

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED OCT 25 1977  
DATE ENTERED DEC 9 1977

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

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

**NAME**

HISTORIC Berrien County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Town Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Nashville

VICINITY OF 2nd, Dawson Mathis

STATE Georgia CODE 13 COUNTY Berrien CODE 019

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Berrien County

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Nashville

VICINITY OF

STATE Georgia

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Nashville

STATE Georgia

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 Berrien County Courthouse is a two story brick building articulated by a recessed and projecting facade with decorative brick patterning. Projecting towers flanking each facade of the building; a frontispiece on each facade accented by two additional towers on the east and west sides; and an impressive clock tower define the massing of the building. On the east and west sides, the arched entrance projects between the two frontispiece towers while the second story window area above it appears recessed, since it is flush with the main facade of the building. The north and south facades are also articulated by a projecting frontispiece with a center arched entrance, but are without towers.

The contrasting rhythm of fenestration in the projecting and recessed portions of the building contributes to the building's distinctive and integrated design. On the north and south facades an arched window directly above the arched entrance, repeats its form, while on the east and west facades, the second story of the frontispiece, above the arched entrance contains three squareheaded windows. Each story of the four side towers contains one squareheaded window. Thus the sequence of fenestration can be read as follows: the first story of the east and west facades contains an arched entrance, flanked by three square windows, in turn flanked by a square window of the side towers. The second story of the east and west facades contains three squareheaded windows, above the arched entrance, flanked by three arched windows, in turn flanked by the square tower windows. The first story of the north and south facades contains the arched entrance flanked by one square-headed window in turn flanked by the square tower windows. On the second story is the single arched window above the center entrance, flanked by a single arched window, in turn flanked by square tower windows.

Each of the side towers are capped by a pyramidal roof with small <sup>spires</sup> ~~spires~~ while the towers of the east and west frontispieces culminate in smaller pyramidal forms with larger spires. They are accented by two mouldings that have been painted white. The lower moulding, accenting the tower, also is a continuation of the white cornice of the building. The spires of the central towers lead to the imposing clock tower; composed of an open platform, upon whose columns rest an ~~hexagonal~~ <sup>octagonal</sup> clock tower surmounted by a ~~hexagonal~~ <sup>octagonal</sup> dome, which in turn is capped by a lantern shaped structure with a pyramidal roof housing the clock works. The five sides of the clock base are articulated by panels while a pediment on the ~~hexagonal~~ dome defines the area above the clock face. The frontispiece of the north and south facades culminate in double chimneys, whose base is also accented by a white moulding, repeating the line of the white cornice. There are a total of eight chimneys.

The Courthouse is distinguished by fine detailing. The elevation is accented by string courses and a frieze of patterned brick extending above the second story windows to the cornice. The brick pattern on the towers is a series of projecting horizontal lines, above which is a panel of recessed brick with a projecting diamond pattern. Between the towers, a vertical brick pattern, is evident between two projecting horizontal brick lines.

The lowest horizontal brick line continues the string course line which crosses above the two second story windows. The arches of these second story windows are accented by a projecting, arched brick line which intersects with this string course at the window's transom line. The string course is carried across to the side towers where it intersects with the top of the brick pattern above the tower's square windows.

(continued)

# 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 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

1898

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

W. CHAMBERLAIN

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Berrien County Courthouse was designed by W. Chamberlain Company of Knoxville, Tennessee in 1898 at the cost of \$17,000. The land on which it stands was purchased from Daniel Griner's farmlands in 1856. The first courthouse was a two story log building costing \$2,600. It was located on the same site and was erected in March 1858. The rustic structure was used for 39 years before it was moved across the street for use as a hotel.

The new Courthouse is notable in that it is a brick, fireproof building with iron support beams, steel ceilings, doors and window frames, and cement floors. Beneath the architect's drawing, published in the SOUTH GEORGIA, Vol. 1, Number 1, August 3, 1899 was the caption "Designs drawn by W. Chamberlain, of Knoxville, Tennessee. Built by Hager and Winston. Price bid of \$15,918 with extras put in building running it up to \$17,000. Almost no wood in it, no exposed wood at all. Is as nearly fireproof as a building can be . . ."

The description of the materials used to construct the fireproof building is as follows: "There are 535,000 bricks, 85,000 of which came from Macon, the others were made here. 600 barrels of lime, 400 barrels hydraulic cement and a small mountain of sand. The tower rests on three beams weighing more than 6000 pounds each, every beam is of iron, no wood supports at all. All the ceiling is of steel and every door either solid steel or covered with it. The doors and window frames are also covered with steel. The floor of the upper story is of wood but is laid upon ten inches of cement and the roof of the building is covered with slate. The clock in the tower is a superb piece of machinery costing \$367.50 and its weights weigh over 600 lbs each. The bell of the clock weighs 500 lbs. and can be heard for many miles. . ."

