

PH0683701

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 6 1978
DATE ENTERED JAN 23 1979

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

Wilcox County Courthouse Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

Irregular pattern along Broad St.

STREET & NUMBER

see continuation sheet

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Camden

VICINITY OF

1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Alabama

01

Wilcox

131

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

see continuation sheet

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wilcox County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Camden

Alabama

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Wilcox County Courthouse Historic District, including the county's most important governmental and commercial establishments, contains 29 structures which date from around 1840 to the present. Radiating from the 1859 courthouse and square are the buildings which were significant to the county's early political history: 5 mid-19th century law offices and an 1889 county jail. Along Broad Street and across Claiborne are 12 early 20th century commercial structures which provide a visual character that has been carried out in several later buildings. In addition, two structures date from the early 1930's, and seven were built and one drastically altered after 1948.

Distractive modern buildings at the northwest end of Broad Street, before the intersection of Caldwell, limited the boundaries in that direction. On the northeast, the district was extended across Water Street to include the Old Jail (2) and to exclude the modern commercial structures on either side of it. The boundaries on the southeast end of Broad Street and southwest end of Claiborne were determined by the breakup of the concentrated building area and the beginning of a residential area.

Visually, the district is dominated by the Greek Revival courthouse and the thirteen 1- and 2-story brick structures from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The flavor of the brick commercial style has been carried over in eight additional buildings constructed since 1930. There are five one-story frame buildings from the 19th century which provide further period character as well as one frame structure from the modern period. Only one building, the concrete-faced structure (9) on Planters Street has a distractive surface covering.

Structurally, the district is in fairly good condition, though two of the mid-19th century buildings - the Colonel Edward N. Jones (4) and Governor Benjamin M. Miller (8) law offices - are vacant and in need of repair. The courthouse is currently undergoing weatherization work.

The structures are categorized according to their dates of construction and the degree to which they contribute to or detract from the character of the district. In the first three categories are the buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries which retain their period styling to a significant degree. Of the modern buildings, the fourth and fifth categories consist of two buildings from the 1930's and three from the recent period which retain the flavor of the early 20th century commercial style and blend well into the district. The last category contains those buildings which intrude on the character of the district, but it may be further divided into moderate and blatant intrusions. Two buildings - the Camden National Bank (24) and the Federal Building (22) - are classified as intrusive because of their contemporary brick and window treatment, but their overall tone is not stylistically offensive. One other intrusion, the vacant structure on Planters Street (9), retains a late-19th century core which could be uncovered and restored. This leaves only two major intrusions, the mobile classroom (7) on Water Street and the modern office (6) on Court Street.

PHOTO #9

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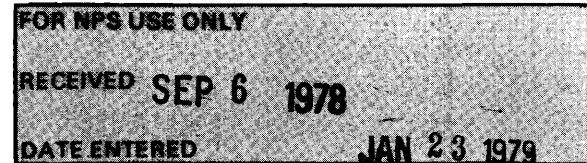
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PAGE 1

Street numbers not available.

Along Broad Street, roughly between Claiborne and Cladwell, extending along Planters and Court streets, and including one structure on Water Street.

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PAGE 2

- ✓ Wilcox County
Wilcox County Courthouse
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ L. Y. Sadler, Jr.
Court Street
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Paul E. Everett Jones, Jr.
Greenwood
Leighton, Alabama 35646
- John Godbold
- ✓ Drawer D
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ William Malone
Clifton Street
Camden, Alabama
- Bill Darwin
- ✓ Clifton Street
Camden, Alabama
- James Bonner
- ✓ Broad Street
Camden, Alabama
- Malcolm Smith
2144 National Bank of Georgia Bldg.
Atlanta, Georgia
- Joe Williams
- Sterret
Camden, Alabama
- Bob Lane
- ✓ Broad Street
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Camden Public Library
(Ms. Della Browder, Chmn.)
P.O. Box 310
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Max Baggett
Clifton Street
Camden, Alabama
- Frank McGraw
- ✓ Cherokee Drive
Camden, Alabama
- Irby Ratcliffe
- ✓ Bridgeport Road
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ W. R. Caton
Caldwell
Camden, Alabama
- Mary L. Ballard
- ✓ Living Trust
Merchants National Bank
Mobile, Alabama 36600
- ✓ FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
Mr. Alvin Turner
Building Superintendent
General Services Administration
Federal Building
Camden, Alabama
- Dan Albritton
- Broad Street
Camden, Alabama
- CAMDEN NATIONAL BANK
A. L. Johnson, President
P. O. Box 518
✓ Camden, Alabama

