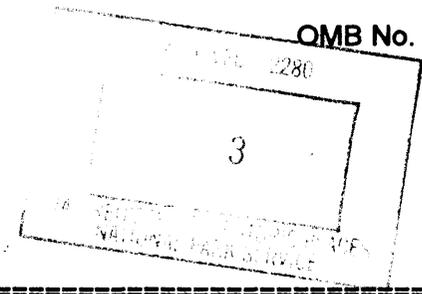


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Washington County Courthouse

other names/site number St. Stephens Masonic Lodge

2. Location

street & number Co. Rd. 34, 255' SE of junction of Co. Rd. 34 & Old St. Stephens Rd. not for publication N/A
city or town St. Stephens vicinity N/A
state Alabama code AL county Washington code 129 zip code 36569

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 5/30/97
Signature of certifying official Date

Alabama Historical Commission (State Historic Preservation Office)
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register
 - removed from the National Register
 - other (explain): _____

[Signature] 7-3-97
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

USDINPS Registration Form

Property Name Washington County Courthouse
County and State Washington County, Alabama

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check only one box.)

Category of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of related multiple property listing
(Enter "NA" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>Courthouse</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>Masonic Lodge</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Social</u>	Sub: <u>Masonic Lodge</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: free-standing gable front

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block

roof metal

walls wood

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition on continuation sheet/s.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government _____

Social History _____

Period of Significance 1853-1947 _____

Significant Dates 1853 1910 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A _____

Architect/Builder Wilson, Levin Jefferson, builder _____

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # AL 111 by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other state agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository _____

USD/NPS Registration Form

Property Name Washington County Courthouse

County and State Washington County, Alabama

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Zone Easting	Zone Easting	Zone Easting
	16	399880	3489740	3
1				
2				

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally Moore and Trina Binkley, Alabama Historical Commission Reviewer

organization Alabama Historical Commission date February 12, 1997

street & number 468 South Perry Street telephone 334-242-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama zip code 36130-0900

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name St. Stephens Masonic Lodge #81

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town St. Stephens state Alabama zip code 36569

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National Park Service

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Section 7 Page 1 Washington County Courthouse
Washington County, Alabama

7. DESCRIPTION

The Washington County Courthouse is a two-story, frame, free-standing gable-front building located in the rural community of St. Stephens, the seat of Washington County from 1854-1907. The building features a rectangular plan, horizontal weatherboard, a standing seam metal roof, and a full-width two-tiered recessed porch. Dating from 1853-4 and forming the nucleus of the unincorporated town, the courthouse fronts in a southwesterly direction on a one-acre lot facing County Road 34, the town's main thoroughfare, approximately 255 feet southeast of its junction with the Old St. Stephens Road. St. Stephens is located in the southwestern part of the state, in the northeastern section of Washington County at the juncture of county roads 28 and 34, and approximately 3 miles from the western bank of the Tombigbee River. The county is located within the Lower Coastal Plain region and maintains an agricultural economy primarily dependent upon the timber industry.

The site features a flat, partially wooded lot, measuring roughly 128' at the street by 404' at its deepest point. The building is situated in the approximate center of the lot, allowing for a front parking area which is covered in asphalt and runs across the full width of the lot. Surrounding the building is a roughly-landscaped grass-covered lawn that is void of a curb or walkway. On the eastern side of the lawn is a large sycamore tree. Recent landscaping includes sparse foundation plantings on the main facade. A slender tree is located adjacent to the rear facade, and the rear (northeastern) portion of the lot is wooded.

