

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

JUL 23 2008

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Jackson County Courthouse and Jail (Additional Documentation) B1

other names/site number Jackson County Courthouse

### 2. Location

street & number 101 North Main [N/A] not for publication

city or town Altus [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Jackson code 065 zip code 73521

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official/Title

State Historic Preservation Office

July 21, 2008  
Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society  
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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ other, explain  
☐ See continuation sheet.

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 9.4.08

Jackson County Courthouse and Jail  
Name of Property

Jackson County, Oklahoma  
County/State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

0 1 buildings

0 1 sites

0 0 structures

1 3 objects

1 5 Total

### Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

County Courthouses of Oklahoma TR

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

1

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: courthouse  
GOVERNMENT: correctional facility

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: courthouse  
Vacant/Not In Use

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite  
walls STONE:  
  
roof ASPHALT  
other

## Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Jackson County Courthouse and Jail  
Name of Property

Jackson County, Oklahoma  
County/State

## 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.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or 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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(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

# \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

### Periods of Significance

1910-1958

### Significant Dates

1911

1924-1925

1938

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

C.E. Hair and Company, architect

Rowles and Bailey, contractor

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Oklahoma Historical Society

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jackson County Courthouse and Jail  
Name of Property

Jackson County, Oklahoma  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 2 Acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 14 469365 3832800 (NAD27)  
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing [N/A] 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 Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for the Western Trails Historical Society

organization Architectural Resources & Community Heritage Consulting date November 2007

street & number 346 County Road 1230 telephone 405-459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Jackson County, c/o Jackson County Commissioners

street & number 101 North Main telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Altus state OK zip code 73521

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

---

**DESCRIPTION**

**Summary:**

The Jackson County Courthouse is a three-story, stone, Classical Revival style building that was constructed in 1910-1911 in the center of the public square. The square was an original element in Altus' turn-of-the-century townsite plat. Directly to the west of the courthouse, but not attached to it, is the two-story, stone, Classical Revival style Jackson County Jail that was erected in 1924-1925. The buildings jointly functioned for decades as the seat of county government for Jackson County, Oklahoma. Due to a lack of integrity caused by a late 1960s renovation, the jail is considered a noncontributing building for the purposes of this nomination. However, the significant historic association between the buildings remains noteworthy and the buildings must be considered collectively.

Also located on the courthouse square are four objects, one contributing and three noncontributing, and one noncontributing site. To the direct north of the courthouse is a small, noncontributing well. The well predates the founding of the town and was used for decades afterwards. The well was modified in the late 1980s with a brick surround, brick base and granite top. A wooden frame with a rope pulley was then placed around the well apparently to simulate the original system. Due to these changes, the well lacks integrity and is considered a noncontributing resource. To the south of the front walk to the courthouse is the contributing, 1932, Confederate memorial erected by ladies of the local United Daughters of the Confederacy chapter. The granite memorial, described as a "shaft" in 1932, has not been modified. To the north of the shaft, and directly in front of the main entry, is a landscaped area, the noncontributing site, which also contains a large cowboy statue entitled "Crossing the Red." The landscape to the front of the courthouse has become more elaborate in the last few decades, including not only the large, raised statue but also multiple plant beds with low stone walls and a front brick sidewalk which gives way to two shrub-lined concrete walks leading to the courthouse. The sophisticated landscape design is not historic and, as such, is considered noncontributing. Readily recognized as an object of art, the prominent cowboy statue that is the centerpiece of the landscaped area is considered a separate, noncontributing object. Dedicated in 1991 as part of the Altus centennial, the bronze statue on a large rock base is noncontributing due to insufficient age. On the southeast corner of the courthouse square, there is a noncontributing, stone and concrete, welcome sign which likely dates to around Altus' centennial as well. Due to the appreciably smaller scales and intents, none of the noncontributing resources on the courthouse square interfere with the ability of the property convey its historic and architectural significance.

Prior to construction of the courthouse in 1910-1911, the public square was a meeting place for the people of Altus and Jackson County. The block was planted with rows of trees and many traded horses at the site, with water available for people and stock from the previously mentioned well. Some of the trees were removed when the courthouse was erected in the center of the block; however, for more than four decades, the block remained nicely landscaped with an abundance of trees. Diagonal parking was provided around the perimeter of the block but nothing on the square itself. In the mid-1950s, with Altus booming in response to the growth of the nearby Altus Air Force Base, the courthouse square was modified to provide parking on the square. Notably, this occurred within the proposed period of significance for the property, 1910-1958.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

---

While there are various landscape beds and a scattering of trees remaining, the square is now taken up largely by black-topped parking lots on the both the north and south sides of the county buildings. On the east side of the square, there is a center landscaped area between the parking lots to emphasis the façade of the courthouse. In addition to several, low, stone flower beds, the area is highlighted with a modern brick sidewalk, two historic-looking black metal lights, the centennial cowboy statue, a row of bushes and two trees marking the corners of the building. The carefully executed landscape design in this area is not historic and therefore is considered a noncontributing site within the property. The site, however, does not destroy the ability of the courthouse to convey its significance.

The Jackson County Courthouse and Jail are the only buildings on the courthouse square. Although not readily visible due to nonhistoric obstructions, the courthouse and jail are not connected. For many years, there was a concrete bridge between the upper levels of the buildings, extending from the roof of the jail to the second floor rear windows of the courthouse, which facilitated the movement of prisoners from the jail to the courtroom without outside interference. The bridge was removed probably in the late 1960s when the jail underwent extensive renovation that also included removal of the original brick chimney in the center of the jail roof.

Over the course of its ninety-six year history, the Jackson County Courthouse has undergone some modifications. The most notable change to the building occurred in 1938 when the dome was removed from the building. Although the original intent of the Works Progress Administration project included repairing and repainting the dome, it was determined necessary to take it down due to deterioration of the dome materials that caused leaks and damaged the interior ceiling and floors. Nonhistoric changes to the building include the modification to the doors and windows. The windows were originally one-over-one, wood, double hung with wooden transoms. The windows are now metal, one-over-one, fixed and topped by a metal-framed, opaque transom or metal louvers. The doors historically were wood, glazed, paneled. Now, except for the boarded rear doors, the doors are uniformly, aluminum, glazed, slab. The interior of the building was also renovated in the late 1970s to not only modernize the appearance but also allow to for the construction of an elevator, resulting in a reconfiguration of interior space and the loss of much historic interior fabric. Despite these changes, the building maintains a good degree of historic integrity, including the characteristics of location, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

The jail has not fared as well as the courthouse. In the late 1960s, a major expansion project resulted in a sizeable, one-and-one-half story, flat-roofed, concrete addition on the north side of the historic two-story jail. Additionally, the original front porch of the jail was obscured with a cinder block screen. A matching screen was placed off the front portion of the south elevation. Many of the windows, as well as the doors, were also modernized. In more recent years, a metal staircase and a large, metal, flat-roofed carport were built on the south side of the jail. Mechanical equipment with a chain link enclosure was also placed off the south side of the jail and courthouse. A wooden fence was built to block access to the space between the courthouse and jail in the early 1990s. Due to the cumulative effect of the changes, the jail is considered a noncontributing resource.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

---

**DESCRIPTION OF THE JACKSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE:**

The Jackson County Courthouse is a three-story, Bedford limestone, Classical Revival style building with a flat, asphalt-covered roof and a granite foundation. The building was designed by the Oklahoma City architectural firm of C.E. Hair and Company and constructed in 1910-1911. Notably, this was the first county courthouse in Oklahoma designed by the firm but not the last. The firm of C.E. Hair and Company also designed the Choctaw and Osage county courthouses in the years immediately after completion of the Jackson County Courthouse. In affiliation with the successor firm of Hair, Tonini and Bramblett, the Okmulgee and Payne county courthouses were built prior to Hair's retirement from architectural practice in 1917. All five buildings share a variety of similar characteristics, including classification as being notable examples of the Classical Revival style. However, there is a distinct similarity between the three buildings designed by the firm of C.E. Hair and Company. This includes a rough stone first floor topped by a smooth stone second and third; a two-story, pedimented portico supported with double, Classical columns; and, for the buildings in Jackson and Choctaw counties, a crowning element of a large, distinctive dome. While both the Jackson and Osage county buildings retain their overall historic integrity, the Choctaw County Courthouse was significantly altered in the mid-1960s by a major modernization project which obscured the historic details of the upper two floors.

Directly related to the central location of the Jackson County Courthouse on the block, as well as the block's hub position in downtown Altus, all of the elevations contain entrances, allowing the building to be accessible from all sides. Notably, this does not mean that the hierarchy of the elevations is not clearly defined. The front elevation is clear due to the dominating, classical two-story portico. The rear elevation, although now obscured, has a relatively lower level of prominence with a one-story portico supported by Classical columns. The identical side elevations are subtly highlighted by a closed pediment along the cornice and a unique pattern of windows, doors and decorative treatment in their center bay.

