

PH001 2866

4th Congressional District  
Benjamin B. Blackburn

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Georgia	
COUNTY: DeKalb	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 718.13.0036	DATE 8/26/71

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Civic Center

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
 Old DeKalb County Courthouse

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Court Square

CITY OR TOWN:  
Decatur

STATE Georgia	CODE 13	COUNTY: DeKalb	CODE 089
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Civic Center</u>

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
DeKalb County

STREET AND NUMBER:  
430 North McDonough Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Decatur

STATE:  
Georgia

CODE:  
13

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
DeKalb County Courthouse, Clerk of Superior Court

STREET AND NUMBER:  
430 North McDonough Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Decatur

STATE:  
Georgia

CODE:  
13

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
None

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

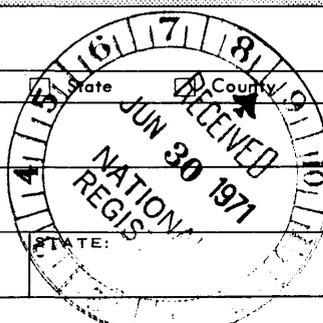
STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:  
Georgia

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Georgia

COUNTY: DeKalb

ENTRY NUMBER: 718.13.0036

DATE: 8/26/71

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

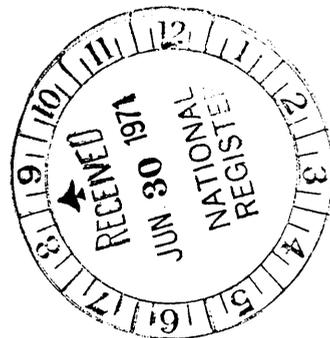
CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present appearance of the old DeKalb County Courthouse, a model of Beaux Arts neo-classicism, remains essentially as designed in 1917. During that year, Atlanta architects Walker and Chase transformed a gutted circa 1900 structure on the site into a larger building with wings and porticoes. The result is a magnificently dignified "old style" public building in the center of Decatur, on the town square.

The outside is constructed entirely of cut, Stone Mountain granite. (Stone Mountain is DeKalb County's major natural landmark.) The north and south entrances are adorned with round Roman columns of cut granite placed atop large square cut pedestals. The column capitals, architrave, frieze and cornice are pure Corinthian in design with all the embellishments of this style of architecture. Second floor windows in the center structure have cut stone lintels laid in a Roman arch. The east and west wings have rectangular windows. The building still retains all of its original outward appearance. The condition of the outside is excellent, having suffered no real damage over the years. The roof, of terra cotta tile, is still in good repair. In 1968 the building was sandblasted and cleaned restoring its original appearance.

The inside, including the stairways, is decorated with Alabama marble, still in a splendid state of repair. The marble stair treads are well worn and dished out by the many thousand footprints of DeKalb and Georgia dignitaries over a period of many decades. The main courtroom, with its paneling and neo-classical detailing, has been made into a meeting hall.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

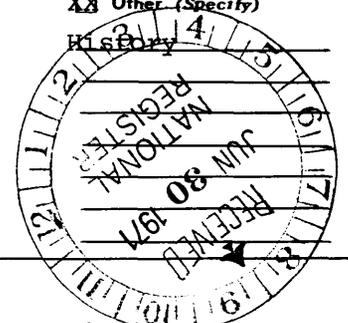
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1898-1900; 1917-1918

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering         | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry            | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention           | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape           | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature          | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music               |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |  |   |   |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When DeKalb County needed a new county administration building and courthouse, the obvious first thought was to do what the county had done since the early 19th century - tear down the old courthouse and use the Decatur square on which it stood as the site for a larger building. But county business in the 1950's and 1960's had expanded to such a degree that it was necessary to erect a building of much larger scale than had ever been needed before. As the new multi-storied building went up nearby, some people felt the old courthouse should be razed and the land put to other uses. Others felt that the Corinthian-columned granite landmark was too fine a building, too well sited in the center of Decatur, to simply be discarded.

Since 1823 the site had been the location of DeKalb's courthouses. Following 19th century custom, the courthouse was located on a rise in the center of town. Streets bounding the four sides of the lot formed a square which became the center of town and county life. The first courthouse erected on the square was a log cabin (c.1823) which was replaced in 1829 with a brick structure. This courthouse served the county until 1842 when it was destroyed by fire. The third courthouse on the site was occupied in 1847. The growth of DeKalb County in the late-19th century called for a larger building and accordingly in 1898, the cornerstone of the present structure was laid. This building was greatly altered, however, in 1917 and 1918 as a result of a disastrous fire in 1916. This fire made complete renovation necessary. In 1917 Atlanta architects Walker and Chase used the basic bulk of the ruined building as the basis of their new design; essentially they added wings to the east and west and pedimented porticoes in the Corinthian order to the north and south. (Their rendering of the new design is framed and hung in the headquarters of the DeKalb Historical Society on the main floor of the building.) Recently cleaned and refurbished, the building is a notable example of Beaux Arts neo-classicism.

While the courthouse is significant architecturally and in terms of urban planning and design, the courthouse square is significant historically as well. On July 22, 1864, General Joseph Wheeler was ordered to capture Federal wagon trains parked just north of the square. After fierce fighting Wheeler's Cavalry forced the Federal troops out of the area. A monument to the soldiers killed in this battle and others was erected in 1906 and still stands in the center of the main south walkway on the square. Several bronze plaques have also been placed on the grounds commemorating other Civil War events.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

4th floor

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Farrell, M.B., DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department, Original draft of National Register nomination form.

Garrett, Franklin M., Atlanta and Environs. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1954).

\_\_\_\_\_, Memoirs of Georgia, (Atlanta: Southern Historical Association, 1895).

Mitchell, William R., Jr., Personal Inspection, December 1970.

Records, DeKalb County Historical Society.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

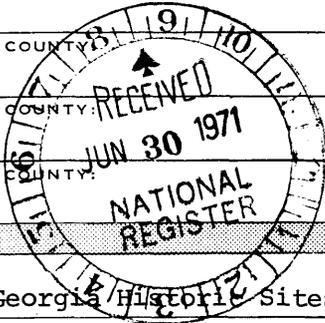
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		33 46 29	84 17 48	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.32 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

UTM  
16/75034  
374029  
Cx



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: William R. Mitchell, Jr., Director, Georgia Historical Sites Survey

ORGANIZATION: Georgia Historical Commission DATE: July 23, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 116 Mitchell Street, S.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Atlanta STATE: Georgia CODE: 13

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION	NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION
<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>Mary Eugeny Jewett</u></p> <p>Title <u>State Liaison Officer</u></p> <p>Date <u>July 26, 1971</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Ernest A. Connelly</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>AUG 26 1971</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>William R. Swartz</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>AUG 8 1971</u></p>

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Georgia	
COUNTY	
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718.13.0036	8/26/71

(Number all entries)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Now a civic center as it has been in essence for generations, the old courthouse continues as a focus of community activity. The DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department is presently housed in the building as is the DeKalb Historical Society, DeKalb Art Society and the University of Georgia Extension Service. Many local civic organizations use the courthouse for meetings and shows. Plans for further development of the civic center call for the furnishing of one room with fine antiques provided by the Decatur Women's Club.

