

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 determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name John C. Calhoun State Office Building
other names/site number State Office Building, Calhoun Building

2. Location

street & number 1015 Sumter Street not for publication
city or town Columbia vicinity
state South Carolina code SC county Richland Code 079 29201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide local

Signature of certifying official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Government Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Cement
walls: Limestone
Brick
roof: Terra Cotta
other: Granite

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1926-1940

Significant Dates

1935

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Tatum, Harold
Medary, Milton B.

Period of Significance (justification)

This period corresponds to Chief Commissioner Benjamin Sawyer's leadership of the Highway Department, an era in which the agency matured from a fledgling department into one with significant statewide power.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: **South Carolina Department of Archives and History and the South Caroliniana Library**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>497104</u>	<u>3762136</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

Richland County, South Carolina, Parcel R11304-01-01

The John C. Calhoun State Office Building is the northeastern building in the tax lot. The building footprint is surrounded by a heavy black line on the attached Richland County GIS Map, at a scale of 1" = 110'.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property is restricted to the building footprint.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Anjuli Grantham</u>		
organization	<u>University of South Carolina Public History Program</u>	date	<u>26 July 2011</u>
street & number	<u>Gambrell Hall 245</u>	telephone	<u>(206) 437-1734</u>
city or town	<u>Columbia</u>	state	<u>SC</u> zip code <u>29208</u>
e-mail	<u>anjuli_fair@hotmail.com</u>		

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: John C. Calhoun State Office Building

City or Vicinity: Columbia

County: Richland County **State:** South Carolina

Photographer: Anjuli Grantham

Date Photographed: October 15, 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 25 East Elevation
- 2 of 25 East Elevation Oblique
- 3 of 25 North Elevation
- 4 of 25 South Elevation
- 5 of 25 Southwest Oblique
- 6 of 25 South Oblique
- 7 of 25 Southeast Oblique
- 8 of 25 East Elevation
- 9 of 25 East Elevation, Detail of Entablature, Cornice, Cartouches and Pilasters
- 10 of 25 East Elevation, Detail of Entablature, Cornice, Cartouches and Pilasters
- 11 of 25 Detail of Entablature, Cornice and Pilasters
- 12 of 25 East Elevation Entrance
- 13 of 25 East Elevation Entrance, Detail of Balustraded Hood and Brackets
- 14 of 25 East Elevation Entrance, Detail
- 15 of 25 East Elevation Entrance, Detail
- 16 of 25 East Elevation Lantern
- 17 of 25 Pilasters, Detail
- 18 of 25 Entablature and Cornice Detail
- 19 of 25 North Elevation, Detail of Festooned Ornamentation
- 20 of 25 North Elevation, Detail of Palmetto Cartouche over Central Door
- 21 of 25 East Elevation, Raised Basement
- 22 of 25 West Elevation, Wheelchair Ramp
- 23 of 25 West Elevation, Raised Basement
- 24 of 25 Setting, Looking North
- 25 of 25 Setting, Looking West from North Elevation

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Description

Summary Paragraph

The John C. Calhoun State Office Building is an Italian Renaissance Revival style building constructed in 1926. It is a five story, I-shaped limestone building over a raised basement with forward-projecting wings, a recessed core and baroque massing. It has a two-story brick and limestone rooftop pavilion with a clay tile hipped roof. Ionic order pilasters grace the exterior walls, and a detailed entablature encircles the entire building. It rests adjacent to the well-manicured grounds of the South Carolina State House, listed in the National Register of Historic Places 5 June 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark 11 May 1976. To the east is the Wade Hampton State Office Building, listed in the National Register of Historic Places 7 March 2007, and to the south is the Edgar A. Brown Building, another state office building. The building's interior was altered in 1954 and again in 1988. The 1988 alteration focused on rehabilitating the courtrooms and creating modern office spaces. Neither alteration substantially changed the lobbies, corridors or the historical appearance of the main courtroom. The exterior alterations were minor and do not change the original appearance of the building. The Calhoun Building maintains integrity of place, feeling and design.

