

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: Newton County Courthouse

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

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street & number: Courthouse Square

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Jasper

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Newton code: AR 101 zip code: 72641

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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>    </u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**  
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I, 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 A. Slatu \_\_\_\_\_ 10-24-94  
Signature of certifying official 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

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**5. National Park Service Certification**  
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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

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**6. Function or Use**  
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Historic: GOVERNMENT Sub: Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Current: GOVERNMENT Sub: Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification:

~~Other~~  
Art Deco

Other Description: Native Ozark stone tradition

Materials:      foundation      Stone/concrete      roof      Asphalt  
                 walls                      Stone                      other      N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.      X      See continuation sheet.

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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: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: SOCIAL HISTORY  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1939-42 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates: 1939 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: Works Progress Administration  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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See continuation sheet.

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:

- X 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: Less than one

Table with 5 columns: UTM References, Zone Easting, Northing, Zone Easting, Northing. Rows A, B, C, D with numerical values and underlines.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Bounded on the west by the eastern edge of Stone Street; on the north by the southern edge of Court Street; on the east by the western edge of Spring Street; and on the south by the northern edge of Church Street.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically-associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 10/13/94

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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

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### Summary

Located in the center of the courthouse square in downtown Jasper, the Newton County Courthouse is a two-storey, reinforced concrete and limestone public building designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style, yet also reflecting the native stone construction tradition indigenous to the Ozark region. Though not elaborately detailed, its design does include such noteworthy elements as an ornamented concrete sign over the main entrance -- containing the words "Newton County" in block Art Deco letters -- and an axial plan revolving around the northern or front entrance. It is in good condition.

### Elaboration

The Newton County Courthouse is a two-storey, reinforced concrete and stone public administration building designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style popular for such Works Progress Administration (WPA) construction throughout the state, yet also reflecting the native stone construction tradition indigenous to the Ozark region. With flues for venting the interior heating system -- and thus without chimneys -- the plan is "H"-shaped and symmetrical, with the axis running from the center of the double-leaf front entrance to the central window on the southern or rear elevation. The flat, built-up tar roof and limestone walls rest upon a concrete foundation, sheathed with limestone.

The northern or front elevation is composed of the two projecting wings flanking the central, connecting section. The central, double-leafed entrance is surmounted by a concrete panel bearing the words "Newton County" and decorated with bands of stylized Art Deco detailing at the top and bottom. The entire bay is flanked by two pairs of pilasters, the outside pilaster slightly shorter than the inside pilaster, and all capped with decorative concrete blocks that feature more incised, stylized Art Deco detailing. The pilaster immediately to the west features the typical concrete WPA plaque, set flush with the surrounding surface and containing the inscription "USA/1939/WPA," all set within a shield. A single window is placed centrally above the entrance in the second floor, and a single window bay is placed on either side of the entrance on each floor, followed by a smaller window bay that lights stairwells within. The projecting wings to either side of the central connector are lit by a single window on each floor.

The southern elevation opposite is quite similar to the northern elevation, the only exception being the fenestration of the connector. It is accessed via two separate single-leaf entrances placed at either end, next to the projecting wings, and the central portion is fenestrated with

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three symmetrically-placed window openings on each floor.

The eastern and western elevations are virtually identical. Each is composed of three full-height pilasters, the outside two of which are considerably broader than the central pilaster, and a total of four window bays placed to either side and in between these pilasters, each containing a single window opening.

The significant exterior details are largely limited to the afore-mentioned concrete panels and blocks surrounding the front entrance, the metal frame hopper windows that survive throughout most of the building, and the rough-hewn, rubble aspect lent by the limestone exterior.

The interior is somewhat unusual in that it is essentially a "split-level": the front entrance allows the visitor to go either down or up. The lower floor is filled with offices while the upper floor contains the courtroom and ancillary rooms. The decoration throughout is simple and relatively functional, the only exception being the benches in the courtroom, which are constructed of wood and stained a rich, light brown.

The principal alterations to the building appear to be limited to the replacement of some of the original metal hopper windows and the addition of an acoustic tile ceiling in the courtroom.

The Newton County Courthouse is in good condition.

