UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY
NOMINATION FORM

OCT 30 1981

Continuation Sheet Item Number Page

Name Historic - Lee County Courthouse

Location - 123 Main Street, Bishopville

Common

Classification - building

Owner - Lee County
c/o County Administrator
Courthouse
Bishopville, S.C. 29010

Representation in Existing Surveys - Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina, 1981

Description - Lee County Courthouse was built in 1908-1909 by contractor Nicholas Ittner of Atlanta. William A. Edwards, of the firm of Edwards and Walter, Atlanta, was the architect.

The courthouse is a three-story brick and stone building of Neoclassical design. A colossal portico in antis defines the facade. The portico features four stone Tuscan columns on stone pedestals, with paired pilasters at the junctions of the portico and the single-bay pavilions which flank the portico. The portico supports an entablature, which circumscribes the building, carrying the discipline of the order to all elements of the courthouse. The entablature has a stone architrave with a double fascia, a cyma recta, and a corona; the architrave is topped by a broad frieze, which is elaborated as an attic story, pierced by wide tripartite windows above the side pavilions, and along the breadth of the side elevations. The central part of the frieze, above the portico, is engraved"LEE COVNTY COVRT HOVSE." A broad cornice,*

Significance - Lee County Courthouse, the first and only courthouse for Lee County, was built six years after the formation of the county in 1902.[1] The courthouse was financed by two bond issues at a cost of $75,000 and was considered one of the finest, most modern courthouses in the state.[2] Lee County, named after Robert E. Lee, was formed from portions of Sumter, Kershaw, and Darlington Counties. Bishopville, an already incorporated town, was chosen for the county seat. The formation of the county was the culmination of several years of effort by the residents of the area in the face of harsh opposition from the parent counties, particularly Darlington County.[3]
The Neoclassical design, the formality of the composition, and the stone and yellow brick construction of the Lee County Courthouse suggest a Roman precedent, both of architecture and**

Acreage 1.1

Verbal Boundary Description - The boundary of the Lee County Courthouse nomination is shown as the red line on the accompanying Lee County Tax Map 30-6, drawn at the scale of 100 feet to 1 inch. The boundary includes the courthouse and its encompassing landscaped lot.

UTM Reference Point - 17/569130/3786270

Other Information

*proportioned according to the colossal portico, crowns the entablature; the cornice consists of a cyma reversa, a fillet, a cyma reversa, a fillet, a small fascia, a larger fascia, and a final cyma reversa. A balustraded parapet is recessed above and behind the entablature. The parapet is of brick, with stone balusters and crown courses, except for the portion above the portico, which is solid stone. This central portion of the parapet features two sculpted escutcheons, topping the pedestals above the pilasters of the portico.

The body of the courthouse is of yellow brick, laid in American Flemish bond, with flush mortar joints. Stone trim is used throughout for window surrounds, water table, and the entablature. The facade, beneath the portico, is five bays with a central doorway and four windows. The doorway features a bracketed architrave and balustraded balcony, which is accessible from a matching doorway on the second floor. The windows are topped with flat gauged-brick arches with stone keystones and imposts. The windows of the second floor have round-arched heads with stone keys. The side pavilions have two-story brick arches encompassing the windows of both stories. The window sash and enframements in the pavilions are of bronze.

The side elevations of the courthouse are three bays wide with paired Tuscan pilasters flanking the central bay. A tabernacle door surround, of stone, is central to both sides.

A two-story addition to the rear of the courthouse is of yellow brick, repeating and continuing the materials and proportions of the original design.

The plan of the courthouse is devised about a central core of offices, with a circumscribing hallway and perimeter offices. The first floor offices retain the crossetted door surrounds and the baseboards. The courtroom is on the second floor; it features five arched windows looking onto the portico and five arched mirrors on the opposite wall. The courtroom is distinguished by an Ionic order, whose fluted pilasters feature festoons suspended across their volutes. The full entablature has a doubled architrave, a cyma reversa and fillet, a plain frieze, and a cornice of a cyma reversa and fillet, an ovolo, and a course of modillion consoles; the cornice supports the coffered ceiling. Simple vertical panels highlight the judge's bench. The courtroom features modern bench pews and wooden wainscoting.

The courthouse occupies a full block in Bishopville. It is surrounded by well-tended trees and shrubbery. A Civil War memorial, a mounted cannon, and a flagpole occupy the courthouse grounds. The courthouse is located adjacent to the commercial center of Bishopville.

**of law, which suggestion is used to establish and enhance the authority of the new county's government. The Roman precedent is further suggested by the lettering of the frieze "LEE COVNTY COVRT HOVSE," wherein a Roman V is used instead of the English U. The details of the Tuscan order of the portico, and the discipline imposed on the entire building by this central feature, reflect Edwards's talents as an architect. In the courtroom the plan of the building did not allow for windows on the east wall in response to those of the west wall; accordingly, Edwards maintained symmetry and improved the efficiency of the natural lighting by placing an arcade of mirrors along the east wall, reflecting the form and light of the windows.

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[1]Historical Records Survey Division of Women's and Professional Projects, Works Progress Administration, Inventory of the County Archives of South Carolina, #31, Lee County (Columbia, S.C.: Historical Records Survey, 1937), p. 2; Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina (Columbia, S.C.: State Co., 1902), pp. 1194-1201.

[2]Inventory, p. 8.

[3]Inventory, p. 2; A. W. Dick, G. R. McElveen, and Laurence M. Peebles, Lee County: Economic and Social (Columbia, S.C.: Department of Rural Social Sciences of the University of South Carolina, 1925), p. 5.