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- Edwin Riggs
✓ Clifton
Camden, Alabama
- Charlie Wetherbee
✓ Rolling Hills
Camden, Alabama
- WILCOX COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Morris Ward, Superintendent
✓ P. O. Box 160
Camden, Alabama
- MATTHEWS ESTATE
(all of the following)
- Anne J. Nicholson (Mrs. W. E., Jr.)
✓ 27 Idlewood
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401
- Louise J. Bannister (Colonel Barry)
✓ 1111 Dombey Road
Savanah, Georgia 31404
- ✓ Bessie M. Cobb
Camden, Alabama
- Louise Matthews
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Marie Matthews (Mrs. H.H.)
Broad Street
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Hattie M. Riggs (Mrs. Edwin)
Clifton Street
Camden, Alabama
- ✓ Sarah M. Lawrence (Mrs. Joe)
201 Mallory Drive
Selma, Alabama 36701
- Harriet M. Trawick (Mrs. Donald T.)
✓ 617 24th Court, N.W.
Birmingham, Alabama 35215
- Betty Matthews (Mrs. Ken)
✓ 1001 W. Pinewood Drive
Mobile, Alabama 36618
- ZIP CODE FOR CAMDEN IS 36726

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STRUCTURES WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT

- Photo Numbers: 1, 2, 3
1. Wilcox County Courthouse (Court Square): 1859; Greek Revival with Italianate bracketing, 2 stories, brick, four fluted Doric columns on west portico, bracketed entablature with overhanging cornice extends around building, main entrance through western double doors, double wrought iron stair leads to second floor entrance, rear entrance on east, north and south annexes added 1957 in style conforming to original.
 - 4 2. Old Jail (Water Street): 1889; Victorian, 2 stories, brick, hipped gable roof with projecting central gable, 1-story shingled gabled portico with Eastlake ornamentation, segmental-arched windows, decorative brick cornice, 1-story rear section possibly older.
 - 5 3. General Richard C. Jones Law Office (Court Street): 1846; 1 story, frame, shotgun house, 3-bay facade, gabled end portico, Victorian alterations include Eastlake colonettes, segmental-arched door and windows, and shingled pediment.
 - 6 4. Colonel Edward N. Jones Law Office (Court Street): c. 1850; Greek Revival, 1 story frame, shotgun house, gabled end portico, 3-bay facade.
 - 8 8. Governor Benjamin M. Miller Law Office (Planters Street): c. 1840; Greek Revival, 1 story, frame, gabled end portico, 3-bay facade, east and west wings, raised on brick piers; vacant and somewhat deteriorated.
 - 10, 26 10. Alford Building (Broad Street): 1923; Victorian commercial design, 2 stories, brick, flat-headed windows, stone lintels and sills, attached cast iron posts.
 - 11, 26 11. Wilcox American News Office (Broad Street): c. 1925; 1 story, brick, metal awning added.
 - 11, 26 12. Camden Cafe (Broad Street): c. 1925; 1 story, brick, metal awning.
 - 12 13. White's (Broad Street): c. 1925; 1 story, brick, modern display windows and doors and metal awning added, attached cast iron posts.

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- 12, 13, 26 14. Williams Store (Broad Street): c. 1925; south section is 1 story, brick, with metal awning and modern display windows; north section is Victorian commercial design, 2 stories, brick, 3 round-arched windows attached cast iron posts, metal awning, corbelled cornice.
- 13 15. Lane Butane, The Carpet Boutique, and Ruby's Beauty Salon (Broad Street): c. 1905; south section is 1 story, gabled roof; north section is 1 story; flat roof with parapet.
- 13 16. Library (Broad Street): c. 1850; Greek Revival, 1 story, frame, shotgun house, gabled end portico, 3-bay facade, segmental-arched windows.
- 14 17. Old Movie Theatre (Broad Street): c. 1925; 2 stories, brick, flat-headed windows. (now occupied by the Red and White Food Store).
- 15 18. Bonner Building (Broad Street): c. 1925; Victorian commercial design, 2 stories, brick, round-arched windows, decorative fanlight. (now occupied by M & F Casuals).
- 18, 25 23. Law Building (Broad Street): c. 1850; 2½ stories, brick, center interior stair divides building, decorative brick cornice, modern plate-glass doors and display windows.
- 20 25. Wetherbee Finance (Claiborne Street): c. 1925; 1 story, brick, cornice trim above windows and door.
- 20 26. Camden National Bank Annex (Claiborne Street): c. 1925; 1 story, brick, attached cast iron posts.
- 22 28. Matthews Hardware Store (Claiborne Street): c. 1925; Victorian commercial design, 2 stories, brick, flat-headed windows, metal cornice, cast iron colonettes; 1-story wing on west.
- 23, 24 29. Mrs. Camilla Jones Stores (Claiborne Street): c. 1900; 1 story, brick, corbelled cornice, attached cast iron posts, 3 sections (west occupied by Western Auto, center by Wetherbee's Store, east vacant).