In keeping with the Classical Revival style, the Jackson County Courthouse is visually divided into three horizontal sections. The sections represent the components of the Classical column, including the base and shaft, as well as an ornate entablature. While the elevations are differentiated as noted in the previous paragraph, the horizontal sections of the building on each elevation are the same. The first floor of the building, clad with a rough-cut red granite, clearly serves as the base. Separating the base from the shaft above is a wide, projected, limestone water table which also serves as the continuous sill for the second floor windows. The shaft is formed by the next two floors, which are clad with a smooth, fitted, Bedford limestone that exudes a pinkish cast. Above the second floor windows, there is a corbelled, darker-colored band that encircles the building and serves as the fascia of the entablature. A light-colored, triple banded area above this acts as the frieze which is topped by a projected, metal cornice ornamented with modillions and dentils. Above the cornice is a stone parapet wall that also encircles the building. While not necessary on the façade due to the dominating two-story portico, the cornice on the north and south elevations is ornamented with a closed pediment that includes a medallion incorporated into the bottom horizontal member. On the rear elevation, the cornice features a large medallion without the closed pediment. The various pink shades of the entablature further reinforce the pinkish cast of the limestone below and above.

The majority of doors and windows in the building were modernized, likely in the late 1970s when the

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

---

interior of the building underwent extensive modification. The work was accomplished prior to the building's original listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The historic fenestration pattern, however, remains evident with centrally-located entries on each elevation and a majority of symmetrical paired windows. The exterior doors on the north, east and south elevations are now all nonoriginal, double, aluminum, glazed slab. Only the main doors on the east elevation are topped by a transom. The transom now is filled with aluminum-framed, metal louvers. The rear doors, which are no longer accessible to the public, are still double, wood, glazed, paneled. The glazing on the doors is protected by boards.

The original windows in the building were apparently one-over-one, wood, double hung and topped by rectangular wood transoms. The existing paired windows are now fixed, one-over-one, metal with typical opaque transoms. Some of the transoms have been filled with metal louvers. A handful of windows, primarily on the back elevation, have been infilled. All of the windows have stone sills and wider, stone headers. The sill below the first floor windows is created by the projected, stone, water table that wraps around the building. On all elevations, the paired windows have continuous sills and headers.

Typical of an early twentieth-century public building, the courthouse has a granite cornerstone that wraps around the northeast corner of the building. Set in the rough-faced granite of the foundation, the cornerstone is a polished, square stone inscribed with the names of the county commissioners, architect and contractor on the north side. The east side of the stone is inscribed with Masonic information. As with most public buildings constructed in the first decades of the twentieth century, the ceremonial setting of the stone was accomplished by the local Masonic chapters with the requisite pomp and circumstance in August 1910. The east side of the stone reads "George Ruddle Grand Master/M W Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M./State of Oklahoma/A.D. 1910 A.L. 5910." Between the dates on the bottom line of the inscription is the traditional Masonic symbol of a G set within a quadrilateral formed by a compass over a square. The north side of the Jackson County Courthouse cornerstone reads "County Commissioners/E. C. Ballow/S. L. Boulware/H. P. West/C. E. Hair & CO/Architects/Rowles & Bailey/Contractors."

The front elevation of the Jackson County Courthouse faces onto North Main Street, which also serves as United States Highway 283. The façade is composed of three vertical sections (see photographs 1, 5 and 12). The two flanking sections are identical with two sets of paired windows on each floor. The center bay is highlighted by the two-story, stone portico. The smooth, limestone portico is set on the rough-cut granite foundation and allows direct access into the second floor of the building. The red granite sidewalls on either side of the central, concrete stairs are quarry-faced and stepped. Based on undated plans for the courthouse, the sidewalls historically contained segregated bathrooms. The fourteen concrete steps between the granite sidewalls are divided by a central, nonoriginal, metal railing. Photographs from the 1950s reveal that there was a metal railing in use on the courthouse steps; however, the railing in the 1950s photograph does not match the existing railing. Supporting the closed pedimented portico roof are large, stone, Classical columns. There are two columns on each side. The columns are set on narrow, stone pedestals atop the granite foundation and have carefully executed bases, smooth shafts and Ionic capitals. The entablature is relatively plain, with the only decorative detail being nonoriginal, metal words which read "Jackson County Courthouse." Behind the portico, the central entry contains double doors topped by a tall, aluminum transom that contains metal



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

---

louvers. Above the transom, there is a stone balconet. The balconet has a decorative metal railing and is supported on either side by stylized, stone brackets. This railing, matching the balconet railing on the south elevation, is not original; only the balconet on the north elevation has a stone baluster railing that appears similar to the railings in historic photographs. Above the balconet on the front elevation, there are paired, fixed, metal windows on the third floor that are not divided. To either side, there are three, single, symmetrical, one-over-one, metal, fixed windows. These windows were designed to be mid-level to provide light to the interior staircase. As such, the windows are shorter than the majority of the other windows. Interestingly, the stone sills on these windows, as well as the double window above the balconet, all have wider, stone sills than the paired windows in the flanking sections.

The north and south elevations are nearly identical (see photographs 2, 4, 6 and 10). The north side fronts on to West Commerce Street and the south side onto West Broadway Street. West Broadway Street also serves as State Highway 6 and United States Highway 62. Both side elevations are visually divided into five vertical sections. The equal-sized outside bays on each elevation contain two sets of paired windows on the upper floors. The single first floor windows are symmetrically located beneath the paired windows. Along the outside edges of both elevations, there are also metal drain spouts. The drain spouts towards the east side extend from the darker-colored, corbelled band of the entablature to the ground. The drain spouts on the west side extend from the cornice to the ground. On either side of the central bay there are two narrow, recessed bays. The setback bays contain a single, symmetrical window on each floor. The central bays contain a secondary entry and are highlighted by identical, closed pediments ornamented with a medallion. The entries are located on the first floor and consist of double, glazed, aluminum doors. To either side of both entries, there were originally single windows. These windows on both elevations have been infilled, likely for security reasons. Matching the main entry, there are balconets above each of the side entries. The stone balconets are set at the level of the stone watertable which encircles the building and separates the rough-cut stone of the foundation from the smooth stone of the second and third floors. Because of this, the stylized brackets which support the balconet are red granite, rather than the lighter-colored limestone. The stone balconet railing on the north side is original; the decorative metal balconet railing on the south is not. The historic railing consisted of nine balusters set between solid, rectangular blocks. The railing, including the balusters, is capped by a stone coping. The balconet frames a central set of paired windows. The windows match the other windows on the elevation, being one-over-one, fixed, metal with a transom. The transoms on both windows, however, have been filled with metal louvers. The third floor windows on both of the side elevations are noteworthy because they do not match the arrangement of the other windows. Due to their placement, the three single windows on the third floor create a Palladian effect, which is reinforced by the closed pediment ornamenting the cornice directly above.

The rear elevation is largely obscured by the two-story jail that was constructed in 1924-1925 (see photographs 3, 4, 7 and 8). This elevation historically fronted directly onto North Hudson Street but now faces onto the rear of the adjacent jail with a minimal walkway separating the buildings. Although not part of the original conception, the County Commissioners in 1910 requested the architect change the design of the back elevation to include a pedimented portico similar to that on the east elevation. Unlike the east elevation portico, the rear portico is only one-story with the entry set into the rock-faced, red, granite foundation. As such, the double, Classical, stone columns with their Ionic capitals

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

---

are set on tall, stone pedestals. The pedestals are then set on a single, rectangular, concrete slab that is only one short step above grade level. Further setting the west elevation from the east elevation are the two, double, adjacent entries on the west elevation. The historic doors are wood, glazed, paneled with boards over the lights. The windows beneath the portico and above the central entry have been apparently concreted-in. On either side of the porch on the first floor, there are two single windows. The windows have been infilled; the ones to the north with concrete and the south side ones with a combination of red brick and metal louvers. The north side first floor windows are located outside the fenced area between the jail and courthouse. The south side windows are within the fenced area. The second floor windows and majority of third floor windows are matching, one-over-one, fixed, metal windows with metal, opaque transoms. Strikingly, on the southernmost side of the west elevation, there are unique attic-level windows. The windows are one-over-one, fixed, metal. These windows lit the interior jury room that was above the historic court reporter's office, a room now used by the District Judge. To accommodate the attic level windows on the exterior, the paired second floor windows immediately below do not have transoms like the rest of the windows.

**Courthouse Interior:**

The interior of the courthouse was modernized in the late 1970s. At that time, an elevator was added, requiring a reconfiguration of the historic, central, rotunda space. Additionally, modern materials, such as wood paneling, replaced many of the historic finishes in the public and office spaces. A few historic, wood, glazed, slab doors with transoms and hand-painted signs signed by the artist, are still present in the building (see photograph 11). The historic vault in the county clerk's office also remains intact. Notably, the interior leaded glass dome is still in place, despite the removal of the exterior metal dome in the 1930s. Interior modifications, including the reconfiguration of the central rotunda area and lowering of the ceiling in the courtroom, have hidden the dome from view for decades.