The 535,000 bricks that were used were shipped from Macon by railroad and tram road with 85,000 bricks being transported the last few miles by wagon trams from the road to the location. The Berrien County Courthouse was thus the only brick building built in Nashville and possibly the County before 1901. In addition, in 1898, the use of fireproof construction in a small Georgia town was progressive. Further, it is clear from the architectural description, that the fine workmanship of this building created a rather elegant building whose aesthetic integrity is representative of late nineteenth century architectural design at its best. It now stands in the middle of the town square, both as a visual anchor, and as a reminder of the County's past, which the Courthouse also symbolizes.

Berrien County was created by an act of the legislature on February 25, 1856, from Irwin, Lowndes, and Coffee Counties, and was named for John McPherson Berrien, judge of the eastern Circuit, U.S. Senator and U.S. Attorney General.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,7</u>	<u>28,5</u>	<u>3,6</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,4</u>	<u>5,4</u>	<u>5,8</u>	<u>0</u>	B								
	ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING					ZONE	EASTING			NORTHING			
C									D								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The courthouse is bounded by Marion Avenue on the north, Washington Avenue on the south, East Avenue on the east, and West Avenue on the West.

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 Mara Gelbloom, Architectural Historian  
Sue Browning (Chamber of Commerce, Nashville)

ORGANIZATION Historic Preservation Section, Dept. of Natural Resources DATE July 13, 1977

STREET & NUMBER 270 Washington Street, S.W. Room 701 TELEPHONE 404-656-2840

CITY OR TOWN Atlanta STATE Georgia

## 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 Elizabeth A. Lyon  
TITLE Acting Chief, Historic Preservation Section DATE Oct. 7, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
ATTEST: <u>Charles [Signature]</u>	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
DATE <u>12/9/77</u>	DATE <u>12-7-77</u>

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CONTINUATION SHEET    Description    ITEM NUMBER    7    PAGE    2

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A second string course continues the line of the marble window sills. A third string course begins on either side of the arched entrance of the frontispiece and runs through the transom line of the first story square headed windows, accented by a window cap of stepped brick pattern. It continues onto the towers, intersecting the top of the segmental brick pattern above the first story square headed windows. The string courses follow the same pattern on the four facades.

In addition to the very fine brick patterning of this building, a great deal of pressed metal was used for detailing, much of which, still exists. All fenestration is provided with transoms and some of these are still filled with a flower pattern of pressed metal. The interior exhibits extensive areas of pressed metal on the ceilings and wainscoting. The cornice and exterior mouldings are also metal, as is the roof of the clock tower.

A small two story addition was constructed to the rear of the building c.1900 and is in harmony with the original Courthouse. The rear entrance exhibits an addition of a wooden overhang supported by four slender columns. Two windows to the right of the entrance, each on the first and second stories, and two to the left of the main entrance, on both stories, have been bricked over. A drop ceiling has been installed in the main court room. Except for these few alterations the Berrien County Courthouse maintains its architectural integrity as a fine example of late nineteenth century architectural design, but is endangered by deterioration.

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CONTINUATION SHEET    Significance    ITEM NUMBER 8    PAGE 2

Nashville, the county seat, was selected for its site in 1856, when the County of Berrien was formed. It was established as a community in 1890 and incorporated in 1910. Nashville served as a stagecoach stop until its selection as the county seat. The town, Nashville, was named for General Francis Nash, a distinguished Revolutionary soldier.

The courthouse records date back to 1856. They record the first marriage, first last will and testament probated and the first jury cases of Berrien County. Books whose pages were cut out by Confederate Soldiers, with knife or sword, in order to get paper during the War Between the States, are also found in the Courthouse records.

The square upon which the present Courthouse stands is now the middle of Nashville's business district, and has for nearly eighty years, served as the hub of major activities taking place in Nashville and in Berrien County. Many great Southern politicians made their speeches to people of Berrien and surrounding Counties from this square. The Courthouse square also was a place for entertainment and amusement: the bandstand which was located on the courthouse square served as a place for families and friends to assemble for great band concerts. Tobacco harvest drawings, medicine shows, and street dances were held at the square where peanut machines and snowball stands could be found. The Courthouse itself served as a place for old time gospel preaching and singing and fiddler conventions.

Thus Berrien County Courthouse is not only significant as an extremely fine late nineteenth century building and in terms of its documentary history, but it also derives its significance from the role it played in the life and culture of Southern Georgia and in the meaning that it now has to the people of the county.

The present County Commissioners, under the leadership of Commission Chairman Hughes, is seeking ways to preserve this valuable county resource.

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CONTINUATION SHEET    Photographs    ITEM NUMBER    PAGE

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Berrien County Courthouse, Nashville, Berrien County  
Photographs by: David J. Kaminsky  
Date: March 25, 1977  
Negatives filed at: Department of Natural Resources

1. South facade.
2. Northeast facade.
3. Interior, first floor hall, looking west from center of building.
4. Interior, west stairway to second floor, looking southwest.
5. Interior, second floor, looking north.
6. Interior, mantle in County Commissioner's office, looking northwest.
7. Interior, second floor coatroom, looking northwest.
8. Interior, second floor by west stairwell, looking south.