

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

JUN 3 1983

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

1. Name

historic Union County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Union Square

N/A not for publication

city, town El Dorado

N/A vicinity of

state Arkansas

code 05

county Union

code 139

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 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
	N/A	<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 Union County

street & number Union Square

city, town El Dorado

N/A vicinity of

state Arkansas

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Union County Courthouse

street & number Union Square

city, town El Dorado

state Arkansas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title AHPP Survey Files

has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes ☐ no

date May, 1971

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town El Dorado

state Arkansas

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

SUMMARY

The Union County Courthouse, built during 1927 and 1928 by William Peterson from plans designed by Mann & Stern, Architects, typifies the use of Greek architecture and vocabulary for civic and justice buildings early in the twentieth century. With its four colonnaded facades, this imposing four-story Neo-classic structure has a richly detailed interior, highlighted by a two-story atrium.

ELABORATION

The massive rectangular block of the Union County Courthouse dominates a city block radius around the building, despite the fact that it is not as tall or large as some of those in the area.

Built during the early years of the El Dorado oil boom, the Union County Courthouse is composed of four symmetrical colonnaded facades, constructed of smooth dressed limestone. Neo-classic in design, there are fourteen free-standing Ionic columns on the front and rear elevations and six on the end elevations that create style blind colonnades. Columns in antis rest on the first floor and extend the height of the second and third floors.

Front and rear elevations have fifteen fenestrations, while the end elevations have seven on each floor. Windows on the attic story are covered with decorative grilles, as this floor is occupied by the city jail. All elevations, with the exception of the front, have areas where limestone is found in place of windows. This is an original feature of the building that does not interfere with the rhythm of the facades. The only alteration to the exterior of the building is the replacement of wooden sash windows with metal.

A terra-cotta parapet with acanthus ornament projects above the unadorned entablature at the point that the facade recedes to the attic story. Between each column and the second and third floor windows are medallions representing the scales of justice and lanterns of light. Except for the parapet and medallions, the exterior of the building has little ornament. The entablature bears only the incised name of the building and the roof line is adorned with only a simple cornice moulding.

In comparison, the interior of the Union County Courthouse is richly detailed. The first floor is dominated by a centrally located two-story atrium with a second floor gallery. All stairways are located in this lobby area, and it is from this point that corridors intersect. Large square marble columns, two-stories in height, support the second floor gallery which has a polychromed bronze balustrade. Gilded and polychromed capitals with acanthus, volutes and Greek key detailing adorn the columns. The first floor is floored with marble, as are all of the stairs in the building, while the upper stories have crushed marble and colored, geometrically tiled floors. First floor newel posts are cast bronze griffins. The frieze in the lobby area is of molded plaster with rosettes flanked by guttae and metopes.

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National Park Service**

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There are three judges chambers and courtrooms in the Union County Courthouse, with the chambers being located adjacent to the courtrooms. The largest of the three courtrooms is located on the second floor. This one-and-a-half-story room has an ornate plaster coffered ceiling adorned with gilded rosettes. Above walnut wainscot, the walls are of plaster, painted, scored and textured to resemble stone. The area directly behind the judge's bench is covered with dark paneled walnut. A molded plaster border is located just above the wainscot. Double metal paneled doors are topped by a transom with decorative bronze grilles.

The Union County Courthouse is a fine example of Mann & Stern's accomplished adaptation of the Greek Temple form to twentieth century requirements. The four colonnaded facades create a monumental presence in downtown El Dorado, appropriate to the building's function.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1927–28 **Builder/Architect** Peterson/Mann and Stern, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SUMMARY

Built to accommodate the flood of paper work brought on by the El Dorado Oil Boom of 1921, the Union County Courthouse, since 1928, has handled scores of legal documents and court cases necessary to maintain the titles and deeds of the previously quite farming and timber community. Neo-classic in design, this structure, with its classical detailing and imposing presence, embodies the building's intended and continued use and today serves as an outstanding example of Mann & Stern's architectural dexterity.