East Elevation

The raised basement is made of rusticated limestone with deeply indented mortar joints and a granite base. The recessed core's raised basement includes two arched windows with limestone surround and a keystone on each side of the main steps. A protruding water table separates the raised basement from the first floor. The stairs are made of limestone except the top step, which is made of granite. These steps end at a concrete terrace which was poured in the 1960s. This in turn was topped by Dex-O-Tex in the 1988 renovation. Slate flagstones, installed in 1988, are between the landing and main door. Rectangular flagstones form a border for the interlocking diamond flagstones within. Surrounding the terrace is a classical balustrade with limestone balusters and granite rails.

The Sumter Street-facing east elevation is the primary entrance to the building. The door is deeply recessed and double leafed with a transom. The door and transom are ornamented with a finely detailed, yellow-white painted wrought iron grill, which rests over the glass. The door is shouldered with festooned lintels; above the door there is foliated ornamentation. This ornamentation ends at the door's balustraded hood, which is supported by three heavily foliated brackets. On each side of the door there is an iron electric lamp of exceptional workmanship.

The recessed core is composed of limestone wall pilasters with an implied Doric capital that rise from the first to the third floor. Three metal casement windows flank each side of the door. Per each wing, four limestone fluted Ionic pilasters rise from the first floor to the top of the third floor. Windows wrap around the projecting wings. There are three metal casement windows per wing; each window is separated by a pilaster. The second and third floors of the east elevation's recessed core contain seven multi-light elongated windows with a vertical form. These windows span from the second floor to the top of the third floor. Windows of the same description wrap around the projecting wings and three such windows grace each of the wings. The windows end at an entablature that wraps the entire building. The entablature consists of a plain frieze punctuated with eagles encircled in wreaths. These eagles correspond to the fluted pilaster or wall pilaster below. The eagle's wings are outstretched except for those that are above the innermost and outermost pilasters; their wings are folded and stay within the wreath. Egg and dart molding and a dentil line the top of the frieze. Roaring lion heads rest upon the cornice.

A two-story rooftop pavilion sits atop the third floor. In the recessed core, the pavilion is composed of seven two-story blind arches made of brick that are punctuated with limestone pilasters of the Tuscan order. Each arch contains a pair of double hung windows; one pair corresponds to each floor. Between the third and fourth floors rest two cartouches. Both are festooned shields carved with the primary imagery from the state seal. The southern cartouche bears the image of a woman holding a laurel branch and the northern cartouche depicts the palmetto tree. The wings of the fourth floor's rooftop pavilion are made of limestone, which rise to a parapet of the Doric order. Over the fourth floor's wings there is one limestone roundel on each of the two brick surfaces separated by limestone pilasters. The fifth floor lacks wings and is made of buff colored brick. The terra cotta tile hipped roof is punctuated with two decorative penthouses of face brick and limestone; one is at the south of the building and the other to the north. Limestone pedestal-like pilasters surround a roof ventilator with arched louvered panels set in the face brick of the decorative penthouses.

North Elevation

The north wing's raised basement has three metal casement windows that correspond to the windows above on subsequent floors. A granite staircase rises to the first floor of the north elevation. A relieving arch under the stairs creates a portal entry for the raised basement on both sides of the steps. Subsequently, the portal leads to two doors that enter the raised basement. A lamp standard sits atop the main staircase's cheeks. Four limestone fluted pilasters of the Ionic order rise from the bottom of the first floor to the top of the third floor from the projecting central pavilion.

On the north elevation's first floor there are two metal casement windows on each side of the central pavilion. These, like the east elevation, are directly under the windows of the floors above and below. The north elevation was the intended front of the building, as the State House is situated to the building's northeast; as a result there are three doors, each double leafed with a transom and the same fine iron grillwork as the east elevation. The center door is deeply recessed with floral ornamented shouldering. Above the middle of the door is a festooned cartouche bearing the palmetto tree with rolling hills behind it and arrows or spears at its base. Above the cartouche is more foliage followed by the hood of the door. This hood is identical to that of the east elevation

except there are only two foliated brackets rather than three supporting the balustrade. The two doors flanking the middle door lack hoods, but they do have festooned cartouches with a simple palmetto in the center. The second and third floors of the north elevation have elongated windows that stretch from the second floor to the top of the third floor. Three windows on the projecting central pavilion correlate to the doors below, and two windows on each side of the pavilion also correlate to the windows above and below.

