

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR LISTED

DEC 6 1996

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AHPP

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Mississippi County Courthouse, Chickasawba District

Other Name/Site Number: MS 0056

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 200 West Walnut Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Blytheville

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Mississippi Code: AR 093 Zip Code: 72315

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Cathryn H. Slater Signature of certifying official 10-14-96 Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

 Signature of commenting or other official Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

 Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Government Sub: Courthouse
Current : Government Sub: Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Colonial Revival

Materials: foundation Sandstone roof Ceramic Tile
walls Sandstone other Wood
Brick

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

Located at 200 W. Walnut Street, the Mississippi County Courthouse in Blytheville is a three-and-a-half story, cut-sandstone and brick structure designed in the Colonial Revival style by the Pine Bluff architectural firm of Selligman and Ellesvard in 1919. The exterior of the structure is virtually unaltered with exception of a handicapped accessible elevator shaft that was recently added to the eastern elevation. The interior is also largely intact and features an ornate, white marble-clad, two-story entrance foyer. Also included on the courthouse square is a modern noncontributing Cooperative Extension Service office, a radio tower, numerous monuments and one grave.

Elaboration

Designed in 1919 by the Pine Bluff architectural firm of Selligman and Ellesvard, the Colonial Revival-style Mississippi County Courthouse in Blytheville is a three-and-a-half story, cut-stone and brick structure. The entire first story is faced with regular-coursed, smooth ashlar-finished sandstone while brown brick is utilized for the upper stories. The essentially rectangular-plan building contains a slightly recessed center section, which houses a short fourth floor that begins above the projecting stone cornice and entablature that encircles the building. The fourth-story is covered by a very low-pitched, pyramid roof that is sheathed with green

ceramic shingles, and the three-story side sections are capped with hipped roofs clad with identical shingles. The projecting stone cornice is decorated with modillions, and the entablature is punctuated with ornate wrought-iron attic vents placed above the windows on the hipped-roof side sections. There is one interior brick chimney located on the rear elevation at the junction of the center block and the western side section

Fenestration for the building is largely accomplished by groups of three, single-hinged, wood-frame casement windows with distinctive transoms consisting of eight triangular panes. The first-floor windows contain eight-pane casements while the second and third floors are lighted by ten-pane casement windows. The fourth floor is fenestrated by groups of three eight-pane, single-hinged, wood-frame casement windows without transoms. There are five window groups on the front elevation, and six window groups on the rear, or northern, elevation.

The front, or southern, elevation is dominated by the slightly recessed center section that is divided by six two-story limestone pilasters with simple bases and capitals. The two outside pilasters are only half of the width of the four center pilasters. Interestingly, the pilasters begin at the top of the limestone-clad first story and extend to the very wide limestone entablature beneath the projecting cornice. The main entrance is positioned in the center of the facade and is covered by an ornate stone and wrought-iron railing balcony that is supported by two decorative stone brackets. The actual entrance surround is unadorned, and the original door has been replaced with a modern aluminum-frame, single-leaf door with one sidelight and transom. The balcony can be accessed through a special group of casement windows that differ from the regular windows only by extending all the way to the floor. Besides the balcony window, thirteen groups of casement windows fenestrate the center section of the front elevation. The flanking hipped roof projections add twelve more window groups.

The eastern and western side elevations were originally identical in composition; however, the eastern elevation now contains an attached handicapped accessible, three-story elevator shaft in the center of the facade. The western elevation contains a single-leaf entrance at the center of the first floor and is otherwise symmetrically fenestrated by fourteen window groups

A total of forty-two window groups (counting the fourth floor) combine to illuminate the rear, or northern, elevation. The principal feature of this elevation, however, is the two-story curved bay in the center of the main block. This bay contains ten windows per floor and is covered by a flat roof outlined by a simple cornice.

The interior is also largely intact and features an ornate, white marble-clad, two-story entrance foyer. A marble staircase ascends to the second floor along the right wall of the foyer and is adorned with a large copper and brass lamp post mounted on a massive marble newel post. Marble is utilized throughout the building for door and window trim and wainscoting.