ELABORATION

On January 11, 1921, the Bussey oil well blew in on the southwest side of El Dorado. The oil boom changed this southern Arkansas town forever. The population of El Dorado, the county seat of Union County, more than doubled overnight. Speculation in oil and gas leases brought a tremendous demand on the record keeping of the county. This voluminous amount of deed and title transactions was too much for the facilities of the former courthouse to handle. The new found wealth in the county provided the means by which a new structure could be commissioned which would accommodate the additional responsibilities thrust upon the county government. It was not until 1926 that a new courthouse could be considered. On February 1, 1926 the county court authorized a total appropriation of \$750,000 to build a new courthouse and jail. The Commissioners of Public Buildings, C. H. Murphy, George W. James and J. M. Wallace, were authorized to employ an architect or architects to prepare and submit plans, drawings and specifications. The Commission accepted the plans of the well known firm of Mann and Stern, Architects. This firm designed the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, the Masonic Temple and YMCA Building in Little Rock, as well as the Union Bank in El Dorado. While county court records clearly state that the firm of Mann and Stern was engaged for the design work, in an unpublished autobiography by George R. Mann written in 1932, Mann takes credit for the design of the courthouse. The blueprints which are on file in the county judge's office show Eugene John Stern as architect. Mr. William Peterson submitted an acceptable bid and was approved as contractor of construction. Building began in the spring of 1927 and was completed a year later. Upon completion, the Union County Courthouse became a center of legal and commercial life in southern Arkansas.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Autobiography of George R. Mann dated 10-6-32
Union County Court Records - January Term 1926
Union County Court Records - 16th day of May 1927
Union County Court Records - 25th day of May 1927
Union County Court Records "4" Page 144 - May 16, 1927/Page 150 - May 25, 1927

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name El Dorado, AR - LA

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

UTM References

A

1	5	5	3	1	3	2	5	3	6	7	4	6	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Union County Courthouse occupies an entire city block in the center of the commercial district of El Dorado. It is bounded on the north by Elm Street, on the east by Jefferson Street, on the south by Main Street, and on the West by Washington Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judge C. Jerry (retired) and William L. Cook III (edited by the staff of the AHPP)

organization South Arkansas Historical Foundation date May 13, 1983

street & number 303 First National Plaza telephone (501) 863-7047

city or town El Dorado, state Arkansas

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

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5-13-83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/30/83

for Melvin Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Page 1

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Block described as Courthouse in Original Plat of Town of El Dorado, North of Block 6 in SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 28, Township 17 South, Range 15 West.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Union County Courthouse
Union County
ARKANSAS

Working No. JUN 3 1983
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84
Date Due: 6/30/83 7/18/83
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6/30/83
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Entered in the
National Register
Federal Agency: _____

☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal
Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unrestored		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- 8891 E MUL
- _____ summary paragraph
 - _____ completeness
 - _____ clarity
 - _____ applicable criteria
 - _____ justification of areas checked
 - _____ relating significance to the resource
 - _____ context
 - _____ relationship of integrity to significance
 - _____ justification of exception
 - _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UNIT References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Title _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
February 1983
Negative on file at AHPP
Viewed from the West