Above the entablature rests the rooftop pavilion. Four short paneled pedestal-like pilasters rise from the entablature on the projecting pavilion to above the fourth floor. These pilasters correspond to the pilasters below. Three sets of paired windows are in between the pilasters. Two pairs of these same windows sit on either side of the fourth floor's projecting pavilion. The fifth floor is made of brick and has six pedestal-like limestone pilasters that rise to the roof. A central French-style door opens to a rooftop terrace. Three pairs of windows sit beneath three blind arches made of brick. To the east and west of the blind arches is a single window topped with a roundel. From this elevation, one can see the rooftop penthouse. The core of the penthouse is made of face brick inset with three small arched windows. The core is flanked by wings made of brick with limestone pedestal-like pilasters that rise above the core. Each wing contains one arched louvered roof ventilator. The penthouse is also capped with clay tiles.

West Elevation

The west elevation is identical to the east elevation except for alterations to the raised basement and terrace. A wheelchair ramp slopes down from the north side of the stairs to the raised basement and terminates at a door inset in the arched space formerly occupied by a window. To the south of the steps is a small staircase that terminates at another door inset into the former space of an arched window. The northernmost window on the south wing has been replaced with a vent, as well.

South Elevation

The south elevation is similar to the north, except there is no staircase and there are no doors. As a result, on the ground floor there are two windows on each side of the central pavilion and three in the pavilion itself. The eastern-most window of the ground floor's central pavilion has been replaced with a vent, as have the two windows to the east of it. Rather than having three doors on the first floor like the north elevation, there are three windows. In every other regard the south elevation is identical to the north elevation.

State House Grounds and Conclusion

The South Carolina State House grounds have expanded dramatically since the Calhoun Building's construction. A pedestrian mall replaced Senate Street directly to the north of the building. State office buildings now line Pendleton Street to the south and Assembly Street to the west. Regardless of these changes, the growth of the State House complex has not detracted from the integrity of the Calhoun Building's setting in any way.

Although the Calhoun Building has been altered on the interior in order to adapt the space for modern office use, these alterations have been made sensitively and within the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. There are areas of cracking and staining to the exterior limestone due to age and poorly implemented past repairs, but the Calhoun Building still retains its original footprint, façade, and appearance from when it was constructed in 1926.

Statement of Significance

The John C. Calhoun State Office Building, built in 1926, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the Area of Significance for Architecture as an important example of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture in the capital city of South Carolina. Furthermore, it is the work of Harold Tatum, South Carolinian architect of note. Nationally recognized architect Milton Medary served as the consulting architect to the project as well. The Calhoun Building is also eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the Area of Significance for Politics/Government for to its association with the South Carolina State Highway Department, the Calhoun Building's primary tenant until 1952. From 1926 to 1940, the department experienced incredible growth under the leadership of Chief Highway Commissioner Benjamin M. Sawyer. Sawyer was at the helm when the National Guard seized and occupied the Calhoun Building from October to December 1935 under the orders of Governor Olin D. Johnston. When resolved, this incident formed a legal precedent ensuring that elected officials cannot use military force to solve political or civil disputes.³

Criterion C: Architecture

Architectural Significance and History of Construction

The Calhoun Building is a fine example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style of architecture in a public building. It is a noted work by South Carolina architect Harold Tatum, and it is significant due to its association with consulting architect Milton Medary, who was president of the American Institute of Architects during the construction of the building.⁴

By 1923, the South Carolina State House was too small to house the state's departments, bureaus and courts. As a result, state employees worked in rented office spaces in disparate areas of Columbia. The Sinking Fund Commission (the present day Budget and Control Board) ascertained that it would be fiscally and practically responsible to construct a state office building to unite most state employees under one roof. On February 4, 1924, the General Assembly concurred and approved an act to allow the construction of South Carolina's first state office building.⁵

Ads were printed in *The State*, one of Columbia's daily newspapers and the most influential in South Carolina, soliciting site proposals and qualified architects. In the interim, a local architecture firm was hired to ascertain the amount of rented space state employees occupied in and around Columbia.⁶ In March 1924, two neighboring sites were purchased: the first for \$34,500 from Trinity Episcopal Church and the other for \$17,391.19 from B.F.P. Leaphart.⁷ These two lots were directly southwest from the State House and together measured "13 feet on Senate Street and 208 feet on Sumter Street."⁸

³ John Hammond Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), p. 115.