**Courthouse Alterations:**

The most notable alteration to the courthouse occurred during the period of significance. The removal of the dome in 1938 removed a major distinguishing element. However, this change occurred within the period of significance and the building continued to be the hallmark of county government for decades after the dome was removed. Notable nonhistoric changes to the building include the replacement of the windows and doors in the late 1970s. More recently, a large mechanical unit, encircled by a chain link fence, has been located off the southwest corner of the building. Other changes have been made to the historic landscaping to the front of the building and a tall wooden fence, built in the early 1990s, obscures much of the lower portion of the west elevation. Overall, these changes do not interfere with the ability of the building to convey its significance. The courthouse remains the symbol of Jackson County and retains its integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials and, most importantly, feeling and association.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE JACKSON COUNTY JAIL:**

The Jackson County Jail was constructed in 1924-1925 following the condemnation of the original county jail. Although the original bond issue for the courthouse included provision for the construction of a separate county jail, this did not happen due to a lack of funds. The jail was apparently located in

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7

---

the basement of the courthouse until it was condemned in the early 1920s. After much discussion throughout 1923, including consideration of the idea of building a jail on the roof of the courthouse, the design for the new jail developed by Cliff Chism of J.C. Chism and Son of Altus was finally put out for bid in April 1924 and the contract let to a local contractor, M.T. Murray, in June 1924. Work began on the new building in early September 1924 and the building was occupied in mid-February 1925. Forty-two years later in May 1967, the separate county jail was condemned when the concrete ceiling "collapsed" during "makeshift repairs" on the building. Taking over a year-and-a-half, a renovated and expanded jail opened in December 1968.

The original, two-story with a basement, stone, flat-roofed jail continued the architectural style and building material initiated for county buildings in Jackson County by the county courthouse (see photographs 3-4 and 7-9). Due in part to its smaller scale and more restrained decorative detail, the county jail is not as imposing as the courthouse building, befitting its important but mundane role in county government. The Classical Revival style, flat-roofed building has a rough-cut, red, granite foundation and smooth, Bedford limestone, upper walls. Like the courthouse, the jail is visually divided into three sections like a Classical column. The granite foundation serves as the base; the limestone walls as the shaft; and, the projected, metal cornice with short modillions forms the requisite entablature. As on the courthouse, a projected, limestone water table encircles the building and separates the base from the shaft.

As with the courthouse, the doors and windows of the county jail have largely been replaced (see photographs 3, 7 and 9). The central front entry now consists of an aluminum, glazed, slab door with sidelights and a narrow transom. Other doors, including a second floor entry and a double basement-level entry, on the south side are metal slab. The majority of windows in the building were paired. The windows on the first floor are aluminum, unequal one-over-one, awning with screens. The screened, second floor windows are a combination of nonoriginal, six-over-six, metal, hung and historic, vertical four-over-one, wood, hung. The first floor windows have a continuous, stone sill formed from the water table. Originally, at least the front first floor windows and entry had ornamental hoods supported by brackets above each set of paired openings. The hoods were removed in the late 1960s when other modifications were made to the building. The paired second floor windows have continuous, stone sills under each set of windows. The banded frieze area of the metal cornice above the windows creates a header for the second floor windows.

Historically, the building had a center, brick chimney and a rough-cut, full-width porch with a concrete cap. The chimney was apparently removed in the 1960s remodel of the building, as it appears on a photograph of the building published in the January 5, 1968 issue of The Daily Oklahoman. The porch remains in place but a flat-roofed, metal awning was suspended above it and a decorative cinder block screen with a black metal framing rests on top of the historic granite porch wall (see photograph 3 and 9). The metal awning is attached directly below the second floor windows. The awning and screen extend along the entire historic porch and continue along the front of the one-and-one-half story, concrete addition attached to the north side of the jail. The addition has a flat-roof and no visible windows or doors. A similar decorative cinder block screen with metal framing was attached to the south side of the building, obscuring the west portion of that wall. A nonhistoric entry, consisting of a metal, slab door and accessed by metal stairs, was also cut into the east portion of the second floor. Directly below the entry at the basement level is another metal, slab door. More recently, a flat-roofed,

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 8

---

double-car, metal carport has been erected directly south of the cinder block screen.

The rear of the jail is obscured by the tall wooden fence constructed in the early 1990s to block access to both the back sides of the jail and courthouse (see photograph 8). On the jail, there is an above-grade first floor entry on this elevation. The metal slab door is accessed by a set of concrete stairs with a metal pipe railing. Directly south of the wooden fence, a chainlink enclosure has been constructed around large mechanical units. All but the second floor windows on the north side of the jail are obscured by the large, concrete addition. The front, paired windows remain in place but the openings to the east side of the north wall have been covered with boards.

The Jackson County Jail is currently not in use. The county recently constructed a new detention center. The modern detention center is located on the outskirts of downtown Altus, south of the historic railroad tracks on South Main Street. At this time, the county does not have plans for the historic jail building and no effort is being made to maintain or find an alternate use for it.

Due to the late 1960s renovation and expansion of the jail that resulted in an overwhelming loss of historic integrity, the Jackson County Jail is a noncontributing resource. However, the jail remains a significant resource that is inextricably tied to the historic county courthouse. Combined, the two buildings represent county government in Jackson County for all but the first decade of the twentieth century. Although not the hallmark of county government that the courthouse is, the jail is critical to understanding the role of government not only in peacekeeping but also law enforcement activities on a county-wide basis. The alterations to the jail are gaining their own significance and the status of the building as noncontributing should be reevaluated in another decade when these changes reach the fifty-year mark.

**OTHER RESOURCES ON THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE:**

There are four objects and one site on the Jackson County Courthouse Square. Two of the objects, the Confederate Memorial Shaft and the well, are historic. However, only the Confederate shaft retains its integrity and is considered a contributing resource. The well, heavily modified in the late 1990s, maintains no historic integrity and is, therefore, considered noncontributing. The nonhistoric objects on the courthouse square consist of a large, bronze statue entitled "Crossing the Red" and a stone and concrete welcome sign on the southeast corner of the square. Both of these objects likely date to around Altus' Centennial in 1991 and, thus, are noncontributing due to insufficient age. To the front of the courthouse, there is a modern landscape area that is also a considered noncontributing site. The elaborate design of the area, which includes the aforementioned "Crossing the Red" statue, plant beds, large shrubs and sidewalks, is not historic. With the exception of the well, all of these resources are located towards the east side of the courthouse square. None of the resources are of substantial size or consequence to interfere with the ability of the County Courthouse and Jail to convey its significance.

The contributing, granite Confederate Memorial Shaft was dedicated to the veterans of the Civil War and World War I by the local chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy in June 1932 (see photograph 13). The memorial consists of a smooth, pink granite shaft set on a concrete base. The shaft is topped by a mushroom, concrete cap. The inscription on the shaft reads "ERECTED BY/GEN

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 9

---

S.J. WILKINS/CHAPTER OF THE/UNITED DAUGHTERS OF/THE CONFEDERACY/TO OUR VETERANS/1861-65 – 1917-1918 – 1898/1932.” The memorial is located immediately to the south of the front landscaped area, in a grassy area near a large tree. More than seventy-five years old, the shaft has not been altered and is a contributing resource.

On the north side of the courthouse square, near the center of the concrete sidewalk that extends the length of this side of the square, is the historic but noncontributing well (see photograph 15). The well predates the founding of Altus and was used for decades after the townsite originated in 1891. A photograph of the well appeared in the October 27, 1935 issue of The Daily Oklahoman. At that time, the well had a simple, metal, hand-pump sitting on a stone base. The base appears to have had a large, circular, concrete top. The caption on the photograph reads “This is the original Altus water system which served the citizens for many years and now stands as a monument to the pioneers.” In 1989, the well was memorialized as a centennial project to commemorate the 1889 land opening. Currently, the well is located on a brick-lined, square area. The well has a tall, brick base with a large, circular, granite top. The top is inscribed with an image of early day settlers and a summary of the history of the well. A wood brace around the outside of the well holds a pulley for a bucket to be lowered into the well. The well retains no features apparent in the 1935 photograph. Due to the overwhelming loss of historic integrity, the well is considered a noncontributing resource.

On the southeast corner of the courthouse square, there is a nonhistoric welcome sign (see photograph 14). The sign likely dates to Altus’ centennial in 1991. Metal words attached to the stone read “Welcome to/City of Altus/&/Jackson County.” Immediately below the word “Altus,” are smaller words which read “Est. 1891.” The stepped, stone sign has a concrete cap with the Altus city logo on the southwest side of the uppermost cap. The circular logo features the words “City of Altus/Oklahoma” around three iconic images of the area. The curvilinear sign is set within a small, landscape area. To the front of the sign, is a fire hydrant. The sign is obviously fairly new and, therefore, is a noncontributing resource.

On the east side of the courthouse square, directly in front of the courthouse, there is a large landscape area. The area has been carefully designed to emphasize the courthouse façade, as well as the large bronze statue located near the front sidewalk. The design is nonhistoric, probably dating to 1991 and the placement of the statue and other work on the square as part of the centennial activities of the 1889 Oklahoma land run and 1891 founding of Altus. The design consists of two large, rectangular, stone plant beds extending from the sidewalk diagonally towards the courthouse. To the inside of the beds, are matching, nonoriginal, metal, nostalgic, acorn lights. Behind these, and nicely flanking the front elevation of the courthouse, are two large trees. A line of large shrubs extend along both sides of a divided concrete sidewalk that comes to a point in front of the courthouse steps. In the center of the V created by the sidewalks is the bronze statue described below. Extending the length of the landscape area, there is a horizontal brick sidewalk along the east edge of the area. The bricks are inscribed with names of persons and businesses. Overall, the elaborate design is nonhistoric and does not contribute to the ability of the courthouse to convey its significance.