Centrally located on the lot, the frame building rests on a foundation of concrete blocks and wooden sills. The gable-front facade features three-bays, with a two-tiered recessed porch supported by four slender square piers. Square block-type elements crown the piers on the second floor and support a simple cornice. Narrow trim ornaments the gable end, and a Masonic emblem in the apex of the gable denotes the current and historic function of the building. Exterior double reverse open-stringer stairs at either end of the porch provide access to the second floor, and horizontal weatherboard panels cover the lower portions of the stair landings on the front facade only. The two square piers at each end of the lower level extend from the stair landing to the second floor, rather than from the first floor. Simple rectangular boards form the stair and porch balusters and rails. Entrance on both the first and second floors is through slender four-panel double doors, surmounted by a three-lite transom and symmetrically located in the center bay. Symmetrically arranged openings are located at each level of the flanking bays. Those on the western side of the facade contain original 6/6 windows. The lower opening of the eastern bay contains a single-leaf four-panel door and 3-lite transom (apparently original), while the upper opening has been converted from a window to a door opening and is currently boarded over.

The northwestern and southeastern elevations are similar and contain horizontal weatherboard, the simple cornice, and the seamed metal roof over exposed eaves. Other elements on these facades, from front to rear, include the end piers of the porch, railings on the second floor of the porch and the stair landing, vertical framing supporting the stair landings, a course of five 6/6 symmetrically arranged windows at each level, a vertical break toward the rear facade denoting an addition to the structure, and a sixth 6/6 window at each level of the rear addition. The lower window on the southeast facade of the rear addition has been covered with plywood. The rear, or northeastern, elevation contains four symmetrically arranged window openings, three of which contain 6/6 lites and one which is currently covered with plywood. A single-leaf four-panel door and 3-lite transom is located slightly off-center to the west, indicating the location of an interior wall. Weatherboarding covers the remaining area of rear facade, with no cornice or end returns on the rear gable.

On the interior, the building features a simple rectangular plan, constructed to house county offices on the first floor and the courtroom and masonic hall above. The lower floor contains two principal rooms, formed by an interior wall running the length of the building, with two storage rooms in the rear addition. Entrance through the main NPS

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Washington County, Alabama

doorway provides access to the western section, made possible by an angling of the bisecting wall toward the south at the southeast end (main entrance) of the room. Access to the eastern section is through the exterior single-leaf door on the eastern bay of the front facade and through an additional interior opening located just beyond the mid-point of the interior wall. Each of these rooms is one-and-a-half bays wide and five bays deep and contains the five original window openings on each side wall. They are currently used as dining (western section) and kitchen (eastern section) facilities. The two rear storage rooms are contained in the rear addition and form a slightly off-center (to the west) hallway. Each of these rooms contains a doorway opening to the hallway and side and rear windows that are either added or relocated. Notable interior elements on the ground floor include the original flooring, beaded ceiling boards, wall covering featuring horizontal beaded boards above vertical beaded wainscoting, a molded baseboard and chair rail, and a molded entrance door surround. Exposed wiring indicates the addition of electricity, with lighting being supplied by naked bulbs.

The second floor features a large principal space originally used jointly as a courtroom and masonic hall. Two small rooms at the southwestern end (front) of the building provided a vestibule area opening off the second-floor entrance (two bays wide and one bay deep) and a small jury room (one bay wide and one bay deep). An interior doorway joins the vestibule and jury room, and one original window on the side wall in each of these rooms provides illumination and ventilation. Additional two-panel interior doors lead from these two front rooms into the courtroom/masonic hall area. The main second floor area is located just beyond these two front rooms and is three bays wide and five bays deep, featuring the two interior doors on the front wall, four original windows and one added or relocated window on each of the side walls, and two added or relocated windows on the rear. A change in the width of the floor boards denotes the rear addition. As on the first floor, beaded ceiling, horizontal wall covering, and wainscoting were used. Likewise, the same molded base board, chair rail, and door surrounds appear. Lighting is provided by six simple globe-type fixtures, three each on two side axes, and two ceiling fans on a center axis provide ventilation. Notable interior furnishings include the judicial bench (now the Worshipful Master's Station) and a number of original chairs, as well as several Masonic items including the altar (center ceremonial table), the "Brazen Pillars," and the Senior Warden's Station (podium at southwestern end of room). The wall hanging behind the Worshipful Master's Station is a Masonic chart used for instructing members. The Masonic star is painted on the center of the floor, indicating the affiliation of the Order of the Eastern Star, a Masonic women's auxiliary, with the lodge (this group was active until around 1910 and again in the 1980s for a brief period).