The courthouse square is bound by West Walnut Street, Second Street, Chickasawba Avenue, and Third Street. Also included within this boundary is a modern noncontributing Cooperative Extension Service office building and radio tower on the northwest corner of the square. The western and southwestern portion of the square contains numerous monuments, both contributing and noncontributing, and one contributing site, the Edgar H. Lloyd grave. The noncontributing Vietnam Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Memorial is situated just west of the western elevation courthouse entrance and south of a concrete sidewalk. Further west, the sidewalk forks near its junction with Third Street, and two contributing monuments, the 1934 Confederate Veterans of Mississippi County Memorial and the 1934 Children of the Confederacy Memorial Bench, along with the contributing 1936 Centennial Memorial marker, are located between the dual sidewalks. South of this sidewalk is another cluster of monuments (including the Edgar H. Lloyd grave) composed of the noncontributing Vietnam Memorial, the contributing c. 1946 Edgar H. Lloyd/World War I & II Memorial, the noncontributing Korean War Memorial, and the noncontributing Eternal Flame installed in 1962.

The Edgar H. Lloyd Memorial was surveyed as part of the SOS! (Save Outdoor Sculpture) program in November, 1992. The granite memorial contains a portrait bust in deep relief of a young male with a full head of hair in a military shirt with open collar. Directly below is the inscription: THE WHITE HOUSE/WASHINGTON/THE PRESIDENT OF THE/UNITED STATES TAKES PRIDE/IN AWARDING THE MEDAL OF/HONOR POSTHUMOUSLY TO/FIRST LIEUTENANT/EDGAR H. LLOYD/INFANTRY U.S. ARMY/CITATION/FOR CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY/AND INTREPIDITY AT THE RISK/OF HIS LIFE ABOVE AND BEYOND/THE CALL OF DUTY/ Franklin D. Roosevelt (script signature facsimile).

Mississippi Co. Courthouse, Chickasawba District Arkansas
Name of Property County and State

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8. Statement of Significance

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1919

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Selligman and Ellesvard

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

Summary

The Mississippi County Courthouse in Blytheville is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance as an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style as applied to public buildings.

Elaboration

As the northern county seat of Mississippi County, Blytheville is substantially younger than the southern county seat of Osceola, which was founded as early as 1836 by some accounts. Mississippi County was formally created in 1833. At that time the county, along with much of Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri, was covered with vast tracts of frequently flooded hardwood forests growing in the rich, Delta alluvial soil. In addition to the natural river flooding, transportation was further hampered by the New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 and 1812, which transformed thousands

5 acres into malaria-infested swamps, commonly known as the "Sunkenlands," and even lakes such as Big Lake. Agriculture in the form of cotton had been introduced to Mississippi County during the antebellum period and several large plantations flourished along the river.

The site constituting much of present-day Blytheville was purchased by Henry T. Blythe in 1873. Blythe, a Virginian-born Methodist minister who had first settled in Mississippi County in 1853, erected a steam-powered sawmill and cotton gin on his new land (the site which is now East Walnut Street). In 1879, a post office was established with Blythe as the postmaster. The following year, he formally laid out a town and began selling town lots. Soon, a small village began to emerge. Additional impetus for growth was provided in 1888 when L. W. Gosnell, an early Blytheville merchant, also constructed a cotton gin. Consequently, the town began to attract a few cotton buyers from Jonesboro and Memphis. Blytheville was incorporated in 1891. Although only eight miles from the Mississippi River, the town leaders realized that better transportation in the form of railroads was needed to tap the vast surrounding timber tracts and create a booming lumber industry.

The first efforts to secure a railroad to Blytheville centered around the extension of the Paragould & Southeastern Railroad from its intersection with the St. Louis and Southwestern Railroad ("Cotton Belt") in Paragould, Greene County, through Hornersville, Missouri. The line reached Hornersville in 1897 and subsequently terminated in Blytheville. In 1901, the rails of the Jonesboro, Lake City, and Eastern arrived in Blytheville, connecting the town with the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad (commonly known as "Frisco" and formerly the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis) in Jonesboro. One year later, the St. Louis & Memphis Railroad, which was acquired almost immediately by the Frisco, reached Blytheville and provided a direct link with St. Louis and Memphis. With transportation now readily at the hand, the large timber companies moved to acquire the surrounding forests and establish mills in Blytheville. The Chicago Mill & Lumber Company was the first of the these companies to establish a mill in Blytheville. Others followed, and the resulting timber boom greatly accelerated the town's growth.