The centerpiece of the front landscape design is a large, bronze statue entitled “Crossing the Red” (see photographs 1 and 12). The statue was designed by Harold “H” Holden and sponsored by the Altus Rotary Club to celebrate Altus’ 1991 centennial. The statue is located in the center of a circular,

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 10

---

stone-line flower bed. The bronze statue sits on top of a large stone. In the center of the stone, there is a bronze plaque. Beneath the Rotary symbol, the plaque reads "*Crossing the Red*/Dedicated by/The Altus Rotary Club/to the/Pioneer Settlers/of Jackson County/on the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the/Founding of the City of Altus/1991." The statue consists of a cowboy atop a horse and swinging a rope over two longhorn cows. Due to insufficient age, the statue is a noncontributing resource.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 11

---

**SIGNIFICANCE**

The Jackson County Courthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as part of the thematic "County Courthouses of Oklahoma" nomination. At that time, only one brief page of information specific to the Jackson County Courthouse was included. Notably, no other resources on the county square were discussed, including the jail. The courthouse was nominated under Criterion A for its association with local government and politics and Criterion C for its architectural significance as a "...prominent landmark in Altus." The period of significance for the building was restricted to 1910, which encompasses only the year construction was started on the building. The courthouse was not completed until 1911 and continued to be a significant landmark of local politics and government for decades after this. According to the original nomination information, the architect for the building was C.C. Hair and Company. The correct name of the firm was C.E. Hair and Company, named after the firm's principle, Charles Ernest Hair.

The name of the property should be amended to "Jackson County Courthouse and Jail." The property was originally listed under simply "Jackson County Courthouse." Although lacking historic integrity, the significance of the jail and its relationship to the courthouse should be readily recognized. The jail, constructed in 1924-1924 after the original jail in the courthouse basement was condemned, was also a highly symbolic and functional building that historically was significant in local government and politics. The relationship between the jail and courthouse is impossible to disentangle. The two together formed the visible foundation of government, politics and law enforcement in the county for years.

The criteria the property was originally listed under remain fully applicable. The Jackson County Courthouse and Jail is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with county-level government and politics. The property was, and remains, the seat of county government for Jackson County. County government was a critical political unit at the local level which united a multitude of various-sized communities and offered services, particularly law enforcement, that the typically small communities of western Oklahoma would not have been able to afford by themselves. Additionally, the property is eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance as landmark examples of the Classical Revival style in Altus and Jackson County. As intended when constructed, the monumental county buildings are without equal in Altus or Jackson County.

The period of significance for the Jackson County Courthouse and Jail should be revised to extend from 1910, when construction started, to 1958, the current National Register fifty-year mark. Throughout this period, the property was not only an architectural landmark but also the very seat of county government. Obviously, the historic resources are the best tangible connection to government and politics at the county-level during this period. Important dates during the period of significance include the 1911 completion of the county courthouse, the 1924-1925 construction of the separate county jail on the courthouse square and the 1938 removal of the metal dome on the courthouse. Although the property continued to be significant in local government and politics after 1958, there is not adequate justification to support exceptional significance to extend the period of significance into the latter decades of the twentieth century.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 12

---

**HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

Jackson County, Oklahoma, is located within an area that became highly contested in the late nineteenth century. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase set the border between the United States and Spanish-controlled Mexico at the Red River. Critically but understandably due to a lack of intimate knowledge of the area, the agreement did not specify which branch of the Red River was actually the border. In 1819, the area that now includes Jackson County diplomatically became part of the United States. However, in 1852, the north branch of the Red River was incorrectly identified as the defining course of the river, allowing the seventy-by-ninety mile swath of land between the north and south branches of the Red River to be claimed by the state of Texas. In 1860, the Texas state legislature created Greer County to encompass all of the area between the branches of the Red River. About thirteen years later, a federal survey of the area discovered the 1852 error and politically cordoned the area off as a part of Indian Territory. As with the rest of Indian Territory, settlement of the land by non-Native Americans was thus prohibited.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the restriction on settlement, by 1880, Texas cattlemen had moved into Greer County, laying claim to the land using land certificates given to veterans of the Texas Republican Army and the Confederacy. In July 1884, President Grover Cleveland issued a proclamation prohibiting settlement in the area until jurisdiction of the land was decided. With settlement continuing despite the presidential proclamation, the federal government filed suit against the state of Texas in 1890. The United States Supreme Court issued their decision in mid-March 1896 in favor of the federal government. By that time, much of the west portion of the original designated Indian Territory had become Oklahoma Territory and settlement by non-Native Americans was well underway.<sup>2</sup>

The newly attached area to Oklahoma Territory continued to be called Greer County. Additionally, under legislation passed by Congress following the Supreme Court decision, the pre-1896 settlers were allowed to file 160 acre claims on the lands they had been occupying. Settlers were also able to purchase up to an additional 160 acres for a dollar an acre. Many of the towns founded in the area before 1896 continued to thrive as well.<sup>3</sup>

One of the pre-1896 towns in Greer County was the community of Altus. Originating in 1891, the town came into being following a flood at Bitter Creek. The flood caused significant damage to the small town of Frazier, which had been founded in 1885 at a point two-and-a-half miles west of Altus. Seeking higher ground, the Frazier residents formed a land company and purchased 160 acres from Sam Neal. The new townsite was formed from forty acres of land in four adjoining sections. The intersection of the four sections then became the intersection of Main and Broadway Streets. The town was named "Altus" upon the suggestion of W.R. Baucum. The name in Latin means "the high place"

---

<sup>1</sup> Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Final Survey Report: Reconnaissance of Certain Parts of the City of Altus," (Available Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; 1993), 88-89.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 88-89.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 13

---

so it was particularly fitting for the new community.<sup>4</sup>

With the former Frazier residents quickly setting up shop in Altus, the town thrived. Although the town was organized under the laws of Texas, the 1896 decision allowed the settlement to continue if there were more than seventy-five residents and the community was able to purchase the land within the town limits for a dollar per acre. Despite this, for unknown reasons, the plat for the town, dated June 1900, was not filed until January 13, 1901, nearly five years after the Supreme Court decision and nearly ten years after Altus' original founding. Notably, the plat as originally conceived included a public square in the center of town with lots on the surrounding blocks divided for smaller commercial purposes.

As part of Oklahoma's statehood, granted in November 1907, the "old" Greer County was divided into four counties. This included all of the existing Jackson, Greer and Harmon counties, as well as a part of Beckham County. As with most of western Oklahoma, agriculture formed the economic base that Jackson County relied on to stimulate growth and development. Development of oil fields in the first decades of the twentieth century also allowed the area to flourish. The long-time twin economic forces of Oklahoma, oil and agriculture, remain a significant revenue source in Jackson County to the present time. These, of course, have been augmented periodically, most notably by federal programs. In the 1930s, with devastating turndowns in both agriculture and oil, the various New Deal programs of Franklin Roosevelt assuaged residents during the trying times. In the 1940s, the location of an air base in Altus allowed Jackson County to emerge from the Great Depression on a strong upswing. Although closed following the end of World War II, the base was reactivated in the mid-1950s. The Altus Air Force Base remains a significant economic force in Jackson County to the present day.

#### HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

In late 1907, Altus was named the temporary seat of the newly created Jackson County. As in all the counties that came into existence at statehood, the county seat would remain at Altus until an election called by the Governor decided the permanent location. The courthouse was initially situated in rented quarters in downtown Altus. The county commissioners also voted to board county prisoners in Mangum in the Greer County jail at a cost of forty cents per day per prisoner. By mid-May 1908, the residents of Jackson County were circulating petitions requesting Governor Haskell to call the election. In the early stages of the process, the local Altus paper advocated a county "fight" that would be a "...clean, open, fair, and honest contest, a free vote and a fair count, and may the best and most deserving locality win."<sup>5</sup>

Moving quickly, the Governor proclaimed the election would be held on July 18, 1908 with the only two contestants in the fight being the towns of Altus and Olustee. One early point of contention was the public square in Altus. Opponents in Olustee asserted that "...if the county seat remains at Altus the taxpayers will be held up for \$75,000 to pay for the square." Residents of Altus countered with the news that Judge T.P. Clay granted the property to "...the people for their use and benefit as public property, forever." According to published reports in June 1908, Judge Clay deeded the property to the

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>5</sup> The Altus (Oklahoma) Times, 23 January 1908 and 14 May 1908.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 14

---

public previous to the establishment of the community and the square had long been identified as the future site of the courthouse.<sup>6</sup>