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STRUCTURES WHICH DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT

- 7 5. County Office Building (Court Street): 1933; 1 story, brick, flat-headed windows.
- 16 19. Ratcliffe's Hardware Store (Broad Street): 1964; 1 story, brick, flat roof. *intrusion*
- 16 20. Thomas Jewelry Store and Caton's Barber Shop (Broad Street): 1952; 1 story, brick. *intrusion*
- 16 21. Alabama Power Company (Broad Street): 1952; 2 stories, brick. *intrusion*
- 21 27. Coleman Radio & T.V. Service (Claiborne Street): early 1930's; 1 story, brick, hipped-gable roof; former service station.

INTRUSIVE STRUCTURES

- 9 6. John Godbold Law Office and Holman Insurance Agency (Court Street): 1977; 1-story, brick, shingle overhang.
- none 7. Wilcox County Board of Education Annex (Water Street): c. 1970; mobile classroom; 1-story, frame.
- 9 9. Vacant Structure (Planters Street): late-19th century, frame core; concrete block facade dates from 1948; drastically deteriorated. *possible rehab (see para. 5)*
- 17, 25 22. Federal Building (Broad Street): 1959; 2 stories, brick.
- 19, 20 24. Camden National Bank (Broad Street): 1906 core with drastic alterations and additions date from 1950's and 1960's; 2 stories, brick.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Highlighted by the 1859 Greek Revival courthouse, the Wilcox County Courthouse district depicts the significance of the county seat as a political, social, and commercial center for the surrounding rural area. The district contains 29 structures clustered around the courthouse square which date from the mid-19th century to the present. Among other important buildings are the law offices of two prominent Alabamians, an 1889 county jail, and a number of Victorian-influenced commercial structures.

In 1832, the first Wilcox County seat at Canton Bend was moved inland from the Alabama River to escape a series of fatal epidemics and to be nearer the center of the county. Barbourville, the new county seat, was established on twelve acres of land given by W. T. Dunn. In 1841 it was renamed Camden at the suggestion of Dr. John D. Caldwell, a pioneer from Camden, South Carolina. Camden grew rapidly, soon becoming the largest community in the county.

In the pre-Civil War years, a period of general economic prosperity for the South, the town could boast two hotels, a school, six churches, the county courthouse, and jail, as well as several offices and general merchandising stores. Of these, four former law offices, the "Law Building", and the courthouse still stand.

The Wilcox County Courthouse (1), the focal point of the district, was built in 1859 to replace the original two-story frame structure. The Court of County Commissioners, composed of L. W. Mason, J. D. Pritchett, and N. A. McMillan, signed bonds for building the new courthouse and hired Alexander J. Bragg, an architect and contractor, to construct it for a cost of \$33,528. Except for the 1957 addition of north and south wings, the exterior remains unchanged. Currently, the structure is undergoing weatherization work.

Among other mid-19th century structures are several buildings which formerly served as offices of Camden attorneys. Similar in style are the Library building (16) and the Colonel Edward Nathaniel Jones Law Office (4), both one-story frame "shot gun" structures. The Law Building (23), on Broad Street, is a two-story brick structure built around 1850 to house law offices upstairs and a commercial establishment below.

Following the Civil War, Camden and the surrounding area experienced a severe economic depression which did not ease until the recovery of cotton prices in the 1880's. On the local level, Camden's recovery may be marked by the construction of a new county jail in 1889. The "Old Jail" (2), located behind the courthouse, was built by Mr. L. Y. Tarrant at a cost of \$4,800. It served as the county's third jail building until a new one was erected around 1960. Presently it is used as a county office building.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Birmingham Age-Herald, Sept. 20, 1914.