Since its construction, the building has remained close to its original form, though several alterations have occurred. Site inspection, local historians, and historic photographs have been used to document these changes. The notable alterations include two major changes in the porch, an addition on the rear, the application of beaded wall and ceiling covering on the interior, and the construction of a new foundation and roof. The earliest of these might have been the rear addition, as the windows in the added element appear to date from the mid-19th century and are too numerous for all to have been relocated from the original rear facade. Local historians believe that the addition was made very early, certainly prior to 1910, when the Masons acquired the structure. Around the turn of the century, when technology made the materials available, the beaded wall and ceiling covering was added to the interior. Again local historians believe this alteration to have occurred before Masonic ownership of the property. Masonic records give no evidence of structural changes to the building during this period.

A HABS photograph dating from 1934 reveals that the porch maintained its original form into the 20th century but had been significantly altered by the time a 1978 photograph was made. According to local historians, the porch achieved its current design in 1985, in an attempt to restore it to its original appearance. In the HABS photo, the porch displayed the two-tiered recessed form with the double reverse stairs. However, the columns were slender hexagonal posts and the balusters appear to have been slender posts. The panels below the stair landing were

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Section 7 Page 3 Washington County Courthouse
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made of vertical flush board and extended below the landings on both the front and side elevations. As depicted in a 1978 photo, the porch floor was removed around 1948, and the two-tiered form was replaced with a full-height version featuring slender posts made from tree trunks which tapered gradually upward. A straight stair extended from the western side of the front facade to a landing on the second-floor entrance in the eastern bay of the same facade (the window having been converted to a door). A large Masonic emblem appeared in the facade gable of the HABS photo and again in the 1978 photo, but in the current renovation a smaller emblem enclosed in a circle has been used.

Alterations to the foundation and roof occurred in 1954. In the HABS photo, the foundation appears to have been brick, where currently it is concrete block. A standing seam metal roof has replaced an earlier deteriorated standing seam metal roof. Electricity became available to the community around 1938-9, as part of a New Deal Rural Electrification Administration program, and the building was plumbed during the late 1950s, when a toilet was located in the jury room and a sink installed in the kitchen. Heat is provided by space heaters and air conditioning by one window unit on the second floor.

Today the Washington County Court House is one of only two buildings documented from St. Stephens' early history. The St. Stephens Methodist Church, located between the junction of County Road 34 and the Old St. Stephens Road, was constructed in 1857 by Levin Jefferson Wilson, who is also credited with the courthouse building. A building known historically as the Turner Hotel, located across County Road 34 from the courthouse, possibly contains a core dating from the 1830s. With the exception of a few late-19th century residential buildings, the remaining buildings primarily date from the mid-20th century. Since the time of its construction, the courthouse has been the focal point of the community. It continues to be used as a Masonic meeting hall, with meetings held every two weeks and social functions held at least twice per year. Plans for future alterations include only routine maintenance, with repair of the roof being the most immediate need.

Archaeological Component

Although no formal archaeological survey has been made of the Washington County Courthouse, the potential for subsurface remains may be good. Buried portions may contain information that may be useful in interpreting the site.

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Washington County, Alabama

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Washington County Courthouse is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of politics/government. Constructed as the seventh seat of government for Alabama's earliest county, the building served as a principal governmental and political facility for the county from its completion in 1854 until the relocation of the county seat to Chatom in 1907. Furthermore, of the county's eight seats of government, it remains as the earliest extant courthouse, with the 1964 Chatom courthouse being the only other in existence.

