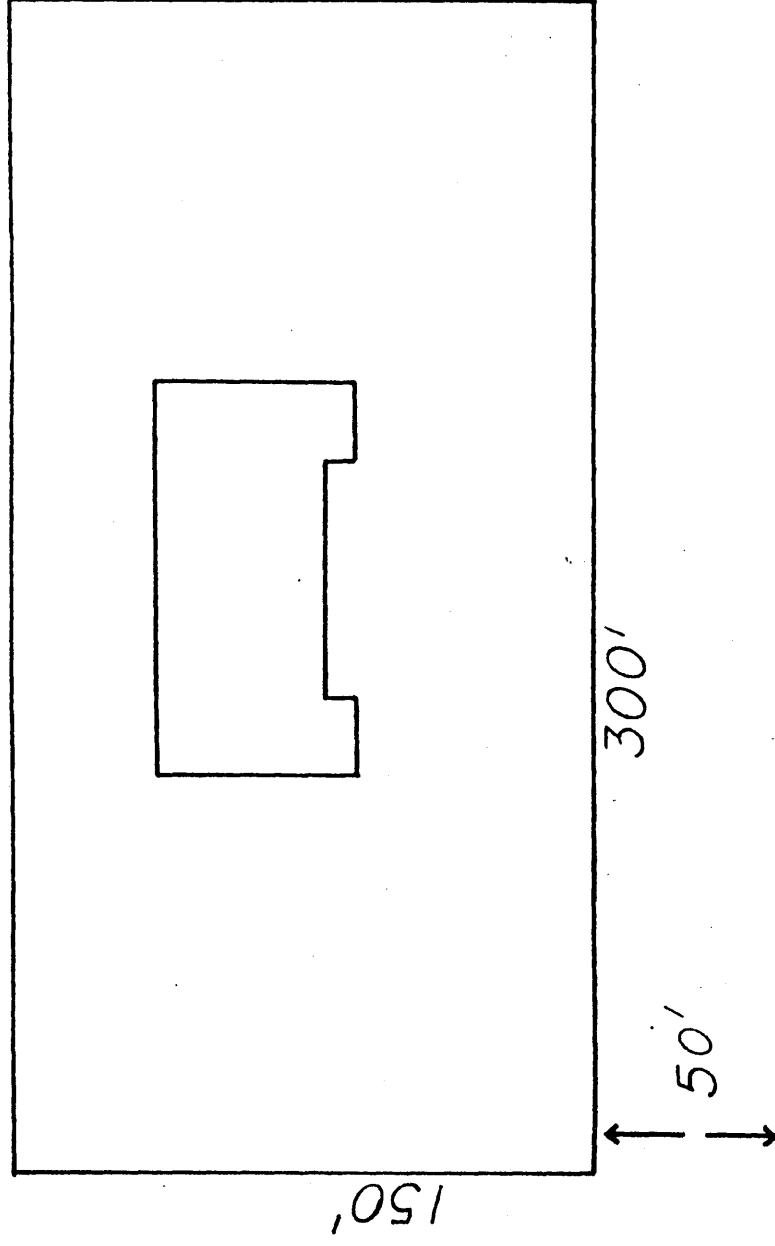
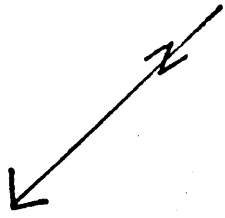
Page 2

8 - SIGNIFICANCES ( Old Wesson Public School)

In sharp contrast to the lusty growth of the 1840s and 1850s, the economy of Mississippi in the post-Civil War era (1865-1900) largely precluded the building of substantial structures resembling the mainstream of contemporary American architectural design. Thus, the preponderance of nineteenth century Revival examples predate the Civil War, leaving the remaining thirty-five years of the century with only a handful of major building projects. The Second Romanesque Revival style is therefore represented in Mississippi by precious few examples making each a valuable resource worthy of preservation.