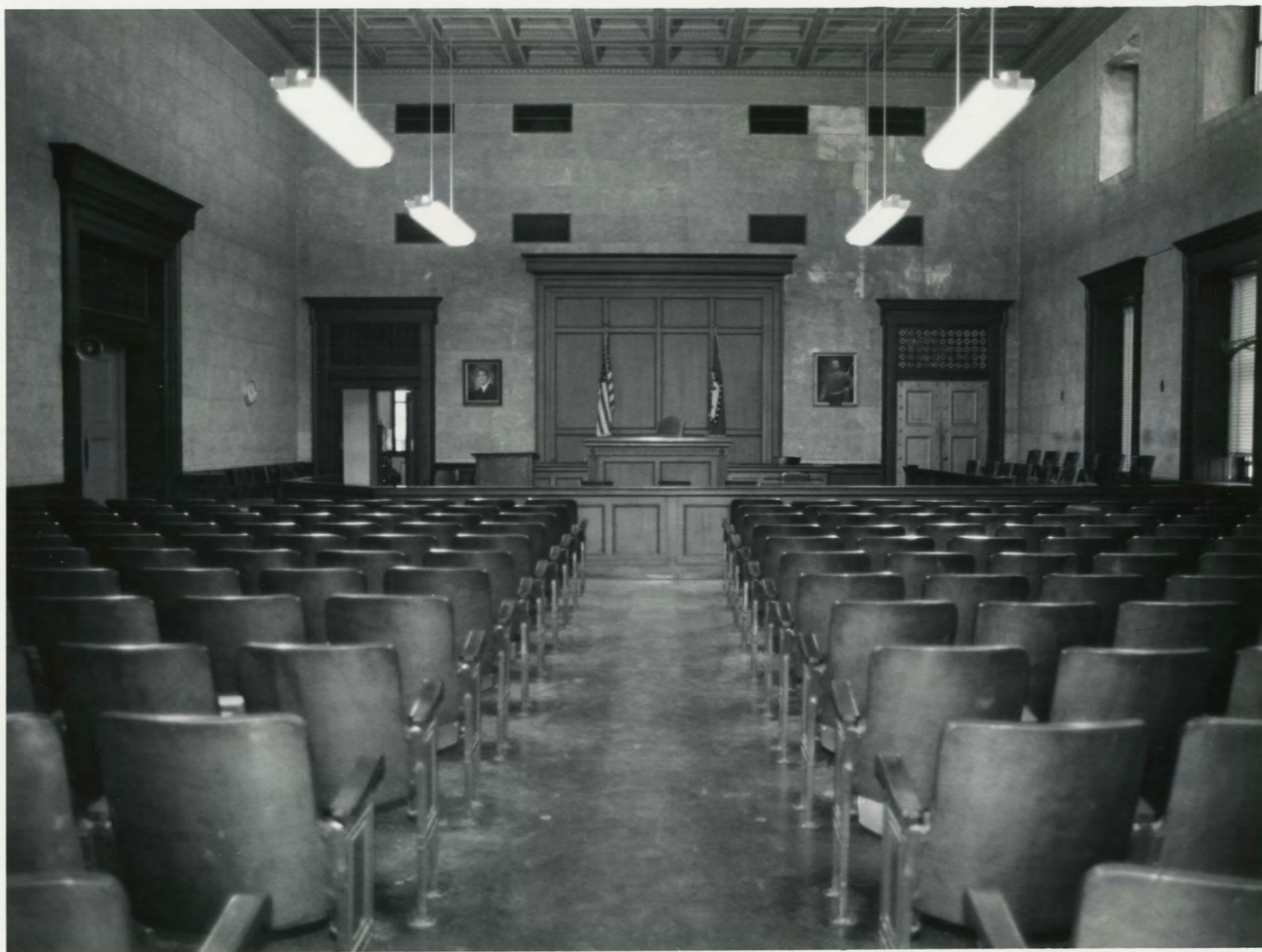
Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
February 1983
Negative on file at AHPP
Interior



Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
February 1983
Negative on file at AHPP
Interior