Early Courthouses of Alabama Prior to 1860. Edited by the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Alabama. Mobile: Jordan Printing Co., 1966.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 6½ acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Camden South Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1 6 | 4 7 2 7 6 0 | 3 5 3 9 3 8 0

B 1 6 | 4 7 2 7 7 0 | 3 5 3 9 3 5 0

C 1 6 | 4 7 2 7 4 0 | 3 5 3 9 2 0 0

D 1 6 | 4 7 2 6 4 0 | 3 5 3 9 1 6 0

E 1 6 | 4 7 2 6 0 0 | 3 5 3 9 2 4 0

F 1 6 | 4 7 2 5 7 0 | 3 5 3 9 3 8 0

G 1 6 | 4 7 2 6 1 0 | 3 5 3 9 4 1 0

H | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

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

Sally B. Moore

ORGANIZATION

Alabama Historical Commission

STREET & NUMBER

725 Monroe Street

CITY OR TOWN

Montgomery

DATE

August 31, 1978

TELEPHONE

(205) 832-6621

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. Toward, Jr.

TITLE

SAPD Alabama

DATE

September 1, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

William Belmont

DATE

1/23/79

DATE

1/22/79

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In the late 19th century, General Richard C. Jones, brother of Colonel Edward N. Jones, emerged as the first of two Camden attorneys to become prominent state politicians. In addition to practicing law, Jones served as a brigadier general in the State Militia, a member of the State Senate, President of the University of Alabama (1890-97), and a member of the 1901 Alabama Constitutional Convention. His Camden law office (3), located across from the courthouse, was altered slightly during the Victorian period. Today it retains this late-19th century appearance and continues to be occupied as a law office.

Benjamin Meek Miller, attorney and Governor of Alabama (1931-35), housed his practice in the mid-19th century structure (8) directly behind the Richard Jones Law Office. An eminent Alabamian, Miller also served as a member of the State Legislature, circuit judge, and justice of the Alabama Supreme Court. He was elected governor at the height of the Depression, and during his administration he worked to untangle the financial chaos inherited with his office.

On Claiborne Street are two fine early-20th century commercial structures, the Matthews Hardware Store (28) and the row of stores constructed by Mrs. Camilla Jones (29). Several other buildings from this period--the Old Movie Theatre (17), Bonner Building (18), and Alford Building (10)--also remain as reminders of the commercial activity of this Black Belt county seat during its more prosperous years.

Today Camden continues to serve as the commercial and political center for the county, as evidenced by the recent structures built within and around the district.

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- Sisk, Glenn Nolen. "Some Population and Agricultural Trends In the Alabama Black
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- Stewart, John Craig. The Governors of Alabama. Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing
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Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of Claiborne and Water streets, proceed in a southwesterly direction along the northwest boundary of Claiborne approximately 83 feet; thence in a southeasterly direction approximately 155 feet to the rear property line of the Camilla Jones Stores (29); thence in a southwesterly direction along the rear property lines of the buildings facing Claiborne approximately 365 feet; thence in a northwesterly direction approximately 103 feet to the southeast boundary of Claiborne; thence in a northeasterly direction along said street approximately 55 feet; thence in a northwesterly direction across Claiborne approximately 123 feet to the northwest corner of the Camden National Bank Annex (26) property; thence in a northeasterly direction approximately 28 feet; thence in a northwesterly direction along the rear property lines of the buildings facing Broad Street approximately 480 feet; thence in a northeasterly direction approximately 95 feet to the southwest boundary of Broad; thence in a southeasterly direction along said boundary approximately 50 feet; thence in a northeasterly direction across Broad Street approximately 140 feet to the northeast corner of the Library (16) lot; thence in a southeasterly direction approximately 150 feet to the southeast boundary of Planters Street; thence in a northeasterly direction along said boundary approximately 145 feet to the southwest corner of the intersection of Planters and Water streets; thence in a southeasterly direction along Water Street approximately 50 feet; thence in a northeasterly direction approximately 145 feet to the rear of the Old Jail (2) property; thence in a southeasterly direction approximately 60 feet to the southeast corner of the jail property; thence in a southwesterly direction approximately 145 feet to the southwest boundary of Water Street; thence approximately 245 feet along the southwest boundary of Water Street to the point of beginning.

Proposed boundaries for Camden Historic District

