

PH0670642

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED SEP 16 1976

DATE ENTERED DEC 12 1976

**DATA SHEET**

# 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 **\*\***  
Cheatham County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Court Square

CITY, TOWN  
Ashland City

STATE  
Tennessee

VICINITY OF  
Fifth

COUNTY  
Cheatham

CODE  
47

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Fifth

CODE  
21

## 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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
Cheatham County

STREET & NUMBER  
Cheatham County Courthouse, Court Square

CITY, TOWN  
Ashland City

STATE  
Tennessee

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Cheatham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER  
Court Square

CITY, TOWN  
Ashland City

STATE  
Tennessee

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Tennessee Historical and Architectural Survey

DATE  
April 1974

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Tennessee Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN  
Nashville

STATE  
Tennessee

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tennessee General Assembly established Cheatham County on May 15, 1856 and named it in honor of Speaker of the Senate Edward S. Cheatham. The county court convened at various locations until a permanent structure was built. That body appropriated \$12,000 for a courthouse which was erected on a 300' x 600' lot in the center of Ashland (later Ashland City) in 1869.

The present Cheatham County Courthouse is actually two buildings in one, each representative of a different time period and architectural style. The overall plan is a T, with the 1869 section forming the vertical bar and the 1914 addition the horizontal.

The 1869 courthouse, a Greek Revival-Italianate, two story, brick building, has a rectangular (42' x 48') plan. The main facade faced southwest and contained two windows and an entrance in the first story and three windows in the second; this pattern was duplicated in the other three elevations. The brick walls were laid in common bond and built on a cut and hammer-finished, coursed limestone foundation and water table. The medium gable roof is surmounted with four, single chimney stacks located at the corners. The original roof was replaced, probably in the early 1900s, with a standing seam, metal roof. The boxed pediment is decorated with dentils and has an ornate vent. Dentils and sets of paired brackets highlight the boxed cornice. The windows flanking the entrances have semicircular openings; brick, radiating arch voussoirs; and plain, limestone sills. Double, four-over-four windows are located over each entrance; all other windows have six-over-six lights. The second-story windows are elongated to accommodate the high courtroom ceilings. The original entrances were comprised of double-leaf, paneled doors and semicircular transoms with quarter-round lights, but these have been drastically altered.

The first-floor interior was designed with a central hall and a large staircase which led to the second-floor courtroom; a second hall crossed the first at the center of the building. Except for two small conference rooms located on either side of the staircase, the courtroom occupied the entire second floor. The bench and witness box were arranged at the southwestern end of the room and the jury box placed to the left of the bench. Spectator seats were arranged in three groups separated by two aisles. Large wood-burning stoves, placed in each corner, heated the courtroom.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the county government had outgrown the courthouse. The county court floated a \$25,000 bond issue to renovate the existing building and to construct a large addition to the southwest side of the courthouse.

The two-story brick, Colonial Revival addition is rectangular in plan and was designed by architect Robert E. Turbeville. The foundation consists of rusticated limestone and has a dressed stone water table and pilaster bases. Laid in stretcher bond, the walls of the main facade are divided into three bays by brick pilasters accented with capitals and bases. The focal point of the building is the pedimented portico with outsized dentils and severely truncated Ionic columns, together with the deeply recessed entrance. (A matching, open, second-story porch, centered over the entrance,

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was enclosed in 1946 to provide additional office space.) Three unusual hipped gables, topped with spherical finials and centered on the southwest side, adorn the composition shingle-clad, low hip roof. Plain chimneys are mounted on both ends of the roof. A boxed cornice, which features large, widely spaced dentils, nearly girds this section of the building.

The lower windows on the main facade have one-over-one, rectangular, doubled sashes and stone lintels with keystones; the adjacent elevations each contain a single window and vault opening. A stone belt course, positioned at the same level as the sills, gives the appearance of a continuous sill configuration; this sill treatment is repeated on the second story. The upper, one-over-one windows are surmounted with transoms and a dentilated, continuous stone lintel. The keystone lintels are repeated over the double entrances, and each of the double-leaf doors has large, beveled glass panels.

The 1914 section provided four additional offices, two vaults, and a double staircase and vestibule. The original staircase was removed and the placement of the courtroom furnishings was reversed--the bench is now positioned in the northeastern end of the room and the entrance was moved to the opposite end. In 1941 and 1970, respectively, the northwest and southeast halls were enclosed to afford additional office space.

Restroom facilities were added to the northeast wall of the 1869 section in 1937. This small, brick addition has a hip roof which is curiously positioned so that overhang partially covers the northeast entrance.

An unusual feature of the tree-shaded and landscaped court square is the permanent, lighted croquet court. The courthouse grounds are the scene of the traditional checker tournaments as well as spirited croquet matches.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input 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      1869 and 1914                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Robert E. Tuberville (1914)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Three attempts were required to organize Cheatham County. The state legislature authorized the erection of Cumberland County--so called because the Cumberland River approximately bisects the county--in the 1830s and again in the 1840s, but both attempts failed. (Cumberland County in East Tennessee was organized in 1855.) In 1856 the new name Cheatham was selected, and the county was finally formed.

The Cheatham County Courthouse is the only significant public building in this predominantly rural, agricultural county and the most architecturally and historically important edifice in Ashland City. One of the few remaining courthouses built during the troubled years immediately following the Civil War, the 1869 section of the present building is one of the oldest courthouses in the state.

The 1869 courthouse, noted for its graceful, classical simplicity, adequately served the administrative and judicial needs of the county for more than fifty years. Nashville architect Robert E. Turbeville designed an addition to the courthouse in the popular Colonial Revival style in 1914, and the earlier structure was retained intact as an ell for the modern building.

The courthouse as a social institution is a rapidly vanishing tradition in all but the rural Tennessee counties. The Cheatham County Courthouse remains the county meeting place where news and gossip are disseminated and the ubiquitous checker games are played. An unusual feature of this courthouse is that a concrete croquet court has been built on the lawn, and regularly scheduled matches, which attract large crowds, are held under the lights on summer evenings.

The present courthouse is the only one that the majority of the citizens can recall. It has been and will continue to be a landmark in the county and a source of community pride. Plans are currently being considered by the county court to restore the building to its 1914 appearance.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Design Research, Inc. "Cheatham County Courthouse--Architectural History Study," a study prepared for the Cheatham County Court, 1976.

Goodspeed, Weston et al, "Cheatham County" A History of Tennessee from the Earliest Times to the Present. Nashville: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1886.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	6	4	9	4	2	9	0	4	0	1	4	2	2	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

C 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING							

B 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING							

D 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Robert E. Dalton, Director of Field Services

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Tennessee Historical Commission

July 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

170 Second Avenue North

(615) 741-2371

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Nashville

Tennessee

# 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 89-665), 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Robert E. Dalton*

DATE

9/10/76

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*[Signature]*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

12/12/96

ATTEST:  
*[Signature]*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/6/74