The tension between the two communities, aided and abetted by other towns in and outside of the county, continued to escalate through June and early July 1908. Both towns made claims as to being the closest to the geographic center of Jackson County. A conspiracy was also charged between Altus and Hollis that would "...dismember Jackson County..." by allowing townships in west Jackson County to unite with Hollis and other communities in Greer County to form another new county. The new "temporary" Jackson County jail also came under scrutiny. According to the Olustee newspaper, it was provided in the county commissioner proceedings that the jail was to be moved by the builder to Olustee if it was named county seat. In defense of Altus, The Blair Progress noted that moving the building, with its concrete floor and riveted steel cells, would not be practical. Additionally, the newspaper reported a conversation with "...Contractor Clif Chisum, the man who contracted with the commissioners and did build the jail, and he informed us and allowed us to use his name to the effect that the commissioners had made no contract agreement or understanding with him or his company, the Altus Planing Mill Co., to move the jail to any place in any event." As the election drew close, the "Altus crowd" made one last "...rout (to) the craftily built yarns of the Olustee push..." when the pro-Altus group circulated maps showing the sizeable quantity of land in Olustee owned by non-residents.<sup>7</sup>

With a final count of 2,077 for Altus and 1,365 for Olustee, Altus became the permanent county seat of Jackson County on July 18, 1908. With the furor over, county government resumed its work, located in rented quarters in downtown Altus. Naturally, small upheavals continued to occur in county government. In September 1908, Bud Ashlock, Jackson County Clerk, purchased a safe to store the county records. When Ashlock received the safe, it was found to be too large so the owner of the "courthouse" objected to the moving of the safe to the second floor. In response, Ashlock relocated the county clerk's office into the White Building, to the rear of the First National Bank.<sup>8</sup>

Over a year after the issue arose in the county seat battle, Altus' public square was formally deeded to Jackson County. Valued at \$100,000, the ownership of the square was "...irrevocably and eternally" conveyed to the county commissioners by county Judge W.T. McConnell and the Altus city council. The earlier reports that the square already belonged to the county were dismissed as "...different opinions...expressed by many well informed persons, each insisting that he had ample ground for his opinion."<sup>9</sup>

As Altus marked the first anniversary of its county seat victory, a proposition to build a courthouse and jail was raised by W.R. Spears. Initial reaction in Altus was not optimistic as one of the election promises made by the town to gain the county seat was that the courthouse question would not come up for at least five years. In September 1909, Spears submitted a petition and letter to the county commissioners to urge them to call for an election on the matter. Three months later, the county commissioners received a bid from Spear and Dow, a banking firm with offices in Fort Smith,

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 28 May 1908 and 4 June 1908.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., June 1908 - 16 July 1908

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23 July 1908 - September 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17 June 1909.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 15

---

Arkansas, and Chicago, Illinois, for a proposed issue of a \$100,000, twenty-year bond to construct a courthouse and jail. On December 9, 1909, the county commissioners, S.L. Boulware, H.P. West, E.C. Ballew, voted to enter into a contract with Spear and Dow to sell the bonds.<sup>10</sup>

In a special session on December 20, 1909, the county commissioners voted to order an election to be held on February 26, 1910, to decide the courthouse bond issue. In order to make the bond issue more palatable to the voters, the County Commissioners submitted "Arguments on the Court House Question" for publication in the local newspapers. In this quasi-letter, the commissioners explained that at that time, the county was paying \$2,500 a year for renting quarters. The interest on the bond issue would create a debt of \$5,000 per year or \$2,500 more per year than the existing payments. Additionally, to create a levied sinking fund, the county would need to initially expend \$3,000, bringing the total necessary funds to \$5,500. This would require a mill levy increase of one-half mill, bringing the mill levy to three-fourths a mill. In other words, for each \$1,000 worth of property in Jackson County, the levy would be \$.75. Over time, however, the accumulated sinking fund earnings would be applied to the interest and, with property values expected to double over the course of a decade, the mill levy would fall by one-half to a third.<sup>11</sup>

To justify the new building, the County Commissioners noted that the current location of the county court had become untenable due to the construction of an adjacent two-story building that blocked the light and ventilation into the court's temporary quarters. The necessary relocation of the court would also cost taxpayer money with additional repetitious costs likely in the future. Further, since the county already owned the public square in Altus, there would be no land costs. Finally, the commissioners pointed out the county owned about \$25,000 worth of property that in its temporary quarters was not properly secured. To replace the county records, which were not all stored in fire-proof vaults, the commissioners estimated it would cost \$100,000 alone.<sup>12</sup>

Heeding the county commissioners pleas, voters approved the courthouse and jail bonds with almost a two-to-one majority. Just two days after the election, the county commissioners held a session "...for the purpose of adopting plans and specifications for..." the new buildings. However, likely due to the petition filed at the meeting by S.E. Echols to set aside the sale of bonds to Speer and Dow because of alleged legal issues with the earlier agreement, the board deferred action on the plans and specifications until March 9, 1910. Before adjourning, the commissioners overruled Echols appeal.<sup>13</sup>

During this same period, the Altus Chamber of Commerce and local real estate and business men, sought out the services of L.P. Jensen, a St. Louis, Missouri, landscape architect of "...national repute in his chosen profession." Hired with the sole purpose of "...laying out and beautifying Altus," Jensen proposed a civic center for Altus that would include the courthouse, a union depot, city hall, library and "...all buildings belonging to the city or county which may be built in the future as the city advances in wealth and population." Potential future buildings envisioned in the plan included but were not limited

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 29 July 1909, 11 September 1909, 16 December 1909. See also The Altus (Oklahoma) Weekly News, 16 December 1909.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 23 December 1909, 13 January 1910 and 17 February 1910.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 17 February 1910.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3 March 1910.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 16

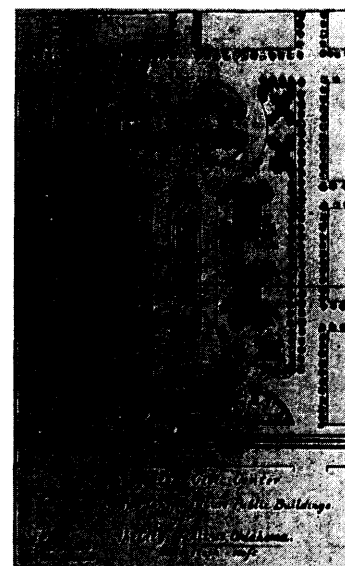
---

to art galleries, museums, public baths, a gymnasium, a federal building and YMCA and YWCA buildings. Jensen was obviously a promoter of the City Beautiful Movement then sweeping the nation. The City Beautiful Movement was a nationwide turn-of-the-twentieth-century trend in urban planning to rectify the decay and demoralization of communities through the beautification of the city. Urban areas across Oklahoma and the nation were growing exponentially with a mounting realization of the critical importance of community planning, not only in sustaining urban growth but also for the continued health and safety of residents and visitors. Proponents of the City Beautiful Movement believed that by beautifying an urban area with wide elegant avenues, carefully planned landscape designs and opulent, usually Beaux Arts style buildings, the pride of the city would be restored and inner cities would maintain their central position within the expanding community. Additionally, the movement sought to maintain the importance of civic buildings in an era of increasing commercial development that manifested itself in ever-taller skyscrapers which overshadowed the previously dominant civic and religious properties.<sup>14</sup>

Critically, Jensen was opposed to the placement of the courthouse on the public square. Also reflective of aspirations of the City Beautiful Movement, Jensen noted that the loss of the public square would be criminal as "That square, in his opinion, should always remain a beautiful little park, where the citizens of Altus and Jackson county can take a cool and refreshing rest in the shade of the growing trees, close to nature where the eyes and the entire nervous system is refreshed by contact with natural beauty." Picking up this cause, the newspaper noted that

This is a matter of no small moment, and although the square is now the property of the county, if a more suitable site for the court house is furnished to the county free of cost, we do not think there is a man in Jackson county who would insist on the court house being built in the square. Good health and good morals demand that the people shall have just such breathing places, centrally located, where all may go to hold silent and thankful communion with the greatest of all doctors, nature itself.<sup>15</sup>

Jensen's initial plan (see image) called for the city to purchase at least a three block tract of land that "...at some point (was) contiguous to the public square." Running the full-length of the area would be "...a beautiful park, with trees entirely around the edge, the roadways running at each side the entire length." The main buildings of the plan were to be the court house and union depot. Located at opposite ends, the buildings would serve as the anchors for the grand boulevard. Notably, even as the plan was developed, the opposition to the courthouse going anywhere other than the public square was deemed "...unalterable."<sup>16</sup>



The Altus Times, 10 March 1910

Moving forward in spite of the continuing publicity for the civic center, the county commissioners

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 10 March 1910 and 24 March 1910. See also Cynthia Savage, "The City Beautiful Movement," Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture, forthcoming.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10 March 1910.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 10 March 1910.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 17

