# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

(Form 10-900a). Type all entries.			
1. Name of Property	logs		
historic name Poinsett County Co	ourthouse		
other names/site number			
2. Location		nysical appearance	escribe present and historic pl
street & number			not for publication N/A
city, town Harrisburg			vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code Al	county Poinsett	code AR	111 zip code 72432
			Seren is equal and a mark p
3. Classification	and the second section of the Court of the C		
Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Reso	urces within Property
private	X building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
X public-local	district	1	buildings
public-State	site		sites
public-Federal	structure	· ·	structures
pasiio i dadiai	object		objects
		1	Total
Name of related multiple property listing:		Number of centr	ibuting resources previously
N/A	1 3950		onal Register N/A
	.1.090	iisted in the Nati	onal Register
4. State/Federal Agency Certificati	on		
Signature of certifying official Arkansas Historic Preserve State or Federal agency and bureau  In my opinion, the property meets Signature of commenting or other official		ister criteria. See	Date  continuation sheet.
State or Federal agency and bureau			
5. National Park Service Certificati	on		
I, hereby, certify that this property is:	OII	Entered in t	118
entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  determined not eligible for the National Register.	Albung Zyun	Entered in Cartional Reg	
removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)			
	Signature of the	ne Keeper	Date of Action

6. Function or Use		100°01 × 100°01
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)		nctions (enter categories from instructions)
Government/Courthouse/County Courthouse	Governm	ent/Courthouse/County Courthouse
250	(4) <u>3150/(8)</u>	National Segister of H
7. Description		met renemelesh
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (e	inter categories from instructions)
	foundation .	Limestone
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/ Classical Revival	walls	Limestone
	roof	Ceramic Tile
	other	Lauren (h. 1919). 1919 (h. 1919). Action mitter:

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary. The Poinsett County Courthouse was designed in 1917 by Pine Bluff architect Mitchell Selligman and is constructed of grey Bedford stone and reinforced concrete. It is two storys in height, set upon a raised basement, and covered with a hipped roof and central dome on the main portion and a flat roof on the wings. Its rectangular, symmetrical plan features two intersecting hallways which allow entrance into the building from all four elevations.

Elaboration. The Poinsett County Courthouse was designed by the Pine Bluff architect Mitchell Selligman in 1917, just one month after the earlier courthouse had burned. is constructed of gray Bedford stone facing reinforced concrete walls and is designed in a very free Classical Revival style, originally combining Roman, Palladian, and Colonial Revival elements in a large and impressive composition. It is a full two storys in height and is set upon a slightly raised basement. It is covered with a flat roof laid behind a carved stone balustrade on the northern and southern wings. The roof of the taller central block of the structure is intersected on opposite sides by the gable roof, full-height entrance porticos, while the block itself is capped with a low, pyramidal hipped roof, all of which is finished in clay tile. The pyramid roof is truncated by a raised, square stone platform which supports an octagonal clock tower. The tower is composed of an octagonal drum, each face of which features two pilasters flanking a tall central window, and a tall, octagonal dome which is itself punctuated by four molded clock openings (one above each elevation) and finished by a carved spherical ornament. The plan is symmetrical and essentially square. The first floor entrances on all four elevations lead into two perpendicular axial hallways, with twin straight staircases at th northern and southern ends which flank the hallway itself and lead up to the second floor and down to the basement. A single stone chirney rises from the northern flank of the hipped roof.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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The eastern and western elevations are identical. Both present symmetrical facades organized around the clear focal point, the full-height, pedimented Corinthian portico. At each end of the facade a slightly projecting two story bay consists of two squareheaded, fixed, aluminum single pane windows on each floor, the upper windows slightly smaller than the lower, placed between two end pilasters which in turn rest upon a water table molding and which support a blank frieze and cornice. These projecting bays frame the taller central block, which is five bays long behind the portico. The first story of this central section is fenestrated by two square-headed fixed aluminum windows on each side of the central aluminum pair doors and transom, while the second story features five identical arched aluminum windows which have a small awning window built into the bottom and a semi-circular solid aluminum piece inserted into the arch above. The portico is composed of a low, stone staircase rising between flat stone stoops to a porch floor, which in turn supports four massive, evenly distributed round Corinthian columns which narrow as they rise to their elaborate capitals. A simple entablature with a frieze featuring the name of the building and a raised blank circle at each end is finished with a delicate dentil course extending the entire length of the projecting interior pediment molding above. The pediment molding is ornamented underneath with a larger dentil course, of fewer dentils and each being a sculpted scroll. This course is continued also beneath the pediment

cornice, as is the smaller dentil course. The tympanum is decorated with a stylized floral motif on either side of an elaborate central cartouche. The same frieze and cornice detailing as seen here appears also on the main body of the building, but on these elevations only.