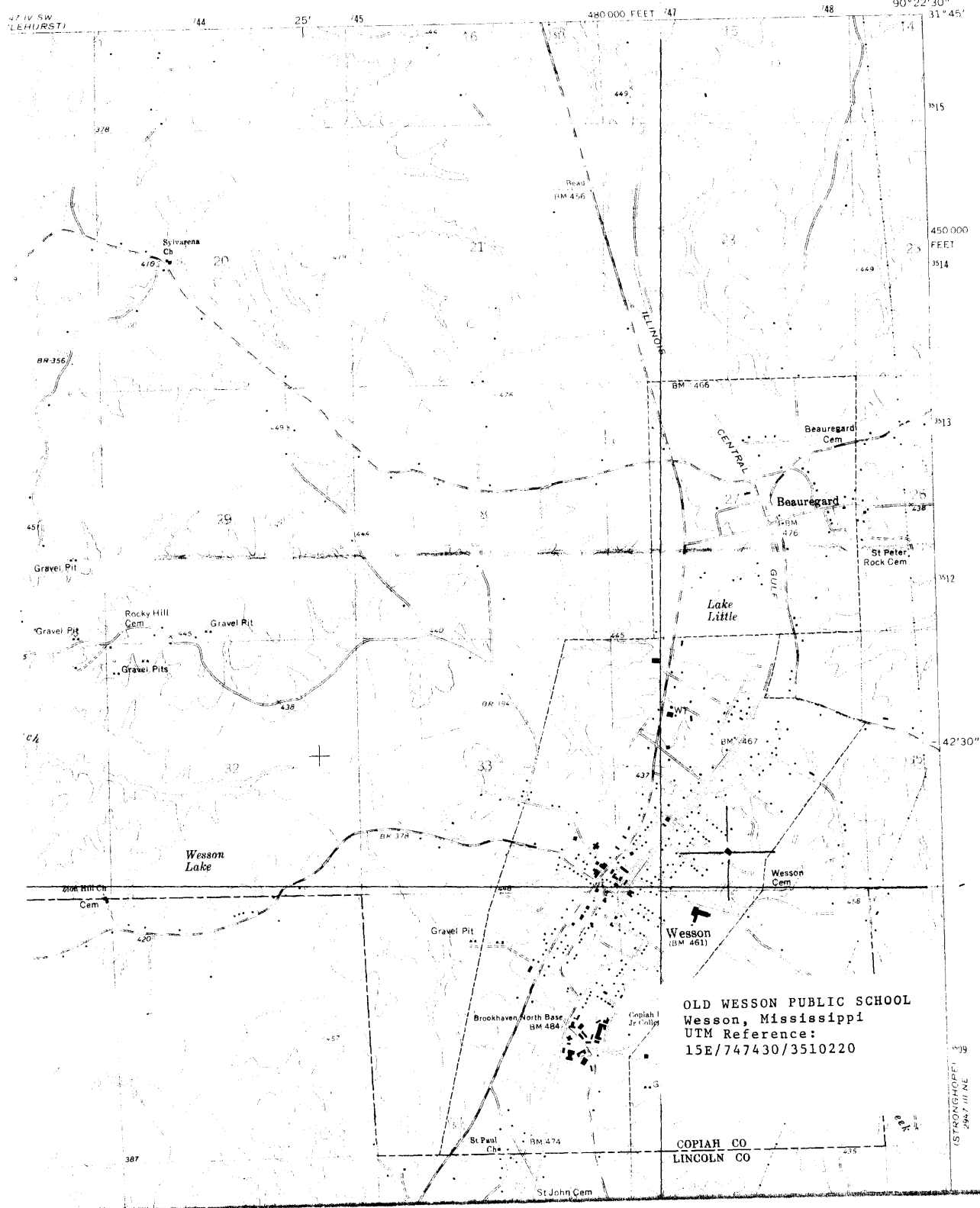
The Old Wesson Public School is an imaginative and eminently pleasing example of the Second Romanesque Revival style adapted to the Mississippi climate by its prominent eleven-bay double gallery. While it may be considered a somewhat watered-down cousin of its northern contemporaries, the school nonetheless is important to the architectural history of Mississippi.

OLD WESSON PUBLIC SCHOOL BLDG.  
COPIAH CO., MISS.



NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

(SHAW) (KOV)







From the southeast, the front (southwest)  
elevation

Old Wesson Public School *Bldg.*  
Wesson, Mississippi

Norman Chronister, Mississippi Department  
of Archives and History

October, 1979

Photo No. *1/2*

*Copy to Co.*

OCT 16 1980

APR 8 1980



From the southwest, the front (southwest)  
elevation

Old Wesson Public School *Bldg.*  
Wesson, Mississippi

Norman Chronister, Mississippi Department  
of Archives and History

*copied co.*

October, 1979

Photo No. 2 */2*

**APR 8 1980**

OCT 16 1980