---

formally selected the firm of C.E. Hair and Company as the courthouse architect on April 4, 1910. The following day, the commissioners chose E.C. Perry Jr. as architect of record for the proposed county jail. The commissioners then considered the bids for the courthouse construction at their April 27, 1910, meeting. With the bids as high as \$96,500, the commissioners accepted the low bid of \$88,900, submitted by the Oklahoma City firm of Rowles and Bailey. The bid dropped to \$85,400 after a few modifications were made to the building plans. This included replacing some of the proposed marble wainscoting with enamelistic wainscoting and cement floors in the basement corridor instead of Terrazzo. Notably, the bid did not include the heating plant and plumbing in the building. About two weeks later, the heating and plumbing contract was award to H.G. Post of Lawton for \$7,547. Notably, in early July 1910, the county commissioners also ordered the architect to change the plans so the rear elevation of the courthouse resembled the façade with the exception of the stairs.<sup>17</sup>

The selection of the firm of C.E. Hair and Company to design the Jackson County Courthouse is noteworthy. Born in Lewistown, Illinois, Charles Ernest Hair was born on July 26, 1875. Studying for two years at Knox College in Kansas, Hair began attending the Kansas State University in 1894. Graduating from the university in 1898, Hair then sat for the State Board of Architects exams on October 8<sup>th</sup> of that year. Passing the exams with "...greater credit than had any who had preceded him since the creation of the board..." Hair immediately set up his practice in Galesburg, Kansas. According to a newspaper article at the time of his death in 1918, Hair moved to Oklahoma City in 1908 and became a member of the firm of Hair, Tonini and Bramblet. While it is likely that Hair opened an office in Oklahoma in 1908, he did not immediately enter into partnership with Tonini and Bramblet. The 1909 Oklahoma City city directory lists the architectural firm of Haer (sic) and Smith. The following year, the firm is correctly spelled Hair and Smith. By 1911, the firm was organized under the name of C.E. Hair and Company. The 1915 directory continued to list the firm as C.E. Hair and Company. The 1916 directory did not list any firms that included Hair by name, which may have simply been an oversight or the firm was undergoing reorganization at that time. The 1917 directory advertised the firm of Hair and Tonini and Bramblet. According to the newspaper, Hair retired from architectural practice in the fall of 1917. Moving to Monte Vista, Colorado, Hair then passed away in late October 1918.<sup>18</sup>

During his years of practice in Oklahoma, Hair "...designed a large number of schools and public buildings throughout..." the state. In all, Hair's firm worked on the design of five county courthouses that were constructed. Beginning with the Jackson County Courthouse, Hair also designed the courthouses for Choctaw, Osage, Okmulgee and Payne counties. The first three buildings, Jackson, Choctaw and Osage, were all built early in the nineteen teens with the buildings in Okmulgee and Payne counties being erected in the later teens, after formation of the firm of Hair, Tonini and Bramblet. Unfortunately, only his courthouse work has been recognized as historically significant.

---

<sup>17</sup> Minutes, Board of County Commissioners, Jackson County, Oklahoma, 4 April 1910 – 5 July 1910. Available Jackson County Clerk's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Altus, Oklahoma. See also The Altus Times, 5 May 1910.

<sup>18</sup> "Hair, Charles Ernest," 1899 Historical Encyclopedia Biographies, page 5, [http://www.usgennet.org/usa/il/county/know/1899\\_bios\\_5.htm](http://www.usgennet.org/usa/il/county/know/1899_bios_5.htm), retrieved 11 August 2007. See also The Daily Oklahoman, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 25 October 1918 and Oklahoma City City Directories, 1906-1917, available Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 18

---

There is very little additional information available at this time to further assess the significance of Hair's architectural career. Indisputably, Hair made a significant contribution to the built environment in Jackson County through the design of the courthouse.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to Hair's considerable architectural expertise, the Jackson County Courthouse also benefited from experienced contractors. By the time they secured the Jackson County contract, the firm of Rowles and Bailey had finished constructing the Grant County Courthouse in Medford. The Grant County Courthouse was described as a "...beautiful building, and up to plans and specifications, in every way." While the contractors were reportedly a non-union firm, they were required by Oklahoma statute to employ union men using an 8-hour system. All public building projects in Oklahoma were subject to this same law.<sup>20</sup>

Work on the courthouse got underway in mid-May 1910. At that time, contractor Bailey indicated the building would be complete in five months, barring hold-ups in obtaining material or other unforeseen events. By the second week in August, 1910, work had advanced to allow for the laying of the cornerstone. As with nearly all public buildings constructed at the time, this momentous event was accomplished by the local Masons. With a date set for August 16, 1910, the Masons organized a grand parade and requested that all stores, offices and business houses be closed in Altus during the event. Attracting "...one of the largest crowds ever assembled in the county seat for any purpose" which was estimated at between 3,500 and 4,000 people, the cornerstone was laid with all due pomp and circumstance.<sup>21</sup>

In early September 1910, the Board of County Commissioners opened the bids for construction of the new county jail. The winning bid was M.T. Murray's with a price of \$5,771. Rowles and Bailey also bid on the job, coming in second with a bid of \$6,700. High bid was that of Walter G. Kenney which was \$7,800. The two-story building with a basement was to measure 36.5X34 feet and be of brick, steel and concrete. Notably, the location of the jail was to be "...in the south part of town near the Wichita Falls depot, on lots 1 and 2, block 6, Hightowers Addition."<sup>22</sup>

By late November 1910, the courthouse's concrete frame topped by the striking ornamental metal dome were in place. Around this time, however, it was determined that an additional \$13,000 would be necessary to complete the courthouse and jail. According to the newspaper headlines, the money was needed for furniture, heating, plumbing and sewage which were "...not included in the \$100,000 issue." Just two weeks prior to the second bond election to be held on February 14, 1911, work on the courthouse building itself was nearing completion. During the last week in January, the steam elevator that carried material to the roof and upper floors was taken down. "Considerable" work still remained, however, to finish the detail work, including painting, varnishing and installing some maple flooring.<sup>23</sup> Passage of the new bond remained a priority. According to newspaper accounts, the courthouse could

---

<sup>19</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, 25 October 1918.

<sup>20</sup> The Altus Times, 5 May 1910.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 19 May 1910, 11 August 1910 and 18 August 1910. See also The Daily Oklahoman, 12 August 1910 and 18 August 1910.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 8 September 1910.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 12 January 1911, 26 January 1911 and 2 February 1911.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 19

---

be finished and the jail erected within the original appropriation; however, there was no money to furnish the buildings. Although the existing jail cells were to be reused in the new jail, they were deemed insufficient for the new building. In a bid of twisted logic, the taxpayers were also informed that failure to pass the bonds would not stop the county from furnishing the building. The county commissioners were entitled to furnish both buildings using funds from the county treasury "...without let or hindrance." The article went on to note that "Its (sic) a cinch that the court house and jail are no use to the county or its people in their present incomplete condition, and even if it costs a little more money to complete it, we had better spend that amount than to permit the money already expended to be of no benefit to us."<sup>24</sup>

Although the incomplete returns published in the weekly paper immediately after the election indicated the bonds had a majority of votes, it was expected that "...later returns (would) overcome this majority and the result is very much in doubt." The final returns showed the bond was defeated more than two-to-one with 754 voting against the proposition and 344 in favor. In response to the defeat, the county commissioners immediately met to discuss the plans for the jail. The construction of the separate building was clearly doubtful with the commissioners considering a proposal to build the jail on the east side of the courthouse roof. Surrounded by an eight or nine foot firewall, this location could "...make a very substantial prison..." if walled in and roofed. One major drawback would be the required stair climbing by the jailer.<sup>25</sup>

With no fanfare, the county officials took possession of the courthouse by the end of February 1911. As predicted earlier, the furniture for the new building was purchased with funds in the county treasury. Shortly after this, city officials worked a deal to rent the courtroom in the northeast corner of the third floor for \$25 per month for use by city offices. This was \$15 less than the city was then expending on city quarters. By law, the county could not occupy the designated juvenile courtroom until a population of 10,000 was reached.<sup>26</sup>

Work continued on the courthouse after its occupation. At the end of March, 1911, the county purchasing committee, which included District Clerk Ned McDaniel, County Clerk Bud Ashlock and County Attorney M.L. Hankins, let a contract to Goodman-Floyd Furniture for the purchase of 100 window shades. Costing a total of \$90, the shades were to be adjustable from the top and bottom, so the double hung windows could be operated either way. Shortly after this, the county prisoners were put to work cleaning up the square. This primarily consisted of removing debris left by the workmen. The Sheriff also posted signs noting the \$5 fine for tying horses to trees on the square. The final square improvements called for the removal of shacks and other unspecified encumbrances so "...the park will look natural once more."<sup>27</sup>

More substantial work was undertaken in late April/early May when the contractors tore up the south side of the concrete floor in the courthouse basement because it was determined defective. When the building was turned over to the county, the contractors had given a bond for maintenance of the

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 2 February 1911.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16 February 1911 and 23 February 1911.

<sup>26</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, 28 February 1911. See also The Altus Times, 9 March 1911 and 16 March 1911.

