

EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Properties Associated with the Oconee County Penal System *Thematic Review*

and/or common

## 2. Location

street &amp; number \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication \_\_\_\_\_

city, town Walhalla \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of Congressional Districtstate SC code \_\_\_\_\_ county Oconee code \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic	<u>NA</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
<input type="checkbox"/> group		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

## 4. Owner of Property

name Oconee Countystreet & number West Main Streetcity, town Walhalla NA vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state South Carolina 29691

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Oconee County Courthousestreet & number West Main Streetcity, town Walhalla state South Carolina 29691

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Places  
in South Carolina has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1981 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ localdepository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and Historycity, town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		<input type="checkbox"/> NA for jail on wheels

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nomination for the Properties Associated with the Oconee County Penal System includes two properties located within the city limits of Walhalla, the county seat of Oconee County, South Carolina. The properties are the Oconee County Jail, a two-story, brick building constructed between 1901 and 1906, and a jail on wheels, the only remaining one of several metal cages on wheels used as quarters for convicts serving on the county chain gang in the early twentieth century. Although alterations were made to the rear of the jail and it was stuccoed in the 1930s, and the cage is now located on the property of the modern law enforcement center rather than on a work site, both the jail and the cage retain sufficient integrity to convey their historical associations.

Additional Information: The penal system in Oconee County conformed to the county penal system which was enforced throughout South Carolina in the early twentieth century. The county jails of the state were intended for the detention of persons awaiting trial in state courts who were unable to pay bond. If a person was convicted, he was sentenced to serve at hard labor, usually on the county chain gang. Female convicts and convicts not wanted by the county authorities were sent to the state penitentiary. Most convicts served their sentences on the county chain gangs. For example, in 1916, 3266 persons were committed to county chain gangs, while the population of the penitentiary in 1916 was 211.<sup>1</sup>

Like other early twentieth century South Carolina jails, the Oconee County Jail consisted of two sections, the jailer's residence and the jail department. The front portion of the jail served as the jailer's residence and the prisoners were kept in the rear wing.<sup>2</sup>

The county chain gangs were located near the roads on which they were working. Guards usually lived in tents; the convicts' quarters were generally cages, cars, or tents. Cages were used in Oconee County. The cages and cars were on wheels and were usually about seven feet wide, seven feet high, and eighteen feet long. The cars had wooden sides; the cages, which were more common, were made of iron or steel strips, about two inches wide, woven in three- to five-inch squares.<sup>3</sup> In December 1916 visits to some county chain gangs by representatives of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina revealed that at least fourteen other counties in addition to Oconee were using cages as quarters for convicts on their chain gangs.<sup>4</sup>

The resources included in this nomination, the Oconee County Jail and the Oconee County Cage, are the only remaining properties associated with the early twentieth century Oconee County penal system.

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Architecture: The Oconee County Jail is a locally important public building which incorporates several elements of neo-medieval design. The stepped and crenellated parapet, the asymmetrical plan with projecting polygonal bays, and the suggestion of a tower are direct architectural references to the popular conception of a medieval castle. It is likely that this architectural quotation was a deliberate attempt to relate the building's incarcerative function with the image of a medieval donjon, keep, and stronghold. The Oconee County Jail bears a striking resemblance to the Anderson County Jail, which was built ca. 1898 and designed by noted architect Frank P. Milburn. Milburn was known to re-use plans (the plans for the Forsyth County Courthouse in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, were re-used to build the Anderson County Courthouse in Anderson, South Carolina, ca. 1898)\*, and it is possible that the Oconee County Jail was built from plans by Milburn.

