

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY
NOMINATION FORM

SEP 11 1981

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Continuation Sheet Item Number Page

Name Historic - Calhoun County Courthouse Location - S. Railroad Avenue, St. Matthews
Common Classification - building

Owner - Calhoun County
c/o County Administrator
302 South Railroad Avenue
St. Matthews, S.C. 29135

Representation in Existing Surveys - Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina, 1981

Description - Calhoun County Courthouse was built in 1913. W. R. Rose was the contractor, and William Augustus Edwards was the architect.

The courthouse is a two-story Georgian Revival building with a colossal Doric portico on the south elevation. The tetrastyle portico projects from a central three-bay entrance pavilion. The columns of the portico are of stuccoed brick with the proportion and detail of the Greek Doric order: no bases, the diameter broad in relation to the height, and annulets on the lower part of each capital echinus. The entablature of the portico is executed in wood. It consists of a bipartite architrave, followed by a Doric frieze, with alternating triglyphs and metopes. A taenia beneath the triglyphs features wooden guttae. The triglyphs are spaced according to the tenets of the Roman Doric order, rather than those of the Greek; thus, the terminal triglyphs are located above the centers of the terminal columns, with a partial metope at the end of the frieze. The Greek Doric order would have*

Significance - Calhoun County Courthouse was built to serve as the first courthouse of the new Calhoun County.¹ The county, named for John C. Calhoun, renowned South Carolina statesman, had been formed after seventeen years of concerted effort by the residents of St. Matthews and its immediate surroundings.² The act establishing the county established a commission to provide for a courthouse and jail.³ The town of St. Matthews, designated the county seat, donated \$20,000 toward construction costs for the public buildings and Mr. E. F. Buyck and Mr. M. Jarecky donated the construction site.⁴

The red brick with white wooden trim, the formal symmetry, and the octagonal cupola crowning the hip roof, together with the Palladian portico of the Calhoun County Courthouse, are**

Acreage 0.76

Verbal Boundary Description The boundary of the Calhoun County Courthouse nomination is shown as the heavy red line on the accompanying Calhoun County Tax Map #118-14, drawn at the scale of 100 feet to 1 inch. The boundary includes the courthouse and the landscaped forecourt, while excluding the adjacent non-historic buildings and parking lot.

UTM Reference Point Longitude: 80° 46' 46" Latitude: 33° 39' 47"

Other Information

*had the terminal triglyphs located at the end of the frieze and over the outside edge of the terminal columns, instead of their centers. Black wooden letters proclaiming "CALHOUN COUNTY COURTHOUSE" are superimposed over the frieze. The entablature continues with a cornice, which consists of an ovolo, a fascia with mutule blocks, a soffit and corona, and a cyma reversa. The cornice is raked into a pediment above the portico, where it is enlarged by the addition of a large cavetto and fillet. The tympanum of the pediment features a semicircular fanlight.

The entablature of the portico is carried around the entire building, on a reduced scale, consisting of a wooden cornice, a brick frieze without elaboration, and a brick course, corbelled, to represent the architrave.

The facade, beneath the portico, is of brick, laid in American Flemish bond. There are three bays behind the portico: a central entrance bay, with double wooden doors beneath a segmental brick arch, and two flanking bays featuring quadrupartite casement windows, topped by brick soldier courses. The three windows of the second story are arched beneath semicircular brick arches. The central arched window opens onto an iron-balustraded balcony.

The portico and entrance pavilion are flanked by single-bay side pavilions, which feature double six-over-six windows on each floor. The side elevations of the courthouse are three bays, with central entrance bays featuring semicircular brick arches sheltering a recessed porch. The central entrances on all elevations reflect the cross-axis plan of the building. Small pediments above the entablature on each side reinforce the axial composition.

The north elevation of the courthouse has two projecting end pavilions of two bays each, flanking a recessed center of three bays. The windows of the second story in the center of the elevation repeat the round brick arches of the facade windows. The windows of the end pavilions are six-over-six.

The courthouse has a hipped roof, clad in composition shingle. A cupola at the crest of the roof is octagonal, painted white, with open arcaded sides, an entablature, and an octagonal dome of pointed profile, sheathed in metal and crowned with a windvane.

The courthouse has a cross-axis plan, with the facade entrance leading to a broad transverse hall, which intersects a perpendicular longitudinal hall. The offices of the first floor are located in the four quadrants defined by the intersecting halls. A U-shaped stair with wooden newels and balustrade is at the east end of the longitudinal hall and leads to the courtroom on the second floor. This courtroom has a wooden tabernacle frame behind the judge's seat at the west end of the room, which features wooden pilasters and an unpedimented entablature. The room is lit by the three arched windows of the south and north elevations. The ceiling is coved. The audience seats are of bent plywood on iron frames.

Calhoun County Courthouse occupies a full block, with a war memorial monument and a flagpole sharing the tree-shaded grounds. There is an asphalt parking-lot to the rear of the courthouse. A concrete access-ramp for wheelchairs has been added to the front of the building.

**characteristic of Georgian Revival architecture, a variation of Colonial Revival architecture that utilized elements of English, as well as American, eighteenth century elements and precedents. The elements of the Calhoun County Courthouse are simple, but handled with great skill (in context of the county budget). The plan of the courthouse is readily apparent from the exterior. The order of the portico is Doric, which requires less craft to erect than do the Ionic orders used by Edwards in most of his other courthouses; yet, the design of the columns, with their careful proportioning and their attention to such details as annulets and guttae, is indicative of Edwards's architectural fluency. The details of the interior are restricted to the courtroom, where they are used to reinforce the authority of the judge, as representative of Law, Order, Justice, and Calhoun County.

¹Robert E. Dalton, "William Augustus Edwards, AIA," June 1981. (Typewritten.)

²Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: Gonzales & Bryan, State Printers, 1908), p. 1279; Official Historical Booklet and Program, Calhoun County Golden Jubilee, May 3 through May 10, 1958, n.p., n.p., n.d.

³Acts and Joint Resolutions.

⁴Ibid.