The building is also eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A in the area of social history. It is believed to have served as the meeting hall for the St. Stephens Masonic Lodge #81 from the time of its organization in 1854 to the present.¹ As one of the earliest lodges in the state which has remained in current use, it has served the community and county as a primary social facility, and it stands today as a structural reminder of the impact of the masonic fraternal order on rural Alabama. It is also unique in depicting a dual function of courthouse/masonic lodge which is documented in only one other extant building, the Monroe County Courthouse which was constructed in 1824 at Monroeville and relocated in 1884 at Perdue Hill.²

The period of significance extends from 1853, when construction of the courthouse began, until 1947, which is fifty years previous to the preparation of this nomination. This period is derived from the years during which St. Stephens was the seventh seat of county government (1848-1907) and during which the building served as the meeting place of the St. Stephens Masonic Lodge #81 (1854-present). In 1910, the Masons acquired ownership of the property and have maintained it to the present.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

During the Colonial period, the area in which Washington County now lies was claimed by Spain as part of Florida (1519-1700), by France as part of Louisiana (1700-1763), by England (1763-1783), and again by Spain (1783-1795). Following the American Revolution, the area was disputed among Spain, the United States, the State of Georgia, and native Indian populations. Under the Treaty of San Lorenzo, in 1795, Spain withdrew to the 31st parallel, and, in 1798, the U.S. Congress created the Mississippi Territory, with Natchez as its capital. By 1802, Georgia gave up its claims to lands in present-day Mississippi and Alabama, and the Choctaw treaties of 1802 and 1806 began the relinquishment of Indian claims. Two areas of early settlement existed in the new territory, Natchez on the Mississippi River and the Tombigbee settlements at the junction of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers. The territory, thus, was divided into the Natchez District, west of the Pearl River, and the Tombigbee District, east of the Pearl River.³

Washington County, in the Tombigbee District, was created June 4, 1800, by proclamation of Governor Winthrop

¹Jacqueline Anderson Matte, The History of Washington County: First County in Alabama (Chatom, Alabama: The Washington County Historical Society) I:63; and Theodore Pearson, telephone interview 1/29/97.

²Agee Braughton, Perdue Hill Foundation, telephone interview 1/15/97.

³Matte, I: xv-xvi.

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Sargent of the Mississippi Territory. In 1817, it became a part of the Alabama Territory and thence the State of Alabama when statehood was achieved in 1819. It is the oldest county in what is now Alabama, its original boundaries extending from the Chattahoochee River on the east to the Pearl River on the west and latitude 32 degrees 28 minutes on the north to 31 degrees on the south. From this area, 16 counties in Mississippi and 29 in Alabama have been wholly or partially formed. Its present area dates from 1847, when the last portion was removed to form Choctaw County on the north. By 1803, the first county court was convened at McIntosh Bluff, which was located in the vicinity of the American-built Fort Stoddert, on the Tombigbee River just above its confluence with the Alabama River, about two miles east of the present-day town of McIntosh in the southeastern section of the county. Today only a few foundation blocks remain on the site.⁴

Later locations of the county seat included Wakefield in 1804, a site selected by Territorial Judge Harry Toulmin and located near present-day Sunflower, about eight miles north of McIntosh Bluff. Following the redrawing of county boundaries in 1809, Wakefield became a part of Baldwin County, and the Washington seat of justice was moved to Franklin in 1810. The site of Wakefield today is heavily forested. Franklin was one of three settlements which had developed around the Spanish Fort San Estaban, located at what was then the head of navigation of the Tombigbee River. Franklin, together with Rodney and Carrollton, originated as settlements of Americans who wanted the protection of the fort but did not want to live in the Spanish-controlled area. In 1811, a year after the removal of the county seat to Franklin, the three settlements were incorporated into the town of St. Stephens, which took the Americanized name of the Spanish fort. Thus, St. Stephens became the fourth county seat, though it did not receive official designation until a "courthouse" act was passed December 23, 1815. St. Stephens today is referred to as "old" St. Stephens, as it is located approximately two miles north of the present town site.⁵