⁴ Sandra L. Tatman, "Medary, Milton Bennett, Jr. (1874-1929)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings, at http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/27096 (accessed November 10, 2009).

⁵ Sinking Fund Commission Minutes, March 4, 1924, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C. (Hereafter referred to as SFC Minutes.)

⁶ Columbia architects Lafaye & Lafaye were contracted for this task. SFC Minutes, March 4, 1924.

⁷ Financial Statement on Proposed State Office Building Submitted by the Sinking Fund Commission, Joint Committee on Printing, South Caroliniana Library.

⁸ M.J. Miller, "Report of the Sinking Fund Commission to the General Assembly of South Carolina Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 1924," Joint Committee on Printing General Assembly of South Carolina, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

The Sinking Fund Commission (SFC) decided against instituting a design competition for the selection of an architect and instead received inquiries from ten interested prospects, all South Carolina residents.⁹ Before making their selection, it was decided that “if the Commission appoint a South Carolina architect, that it be done on the condition that the architect appointed employ at his own expense a consulting architect of recognized ability and who is acceptable to the Sinking Fund Commission to consult with him.”¹⁰ In late April, Harold Tatum was selected by ballot.

Harold Tatum (1887-1958) was a resident of Columbia at the time of the Calhoun Building’s conception and construction. Prior to moving to Columbia, Tatum had studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania under Paul Pierre Cret, the Ecole des Beaux-Arts trained architect who profoundly influenced modern classical design. Tatum worked with the Philadelphia architecture firms Rankin, Kellogg & Crane and Day & Klauder. During his tenure at Day & Klauder he contributed to designs for several universities. These projects included the Harkness Memorial Dormitory at Yale, the freshman dining hall and dormitories at Princeton, and buildings at the University of Colorado.

Tatum opened an office in Columbia with James E. Hunter in 1920. After completing the Calhoun Building, he had an office with Charles Coker Wilson in Columbia from 1929 until Wilson’s death in 1932.¹¹ Tatum was one of the few university-trained architects in Columbia during the 1930s.¹² In 1934 he moved to Charleston, where he worked with R.L. Boinset until he opened his own office in Charleston in 1936. Tatum’s work in South Carolina includes residences in Columbia (1921-1932), the Sumter County Jail (1927), the Industrial School in Sumter (1927), the Monarch Mills School in Union (1923), a Methodist Church in Lockhart (1924), the United States Courthouse in Columbia (1936), and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Charleston (1950), among others.¹³ Per the instructions of the SFC, by the beginning of May Tatum had selected Milton Medary as the consulting architect, who the SFC readily approved.¹⁴ If the SFC had any misgivings about their selection of Tatum, his partnering with Medary quickly soothed them.

Consulting architect Milton Medary was a well-known Philadelphia architect and a partner in the firm Zantzinger, Borie and Medary. He had an impressive list of professional accomplishments and accolades. President Warren G. Harding had appointed Medary to the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and during World War I the U.S. Housing Corporation contracted him to design the workers’ village of Bethlehem near Pittsburgh. President Coolidge appointed him as a member of the National Capitol Park and Planning Commission, where he influenced the design of the District of Columbia. His firm designed the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Treasury Department’s office buildings.¹⁵ Two of Medary’s most important independent designs are the Bok Carillin Tower in Mountain Lake, Florida and the Washington Memorial

⁹ SFC Minutes, March 11, 1924 and March 12, 1924.

¹⁰ SFC Minutes, March 24, 1924.

¹¹ Wilson was one of the most influential architects in South Carolina during the early 20th Century. See Felzer, Lissa. *Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, Charleston County, South Carolina*. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 2004.

¹² United States Courthouse, Richland County, South Carolina. Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1978.