<sup>27</sup> The Altus Times, 30 March 1911 and 6 April 1911.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 20

---

building for a year so the work was done without additional charge to the county. Also in May, 1911, the Southern Electric Company installed light fixtures in the courthouse. Completion of this task, the newspaper noted, would make the courthouse "...one of the most handsomely and conveniently lighted of any courthouse in the state." The fixtures included chandeliers and "...clusters of lights..." in the offices and courtrooms. The corridors and entrances were also to be "...brilliantly lighted." Interestingly, the underground connections between the courthouse and city electric plant were not installed until late June 1911.<sup>28</sup>

Due to the lack of funds caused by the failure of the February 1911 bond issue, the county jail was apparently located in the basement of the courthouse from 1911 to 1924. By 1923, the jail had been condemned by Oklahoma's Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, Mrs. Mabel Bassett. Mrs. Bassett was elected to this position in 1922, after serving as the head of the Creek County Children's Home for twelve years. Notably, Jackson County's jail was one of at least five Oklahoma county jails condemned by Mrs. Bassett by December 1923. Many other jails in Oklahoma were also found lacking by Mrs. Bassett. Raised awareness of and general improvement in Oklahoma prison conditions was one of Mrs. Bassett's greatest legacies.<sup>29</sup>

As early as March 1923, the county commissioners were at work trying to find a solution to the jail condemnation. Once again, the commissioners considered the idea of placing the jail on the roof. This suggestion, however, did not make it out of committee when it became clear that one county commissioner "...was unalterably opposed to so placing the jail." By mid-July 1923, plans had been developed for a \$16,000 jail building on the square. The two-story building, designed by Cliff Chism, was to measure fifty feet long by thirty-eight feet wide and have direct access to the district court room from the jail. This plan also encountered opposition as downtown businessmen, especially those around the square, felt that the jail building would "...decrease the value of their property, and (would) place a nuisance in the heart of the city." The county commissioners, in turn, argued that the placement of the new building on the square was the most economical and advantageous for the county, particularly as the county could employ a single janitor to care for both buildings.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, in early April 1924, the county commissioners announced that bids for the construction of the jail would be received until May 13, 1924. At that time, the levy available for the jail would allow for a building to cost \$20,204.37. At the end of June, 1924, the contract for the jail construction was let to local contractor, M.T. Murray. Interestingly, Murray had also received the jailhouse contract in 1911. On the larger, modern jail, Murray's winning bid was for \$22,678. By June 1924, Murray had already constructed the city auditorium, city hospital and part of the filtering plant.<sup>31</sup>

Work on the new fireproof jail, which was to have a reinforced concrete floor and a granite base with Bedford stone superstructure, commenced in early September 1924. Towards the end of the month, workmen began removing the cells of the old jail in the courthouse basement. The old cells were then

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 11 May 1911, 18 May 1911, 29 June 1911. See also The Daily Oklahoman, 28 February 1911.

<sup>29</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, 31 December 1923. See also Jessie Randolph Moore, "Tribute to Mrs. Mabel Bassett," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, 32:4 (Winter 1954), 361.

<sup>30</sup> The Altus Times Democrat, 20 July 1923.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 11 April 1924. See also The Altus (Oklahoma) Plain Dealer, 24 June 1924.



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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 21

---

moved to the new building. At this time, the prisoners in the county jail were either released by the judge during the October term of the district court or taken to Mangum to be held in the Greer County jail. Additional prisoners were held in the Altus city jail, with six prisoners escaping from that facility in mid-November 1924.<sup>32</sup>

By mid-February 1925, the jail was finished and ready for occupation. To celebrate the occasion, "...county officers staged a huge open house party for lawbreakers and the result (was) that Monday the new jail was full of prisoners." Most of the detainees were held on liquor charges. The completion of the jail heralded a new era in law enforcement for Jackson County as "County officers (had) been handicapped for sometime for lack of room for prisoners and few raids (had) been carried out." With the opening of the new jail, the law officers had "...more freedom..." with ample room for a large number of prisoners.<sup>33</sup>

The construction of the jail obviously did not end the development of the Jackson County Courthouse and Jail. In June 1925, work on a ladies rest room was undertaken in the basement of the courthouse. Notably, the "rest room" is not to be confused with a bathroom. The room was intended to be a space in which women and children could withdraw to in order to rest and relax. The rest room was likely located in the space left vacant by the removal of the jail. The job was paid for by the Business and Professional Women's club. By November of that year, the local newspaper reported more than a thousand women and children had visited the ladies rest room. The Business and Professional Women's club also used the rest room as a meeting place. At the end of November 1927, four new jail cells were installed in the second floor of the Jackson County Jail, at a cost of \$6,000. This allowed the number of prisoners to be held at the jail to double to thirty-two. Reflecting the times, one floor of the jail was to be used for holding white people with African-American prisoners held on the other floor.

In mid-July 1926, the county commissioners ordered a new roof for the courthouse building. The commissioners awarded the job to local contractor Lee Chisum. The job required the clean up of the old tar and gravel roof to allow for a new built-up, asphalt roof. The estimated cost of the sixty feet by forty-five feet was \$325.<sup>34</sup>

Work at the courthouse square was also not restricted to the buildings. In June 1932, the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy dedicated a monument to the veterans of the Civil War, World War I and the 1898 Spanish American War who were lineal descendents of Confederate veterans. For unspecified reasons, the shaft was not dedicated on either military remembrance holidays, Memorial Day or Veterans Day. The ten-foot-tall marble shaft was located on the southeast corner of the courthouse square. During the dedication, Mrs. Mary Garrett, wearing a period costume, delivered the tribute to Confederate veterans she had prepared. Garrett also prepared a tribute to the veterans of 1898 and 1917-1918 which was read by Miss Edna Mae Lloyd, who was wearing a United States Army uniform. Mrs. C.D. Stapp also delivered a tribute to soldiers of all wars. Mrs. J.W. Bates, president of the General S.J. Wilkins chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, dedicated

---

<sup>32</sup> The Altus Plain Dealer, 9 September 1924 and 30 September 1924. See also The Altus Times Democrat, 21 November 1924.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 February 1925.

<sup>34</sup> The Altus Times Democrat, 26 June 1925, 6 November 1925, 27 November 1925 and 23 July 1926.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 22

---

the monument.<sup>35</sup>

During the 1930s, the courthouse also benefited from several New Deal projects. In March 1935, workers working under the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) installed new light fixtures, put up new window shades, kalsomined the walls and varnished the woodwork and seats of the district courthouse. According to the newspaper, the old single drop light fixtures had about twenty-bulbs on it, nine of which were habitually burned out. The cost to the FERA was \$390 for labor with the county providing \$81 for materials. Workmen also did some repair work at the jail that was completed before they started in the courtroom.<sup>36</sup>

In 1938, a more momentous New Deal project got underway at the courthouse. The roughly \$20,000 project called for thirty Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers to remodel the interior and exterior of the courthouse. Initially, this included repair and painting of metal and woodwork on the exterior of the building, including the courthouse dome, as well as new roofs for the courthouse and jail, rearrangement of office space, painting of interior woodwork and walls, and grading and landscaping of the courthouse square. By mid-September, the project had been modified to include the removal of the dome. According to the newspaper, "The dome had deteriorated beyond an economical repair and will be replaced at a lower level." The tin on the dome reportedly had become rotten after years of exposure to the elements that allowed water to get inside the building. The removal of the dome was a notable event as it caused a major change to the building. However, the dome was only one element of the building and its removal did not interfere with the building's continued significance as the seat of county government.<sup>37</sup>

The removal of the dome was the last major project undertaken on the courthouse and jail prior to 1956. In June 1956, the courthouse square was reworked to allow parking on the square itself. This project was necessitated by the increased population in Altus and Jackson County, particularly due to the number of men stationed at Altus Air Force Base. At that same time, the county commissioners held a bond election to build a new jail and remodel the courthouse. The bond, however, failed. More than ten years later, the issue again arose after the Jackson County Jail was condemned due to falling plaster from the jail ceiling during make-shift repair work. The initial September 1967 bond issue, which included jail improvements and courthouse remodeling, failed. The following month, a second bond election was held to raise \$150,000 strictly for improvement and expansion of the county jail. This bond was successful.<sup>38</sup>

In January 1968, the county commissioners opened the bids for work on the jail. According to project architect William A. Appleby, work was not expected to start until March 1968 with the contractor having 180 days to complete the project. The opening of the bids, however, revealed that the project costs exceeded the available funding. The low bidders, Munger-Emmons Construction Company of

---

<sup>35</sup> The Jackson County Chronicle, 23 June 1932. See also The Altus Times Democrat, 15 June 1932, 19 June 1932 and 22 June 1932.

<sup>36</sup> The Altus Times Democrat, 22 March 1935 and 22 April 1935.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 10 August 1938 and 22 September 1938.

<sup>38</sup> The Daily Oklahoman, 22 June 1956, 25 September 1956, 14 October 1956, 10 August 1967, 13 September 1967, 19 September 1967 and 25 October 1967.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 23

---

Enid bid \$133,821 for the general contracting. The Southern Steel Corporation of San Antonio bid an addition \$46,700 on the jail equipment. The county commissioners and Appleby then elected to meet with the contractors to "...try to work out a plan within county funds."<sup>39</sup>

Apparently unsuccessful in working a deal with the original low bid general contractors, the project was finally awarded to Falcon Construction Company of Altus in mid-March 1968 at a cost of \$104,772. Southern Steel Corporation of San Antonio secured the jail equipment contract with a low bid of \$30,821. Work was expected to get underway by April 1968. Notably, due to a lack of funds, the project did not include construction of passageway from the jail to the courthouse. This amenity was expected to cost \$4,050 with the county commissioners hoping to add it at the end of the fiscal year. Taking slightly longer than the expected six months, the jail project was completed in December 1968.