"Old" St. Stephens emerged as a center for political and commercial activity in the newly created Alabama Territory. By 1818 it had a population of 1,500 and boasted the location of the Territorial Legislature, a federal land office, the Washington Academy (the state's first chartered school), an Indian trading factory, the Tombeckbee Bank, a steamboat company, numerous merchants, and several physicians. It also became the location of one of the state's earliest masonic lodges, when, possibly as early as 1811, the Friendship Lodge #65 was chartered by the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. This charter was revoked in 1816. A second lodge (number unknown), possibly a reorganization of the first, was issued a dispensation by the Grand Master of North Carolina, April 12, 1821. Delegates were sent to Cahaba to participate in the organization of the Grand Lodge of Alabama on June 11, 1821, and the group thence became St. Stephens Lodge #9. This charter was forfeited in 1834, St. Stephens having suffered a serious decline. This short-lived prosperity resulted from several factors: the production of steamboats that could navigate upriver beyond St. Stephens; the acquisition of Mobile by the United States, making it the port of entry; the removal of the Alabama Territorial capital to Cahaba in 1818; the removal of the federal land office and Indian trading factory; and, finally, the spread of a yellow fever epidemic in 1819 which killed as many as 700 people and caused many others to move away from the river bank. The town was eventually deserted, and today is forested, with only tombstones and foundations remaining.⁶

⁴Matte, I:22; and S.G. Daniels, Theodore B. Pearson and Leon Cox, "National Register Listing Sought," Washington County News, April 24, 1996.

⁵Matte, I:29, 50.

⁶Thomas McAdory Owen, History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography, (Chicago: The S.J. Clark Publishing Company, 1921) II:1224; Matte, I:59; Joseph Abram

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Following the decline of St. Stephens, many of the residents relocated in a settlement situated seven or eight miles north of present-day Millry, in the north-central part of the county. Here, in 1825, they established the town of Washington Courthouse as the new seat of government, which is today an abandoned wilderness. A fire in 1842 destroyed the county records and courthouse, and the county seat was then removed to Barrytown, which at that time was centrally situated in the county. When Choctaw County was formed in 1847, Barrytown was within its boundaries, and the county seat was relocated a seventh time.⁷

The town of "new" St. Stephens, located approximately three miles south of the original St. Stephens town site, was selected in 1848 as the seat of government for Washington County. On November 23, 1853, the State Legislature passed Act No. 243 authorizing construction of the courthouse at "Old Hazard Field", a 10-acre site owned by John B. Hazard. Levin Jefferson Wilson, Walter Woodyard, James K. Blount, James B. Slade, and Daniel Rain were appointed commissioners with authority to let out the building of the courthouse and to receive it when completed. A contract was awarded to Levin Jefferson Wilson (born in Montgomery County, Maryland in 1805 and died in St. Stephens in 1876) in December of 1853. Local historians credit him with the construction of this building, as well as the 1857 St. Stephens Methodist Church. On January 19, 1854, the State Legislature passed Act No. 244, authorizing the commissioners at St. Stephens to pay for the courthouse from county funds.⁸

Shortly after its construction, according to local historians, the St. Stephens Courthouse became the meeting place of a newly created masonic lodge.⁹ In 1854, a group of Masonic Bretheren, presumably former members of the St. Stephens Lodge #9, petitioned the Grand Lodge of Alabama for a charter to form a new lodge. Permission was granted for St. Stephens Lodge #81 in December, 1854. At the first meeting, in January 1855, the lodge was opened by Deputy Grand Master David Rain, of Blanden Springs Lodge #151, who installed the officers of the new lodge. Bro. T. S. Parker served as Installing Marshall. The officers installed were James White, Worshipful Master; James K. Blount, Senior Warden; Thomas S. Parker, Senior Deacon; F.W. Baker, Junior Deacon; and E. H. Gordy, Secretary. Other charter and early members included: T. P. Ashe, W. A. Bailey, T. H. Bailey, R. L. Bowling, F. W. Brunson, John W. Carpenter, J. W. Faith, F. C. Koen, Daniel Rain, Benton C. Rain, J. A. Richardson, and Walter Woodyard.¹⁰