\*Frank A. Dickson, Journeys Into the Past: The Anderson Region's Heritage (Anderson: Frank A. Dickson, 1975), p. 47.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) social history

Specific dates 1901-06, 1938-39 Builder/Architect unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Included in the nomination for the Properties Associated with the Oconee County Penal System are the Oconee County Jail, a two-story, brick building constructed between 1901 and 1906, and a jail on wheels, a metal cage on wheels which was used in the early twentieth century to quarter prisoners serving time on the chain gang. The properties are located within the city limits of Walhalla, the county seat of Oconee County, South Carolina. Together these two resources are historically significant as visual reminders of the main components of the early twentieth century penal system in Oconee County and the state, the jail and the chain gang. Oconee County is the only county known to retain both an early jail and a cage or car for chain gang members in a basically unaltered state. In addition, the Oconee County Jail is a locally significant architectural design.

Social History: The Oconee County Jail and the Oconee County Cage reveal information about the treatment of criminals in Oconee County and in the state in the early twentieth century. Since prisoners in county jails were generally persons awaiting trial who were presumably innocent under the law, the social ideal was to hold them for appearance at court, yet prevent them from suffering physically or morally.<sup>5</sup> Life on the county chain gangs was harder. Since idleness was considered detrimental to the character of criminals and since crime was expensive and harmful to society, labor on chain gangs was intended to reform convicts while at the same time not prove physically injurious. The convicts wore leg chains and usually worked from sunrise to sunset. Living conditions were harsh.<sup>6</sup> The cage was one facet of these harsh conditions.

Properties Associated with the Oconee County Penal System  
Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>"The Treatment of Convicts on Some County Chain Gangs," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 3 (March 1917): 31; "Crime and Its Treatment in South Carolina," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Public Welfare 3 (June 1922): 3-5.

<sup>2</sup>Sanborn Map Company, Walhalla, Oconee County, South Carolina (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1906); "What It Means to Be a Prisoner in Some of Our County Jails," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 3 (March 1917): 23.

<sup>3</sup>"County Chain Gangs," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 1 (December 1915): 141.

<sup>4</sup>"The Treatment of Convicts," pp. 32-71.

<sup>5</sup>"What It Means to Be a Prisoner," p. 5.

<sup>6</sup>"The Work of Local Committees of Visitors: A Handbook," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Public Welfare 2 (June 1921): 8; "The Treatment of Convicts," p. 31; "County Chain Gangs," pp. 141-46.

<sup>7</sup>Keowee Courier (Walhalla, S.C.), 8 February, 29 May 1868.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 21 May, 17 September 1869.

<sup>9</sup>Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, Passed at the Regular Session, January - February 1901, p. 861.

<sup>10</sup>Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, Passed at the Regular Session, January - February 1902, p. 1207.

<sup>11</sup>Sanborn Map Company, Walhalla, Oconee County, South Carolina (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1906).

<sup>12</sup>"County Jails," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 1 (December 1915): 106, 127-28.

<sup>13</sup>"County Chain Gangs," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 1 (December 1915): 160.

<sup>14</sup>"Our Third Inspections of the County Chain Gangs," Quarterly Bulletin of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina 3 (December 1917): 175.

<sup>15</sup>Fourth Annual Report of the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina, 1918, to the Governor (Columbia, S.C.: Gonzales and Bryan, 1919), p. 158.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property see individual inventory forms

Quadrangle name see individual inventory forms

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

see individual inventory forms

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	NA	code	county	NA	code
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state	NA	code	county	NA	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Mary Watson	Mark Schader, S.C. Appalachian Council of Governments
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organization	South Carolina Department of Archives and History	date	July 13, 1982
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street & number	1430 Senate Street	telephone	(803) 758-5816
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city or town	Columbia	state	South Carolina 29211
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## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title	Charles E. Lee State Historic Preservation Officer
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date Sept 7, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Patrick Andrews

Chief of Registration

date 11/10/82

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Oconee County Penal System Thematic Resources  
State South Carolina

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Oconee County Cage

Substantive Review

Keeper

Franklin D. Byrd 11/19/82

Attest

Patrick Andrews 11/10/82

2. Oconee County Jail

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Delaney Byrd 11/14/82

Attest

3.

Keeper

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

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