

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 12 1976
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

**

Gibson County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Seventh

VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee

CODE

47

COUNTY

Gibson

CODE

53

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Gibson County

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Gibson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Tennessee Historical and Architectural Survey

DATE

July 1973

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Tennessee Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gibson County Courthouse is located on the square in Trenton, Tennessee. The cornerstone date of the building is 1899 and the structure was designed and built by Walter Chamberlain and Company of Knoxville.

The large rectangular, two-and-one-half story, polychromatic brick structure is an eclectic blend of High Victorian classic revival style elements and a balanced design of symmetrical spacing, highlighted by four, square two-story, inset towers topped with shingle-clad spires of medium height. The center section of the hip roof features a two-stage, open vaulted belfry and clock tower with a crowned dome roof. The center hall plan is designed with three identical entrances and a semi-circular one story bay was built on the south side of the building. The raised foundation accommodates a full basement. The centered main entrances are distinguished by a projecting frontpiece which terminates in a three bay parapet wall dormer which is set with a cross-mullioned, Diocletian-style window. The main entrance has been established on the north elevation. The side entrances were designed to a reduced scale. The attached porches are fronted by four free-standing columns with cast iron capitals. The slate roof supports a decorated balustrade over the entrance. The front steps lead through the arcaded portico to the entrance doorway.

The polychromatic effect is created by the use of red and yellow patterned brick and accented with gray stone. The roof is clad in red shingles and the wood trim has been painted white. A bichromatic design of headers decorates the frieze between the center and end towers. The regularly spaced eave brackets are painted white. The round-headed windows feature molded archvolt designs of red brick which continue across the facade in the dripstone course. The red brick is used to accent the keystone voussirs, continuous trim courses, and tower quoins. Triangular gablets and roundheaded transom panels have carved wood tympanum panels. Granite gray stone is used for the belt course and water table course.

The interior design features two halls which intersect in the center of the building. Doors leading to the courtrooms and chambers line the walls which are accented with glazed tile wainscotting. The first floor has remained largely unchanged, however, the second floor was recently renovated and modernized. The name of the county is spelled out in the terrazzo tile floor of the foyers. The brick bearing walls have been painted and ceiling spaces are vaulted between the steel beams. The east-west hall has staircases with ornate cast iron balustrades at each end. The main courtroom is located in the north end of the building.

Changes to the building were made early. Sometime in the period 1901-10 spherical ornaments attached to the pilasters at each of the entrances were removed. The clock tower burned in 1941 and this was replaced with a duplicate. The entrances were changed in 1967 when the original wood doors at each entrance were replaced with glass doors; two additional offices were added to the first story courtroom at the same time. Two years later the second-story main courtroom was renovated and partitioned to form the new courtroom and offices. The basement was renovated in 1970 and last year all of the remaining offices were redecorated. The courthouse was designed for electricity and there were forty-two electric light fixtures included in the original design. Sand was used to fill the spaces between floors as a method of fireproofing the structure.

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 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 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 1899-1901

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Walter Chamberlain and Co.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tennessee General Assembly created Gibson County on October 21, 1823. The new West Tennessee county was named in honor of Colonel John H. Gibson who fought under Brigadier General John Coffee in the Creek War in 1813. Gibson Port was selected as the county seat, and later the citizens changed the name of the town to Trenton.

The first county court held sessions at the house of Luke Biggs and at William C. Love's residence, from January 1824 until a temporary log courthouse was completed in Trenton in April of the following year. In 1829 or '30 a two-story brick building served as the courthouse, but being found unsafe, it was replaced in 1837 by another temporary structure. A second, two-story brick courthouse was completed in October 1841; it stood until it was razed to provide space for the present building.

The Gibson County Courthouse was designed by Walter Chamberlain and Company of Knoxville, and the county court selected Hugger and Winston to build it. In October 1899, with much ceremony and the assistance of more than 300 Masons, a brass band, and hundreds of Gibson Countians, the cornerstone was laid. The original contractors abandoned the project and a second firm, T. R. Biggs and Son of Trenton, completed the building. The dedication ceremonies occurred on July 1, 1901.

The combination of materials and structural elements which have different textures, colors, shapes, and patterns, into an attractive, harmonious, and interesting whole, marks the Gibson County Courthouse as a uniquely different building. Designed in the grand manner, when the costs of building materials and craftsmen's salaries were within reach of the budget of a rural, predominantly agricultural county, this is one of the last Victorian Revival courthouses to be erected in the state. It is certainly one of the most unusual. The seventy-five-years-old courthouse is the focal point of county government, Trenton's pride and joy, and an architectural landmark in West Tennessee.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Culp, Frederick M., and Ross, Mrs. Robert E. Gibson County, Past and Present. The First General History of One of West Tennessee's Pivotal Counties. Trenton, TN: Gibson County Historical Society, 1961.
- Herndon, Joseph L. "Architects in Tennessee Until 1930. A Dictionary" Unpublished M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1975.
- Telephone conversations with Frederick M. Culp, January 15 and 23, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5

UTM REFERENCES No UTM grid marks on most current map. Latitude and Longitude below.

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Latitude: 35° 58' 51"

Longitude: 88° 56' 29"

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

Gail Hammerquist, Architectural Historian and Robert E. Dalton, Director of Field

ORGANIZATION

Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

May 1976

Services

STREET & NUMBER

170 Second Avenue North

TELEPHONE

(615) 741-2371

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

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

TITLE

Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

DATE

8/10/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

James L. Gandy
Charles A. ...

DATE

11/9/96

DATE

11-3-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER