

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF DALLAS COUNTY
DALLAS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

Listed in the N.R.
3-27-84
DA0058

Survey Number DA-10

Owner Judge Joe Meader

Property Name Dallas County Courthouse

Address Dallas County Courthouse

3rd & Oak Sts.
Location Fordyce

Fordyce, AR 71742

Significant Date/s 1911

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Dallas County Courthouse, an imposing building of Classical Revival design, is situated on the corner of Third and Oak Streets in Fordyce. This building possesses a monumental presence in a neighborhood, which, though only a block from Main Street, is primarily residential. Built in 1911, three years following the move of the county seat from Princeton to Fordyce, the courthouse was designed by Frank W. Gibb and built by Edgar Koonce. Consisting of two-stories built upon a high basement with a raised concrete foundation, the building is highlighted by a domed cupola that rises from the flat roof and two porticos supported by Tuscan columns. The plan is rectangular with symmetrical elevations. Constructed of brick laid in American bond, the courthouse has simply framed single-light double-hung windows with wooden sash and stone sills. Projecting several feet from the front (south) and rear (north) elevations are pedimented central pavilions. Brick pilasters with simple caps and bases span the area between the watertable and unenriched entablature, indicating the three bays of each elevation. Above the entablature is a brick parapet with stone coping. The octagonal central cupola has a shingled domed roof topped by a pommel. Four pilaster-supported pediments on the four principle sides surround an equal number of clock faces, beneath each of which a small window is located. Long narrow windows are positioned at each corner.

The front elevation, which faces Third Street, is dominated by a portico supported by four Tuscan columns which rest upon a podium. The entablature is unadorned and is continuous around the building. A dentiled raking cornice and a central circular band in relief adorn the pediment. The central projecting pavilion has ten coupled windows. The front entrance consists of double wooden doors, each with a window with mullions radiating from the center, creating eight triangular lights. Architrave trim surrounds the door and two consoles support a cornice. A panel between the trim and cornice has geometric shapes in relief and bears the name "Dallas".

The central pavilion on the rear elevation has a brick pediment pierced by a wheel window with a brick surround and four keystones. Each floor of this elevation has ten windows uniformly arranged. A single story rear addition, which attains the height of the watertable, houses the police department. Wooden doors, similiar to those on the front, are found on both end elevations. Each is flanked by sidelights and topped with a large transom. The east elevation, which faces Oak Street, features a one-story balustraded portico supported by four Tuscan columns. "County Courthouse" appears on the frieze of the porch entablature.

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The Dallas County Courthouse is an excellent example of Gibb's adept adaptation of the classical temple form for a modern building. Typical of many American civic buildings of the period, this Classical Revival design appropriately symbolizes the importance of the building's judicial function.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Representing the growth of Fordyce and the popularity of the Classical Revival style in America, the Dallas County Courthouse stands as a testament to both local and national trends. Monumental in scale and proportion, this courthouse, the largest and finest Classical Revival structure in Dallas County, symbolizes Fordyce's rapid growth as a trade center that culminated in its replacing Princeton as the county seat. Though infrequently used in Dallas County, the Classical Revival, with its democratic connotations, was a style often employed in the design of civic buildings throughout America during the first quarter of this century. This building also serves as an important example of the architectural designs of Frank W. Gibb early in his career. Though he had experience as an engineer and surveyor, Frank W. Gibb, who came to Arkansas from Chicago, is not known to have formally studied architecture. Despite his lack of professional training, Gibb established himself as a capable architect and built for himself a healthy practice. Gibb frequently designed classically-inspired structures, of which the Dallas County Courthouse is a significant example. A focal point of Fordyce, the courthouse has continued since its construction to serve the judicial needs of Dallas County and remains unparalleled in its design and scale.

Acreage: less than 1

Quadrangle Name: Fordyce

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000

UTM Reference: 15 554260/3741320

Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 17, Lots 7, 8, and 9 and the south halves of Lots 10, 11 and 12, original city of Fordyce.