

PH6670651

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 18 1977
DATE ENTERED SEP 22 1977

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 **
Clay County Courthouse
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN 701 E VICINITY OF NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Fourth
STATE Tennessee CODE 47 COUNTY Clay CODE 27

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Clay County
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Celina VICINITY OF STATE Tennessee

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Clay County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Celina STATE Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Tennessee Architectural and Historical Survey

DATE December 1976 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Tennessee Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Nashville STATE Tennessee

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Clay County Courthouse is a plain, two-story brick building. The brick is laid in common bond and was originally pointed and pencilled, but the pencilling, a thick, awkward stripe, is now mostly gone. Atop the building is a simple square cupola, originally containing a bell. The present roof, which replaced one of standing seam copper, is of asphalt shingles, except for the cupola which is of tin. The denticulated cornice is supported on paired brackets, eight on each side and equally spaced. The cupola cornice is similar. A false water table of poured concrete surrounds the building and obscures the foundation.

The plan of the building is rectangular and its dimensions are reminiscent of the courthouses constructed in other Tennessee counties in the 1820s and '30s. On the first floor are located county offices and on the second is the tiny courtroom which still contains a number of original benches. This courtroom is the only portion of the building to have undergone alteration. The floor, which was originally sloped, is now level and a balcony has been added. The only other alteration was the removal of the coal stoves which provided heat for the courtroom and their replacement with gas heaters.

The original benches which still remain are hand made and crudely constructed. They were originally cut to fit the earlier sloped floor. When the floor was altered the benches were adapted by the expedient of tacking blocks to the bottom of the legs and by this means leveling them. This makeshift arrangement is an amusing accent to the vernacular concept of the courthouse itself. It is as well indicative both of the regional culture and of the necessity imposed by economic conditions.

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 checked="" 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 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 1873

BUILDER/ARCHITECT D. L. Dow

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The area of the Upper Cumberland River in Tennessee is one of the most historic in the state. Coming down the river from the Cumberland Gap region, white explorers and long hunters arrived in the area as early as 1769, camping on the present site of Celina. Settlement of the area was slow, however, as most settlers were attracted to better lands in the Nashville basin.

Due to this factor and to the difficulty of building roads in the hilly terrain and the resulting poor transportation other than by water, the area did not develop as did the rest of the state. Isolated from the social and economic changes which occurred in Tennessee in the nineteenth century, the area of the upper Cumberland River developed and preserved a distinctive culture much more attuned to eighteenth or early nineteenth century values and modes of living than to those of a modern, industrial society.

Clay County was established by the legislature in 1870 from portions of Jackson and Overton counties to relieve difficulties caused by the necessity of citizens of the area attending court in Livingston or Gainesboro. The county was named in honor of Henry Clay. The first court was held at Butler's Landing but the county seat was moved to Celina in 1872. On April 27, 1872, contracts were awarded for the construction of public buildings. The contract for the courthouse was let to D. L. Dow of Cookeville for the amount of \$9,999.00 and a \$.30 per hundred tax levy was passed to pay for it. A log jail was constructed at the same time.

The courthouse, completed in 1873, has now served with no major alterations as the governmental center of Clay County for over 100 years. It is the first and only courthouse that Clay countians have known.

Architecturally the courthouse is reflective of the social and economic conditions of the region. It is an architectural expression of the cultural context in which it exists. The dimensions and basic plan are similar to courthouses which were constructed by other counties in Tennessee in the 1820s and '30s; it is thus almost an anachronism. It is also the smallest courthouse in the state, possessing few architectural frills but substantial and obviously meant to endure. In this timber-rich region the pioneer tradition of wood building construction lingered well into the twentieth century, and the courthouse is one of the earliest brick structures in the county. That Clay countians chose to construct their courthouse of brick is testimony to the civic pride existing in the newly incorporated county. This unadorned but solid building is a symbol of the pioneer virtues of self-reliance, frugality, and foresight.

Distinguished personages associated with the building include Cordell Hull, Secretary of State under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who began his practice of law in Celina in

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CONTINUATION SHEET

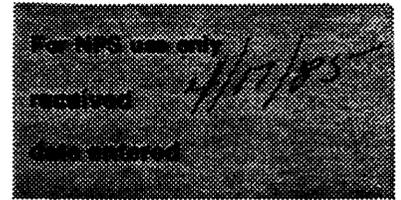
ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

1891. Benton McMillan, governor of Tennessee from 1899 to 1903, also began his career as a lawyer in Celina.

These factors make the Clay County Courthouse one of the significant cultural resources of the area.