The northern and southern elevations are also identical. Each is nine bays across and balanced around a projecting central bay, which contains two thin stairwell windows on either side of a central, square-headed fixed single-pane aluminum window on the second story and an aluminum pair door entrance with a single-pane transom on the first story. To either side of this central bay these elevations are punctuated with three square-headed single-pane fixed aluminum windows on each story, with the upper story windows being slightly smaller than those on the first story. These elevations also feature fixed aluminum basement windows, with three to each side of the central low, stone staircase. The stone balustrade seen on the eastern and western elevations (atop the flanking wings) is continued around both of these elevations. Otherwise the ornament is confined to the pilasters and dog-ear decorative stone crown moldings around the doorways. The interior retains much of its original plaster walls and decorative plaster moldings and ornament. Noteworthy among these are the eagle and Corinthian capital groupings in the courtroom. The interior also retains original light fixtures and wood door trim.

The Poinsett County Courthouse has only been altered slightly over the years, with the most drastic changes occurring in the early 1970's, when the original Colonial Revival wood fanlight-and-vertical-pane sash and the one-over-one wood sash windows were replaced throughout with aluminum thermal windows. The clay tile roof developed leakage problems but was restored rather than replaced. The Poinsett County Courthouse remains the finest and most sophisticated example of its architectural type in Harrisburg.

8. Statement of Significance	Major Sibilographical References
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property nationally s	y in relation to other properties: tatewide X locally
Applicable National Register Criteria A B X C	D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	D E F G
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  Architecture	Period of Significance Significant Dates 1917 1917
	Cultural Affiliation N/A
Significant Person _N/A	Architect/Builder Mitchell Selligman/J.E. Hollingsworth

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary. The Poinsett County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance for its distinctive architectural style. It survives as the best example within the community of Harrisburg of the grand, formal Classical Revival style which became popular after the turn of the century. It is also unique in this regard, as it combines several distinct architectural traditions into a synthesis which draws directly from European Classical and Baroque prototypes, as well as the American Colonial interpretations thereof.

Elaboration. The Poinsett County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance for the high quality of its design and the sophistication of its architect in the handling of a variety of Classical and Neoclassical traditions. Its selection and distribution of traditional ornament blends with its expanses of relatively uninterrupted wall space to create a composition which is imposing and formal yet rich with detail which is both symbolic and visually engaging.

The city of Harrisburg had served as the county seat of Poinsett County since 1856, when the town of Bolivar (three miles to the north) was relieved of that role. Harrisburg made the most sense as the site of the county seat due to its central location; and it later became even more accessible by virtue of the decision of the St. Louis, Íron Mountain and Southern Railroad to site their Helena branch through Harrisburg in 1882. Naturally, the city experienced substantial growth after this point in time: it grew from 700 in 1889 to between 2,000 and 2,500 in 1917, the year the new courthouse was constructed. By this time Harrisburg could boast of two banks, water works, an electric light and power plant, a new ice plant, two large cotton gins, a new flour mill and grain elevator, two retail lumber yards, one large stave mill, a tractor factory, a bakery, a number of active retail stores, two hotels, several restaurants, blacksmith and machine shops, one weekly newspaper, and three saw mills. The city also possessed a number of active church organizations, a good system of public schools (a new high school was constructed around this time at a total cost of over \$60,000.00), and well-kept streets with paved sidewalks. Most importantly, perhaps, was its accessibility to the rich farmland which surrounded it and produced in abundance such crops as wheat, corn, cotton,

9. Major Bibliographical References	Statement of Significance in conditions of this con-
Goodspeeds Biographical and Historical Memoirs	of Northeast Arkansas 1800
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Hodges, Curt, "Major Roofing Project Should 'Dry 11/09/85, p.1.	y' Courthouse," <u>The Jonesboro Sun</u> ,
Poinsett County Court Records.	
<u>Up-To-Date</u> , Poinsett County, 1919.	
ecad et 100 to 1	
Desired Alpha Alpha	See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):  preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	University Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specify repository:
Record #	
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property Less than 1	
riorouge of property	
UTM References A 1 5 7 0 6 8 9 0 3 7 7 0 0 Zone Easting Northing	B L
C	
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	00
Starting at a point formed by the intersection western boundary of East Street, proceed souther with the perpendicular line formed by the northern boundary	erly along latter boundary to the intersection
	$\boxed{X}$ See continuation sheet
Boundary Justification	
This boundary includes all the property historic	ically associated with this resource.
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian	
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Prograstreet & number 225 E. Markham, Suite 200	
city or town Little Rock	telephone (501) 371-2763

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clover, cow peas, rice, alfalfa, soy beans, timothy, oats, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, etc. After the construction of the railroad, Harrisburg became an important commercial and transportation center for the thriving agricultural community around it.