Organization of the St. Stephens Lodge, #81 reflects a pattern of growth of the Masons in Alabama during the mid-19th century. When the Grand Lodge of Alabama was chartered in 1821, there were nine subordinate lodges represented. In 1846, this number had grown to 73, and in 1921 to 565. The organization was formed for the purpose of increasing the intellectual, moral, and physical standards of its members, together with the purpose of providing opportunities for fraternity, charity, and education in the community. The St. Stephens Lodge #81 has met continuously, since 1855, with the exception of the years between June 1861 and August 1865, during the Civil

Jackson, Masonry in Alabama: a Sesquicentennial History, 1821-1971, (Montgomery, Alabama: Brown Printing Company, 1970), 12-17; and Daniels, "National Register."

⁷Matte, I:63, 349.

⁸Matte, I:63; and Simeon G. Daniels, "National Register."

⁹See Note 1.

¹⁰C.V. McLain, Jr., "Marker Dedicated," The Masonic Monthly, May, 1974.

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War. The minutes of the lodge have been maintained since its creation.¹¹

During the Civil War, Washington County furnished a Confederate infantry company, known as Wilson's Guards, in honor of L.J. Wilson, who sponsored the company and presented its officers with engraved swords. The company was recruited in St. Stephens in December 1861 and January-February 1862 and mustered at the Washington County Court House. It fought as Company A of the 32nd Alabama Infantry Regiment, organized in Mobile in April 1862 and later consolidated with the 58th Alabama.¹²

Though St. Stephens never achieved the prosperity of its namesake, by the turn-of-the-century, it did boast being the most prominent town in the county. With a population of around six hundred in 1903, it claimed to have four stores, two churches, two hotels, the Mobile District High School, a physician, drug store, gin, grist mill, county buildings, and three lawyers. But a final relocation of the county seat in 1907 was to bring about a reversal of this prosperity. Today St. Stephens is an unincorporated rural community of around 250 people, with the agriculture, timber, and concrete industries providing the primary economic base. Today, the courthouse at "new" St. Stephens is the earliest extant courthouse remaining from the eight county seats, with the 1964 courthouse at Chatom being the only other in existence. Thus, the St. Stephens courthouse is the only structural evidence of the county's early political history.¹³

¹¹Owen, II:960-965; and Pearson.

¹²Matte, I:78-79.

¹³Matte, I:22-25, 63; and The National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the state of Alabama, Early Courthouses of Alabama Prior to 1860 (Mobile: Jordan Printing Company, 1966) 73-4.

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Section 9 Page 8 Washington County Courthouse
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The National Society of the Colonial Dames in America in the State of Alabama. Early Courthouses of Alabama Prior to 1860. Mobile: Jordan Printing Company, 1966.

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National Park Service**

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10. Geographic Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Washington County Courthouse in St. Stephens, Washington County, Alabama, is located on Parcel 8 on Washington County tax assessor map number 65-10-07-45-0-000.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Washington County Courthouse were chosen to include all land historically associated with the courthouse/masonic lodge.

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Photos Page 10 Washington County Courthouse
Washington County, Alabama

Photographic Log:

Washington County Courthouse
County Road 34
St. Stephens, Washington County, Alabama
Susan Enzweiler, photographer
October, 1996
Location of negatives: AHC

1. Facade, camera facing NW.
2. Facade and northwest elevation, camera facing E.
3. Rear and southeast elevation, camera facing W.
4. Southeast elevation, camera facing NW.
5. Foundation of southeast elevation, camera facing SW.
6. Interior, first floor, western room, camera facing SW.
7. Interior, first floor, eastern room, camera facing NW.
8. Interior, second floor, courtroom, camera facing SW.
9. Interior, second floor, courtroom, camera facing NE.