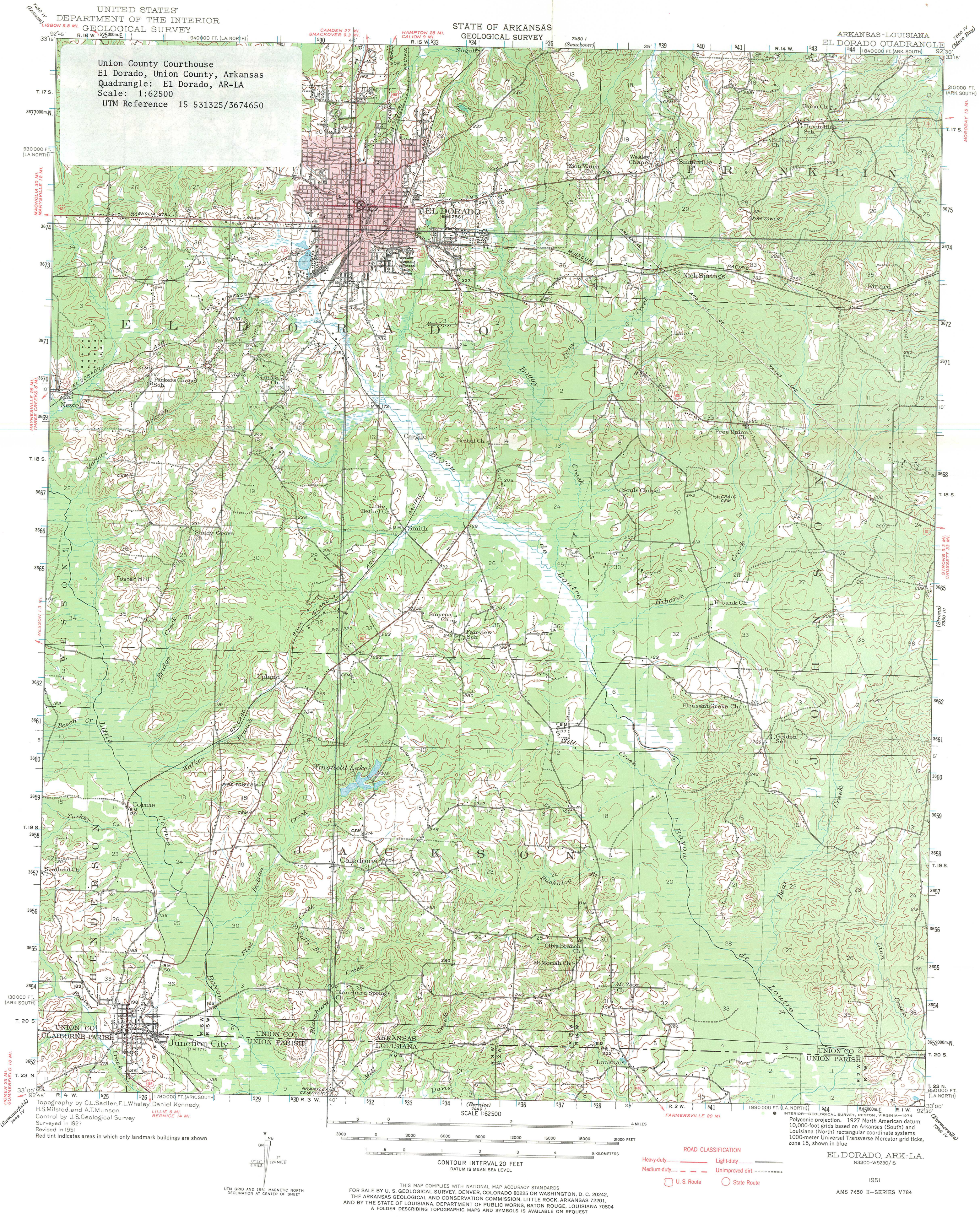
Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
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Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
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Interior



Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County
Photographed by Alice Jones
February 1983
Negative on file at AHPP
Interior



Union County Courthouse
El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas
Quadrangle: El Dorado, AR-LA
Scale: 1:62500
UTM Reference 15 531325/3674650

STATE OF ARKANSAS
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

ARKANSAS-LOUISIANA
EL DORADO QUADRANGLE

Topography by C.L. Sadler, F.L. Whaley, Daniel Kennedy,
H.S. Milsted, and A.T. Munson
Control by U.S. Geological Survey
Surveyed in 1927
Revised in 1951
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

SCALE 1:62500
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty - - - - - Unimproved dirt ———
U.S. Route State Route

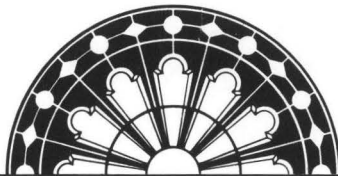
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on Arkansas (South) and
Louisiana (North) rectangular coordinate systems
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue

EL DORADO, ARK.-LA.
N3300-W9230/15

1951

AMS 7450 II-SERIES V784

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242.
THE ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201,
AND BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ARKANSAS
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
PROGRAM

May 13, 1983

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1100 "L" Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

Re: Union County Courthouse
Union Square
El Dorado, AR
Union County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Union County Courthouse. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Wilson Stiles
State Historic Preservation Officer

WS/AJ/ss

Enclosure/s