¹³ Robert E. Dalton and John E. Wells, *The South Carolina Architects 1885-1935 A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1992), 176. The United States Courthouse in Columbia was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. It is also designed in the Renaissance Revival style, and it is distinctive due to the use of poured concrete in its construction. The Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity in Charleston is of the Byzantine Revival style and was listed in the National Register in 2004. See their respective National Register of Historic Places nominations.

¹⁴ SFC Minutes, May 2, 1924.

¹⁵ Rebecca G. Fulmer, “The Life and Times of the Calhoun Building: A Brief History of the First State Office Building,” March 30, 1989. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, State Historic Preservation Office.

Chapel at Valley Forge. Furthermore, Medary was president of the American Institute of Architects from 1926-1928, a period which corresponds to the design, construction, and dedication of the Calhoun Building.

Medary met with the SFC and “gave the Commission his views in regard to the future development in the vicinity of the State House and gave his unqualified approval of the preliminary studies of the state office building.”¹⁶ The SFC directed Tatum to draft plans for both a four and five story structure in case full financing was not available. By November 1924, Tatum and Medary presented the complete plans for approval, and the SFC opened bids for construction.¹⁷ Before Christmas, George A. Fuller Company was selected as the general contractor, W.B. Guimarin & Company chosen to do the plumbing, and the Otis Elevator Company would install the elevators.

Before construction could fully begin, however, funds had to be allocated. The House of Representatives initially approved a construction cost of \$400,000, which the Senate increased to \$500,000. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court decided that they too needed to have offices in the new building, as “the quarters occupied by the Supreme Court...are entirely inadequate and not suited to their needs.” This necessitated the addition of 12,000 square feet to the building, increasing the cost well beyond the allocation.¹⁸ All agreements with the contractors were terminated in April 1925 as Tatum altered the blueprints and eliminated the top two floors of the building in order to keep the cost under \$500,000. The SFC asserted its influence to strongly recommend that the General Assembly increase funding, arguing that it would be less expensive to include the two floors at the time of construction rather than adding them at a later date.¹⁹ In March 1926, the General Assembly relented and increased the amount of funding to \$800,000. Tatum’s plans prevailed.

The building was near completion and mostly occupied by the end of 1926. The State Highway Department’s Motor Vehicle Division and a barbershop set up offices on the ground floor; the SFC, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce and Industries, State Railroad Commission, the Chief Game Warden and a cigar stand were on the first floor; the Highway Department had the entirety of the second floor; the State Tax Commission and the Department of Education occupied the third floor; the State Warehouse Commissioner, State Board of Health, Clemson College’s Livestock Sanitation Department, and the State Insurance Commissioner were on the fourth floor. The Supreme Court was meant to occupy the fifth floor.²⁰

Governor Thomas G. McLeod dedicated the State Office Building on January 5, 1927. Reverend Henry D. Phillips from the same Trinity Episcopal Church that once occupied the site of the Calhoun Building offered the opening prayer. A quartet composed of the governor’s secretary and employees from the Highway Department led the audience in singing “America.” Members of the SFC and the representatives who sponsored the funding bills were acknowledged in the dedication, since, according to one citizen of Laurens County, the new State Office Building was a “monument of pride, a building which will reflect credit upon the state of South Carolina and upon those who co-operated in its erection.”²¹ These individuals were also recognized with a plaque bearing their names in the main lobby.

During its dedication, the building was credited as being both beautiful and economically prudent. According to Tatum the cost of construction was “considerably less than any similar buildings erected at the same time.” In

¹⁶ SFC Minutes, July 12, 1924 There is no indication what Medary proposed concerning the future of the State House grounds.

¹⁷ SFC Minutes, November 10, 1924.

¹⁸ Miller, M.J., “Report of the Sinking Fund Commission...”

¹⁹ SFC Minutes, January 22, 1926.

²⁰ *The State*, January 2, 1927, “South Carolina’s New State Office Building.”