Thus it is no surprise that when the earlier (c. 1872) and presumably more modest courthouse burned on May 4, 1917, the county desired not only something fireproof (hence the reinforced concrete and steel frame) but also a grand and imposing structure which would speak of the county's stature. Of additional significance was the courthouse square site for the structure, surrounded as it was by a thriving commercial district and bordered by four principal throughfares from which the courthouse could be seen on all sides. County Judge S.T. Mayo oversaw the effort which by June 6 of that year saw appropriations ordered by the court for the building of a new courthouse which included the levying of a tax for the purpose. Mitchell Selligman, the young architect from Pine Bluff, was selected to design the new edifice, and J. E. Hollingsworth was the contractor hired to construct it.

Selligman answered the challenge of a site which demanded four front elevations with an essentially Palladian plan, featuring four entrances and two identical main entrances. He highlighted the main entrances with grand, full-height, pedimented Corinthian porticos complete with heavy Classical detail which could be easily read from the street and which clearly identified this structure as an official public building. He fenestrated the bulk of the building with simple one-over-over wood sash windows, as was common for public buildings at the time, but filled his arched windows with wood fixed and sash windows of a distinctly Colonial Revival aspect. Yet he complimented these details with the balance and stasis of the composition and overall proportions. As such he lent the eastern and western (or entrance) elevations both a Classical and Georgian Colonial character.

Though it is difficult to discern just which vocabulary he was trying to emphasize, there is no doubt about the use of the Classical idiom to convey a stately, formal presence. There is also no soubt about the ambitiousness of the county officials in desiring this effect, for stone construction is always one of the most expensive; indeed, this structure cost \$200,000.00 to build in 1917. Selligman clearly availed himself of an opportunity to create a grand and expensive yet appropriately restrained design.

The Poinsett County Courthouse also survives as a symbol of a prosperous place during a prosperous time, a symbolism which is actually part of a contemporaneous, early twentieth century tradition which swept the United States. No fewer than seventeen states built new state capitols during the first two decades of the twentieth century in this grand, Neoclassical vocabulary (the Arkansas State Capitol of 1902 is a representative example). A remarkable amount of wealth was circulating during this period and even public entities found themselves with a surplus of capital. This classical imagery clearly harkened back to

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			3-		_

Europe and especially the grandeur of Rome during its period of greatest conquest and wealth, the days of "bread and circus." Americans, whether deliberately or not, drew parallels between the growth and development of a newly industrialized America and the might and wealth of early Imperial Rome. It is then interesting to see this trend manifest itself in what was a relatively removed, albeit thriving agricultural center. Clearly, the technical advances and growth of transportation networks in the late ninenteenth and early twentieth centuries facilitated the spreading of popular architectural styles; and though it is doubtful that the county officials in Harrisburg embraced such a sophisticated understanding of this new symbolism, it is evident that architects like Mitchell Selligman believed in the correctness and appropriateness of the Neoclassical vocabulary for government buildings. As such, his studied rendering of this style in the Poinsett County Courthouse speaks to this belief, and thus stands as both an erudite handling of the Classical Revival vocabulary and a testimonial to the pervasiveness of its popularity and meaning in the early twentieth century.

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Verbal Boundary Description (cont'd)

along latter boundary to intersection with perpendicular line formed by eastern boundary of Main Street; thence proceed northerly along latter boundary to intersection with perpendicular line formed by southern boundary of Market Street; thence proceed easterly to point of beginning, comprising in all less than 1 acre.