The impact of the timber industry was reflected in Blytheville's official population census. From 1900 to 1910 the population increased from 302 to 3,849. By 1920, 6,447 people resided in the town, which was dubbed "the infant wonder" in Dallas T. Herndon's *Centennial History of Arkansas* published in 1922. At the time of the construction of the new courthouse in 1919, the town consisted of two banks, two weekly newspapers, a modern electric plant, waterworks, and sewer system, large lumber interests, cooperage works, two machine shops, an ice factory and cold storage plant, a broom factory, a handle factory, paved streets, department stores, and fine public school buildings. The architectural record of the growing city was greatly augmented in June, 1921, when the beautiful new courthouse was dedicated.

In 1919, the Pine Bluff architectural firm of Selligman and Ellesvard was charged with designing the new courthouse. Interestingly, the year 1919 was the only year that Mitchell Selligman worked in partnership. Selligman was

known for his design of several prominent structures in Pine Bluff, including the 1919 Central High School and the later Egyptian Revival-style Shrine Temple. The Stewart-McGee Construction Company was awarded the contract, and the building was considered officially completed on July 1, 1921 at a cost of \$150,000. The resulting courthouse was an elegant and refined interpretation of the Colonial Revival style of architecture that proved popular for many early twentieth century public buildings in Arkansas. Although not an exact Georgian-style replica, Selligman and Ellesvard incorporated many of the tenets and architectural elements of that style and the succeeding, more refined Adams style into their design. One of the more distinguishing features of the new courthouse not found on original Colonial-era buildings was the utilization of wood-frame casement windows with unusual decorative transoms. Similar casement windows were frequently employed by Selligman in his designs from this period.

Comparisons to the earlier Mississippi County Courthouse in Osceola (NR 12/13/78) are inevitable. With its large and impressive copper-sheathed dome, fluted Ionic columns, and textbook Classical Revival-style detailing, the 1912 Osceola courthouse certainly provides a stunning visual impression that is undoubtedly favored by many first-time and long-time viewers of the two courthouses. Nevertheless, the Mississippi County Courthouse in Blytheville is an equally worthy design in the context of the less ostentatious Colonial Revival style of architecture.

Although Blytheville would change dramatically from the booming timber economy in 1919 that largely provided the wealth responsible for the sophisticated design of the new courthouse to an equally vibrant cotton-based economy in the 1920's and 1930's to an Air Force Base town of World War II and the Cold War, the Mississippi County Courthouse has remained through the years a stately and elegant visual link to the early, formative years of Blytheville and northern Mississippi County. As the Mississippi County Courthouse remains the best example of Colonial Revival-style public architecture in Blytheville and Mississippi County, it is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance.

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J. Major Bibliographical References

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Bibliography

Herndon, Dallas T. *Centennial History of Arkansas*. Vol.I. Chicago-Little Rock: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922.

The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas. Chicago, Nashville and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889.

Workers of the Writers' Program (with a new introduction by Elliot West). *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1987 (originally published by Hastings House in 1941 under the title, *Arkansas: A Guide to the State*).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Approximately 1.5

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>16</u>	<u>237950</u>	<u>3979750</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is the entire square block bound by West Walnut St., 2nd St., Chickasawba Ave., and 3rd St.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes the courthouse, all of the property historically associated with this resource, and the following contributing monuments (objects): the Edgar H. Lloyd/World War I & II Memorial, the Centennial Memorial, the Confederate Veterans of Mississippi County Memorial, the Children of the Confederacy Memorial Bench. One contributing site, the Edgar H. Lloyd grave, is also included within the boundaries. Additionally, there are the following noncontributing resources: a modern Cooperative Extension Service office building, radio tower, Korean War Memorial, Vietnam War Memorial, Eternal Flame, and Vietnam Veterans Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Memorial.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: October 11, 1996

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201