The expanded jail then had a forty person capacity and included both a "drunk tank" and "psycho cell."<sup>40</sup>

The construction and continued use of the county courthouse and jail allowed Jackson County government to function with a new efficiency. The improved facilities centralized the seat of county government and also allowed for expansion of county records and services. Additionally, the buildings enhanced the community identity. The county courthouse, typically the identifying building of the county, was critical to the county and local towns' self-image.

In Oklahoma, the historic significance of county courthouse in local government was established in the thematic "County Courthouse of Oklahoma" nomination, listed on the National Register in 1984. The Jackson County Courthouse was included in the thematic nomination at that time. The historic significance of the county courthouses as identified in the thematic nomination remains fully applicable. To quote the nomination,

Each county's courthouse serves as the seat and focus of local administration. The courthouse is the physical building that houses the established form for governing diverse groups of people throughout the state. The style of the building may vary from county to county, but the essence of its function does not. The courthouse provides the place in which the local judiciary system metes out justice to the citizens of the county. Other governmental offices, such as those of the sheriff, the county clerk, the tax assessor, and the treasurer, are also located in the courthouse. In some counties, the courthouse contains the offices of such other integral community services as motor vehicle licensing, veterans' affairs, the local election board, and the county extension agency. The courthouse is invaluable as a political center and as a repository of a county's records.<sup>41</sup>

The Jackson County Courthouse and Jail exemplifies all of these duties and responsibilities.

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5 January 1968 and 31 January 1968.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 13 March 1968, 16 March 1968, 5 May 1968 and 8 December 1968. See also The Altus Times-Democrat, 5 December 1968 and 6 December 1968.

<sup>41</sup> Suzanne Haynes, "County Courthouses of Oklahoma" Thematic National Register Nomination, (On-file in the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1984), Section 8, page 0.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 24

---

In 1923, the newspaper published an article entitled "Doings at the Court House" which ably reflects the multitude of goings-on in this landmark building. The article is particularly illuminating as it describes a stroll through the courthouse on a Saturday evening with many county officials present if not working at that time.

A stroll Saturday evening through the Court House. We found Co. Supt. H.H. Porter and his deputy, Miss Mattie Henry, busy as hens taking care of the routine work. During the week, Mr. Porter had visited the Ozark, Eldorado, Prairie Hill and Olustee schools. The Supt. is very optimistic about the schools of Jackson Co. and is putting forth every effort to make all schools A 1.

At the sheriff's office, we found the place well-nigh deserted; Sheriff English was away on a trip to Oklahoma City, Duke and Goodloe were out on a man hunt (sic), while Henry Southall remained to entertain visitors and see that any one buying a new Flivver (automobile), forth-with made application for auto license.

Mr. Southall informed the reporter that to date, there had been application made for 3674 auto licenses at the assessor's office. We found W.A. Ferris and his deputy Mrs. Bertha Dale busy as a cranberry merchant, just received the report of the state Exercise Board on Valuations and were hurrying to get the tax rolls ready to turn to Co. Treas. Mr. Ferris gives out the good news that valuations have been reduced fifteen percent.

In the Judge Williams court was found all quite (sic) as a grave-yard, the only papers filed for a week being the application of C.W. Edwards for letter of administration on the estate of Frank M. Eley.

At the Treasure's office, A.C. Locke and his deputies were marking time, sharpening pencils and getting ready for the rush that is coming. In the justice courts we found two vacant chairs. Judge Shields having gone out for a shave while Judge Gilliland was out of town. Janitor J.D. Stroud was busy explaining to some intimate friends the fine points of a certain machine with some copper pipes which had been used as evidence in the Dist. Court room.<sup>42</sup>

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Jackson County Courthouse is architecturally significant as a landmark example of the Classical Revival style in Altus. The building is without equal in the community. For nearly a century, the courthouse has stood as the architectural symbol of Jackson County. Even without the crowing element of the original dome, the courthouse ably reflects its historic and architectural significance as a notable, public building designed in the eminently popular Classical Revival style.

Due to modifications, the historic Jackson County Jail does not reflect its original Classical Revival style. However, the building remains as architectural testimony to the implementation of law and order in the county. In combination with the Jackson County Courthouse, the jail is noteworthy as Twentieth century county architecture.

---

<sup>42</sup> The Altus Times Democrat, 28 September 1923.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 25

---

Enhancing the buildings' architectural significance is their prominent position on the courthouse square and, in turn, the county square's notable location in the central business district of Altus. The courthouse and jail are readily distinguished by their central position on the courthouse square. They are the only buildings in the immediate vicinity to occupy such a key location on a block. On all of the blocks around the courthouse square, the narrow commercial lots are filled with brick, generally Commercial style buildings that are flush to the sidewalk.

The overall pattern created by the courthouse square and the surrounding commercial blocks has been called the Shelbyville Square. In this design, "The courthouse square sits in the center of the grid, with streets intersecting at each corner, and the lot lines of blocks facing the square typically are oriented to the courthouse." This type of square is one of the most common courthouse square arrangements due to its inherent simplicity. The plan requires only that the courthouse is sited in the middle of the grid. This was particularly attractive in Oklahoma as city planning, particularly after the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, generally adhered to the Jeffersonian grid pattern.<sup>43</sup>

Overall, the Jackson County Courthouse continues to be worthy of placement on the National Register of Historic Places for its association with local government, politics and law enforcement as the seat of Jackson County government. Architecturally, the courthouse and jail remains distinctive within the county and, therefore, merit recognition for their significance as *the* Jackson County buildings .

---

<sup>43</sup> Robert E. Veselka, The Courthouse Square in Texas, (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 2000), 20.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 26

---

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The Altus (Oklahoma) Plain Dealer. 24 June 1924; 9 September 1924; 30 September 1924; 17 February 1925.

The Altus (Oklahoma) Times. 23 January 1908; 14 May 1908; 28 May 1908; 4 June 1908; June 1908-16 July 1908; 23 July 1908 – September 1908; 17 June 1909; 29 July 1909; 11 September 1909; 16 December 1909; 23 December 1909; 13 January 1910; 17 February 1910; 17 February 1910; 3 March 1910; 10 March 1910; 24 March 1910; 5 May 1910; 19 May 1910; 11 August 1910; 18 August 1910; 8 September 1910; 12 January 1911; 2 February 1911; 16 February 1911; 23 February 1911; 9 March 1911; 16 March 1911; 30 March 1922; 6 April 1911; 11 May 1911; 18 May 1911; and, 29 June 1911.

The Altus (Oklahoma) Times Democrat. 20 July 1923; 28 September 1923; 11 April 1924; 21 November 1924; 26 June 1925; 6 November 1925; 27 November 1925; 23 July 1926; 15 June 1932; 19 June 1932; 22 June 1932; 22 March 1935; 22 April 1935; 10 August 1938; 22 September 1938; 5 December 1968; 6 December 1968.

The Altus (Oklahoma) Weekly News. 16 December 1909.

The Daily Oklahoman. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. 12 August 1910; 18 August 1910; 28 February 1911; 25 October 1918; 31 December 1923; 22 June 1956; 25 September 1956; 14 October 1956; 10 August 1967; 13 September 1967; 19 September 1967; 25 October 1967; 5 January 1968; 31 January 1968; 13 March 1968; 16 March 1968; 6 May 1968; 8 December 1968.

"Hair, Charles Ernest." 1899 Encyclopedia Biographies, page 5,  
[http://www.usgennet.org/usa/il/county/know/1899\\_bios\\_5.htm](http://www.usgennet.org/usa/il/county/know/1899_bios_5.htm), retrieved 11 August 2007.

The Jackson County Chronicle. Altus, Oklahoma. 23 June 1932.

Minutes, Board of County Commissioners, Jackson County, Oklahoma. 4 April 1910 – 5 July 1910.  
Available Jackson County Clerk's Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Altus, Oklahoma.

Moore, Jessie Randolph. "Tribute to Mrs. Mabel Bassett." The Chronicles of Oklahoma. 32:4 (Winter 1954), 361.

City Directories, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Available Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History City, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1906-1917.

Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Final Survey Report: Reconnaissance of Certain Parts of the City of Altus. Available Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1993.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 27

---

Savage, Cynthia. "The City Beautiful Movement." Oklahoma Encyclopedia of History and Culture, forthcoming.

Veselka, Robert E. The Courthouse Square in Texas. Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 2000.

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

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 28

---

**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

All of Block 28, Original Town of Altus, Jackson County, Oklahoma

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Jackson County Courthouse and the Jackson County Jail. This is the same boundary for the property as in the original thematic nomination that was listed on the National Register in 1984.

---

**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to all photograph numbers except as noted:

Photographer: Cynthia Savage  
Date of Photographs: 10 August 2007  
Negatives: TIFF File