²¹ *The State*, January 6, 1927, “Office Building Formally Opened.”

the end, the building cost \$799,821.²² Tatum reminded those present that, “the authorized amount has not been exceeded and I wish the Sinking Fund Commission and the state to feel that they have been served faithfully and well in the building of a milestone to which not only the present but future generations can point with just pride.” Governor McLeod concurred that, “the object of this building is greater and more efficient service to the people of South Carolina...Let all who labor here remember they are the servants of the owners of this building.”²³

Others agreed with Tatum that the thrifty, efficient construction was a boon to the state. According to one resident,

Perhaps the greatest value [of the building] will be as another demonstration that our state is able to carry out a splendid piece of construction work in a workmanlike manner. Every citizen in this state is part owner and as he looks at this beautiful building he can say private enterprise could not have built it as economically. It is proof of South Carolina’s efficiency. We need not be afraid of the next job.²⁴

Considering it took nearly fifty years to finish the State House, the comparatively rapid construction of the State Office Building seemed to be a point of pride with South Carolinians. Moreover, it was one of the only building projects of note in the city of Columbia during the 1920s.²⁵

The Calhoun Building’s dedication did not mean the end of work. After Tatum redesigned the building in order to accommodate the Supreme Court, members of the Court complained that the acoustics in the new courtroom were poor and that there wasn’t a doorway between the library and conference room. They refused to vacate the State House in the end. Thousands of dollars more had to be spent in order to convert the courtroom and judge chambers into serviceable office spaces.²⁶

The Highway Department continued to be the most prominent department in the building until it moved to its own building in 1952. The Tax Commission then replaced the Highway Department as the primary tenant. Soon after (1953-1954) the State Office Building underwent its first alteration.²⁷ Architect Heyward B. Singley designed the \$600,000 renovation, and upon completion the State Office Building was renamed the John C. Calhoun State Office Building. The name wasn’t used often, however, since it was typically referred to as the Tax Commission Building until that department vacated the Calhoun Building in 1986.²⁸

In 1983, the new State Court of Appeals needed a courthouse and judges’ chambers. Few individuals remembered that the increasingly deteriorating Calhoun Building had originally been designed to hold the State Supreme Court. Through some sleuthing, it was discovered that the courthouses’ original plaster ceiling remained. The state legislature approved a \$6,000,000 bond to restore and rehabilitate the Calhoun Building for the purpose of housing the State Court of Appeals, and the architectural firm of Stevens and Wilkinson headed

²² *The State*, Sesquicentennial Edition, “State Office Building Financed Out of Rentals Previously Paid for Scattered Private Premises.”

²³ *The State*, January 6, 1927, “Office Building Formally Opened.”

²⁴ *The State*, January 6, 1927, “Reads Lessons in Carolina in State Office Building.”

²⁵ John Hammond Moore, *Columbia and Richland County* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 331.

²⁶ Fulmer.

²⁷ One document claims that Singley completed the renovation in 1953, but the plaque in the lobby of the Calhoun Building claims that the renovation occurred in 1954. [Heyward Singley]. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, file at the State Historic Preservation Office.

²⁸ Fulmer.

the project. In 1988, the South Carolina Court of Appeals moved in to the restored chambers and courtrooms of the Calhoun Building.²⁹ Currently (2011) they are the building's sole tenants.

Criterion A: Politics and Government

The Calhoun Building and the State Highway Department

The State Highway Department was less than 10 years old when the Calhoun Building was proposed, but it was well on its way to being one of the most powerful agencies in the state. In fact, during the construction of the Calhoun Building, the department requested its own state office building separate from the proposed space, and very nearly received approval from the Sinking Fund Commission. The Highway Department initially refused to fund any portion of the Calhoun Building's construction in retaliation for this denial, but eventually the department relented and financially contributed to the Calhoun Building's construction and became its primary tenant.³⁰

The Highway Department not only moved into new offices in 1926, it also got a new Chief Highway Commissioner, Benjamin M. Sawyer. From 1926 until his death in 1940, Ben Sawyer served as the head of the Highway Department. Sawyer's unwavering focus fostered incredible growth in the Highway Department. Sawyer saw that improving the number and condition of roads in the state would facilitate statewide progress and growth. Indeed, advancing this progress would be a large undertaking, as in 1925 only 10% of state roads were paved. In order to improve transportation in the state, the Highway Department, led by Sawyer, supported the 1929 Bond Bill to fund statewide road construction. With Ben Sawyer at the helm and the Bond Bill in place, the Highway Department emerged from its infancy into becoming a full-fledged powerbroker in the state.