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION
PROPERTY Poinsett County Courthouse NAME:
MULTIPLE NAME:
STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Poinsett
DATE RECEIVED: 10/03/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/17/89 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/02/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/17/89 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:
REFERENCE NUMBER: 89001876
NOMINATOR: STATE
REASONS FOR REVIEW:
APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N
COMMENT WAIVER: N
ACCEPTRETURNREJECT
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA	
REVIEWER	
DISCIPLINE	
DATE	

CLASSIFICATION
countresource type
STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION
FUNCTION
historiccurrent
DESCRIPTION
architectural classificationmaterialsdescriptive text
SIGNIFICANCE
Period Areas of SignificanceCheck and justify below
Specific dates Builder/Architect Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
summary paragraphcompletenessclarityapplicable criteriajustification of areas checkedrelating significance to the resourcecontextrelationship of integrity to significancejustification of exceptionother
BIBLIOGRAPHY
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
acreageverbal boundary descriptionboundary justification
ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION
sketch mapsUSGS mapsphotographspresentation
OTHER COMMENTS
Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to
Phone
Signed Date



POINS ETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRIS BURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
WELLATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRIS BURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM EAST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. SWANDA
APRIL, 1986
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM EAST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. SWANDA
APRIL, 1986
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM WEST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. SWANDA
APRIL, 1986
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM NORTHWEST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY V. DE ROSE
APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM NORTH



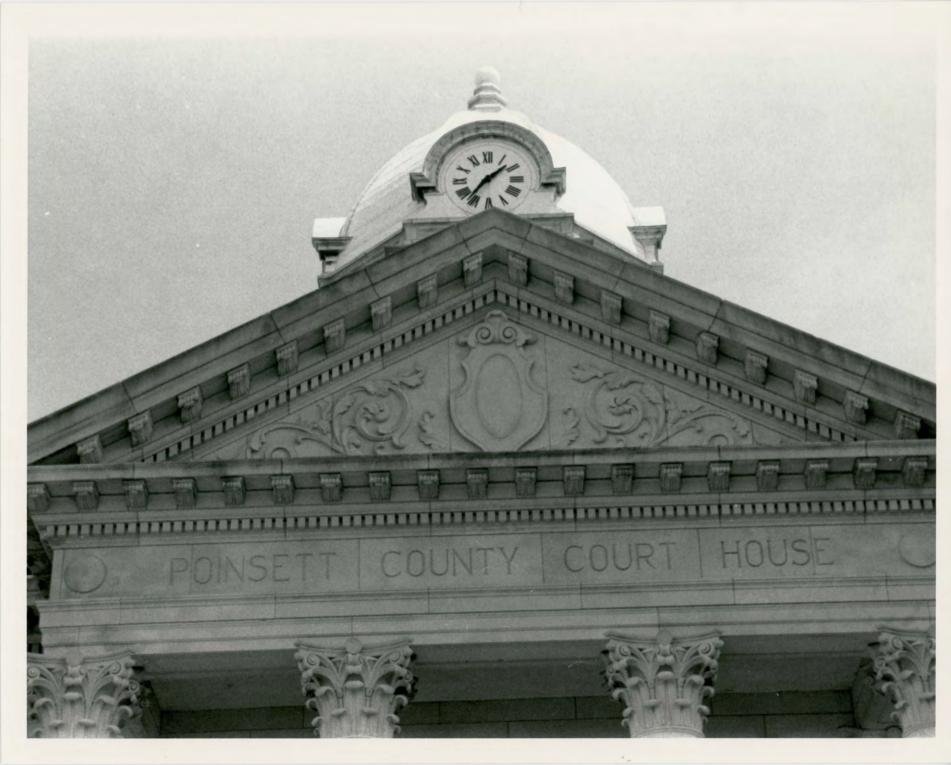
POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. SWANDA

APRIL, 1986

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

PORTICO DETAIL, VIEW FROM EAST



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY M. SWANDA

APRIL, 1986

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW FROM EAST, PEDIMENT DETAIL



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
IHARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
EXTERIOR CAPITAL DETAIL



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FIRE AT AHPP
COLUMN BASE DETAIL



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
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NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW OF INTERIOR STAIRWEAL



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARRANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FIRE AT AHPP
INTERIOR OF MEN'S LAVATORY



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FIZE AT AHPP
VIEW OF COURTROOM



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE
HAPPISSURG, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY V. DE ROSE
APRIL, 1989
NEG STIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW OF COURTROOM ENTRANCE



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HARRISBURG, ARKAWSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DEROSE

APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW OF INTERIOR DOORWAY



POINSETT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HARRISBURG, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY J. DE ROSE

APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW OF INTERIOR LANATORY ENTRANCE



#### ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

September 28, 1989

OCT 03 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

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: Poinsett County Courthouse Harrisburg - Poinsett County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Poinsett 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,

Cathy Buford/ State Historic Preservation Officer

CB/KS/1ss

**Enclosures** 

