

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY FORM



Name of Structure: Wilkes County Courthouse

Location: Court Street, Washington, Georgia 30673

Cost: _____ Date of Construction: 1904. towers destroyed by fire, 1956

Architect/builder: Frank Milburn Contractor: _____

Subsequent architects: _____

TAX MAP/PARCEL NUMBERS

Zone 17/E338870/N3734290
UTM NO. _____

DESCRIPTION:

Style: Richardsonian Romanesque

Facade Material: Pressed Brick

Condition: [] Excellent [X] Good [] Fair

Boundary: As shown on the enclosed map of the site.
The jail is historic.
Acreage: one acre

The Wilkes County Courthouse is two stories high and irregular in plan and massing. The front facade, for example, includes (from left to right) a rounded, turret-like tower, a low-arched entry, and alternating projecting/recessed bays. The walls are built of an orange-colored pressed brick, and the foundations are of rough-faced ashlar. First-floor windows have heavy stone lintels and are subdivided horizontally by stone transom supports. Second-floor windows are round-arched with radiating brick voussoirs. (Terra cotta ornament fills the semi-circular spaced enclosed by some window arches.) The cornice is a simple architrave, and the roof is flat. The building originally had a tall, steeply pitched, eclectically designed roof which was destroyed in a 1956 fire. Behind the courthouse is an attached jail which retains the original design features of the courthouse.

SEP

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Wilkes County Courthouse is significant in terms of politics and government and in local history.

In terms of politics and government, this courthouse is significant because under Georgia's first state constitution in 1777 the counties were created. Wilkes was the first county so named and, thus, is Georgia's oldest county. The county has remained continuously operative as a governmental unit since that date. However, county government has been housed in several structures since 1783 when the town of Washington was first settled. In 1790 over half of the population of Georgia - free and slave - lived in Wilkes County. Therefore, this courthouse represents the procession of government from frontier days to the present.

In terms of local history, the courthouse is significant as the place where governmental functions take place - the recording of wills, marriages and deeds and the holding of court, as well as public celebrations such as the Fourth of July. Since its construction to replace an earlier structure, it has been a focal point for this community, as its counterparts have been in other county seats. The nominated property also includes the jail, which was built at the same time and has remained the local point of incarceration since then.

PHOTOGRAPH:

SEP 16 1972

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY FORM
SIGNIFICANCE:

As a repository for records of marriages, wills, land transactions, the courthouse chronicles the county and is a focal point in the life of every citizen.

Despite the changes to the roof caused by the 1956 fire and subsequent rebuilding, the Wilkes County Courthouse is significant to the architectural history of Georgia's courthouses as one of the few examples of the Richardson Romanesque style. The use of smooth, hard brick and rough-cut stone to create textural contrasts, the irregular massing and juxtapositioning of rounded and angular forms, and the use of the round arch over windows and doorways are all salient features of the Richardson Romanesque style, which are still evident today here.

The Wilkes County Courthouse is also significant for its association with Frank Milburn. Frank Pierce Milburn (1868-1926) the architect was a Kentucky native who studied and worked in Louisville from 1884-1889. In 1895 he moved to Charlotte, N.C. to become the architect for the Southern Railroad Co. He soon acquired the largest architectural business in the South. His designs won many competitions. To his credit are many railroad stations, office buildings, courthouses in many states, such as the one in Charlotte, N.C. The Charleston, S.C. auditorium, and the city hall in Columbia, S.C. are two well-known works in that state. His style was characterized by "great boldness and originality". He made additions to the State Capitol in Florida and worked on other buildings in Tallahassee. He did several other Georgia courthouses.



MAILING ADDRESS: Chairman
Wilkes County Commission
Wilkes County Courthouse
Washington, Georgia 30673



SEP 18 1980

SKETCH MAP

WILKES COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Washington, Wilkes County, Georgia

Scale: Not to scale

Source: Drawn by R.M.Willingham, Jr. from
a site visit

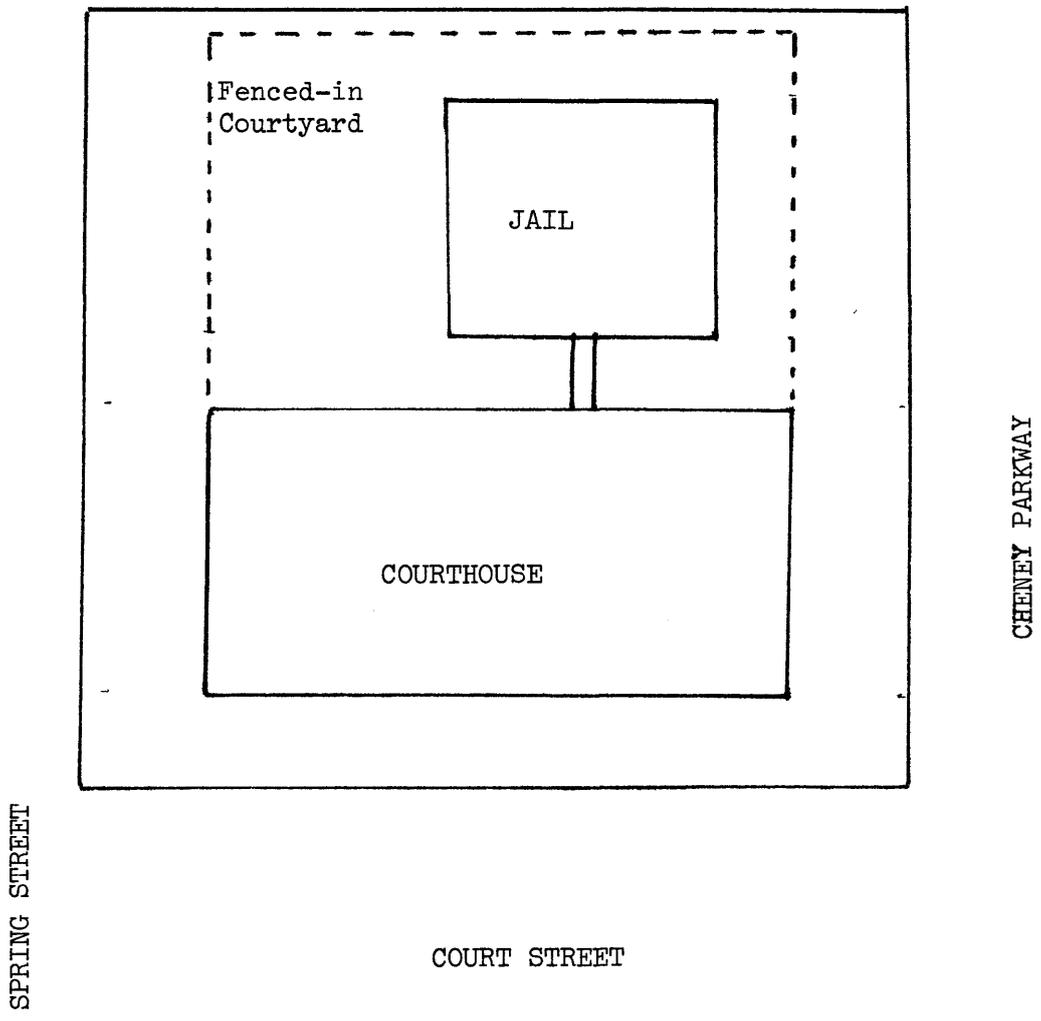
Date: Feb., 1980

Key: The courthouse block as labelled.

FEB 29 1980



PARKING LOT



SPRING STREET

COURT STREET

CHENEY PARKWAY

SQUARE