Support for the Bond Bill and Sawyer's concomitant power was not unanimous, however. The primary opponent to the bill, Representative Olin DeWitt Johnston, charged that the Bond Bill would bankrupt the state. He felt that the upcountry would pay for the roads of the lowcountry (which he represented). When the Bond Bill passed, Johnston claimed that it was due to Ben Sawyer's excessive influence.³¹ A long-lasting feud was set in place.

By 1932, the Highway Department had sold \$50 million in bonds while the total state budget was only \$8 million that same year.³² In an effort to curtail the ascending power of the Highway Department and the State Highway Commission headed by Ben Sawyer, as Rep. Johnston campaigned for governor in 1934 he promised to fire Sawyer and reorganize the State Highway Commission, beginning what *The State* referred to as the "Olin-Ben War."³³ Johnston was elected and took office in January 1935. During his inaugural address, Gov. Johnston demanded that Ben Sawyer and the entire Highway Commission resign immediately.³⁴

No resignations came from the offices of the Calhoun Building. Governor Johnston next step was to use the legislature to reorganize the State Highway Commission, but Johnston's bill was shanghaied by his opponents

²⁹ Fulmer.

³⁰ See SFC Minutes, March 12, 1924, July 12, 1924 and June 22, 1925 and Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 63.

³¹ Jay Bender, "Olin D. Johnston and the Highway Controversy," *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association 1972* (Columbia: South Carolina Historical Association, 1972), 40. Johnston lost his bid for governor in 1930 and blamed Sawyer for his defeat.

³² R. Phillip Stone II, "Bond Bill" in *The South Carolina Encyclopedia* edited by Walter Edgar (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 87.

³³ This discussion has been condensed for brevity. For detailed information concerning the "Olin-Ben War," see the cited materials.

³⁴ Bender, "Olin D. Johnston and the Highway Controversy," 40.

and markedly changed. In May of 1935, Governor Johnston vetoed Sawyer's salary as part of the state appropriations bill. The Commission turned to paying Sawyer's salary from a fund the governor could not access.³⁵

Next, in August, Johnston threatened not to sign any road construction bonds while Sawyer was still in office. In September and October, Johnston declared that the terms of four of the commissioners had expired, three of whom he quickly replaced with his own appointees. Later in October, Johnston charged three additional commissioners with "conspiracy, illegal procedures, fraudulent expense reports, and numerous other foul deeds."³⁶ Soon after, Chief Justice John G. Stabler of the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the new commissioners appointed by Johnston would only be approved after a hearing in which they proved they were worthy of their appointment.

Governor Johnston had spent ten months attempting to oust Sawyer from the Highway Department without any success whatsoever. He decided to turn to more drastic measures. On October 28, 1935, Johnston issued a proclamation claiming there was a state of "rebellion, insurrection, resistance and insurgency ... against the laws of South Carolina in connections with the ...management ...of the State Highway Department." He called to active duty in Columbia the National Guard machine gun unit Company D, 118th Infantry commanded by Major Frank Barnwell with instructions to "take immediate charge of all... buildings" under the jurisdiction of the Highway Department.³⁷ That morning, sixty-five National Guardsmen stood outside the Calhoun Building under orders to bar Ben Sawyer from entering.³⁸ As the confrontation unfolded, armed guardsmen stood in each of the building's offices, in the halls and at the outside doors. Machine guns were placed at each entrance. As a result of this dramatic gesture, Governor Johnston gained the moniker "Machine Gun Olin." Governor Johnston immediately supplanted the entire Highway Commission, including Sawyer, who the governor replaced with Joe Calus.³⁹ Calus called for the immediate resignation of all department employees, whom he subsequently rehired. Governor Johnston had an armed escort accompany the newly appointed managers at all times.

Although Johnston had succeeded in removing Sawyer, in his executive proclamation he neglected to mention a key component to the department's management- the agency's finances. As a result, federal authorities asserted that no highway funds set aside for South Carolina would be distributed until the situation was resolved. The South Carolina Supreme Court froze all department funds until it was ascertained that Johnston's appointments were legal. Due to the financial chaos, some department employees were paid in cash earned from the sale of auto license tags; others were not paid for as long as two months.