Historic View

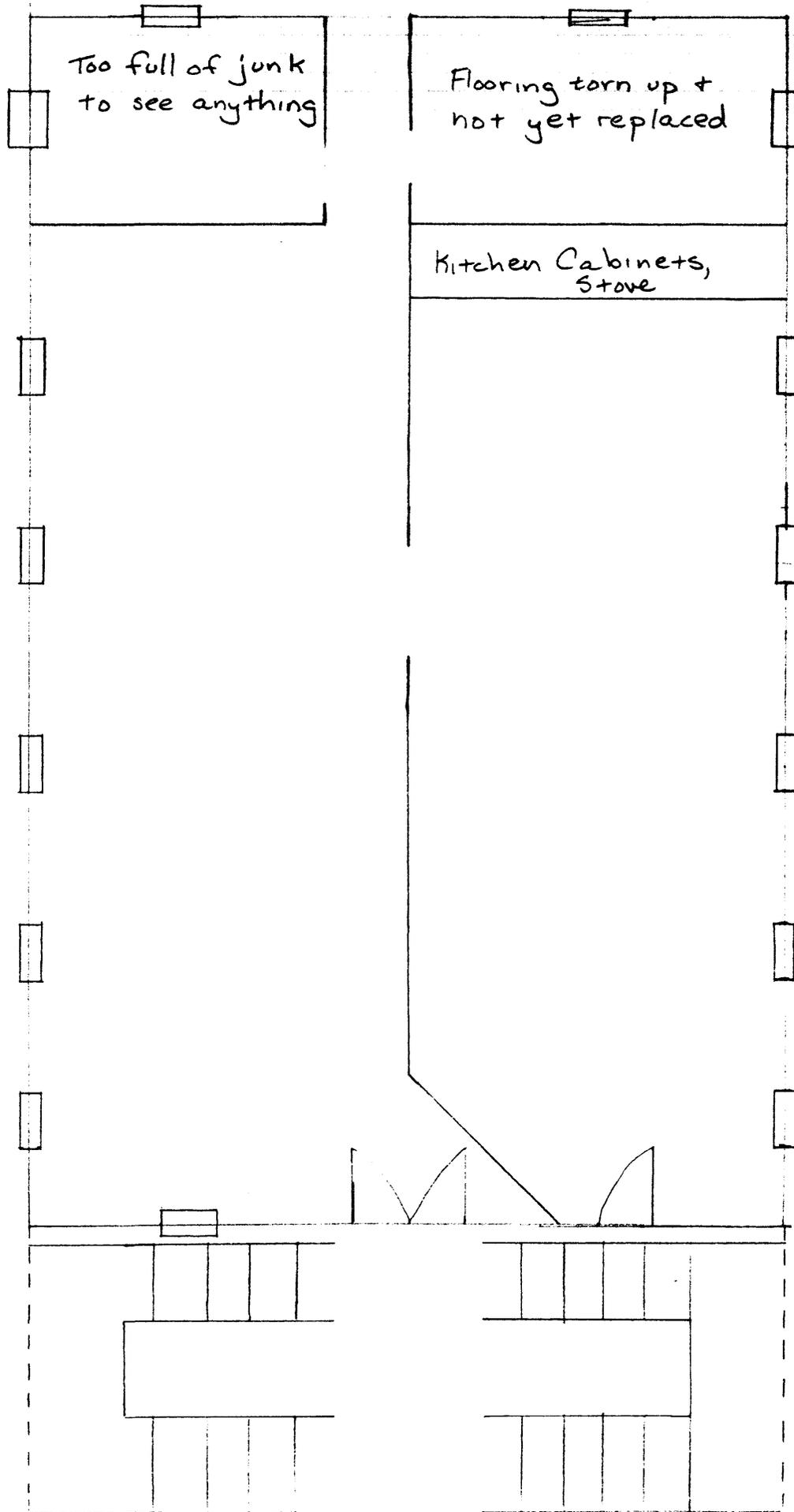
1934 HABS photo by W. N. Manning

Washington Co. Courthouse
St. Stephens, Alabama

Washington County Courthouse, Washington County

First Floor

Oct. 1996



