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# DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED AUG 11 1976  
DATE ENTERED NOV 21 1976

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

### 1 NAME

HISTORIC  Johnston Library

AND/OR COMMON

### LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

210 West Tenth St

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Baxter Springs

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
No. 5, Joe Skubitz

STATE

Kansas

CODE

20

COUNTY

Cherokee

CODE

021

### 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
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

### OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Baxter Springs

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Baxter Springs

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kansas

66713

### LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Cherokee County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Columbus

STATE

Kansas

66725

### 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

August 13, 1970

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas

66612

# 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

The Johnston Library is a two-story rectangular structure with a full basement. It is located on a large, tree-filled block just off the main commercial street in Baxter Springs. The building faces south with the long axis of the building in the north-south direction. The building is approximately 80 feet long and 40 feet wide with an overall height of 40 feet. The south 20 feet of the building, which contains the main entrance, was added in 1905. This south facade combines motifs from the Classical Revival style, especially in the pediment and pilasters, and the Richardsonian Romanesque style in the wide Syrian archway.

The exterior walls are constructed of red brick laid in running bond. A water table of rough cut stone blocks demarks the basement floor and projects approximately four feet above the ground line. The brick masonry resting on the stone base is set back several inches from the face of the stone.

The roof is a low pitched gable covered with asphalt shingles. The only protrusions through the roof are three brick chimneys and a square ventilator. The cornice has been made of decorative brick work including corbelling and brackets. The windows, with the exception of those at the south entrance, are simple rectangles with cut stone sills and lintels.

The south facade has been divided into three bays by four brick pilasters. Windows at the entrance rise from stone sills which have been extended and form a string course broken by the pilasters. The windows have stilted stone arches with corbels and keystones. There is colored glass in the fanlight. The main entrance is through a shallow brick masonry arch with a stone key. The name of the building and the construction date of the addition have been carved in relief in stone and placed in the southern pediment.

The interior has been extensively remodelled, but except for the installation of aluminum doors in 1966, the exterior has not changed greatly since the addition of 1905.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1872

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The building now known as the Johnston Library was built as a courthouse in 1872 by the town of Baxter Springs to provide an inducement for making it the permanent county seat. Created in 1857 as McGee county, Cherokee county was renamed in 1860 and organized in 1867. The temporary county seat of this southeasternmost county in Kansas was supposed to be Freepoint, but the county commissioners never held an official session there, meeting instead at Pleasant View. A fight over the location of a permanent county seat began with the election held Nov. 5, 1867, which Baxter Springs won. The county commissioners, however, refused to canvass the returns. Finally the official records were removed to Baxter Springs on April 14, 1868 by order of the state Supreme Court. Many of the residents of the county were not satisfied because they believed the election had been fraudulent or because they felt Baxter Springs in the southeast corner of the county was not conveniently located for a majority of the citizens. Some also thought that Baxter Springs was not even located in Kansas but in Indian Territory. A later survey shifted the boundary of the state to the south and eliminated doubt on that issue. Other elections were held May 12, 1868, with no place getting a majority and May 26, 1868, with Baxter Springs winning. But again fraud was charged. On Feb. 17, 1869, another election was called, and according to the old accounts the opponents of Baxter Springs had determined to do whatever it took to move the county seat to Columbus, the geographic center of the county. Ballot boxes were stuffed by both sides, but the Columbus supporters won by waiting until all the returns were in from Baxter Springs and then "finding" sufficient "lost" returns for one precinct, which had been held out, to insure a 33-vote margin. The votes cast in this election far exceeded the eligible voters, but both sides had engaged in the same practices so neither could complain very loudly about fraudulent election activities.

The town of Baxter Springs retained its hope of again becoming the county seat, so in 1871 its residents approved a \$10,000 bond issue to erect a courthouse and jail. The building was completed in 1872, and although it was never used as a county courthouse, it did house the county sheriff's office and the jail for eight years until the county jail was completed at Columbus in 1880.

(continued)

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allison, Nathaniel Thompson, History of Cherokee County (Chicago, Biographical Publishing Co., 1904), pp. 62-64, 67.  
 Baxter Springs Citizen, May 30, 1946; Apr. 24, Oct. 30, 1975.  
 Baxter Springs Examiner, Sept. 14, 1871.  
 Baxter Springs Sentinel, June 22, 1872.  
 The Baxter Springs Story (n. p., 1960), pp. 12, 13, 20.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY two

UTM REFERENCES

<sup>15</sup> <sup>5 20</sup>  
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 C                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 Richard Pankratz, Director, Historic Sites Survey  
Cornelia Wyma, Architectural Historian  
 ORGANIZATION Kansas State Historical Society DATE May 17, 1976  
 STREET & NUMBER 120 West Tenth Street TELEPHONE 913-296-3251  
 CITY OR TOWN Topeka STATE Kansas 66612

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE      LOCAL X

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 Myle H. Miller  
 TITLE Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society DATE July 29, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DATE	<u>11/21/98</u>
DATE	<u>11.16.76</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Johnston Library

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After Baxter Springs resigned itself to the fact that Columbus would remain the permanent county seat, the new building became the city courthouse, or city hall, and was so used until 1905. At that time through a bequest in the will of Niles P. Johnston, a prominent Baxter Springs citizen, \$5,000 was donated to the city for a library building, furniture and books providing the city furnished a site and agreed to maintain the building. At an election in April, 1905, the voters almost unanimously accepted the library proposal, and later that month the city council offered the city hall building and park for the library facilities. The three trustees of the bequest accepted the city's offer in July and by November the city hall was being remodeled and an addition was being constructed onto the south.

The Johnston Library building is significant to the history of Baxter Springs. Its futile construction for courthouse usage is symbolic of the town's early growing pains, and for more than 65 years the building has helped provide for the town's cultural well-being. Additionally, the structure is a good example of classical influenced architecture in Kansas.

9.

Baxter Springs Weekly News, Feb. 23, Mar. 9, Apr. 6, 27, June 15, July 13, Nov. 9, 1905.

Cherokee County, Kansas (n. p., 1923), p. 20.

"Columbus and Baxter Came Close to Violence in County Seat 'War,'" Columbus Advocate, February 28, 1957.

"County 'Fight' Recalled," Columbus Advocate, August 8, 1941.  
Galena Weekly Republican, June 22, 1923

"History of Baxter Springs," Baxter Springs Citizen, November 6, 23, 30, 1950.

History of the State of Kansas (Chicago, A. T. Andreas, 1883), p. 1154.

Kansas City Times, June 17, 1958.

Shackleton, Bernice Close, Handbook on the Frontier Days of Southeast Kansas (n. p., 1961), pp. 56, 57.

"Year Citizen Was Founded a Gloomy One for Baxter Springs," Baxter Springs Citizen, May 29, 1952.