On December 5, the South Carolina Supreme Court decided that the commissioner appointments made by Johnston were invalid, and the original commissioners were reinstated. The court also overruled the appointment of Joe Calus. The Court stated that

The avowed purpose of the governor to remove Ben Sawyer and all of the plaintiffs as highway commissioners is wholly unrelated to the power given him by the Constitution and the Statutes to declare

³⁵ Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 107, 108.

³⁶ Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 109. As the controversy came to a crescendo, opponents provided evidence that Gov. Johnston was involved in similar "foul deeds." See Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 120.

³⁷ *Hearon v. Calus, Reports of Cases Heard and Determined by the South Carolina Supreme Court v. 178* (South Carolina Supreme Court 1935), 384.

³⁸ Interestingly enough, Sawyer was a reserve lieutenant colonel in the National Guard. See Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 157.

³⁹ Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 111.

a state of insurrection, and is beyond that power. His use of the militia to take possession, under the muzzles of machine guns and rifles, of the offices of the plaintiffs as State Highway Commissioners is authority and is in excess of his constitutional power... He has not power or right in law to use the militia to discharge the duties of civil office.⁴⁰

Regardless of the Court's decision, Johnston did not call off the militia, and on December 6 he put the Highway Department under the military control of Major Barnwell. Moreover, on December 7, he suspended Sawyer and the other re-instated commissioners for a second time.

Johnston called a special session in the state legislature to approve the popular election of highway commissioners. His efforts were blocked again on December 22 when the Senate passed a resolution "stating that no legislation would be passed until troops were removed" from the Calhoun Building.⁴¹ A compromise came forth after several days of stalemate. A temporary commission was given the power to use money from the state treasury for Highway Department purposes until the department's money was released. The troops were finally removed from the Calhoun Building on December 20.

There were varied public responses to Johnston's seizure of the Calhoun Building. Newspaper editors voiced concerns over Governor Johnston's actions. The *Charleston News & Courier* referred to him as "Herr Johnston" and the *New York Times* published a tongue-in-cheek review of the events that transpired in Columbia.⁴² Interestingly though, the governor's supporters in the upcountry of South Carolina applauded his efforts and believed that he was well within his bounds.

By February 1936, Ben Sawyer was reinstated as Chief Commissioner. In April, the Supreme Court unanimously nullified the governor's removal of the ten commissioners. In May, the Triple Road Act became law. It regulated the price of auto tags, approved new protocol for the election of highway commissioners, and retracted the right of the governor to sign road bonds. In a supreme blow to Johnston's efforts, the governor actually lost power over the Highway Department as a result of the fiasco. After 17 months, the "Olin-Ben War" had come to a close. According to historian John Hammond Moore, this skirmish and the subsequent court decision serves as a precedent ensuring that "an elected official cannot carry out civil obligations with military power that may be at his disposal."⁴³

Olin Johnston served as governor until 1938, and served again from 1943-1945. He went on to serve as a United States Senator from 1945 until his death in 1965. Ben Sawyer served as Chief Commissioner to the Highway Department until his death in 1940. At his memorial service, his work for the state was thus eulogized: "Ben M. Sawyer the Builder! He found his work... in building this great utility in the State Highway System, these ribbons of cement that converge on the capital city from every border of our State like veritable spokes in the great wheel all centering in the hub."⁴⁴ Under the direction of Sawyer, the Highway Department grew from an agency with two hundred fifty full time employees to one with several thousand employees.⁴⁵ He nurtured the financial growth and professionalization of the agency. Indeed, he was considered the most powerful man in the state during his tenure.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Hearon v. Calus*, 414.

⁴¹ Bender, "Olin Johnston and the Highway Controversy," 46.

⁴² Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 114.

⁴³ Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 115.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 133.

⁴⁵ Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917-1987*, 157.

⁴⁶ Bender, "Olin Johnston and the Highway Controversy," 50, 51.

John C. Calhoun State Office Building
Name of Property

Richland County, South Carolina
County and State

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