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### Summary

Criteria A and C, local significance

Designed and constructed in 1939 by the Works Progress Administration, the Newton County Courthouse in Jasper remains one of the Ozark region's finest examples of a Depression-era county courthouse designed in the nationally-popular Art Deco that also reflects the native stone construction traditions of this mountainous area; for this reason it is eligible under Criterion C with local significance. It is also eligible under Criterion A with local significance by virtue of its direct associations with the Works Progress Administration and that organization's extensive public works legacy throughout the state.

### Elaboration

Located in the heart of Arkansas's Ozark Mountain region, Newton County was established by an act of the state legislature on December 14, 1842. The county was named for Thomas W. Newton, a Virginian who moved to Arkansas and became known for his mail deliveries from Arkansas Post to nearby Cadron. Yet Newton was also politically well-connected. A close associate of Robert Crittenden, one of the most influential early settlers of the state, Newton also served as clerk of the legislature, a member (at different times) of the Arkansas house and senate, postmaster at Little Rock, private secretary to Governor Yell, and even finished out Yell's final month in the United States Congress after Yell's death.

The first county seat was designated at John Bellah's house, located on the Buffalo River; soon, however, it was moved to the centrally-located village of Jasper. Clinging to the sides of the narrow Little Buffalo River valley, Jasper has always retained a small town atmosphere. The 1850 census recorded the presence of approximately 75 families; the 1930 census established the town's total population at 412. Furthermore, this character is representative of the county as a whole. Arguably the most rural county in the state, it is the only county never to have been crossed by a single mile of railroad.

The current courthouse building is the fourth constructed for the county. The style of the first building is unknown, but the second courthouse was probably a modest, two-storey, hipped roof structure. The third courthouse, built at the same time as the extant jail, probably resembled the jail in the use of locally-quarried stone; however, it burned in 1938. The current building was constructed thereafter, with the help of labor supplied by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).



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In fact, it was as a result of the Depression that the Works Progress Administration came into being at all. The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and the subsequent advent of such federal public works programs as the Works Progress Administration brought a new courthouse to Jasper in 1939. The WPA -- an organization that hired unemployed men and women to work on a variety of public projects throughout the nation -- was established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration as part of the federal response to the dire economic circumstances brought upon the American people by the Great Depression. The WPA was but one of many such public works organizations instituted by the Roosevelt Administration and managed under the aegis of the umbrella agency in charge of all such public works efforts, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); other agencies under its direction included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the short-lived Public Works and Civilian Works Administrations (PWA and CWA), and such regional projects as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Rural Colonization Projects in Arkansas established at such places as Dyess, Clover Bend and Plum Bayou. Among its various other projects, the WPA constructed or repaired a number of courthouse buildings throughout the state, and the courthouse at Jasper was erected as part of this statewide effort.

The Newton County Courthouse, like several other Depression-era courthouses in the Ozark Mountain region of the state, is also architecturally significant. By virtue of its synthesis of the Ozark region's indigenous stone building tradition -- marked by an emphasis upon the use of locally-quarried stone in service to solid, functional designs that do not reflect the influence of any national architectural style -- with the Art Deco aesthetic that WPA architects and supervisors embraced for such construction, the Newton County Courthouse stands as an unusual combination of local and national aesthetic traditions. For the above reasons it is locally eligible under Criteria A and C.

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### Bibliography

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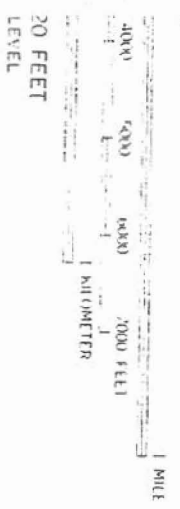
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Lackey, Walter F., *History of Newton County, Arkansas*, (Independence, Missouri: 1950).

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MAP ACCURACY STATEMENT  
 NATIONAL MAP INFORMATION, VIRGINIA 22092  
 DRADO 80225, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204  
 SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Map published by the USGS



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Medium-duty  
 Unimproved dirt  
 State Route

JASPER, ARK.  
 N3600—W9307.5/7.5  
 PHOTOINSPECTED 1975

MT. JUDEA 1:62,500  
 7555 1:62,500

