

PHQ 36162x

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 1 1976

DATE ENTERED

NOV 21 1976

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## NAME

HISTORIC

Clay County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Same

## LOCATION

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Courthouse Square

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ashland

\_\_ VICINITY OF

3

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Alabama

01

Clay

027

## 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

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

 GOVERNMENT

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_PARK

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_OTHER:

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Citizens of Clay County Represented by Clay County Commission and Probate Judge

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Ashland

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Alabama 36251

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clay County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Ashland

STATE

Alabama 36251

## REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites: Survey, Evaluation and Re-inventory

DATE

June, 1972

\_\_FEDERAL \_\_STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

CITY, TOWN

Anniston

STATE

Alabama

# 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 MINOR	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Clay County Courthouse is a good example of the Neo-Classical Revival which dominated public buildings in the early part of the 20th Century. The structure is substantially unaltered since its completion in 1906 from plans provided by C.W. Carlton which drew heavily from the Italian Renaissance styles.

Rising three stories above grade over a partial basement, the rectangular courthouse is situated in the center of the town square of Ashland with the long axis of the building running north and south. The square has been landscaped with small shrubs and fur trees and is defined by a low masonry retaining wall. Construction is of load bearing brick masonry with limestone columns, lintels and sills and cast stone ornament. Lower floor masonry walls contain deep horizontal reveals at every fifth brick course, while the two upper stories are unified by brick pilasters which rise a full height to a deep architrave with projecting moulded cornices and continuous dentil mouldings.

Primary entrances occur on the east and west, with less important entrances on the north and south ends. Emphasis is given the entrances by stepping out the walls slightly to create extra width to accommodate porches with three arched masonry openings. Above the east and west entrances independent granite columns rise from the second floor to the full height of the building, creating a two-story high balcony, punctuated by stone balustrades which project slightly in rounded form over the first entrance arches. This balcony is capped by a deeply hollowed pediment which is repeated on all four sides of the building. Balconies on the north and south have been omitted and half round columns are applied directly to the exterior walls. All column capitals are modified Ionic with egg and dart design worked into the details.

The building is surmounted by an impressive two-story high rotunda with a domed roof and cupola. The main dome features a clock on all four faces, while the cupola, or bell tower, is terminated with a sculpture holding the scales of justice. A small false dome is located on each of the four corners of the building for design effect.

The interior of the building features a central lobby under the grand rotunda. This space rises full height and has a balcony at the second story overlooking the main floor. Access from the main lobby to the second floor is by a curving staircase, executed in baroque fashion, while stairs to the third floor are enclosed and unadorned.

Located on the second floor at the south end of the building, the courtroom is a two-story space with spectator galleries built over the east and west ends of the room. Detailing of the woodtrim and casework is sparse. The main vault is located in the Probate Office on the ground floor and features a steel barrell-vault formed ceiling which is visible, offering evidence of the reinforced construction methods employed in the vault area.

Interior finishes consist of terrazo floors on the ground floor lobby and halls, with new resilient flooring having been installed over the original wood floor on the second and third level halls and offices. Walls and ceilings are of plaster and single wood paneled doors with transoms and simply detailed casework are typical throughout the building.

Overall condition is fair; the west entrance has been sealed off and the interior hall has been partitioned for office space, interior finishes require restoration, and wiring, lighting and heating systems need to be upgraded.

# 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 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		

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SPECIFIC DATES	1906	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	C. W. Carlton
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the few surviving historic structures in Ashland or Clay County, the courthouse is a good example of the Neo-Classical Revival style with design motifs clearly derived from the Italian Renaissance building styles. Such details as the strong horizontal emphasis created by the use of deep reveals at every fifth brick course in the lower floor masonry strongly suggest the rusticated stone bases of the porto-typical Italian Palazzo while the curving staircase from the main lobby to the second floor resembles an interior adaptation of the exterior stairs used on numerous Renaissance buildings.

Shortly after the Alabama Legislature created Clay County in 1866 from portions of Talladega and Randolph counties, Ashland was selected as the county seat and has served as the center of governmental activity and political life in the county. The earliest courthouse burned on December 18, 1875, destroying not only the original buildings but all county records, documents and papers. A second building was erected on the same site following the fire and served until the present structure was completed in 1906. C. W. Carlton, who also designed the nearby Cleburne County Courthouse, was hired to provide plans and specifications for the structure. When completed it was the most imposing structure in the entire county, a distinction which it still retains.

Ashland was the boyhood home of the late Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black, Clay County' most famous native son. Black spent his childhood years in the town and briefly (1906-1907) practiced law from an office near the new Courthouse.

The courthouse is in fair condition and tentative county plans are to restore the structure for continued use.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Judge J. B. Toland, Judge of Probate, Clay County, Alabama.  
 Mr. Charles Ogles, Clay County Planner, Ashland, Alabama  
 Mr. George O. Parker, Architect, Anniston, Alabama

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.06 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A | 16 | 608420 | 3682100 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D | | | | | | | | | |

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

W. Warner Floyd, Executive Director and Ellen Mertins

ORGANIZATION

Alabama Historical Commission

DATE

August 11, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

725 Monroe Street

TELEPHONE

(205) 832-6621

CITY OR TOWN

Montgomery

STATE

Alabama 36130

# 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

*Miss B. Howard-Jr.*

TITLE

SHPO Ala

DATE

August 19, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ACTING DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*

DATE

11/21/96

DATE

4.15.76

ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER