

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

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

For NPS use only
received **DEC 1 1983**
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Old College
and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number Campus of Tennessee Wesleyan College
College Street N/A not for publication
city, town Athens N/A vicinity of
state Tennessee code 047 county McMinn code 107

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A <input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Holston Conference, United Methodist Church
street & number P. O. Box 11869
city, town Knoxville N/A vicinity of state Tennessee 37919

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. McMinn County Courthouse
Deed Book #3-L Vol. 2 Page #101-102 Plat Book 3-L Vol 2 pp.101-102
street & number Jackson Street Square
city, town Athens state Tennessee 37303

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date N/A N/A federal state county local
depository for survey records N/A
city, town N/A state N/A

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

Located in the center of the campus of Tennessee Wesleyan College in Athens, Tennessee, the Old College building looks much as it did when it was completed in 1857. Although chartered as the Odd Fellows Female College in 1854, the unfinished educational building was sold to the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South who had completed the three story, red brick, Greek Revival building by 1858. Despite the various name changes throughout its long history, the structure has always housed an educationally oriented facility that was connected with the Methodist Church. Recently the building has been sensitively rehabilitated to house the McMinn County Living Heritage Museum. The structure retains much of its historical and architectural integrity.

The brick walls of the building, which are laid in common bond, support a plain entablature, a flat roof structure, and four simple brick interior chimneys. The windows are the six pane over six pane, double hung sash type with architrave trim and jack arch lintels which are placed symmetrically on the facades. The entry porch is of frame and covers the central three bays of the south facade. The flat porch roof is supported by four octagonal columns with Tuscan capitals. The deck and roof material have remained frame. The doorway consists of a two paneled double leaf door flanked by three light sidelights and an eight light transom. Small rectangular panels support the sidelights and the entire unit is detailed with architrave trim.

The second story central window repeats the motif of the main entry with a central, multi-paned double-hung sash window flanked by sidelights and a transom. The first-story rear entry has a four paneled rear door with plain trim, a three light transom and a jack arch above.

The interior is laid out in a central hall plan with entries from the north and south and an open stairwell to the rear. The newel posts and balusters are all late-nineteenth century in style on the first and second floors. The third story has mid-nineteenth century newel post and balusters. The stair landing located above the rear entry cuts across the transom. Floors in the hallway and on the landings and in the classrooms retain the original wood flooring as do the risers on the stairway. The interior wood detailing consists of architrave trim around the windows and door frames with plain baseboards throughout.

Alterations to the structure include the removal of a wooden bannister around the porch roof, the addition of a metal fire escape to the south facade, some partition walls were added on the first and second levels and the fireplaces were blocked up and covered over when the building was converted to a steam heating system. Despite these changes, the structure retains much of its architectural and historical integrity.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1857 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old College building of the Tennessee Wesleyan College is being nominated under National Register criteria A and C for its historical significance as an early and influential East Tennessee college and architecturally as one of the few remaining pre-Civil War Greek Revival school buildings in Tennessee.

The Old College building on the campus of Tennessee Wesleyan College was originally chartered as the Odd Fellows Female College in 1854. That year, the McMinn County Lodge #54 of the International Order of Odd Fellows began construction of the three-story, brick, Greek Revival structure, but before the building was complete, they ran out of funds and sold the partially finished school building to the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1857. The church raised sufficient funds to complete the building that year and it opened in 1858 as the Athens Female College.

By 1861 the attendance at the college reached seventy pupils whose instruction included two courses of study, a scientific program, or a more difficult program in arts and classical literature. As in other schools for women in this time period, the college carefully regulated the activities, clothing, and morals of the young women who attended class. The expressed purpose of the Athens Female College as noted from its 1862 catalog was "... to develop the mental and moral powers of the pupil, and to educate the mind to habits of thinking with clearness and force."

The school was suspended during the later stages of the Civil War and the minutes of the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South mentioned the leasing of the building to the Confederate Army for a hospital. The building was sold after the Civil War to pay a debt owed to its president, Erastus Rowley. He gained ownership of the building and donated it to the Holston Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1867.

When the school reopened in 1867, its emphasis changed as well as its name. Now called the East Tennessee Wesleyan College, it served as a preparatory school and college for both sexes. The first enrollment was comprised of fifty-two males and thirty-four females. Of the total eighty-six students, only three were enrolled in an actual college curriculum.

In 1886, the school was renamed Grant Memorial University to honor Ulysses S. Grant after his death. The move was seen to have larger political overtones and the school received kudos from the various United States senators and congressmen for such a significant display of unity for the South. The school attendance grew during this period to approximately three hundred pupils. In 1889 the Holston Conference organized another school, the University of Chattanooga, and appointed the governing body of U. S. Grant University, as the school was now called, to control it. In 1909, the two schools merged and U. S. Grant University became the Athens School of the University of Chattanooga.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Goodspeed's History of East Tennessee. 1887; rpt. Nashville: Charles and Randy Elder Booksellers, 1972.
Martin, LeRoy. A History of Tennessee Wesleyan College 1857-1957. n.p.: LeRoy Martin, 1957.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Athens, Tennessee

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	7	1	8	5	4	0	3	9	2	4	8	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification This nomination includes only the land upon which the building sits, a plot of land approximately 62.5 feet by 50 feet, because the intrusion of recent buildings and landscaping have significantly altered the mid-nineteenth century historic appearance of the campus.

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

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robin Krawitz, Architectural Historian

organization Tennessee Historical Commission date August 1983

street & number 701 Broadway telephone (615) 742-6716

city or town Nashville state Tennessee 37203

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.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Herbert L. Byers

title Executive Director, Tennessee Historical Commission

date 11/25/83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 12/29/83

for *Allan Byers*
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet Old College

Item number 8

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In 1925 the Board of Trustees of the University of Chattanooga voted to separate the Athens School from the University under pressure from locally prominent alumni and a charter renaming the school Tennessee Wesleyan College was drawn up. This reorganization has carried the institution until the present.

Architecturally, the building stands as one of the few extant pre-Civil War, Greek Revival academic buildings in Tennessee. Rehabilitation work began on the Old College building in late 1981 to house the McMinn County Living Heritage Museum. The museum officially opened its doors to the public on June 13, 1982.

