

60-201-400-33

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10/18/79

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only PU3239

received

date entered

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Little Rock City Hall

U.T.M. 15/566340/3845260

and or common

2. Location

street & number 500 West Markham

not for publication

city, town Little Rock vicinity of congressional district Second

state Arkansas code 05 county Pulaski code 119

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Little Rock

Roll # 617:01-12
618

street & number 500 West Markham

city, town Little Rock vicinity of state Arkansas 72201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pulaski County Courthouse

street & number 405 West Markham

city, town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Ark. Historic Preservation Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 federal state county local

depository for survey records Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Little Rock City Hall was constructed in 1907 according to the design of Little Rock architect Charles Thompson. Thompson's design embraces the Classical Roman elements that formed the basis of the Italian Renaissance style, and it is one of the finest Renaissance Revival buildings in the state. Its heavily rusticated ground floor, high ceilinged "piano nobile" (second floor), stone string courses, prominent Classical cornice, and crowning stone balustrade are all essential characteristics of the High-Renaissance public buildings from which the City Hall is derived.

City Hall is a three-story structure whose rigid, Renaissance-inspired principal facades (the south elevation facing Markham Street and the east elevation facing Broadway) suggest a symmetrical plan. The delineation of the rear of the building is irregular, however, and yields to the functional requirements of conducting city government.

The front (south) elevation of the building consists of three bays of equal size. The central bay is slightly recessed and features a monumental entrance portico. The brickwork of the ground floor wall was executed in a manner that gives the impression of rusticated stone, while the corners of the building are articulated with brick that is suggestive of quoining. Each of the flanking bays held pairs of small, square windows on the ground floor, great Roman arched openings that once held finely articulated Palladian windows on the second floor, and larger, square windows on the third floor. Narrow attic windows appear directly under the cornice.

The architect's use of decorative stone detail is noteworthy. A band of egg-and-dart moulding set between two broad stone bands distinguishes the ground floor from the upper ranges of the building. Stone string courses appear between the second and third floors and between the third floor and the attic. Additional stone bands appear between the spring lines of the arches. Stone sills and mouldings surround the second and third floor windows. Keystones articulate the radiating brick arches, and brackets define the centerpoint of the third-floor window lintels. A heavy, dentiled cornice, surmounted by a simple yet Classically detailed and proportioned balustrade, caps the building.

The entry portico was conceived in an appropriately grand manner. It is elevated several feet above the street grade and the design conveys the imagery of a "temple of government." The two-story portico is supported by fluted columns of the Ionic order. It terminates in a dentiled cornice and Classically detailed balustrade reiterating the design of the elements that define the roofscape. The portico features a fluted architrave, and the otherwise unembellished frieze bears the inscription "City Hall" below a narrow band of egg-and-dart moulding. Additional entrances through less finely articulated porticos of a smaller scale appear on the Broadway side of the building.

The Broadway (east) elevation consists of a wide central bay flanked by two projecting corner bays. The south bay is designed in exactly the same fashion as the corner bays of the Markham Street facade; the north bay has two tall, Roman-arched openings. The second- and third floor elevations of this broad central area are penetrated by seven unembellished windows.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The principal facades of City Hall are faced with buff-colored pressed brick. The rusticated basement walls are granite. The rear (north) facade of the building is also faced with brick. However, because of its lack of visibility from Markham and Broadway, this elevation is devoid of the careful attention to symmetry, Classical embellishment, and acutely executed detail that render the striking street facades so attractive.

City Hall was once surmounted by a dominant ribbed dome rising from the square base still evident atop the building. The dome was demolished in 1956, but it is important to note that Thompson's first design for the City Hall did not include a dome.

On the interior, the blue, green, and gold designs in the leaded-glass ceiling of the rotunda create an attractive focal feature. Originally the entire public area of the building was floored with mosaic tiles, and wainscoting of Georgia marble rose to a height of five feet along the public corridors, halls and stairs. Interior columns and pilasters are of the same material. Classical detailing executed in plaster, particularly dentiling and the predominant egg-and-dart pattern, prevails in the cornices, mouldings, and column and pilaster capitals of these spaces.

The building's evolution to meet contemporary standards and the city's needs is obvious even upon casual inspection. Remodelling undertaken in 1960 included: installation of central heating and air conditioning; new wiring, light fixtures, and elevators; expansion of office spaces; lowering of ceilings; painting. The most distressing aspect of this "renovation" work was the bricking-in of the windows. While this construction detracts from the esthetic impact and beauty of the building, the change is by no means irreversible. Alternative solutions may be explored and the Renaissance-like grandeur of the City Hall may be restored.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1907 Builder/Architect Charles Thompson

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The grand opening of the Little Rock City Hall on April 15, 1908, was eagerly awaited. According to the Arkansas Gazette, it became "one of the greatest events of its kind in the history of Little Rock." An estimated 10,000 people filed through the building well into the night, inspecting its corridors, court-room offices, and meeting rooms. Designed by Charles Thompson of Little Rock, the City Hall was at the time considered a great showplace and a symbol of refinement. It was a civic center appropriate to a maturing community. The Little Rock City Hall adequately served virtually all of the city's important offices and agencies, including a municipal court and the Police Department, through the World War II era. In the 1950s and early 1960s, after Little Rock had almost tripled its 1908 population, the building became crowded and several departments were removed to new facilities. For a time the old building fell into disfavor with city officials. There was talk of razing the old building and constructing a new city hall. But in the last decade, the building regained much of its stature. It has been adapted to contemporary needs of the city, and remains a useful and significant political and architectural monument. The architect's use of grand Classical elements in a style inspired by the Italian Renaissance, makes it one of Arkansas's finest Renaissance Revival buildings. Reaching out in two directions to articulate one of downtown Little Rock's busiest corners, the City Hall is a pivotal element in the city's historic cluster of governmental buildings.

The Arkansas Gazette, April 15-16, 1908, March 18, 1956, November 6, 1960, and February 1, 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Little Rock

Quadrangle scale 1: 24000

UMT References

A 1 5 | 5 6 6 3 4 | 3 8 4 = 2 6 0
Zone Easting Northing

B [] | [] | []
Zone Easting Northing

C [] | [] | []

D [] | [] | []

E [] | [] | []

F [] | [] | []

G [] | [] | []

H [] | [] | []

Verbal boundary description and justification East half of Block 121, original city. Bounded by the Central Fire Station on the west, La Harpe Boulevard on the north, Broadway on the east, and West Markham on the south.

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 Ethel Goodstein, Architectural Historian, Robert Beson, Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date September 20, 1979

street & number Suite 500, Continental Building telephone 501-371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-565), 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 21, 1979

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

AREA PLANNING
POLASKI COUNTY

LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

92°15'
34°45'

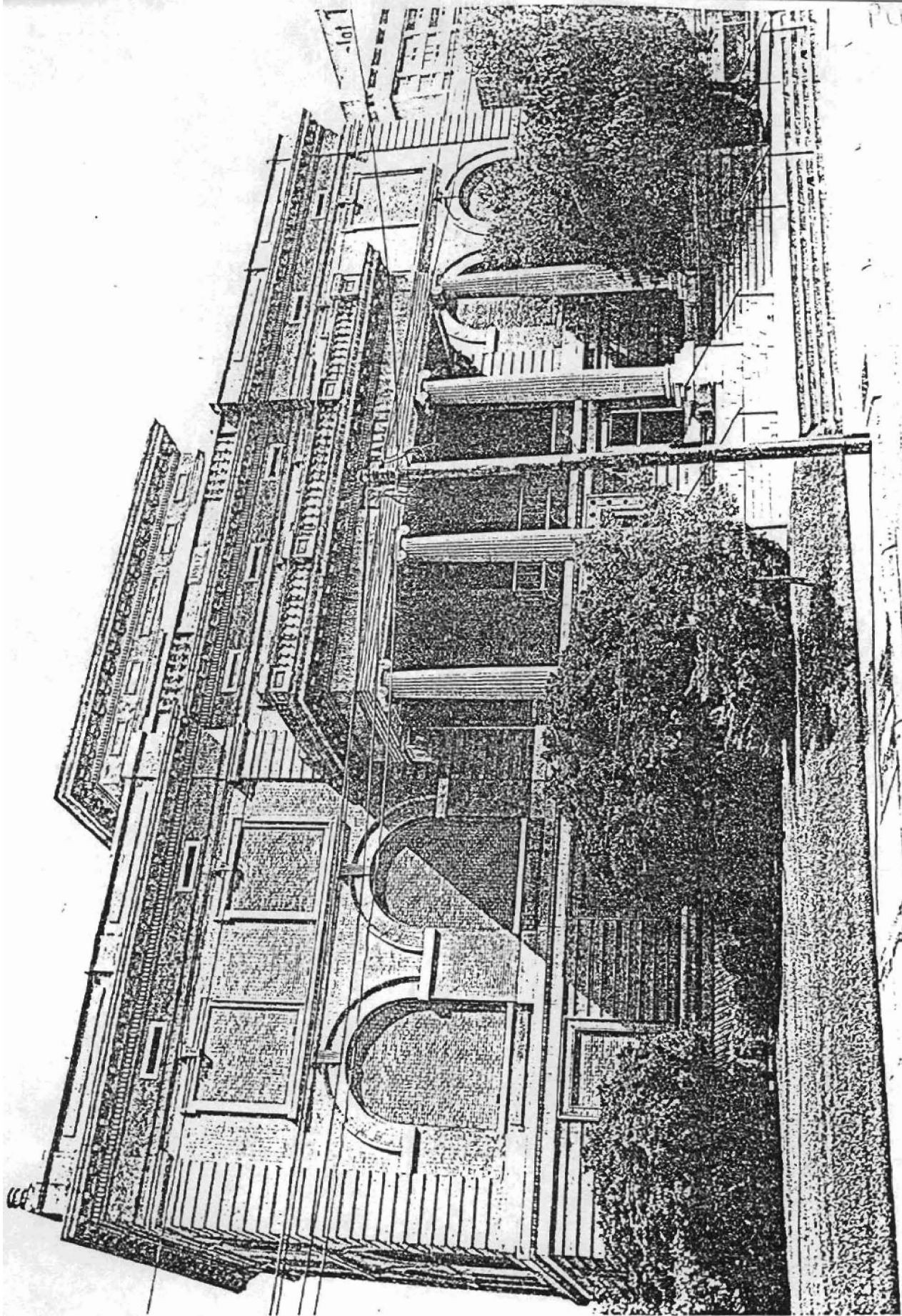
17°30" 1:91,000 FEET

191,000 FEET



Little Rock City Hall
Little Rock, Arkansas
UTM Reference:
15 / 566340 / 3845260





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