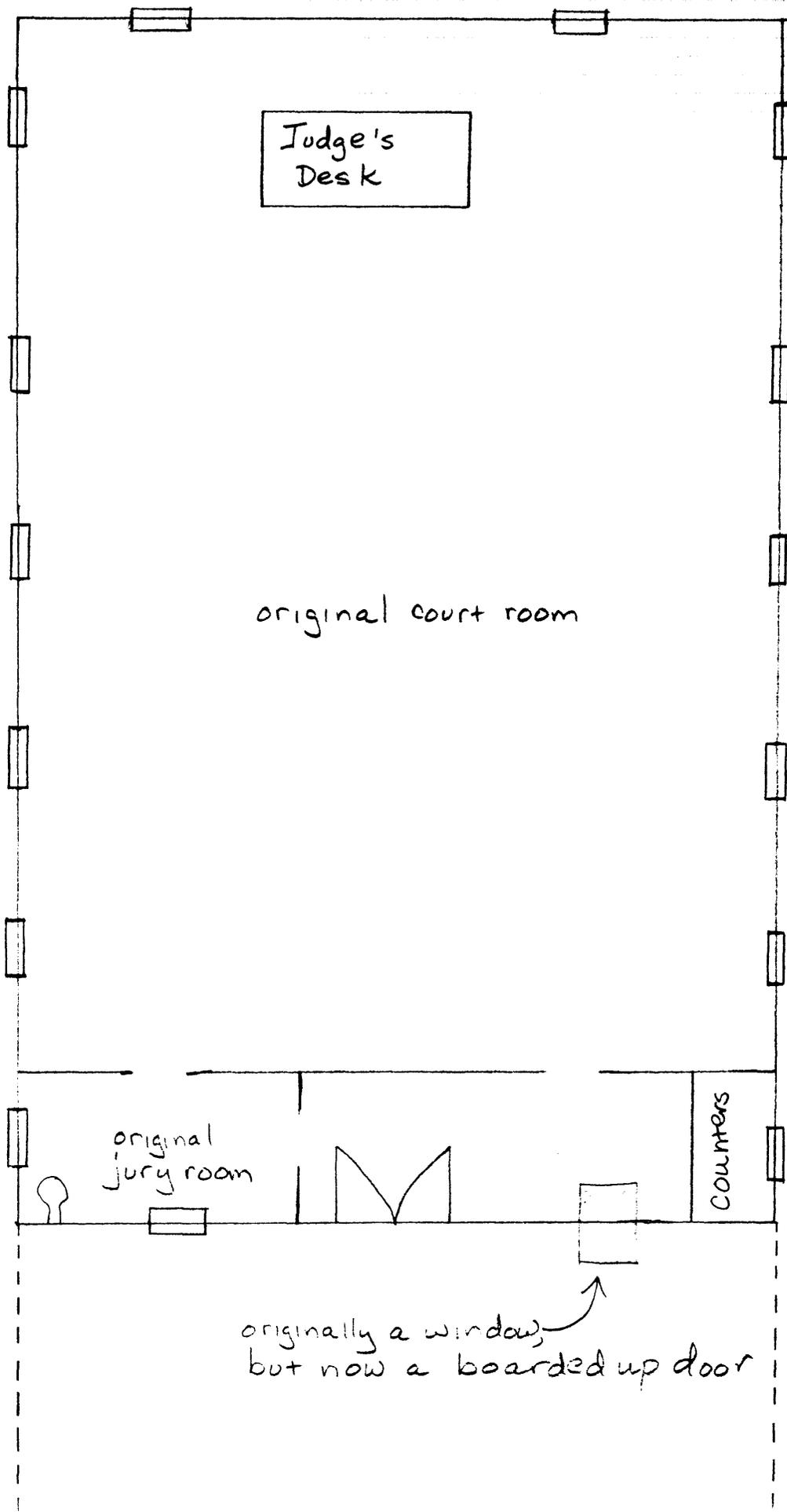
vertical beaded board wainscoting
horizontal " " above "
beaded board ceiling



not to scale

GMS

Washington County Court House, Washington County
Second Floor Oct. 1996



SMU