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

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



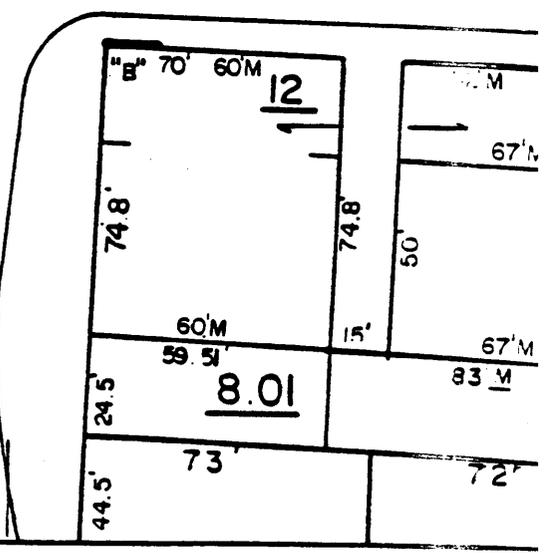
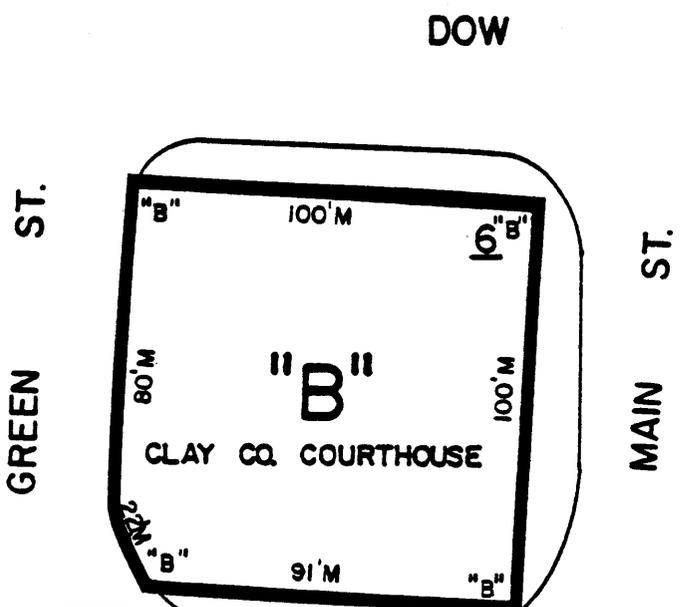
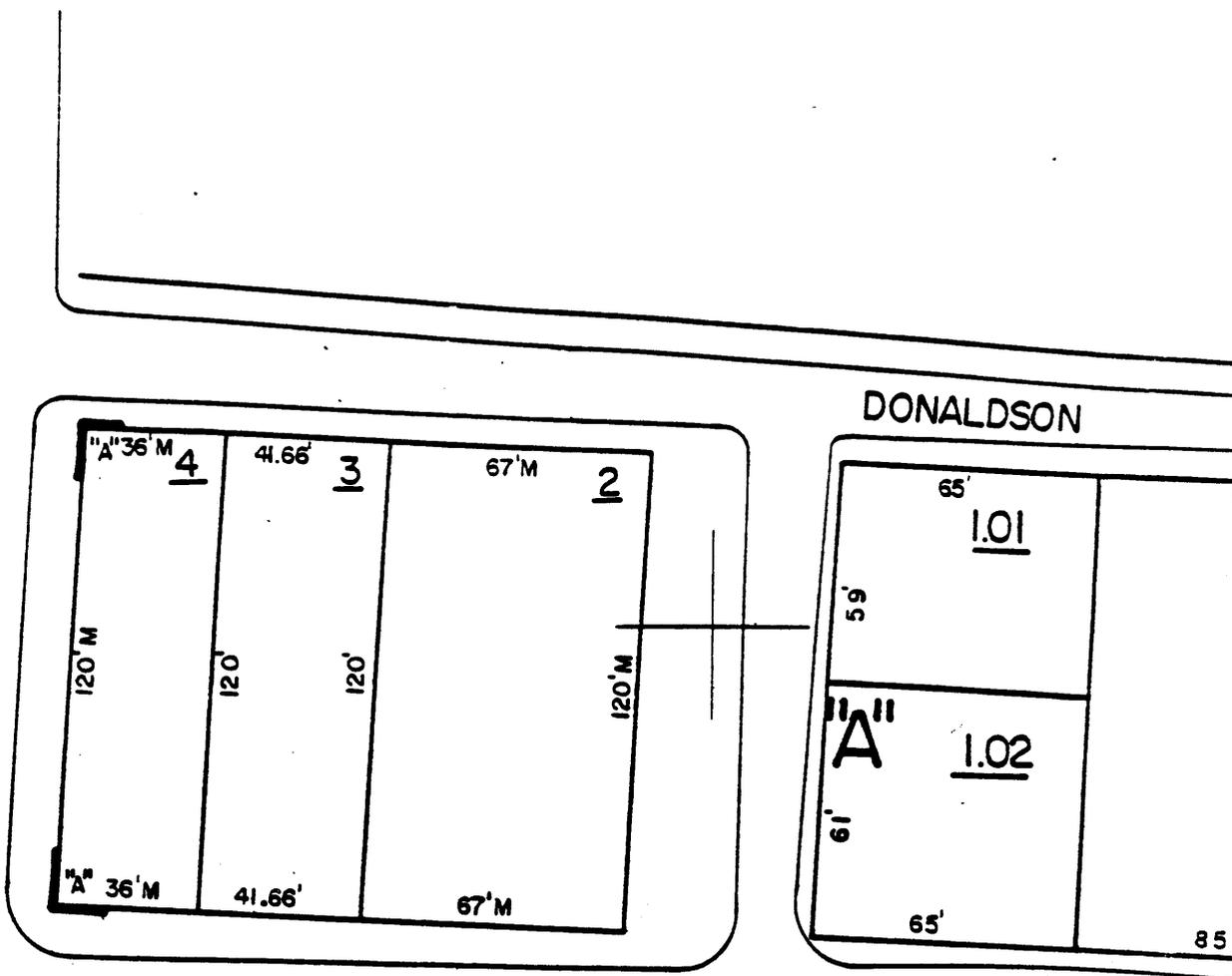
Continuation sheet 10

Item number

Page 1 of 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

The area nominated includes the Clay County Courthouse and the tract it sits on. This tract is Clay County Property Tax Assessor Map 42-JD-Tract B6. This property is five sided; starting at the northwest corner it runs 80' south, thence 22' southeast, thence 91' east, thence 100' north, thence 100' west to the point of beginning. This tract contains 0.22 acre. (See the attached map.) This includes only land historically associated with the nominated property.



MAP 42-JD
42-JD-B6 = .22 ACRE

SCALE 1"=50'

Celina, Clay County, TN

