

PH0692174

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED OCT 26 1976

DATE ENTERED DEC 12 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Wise County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Decatur

VICINITY OF

17

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Texas

048

Wise

497

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

X BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

X PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

X OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

X GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wise County

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Decatur

VICINITY OF

STATE

Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wise County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Decatur

STATE

Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Inventory & Recorded Texas Historic Landmark

DATE

1970 & 1964

FEDERAL X STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The design of J. Riely Gordon for the Wise County Courthouse was similar to but not identical with his design for the Ellis County Courthouse. One of a number of Texas courthouses designed by J. Riely Gordon in a Romanesque Revival idiom, the Wise County Courthouse exhibits a number of characteristics of form, such as, the use of turrets, a tower, broken massing, and fine ashlar masonry of contrasting textures. In addition, it reveals the Greek cross plan developed by Gordon with access at the four reentrants and a central stair.

The broken massing produced by the cruciform plan lent itself readily to the stylistic vocabulary of the Romanesque Revival. Turrets and dormers mark the east and west facades. At the north and south elevations the arms of the cross are connected visually by the swinging curve of the four entry pavilions. The central tower with its bartizans, setbacks and dormers dominates the composition.

Particularly distinctive is the fine masonry work throughout. Exterior walls were of Texas granite. The specifications called for "quality granite in two colors selected by the architect . . . laid up in pitch-faced and pean hammered alternating courses with pointed beds and joints." The main columns were of polished pink granite. Terra cotta in the friezes, turrets and dormers was used extensively. For the roof, "the best quality Bangor slate of very light blue color" was specified.

The interior was appointed with equal attention to detail. The floors were a finish of marble tiles of contrasting hue in a checkerboard pattern. Bases and wainscoting in the lobbies, halls and stairways were also of marble.

The outstanding and distinctive quality of the construction and overall design of the Wise County Courthouse mark it as worthy of conservation.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1895-1897

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

J. Riely Gordon

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wise County named for Henry A. Wise of Virginia was created from Cooke County in 1856 and organized in the same year with Taylorsville, later renamed Decatur as the county seat. The first courthouse was built in 1860. On October 13 of that year, the Clarksville Standard advertised that "the building of a courthouse will be let to the lowest responsible bidder. . . in Novemver 1860." It was specified to be "a frame building thirty-six feet square, two stories high." The contractor was to furnish materials. On November 26, 1881, this building was destroyed by fire. By great effort the county records were saved. The Fort Worth Daily Democrat reported that, "the loss will be a serious one to the county, but it will be the means of securing a new courthouse which was very much needed."

Architect R.F. Sayers was chosen by the County Commissioners on December 15, 1881, to prepare plans and specifications for the construction of a new courthouse. The plans were to contain, "one large room for the County Clerk, one large room for the Collector and Treasurer and not less than four other rooms and one sufficiently large for the County Court. Also three fire-proof vaults below the stairs, one for the County Clerk, one for the Distric Clerk, and a small vault for the Treasurer. The arrangement upstairs will comprise one Large Court Room, Grand and Petit Jury Rooms." For the design and supervision of this project, architect Sayers was to receive the sum of \$1,200. On February 25, 1882 the contract was let to the firm of W. Johnson and Tom Hogan for stonework at a price of \$18,735.00 and to Joseph Kane, contractor, for all other work totaling \$15,600. In March, Sayers was discharged for failure to inspect the work and J. Kane was hired as supervisor. By December 1882, the work was largely complete.

On January 9, 1895, flames destroyed the second courthouse. Following the fire the County Commissioners rented a building from the Wise County National Bank to serve as a temporary seat and proceeded to deliberate on the choice of an architect to design a new courthouse. The commissioners were allotted \$3.00 a day to travel to San Antonio and other points to inspect local Temples of Justice.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robinson, Willard B. & Webb, Todd, Texas Public Buildings of the Nineteenth Century, Austin, 1974.
The Clarksville Standard, October 13, 1860
Fort Worth Daily Democrat, November 27, 1881
Wise County Commissioners' Court Minutes Vol. 7

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2

UTM REFERENCES

A 14 631690 3677950
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Spur 357 and FM 730 - public square

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Willard B. Robinson, Professor of Architecture
S. Elizabeth Sasser, Research Associate 8/24/76
ORGANIZATION DATE
Division of Architecture-Texas Tech University 806/742-2430
STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE
P.O. Box 4499
CITY OR TOWN STATE
Lubbock Texas

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL X

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 Texas State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE Oct. 21, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Active
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE 12/12/96

DATE 12/8/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Property

Wise Co. Courthouse

State

Texas

Working Number 10.26.76.4391

Wise
76002085

TECHNICAL

Photos 3

Maps 1

#12 needs data

called 12.7.76

CONTROL

KP

OK

10.26.76

HISTORIAN

the statement of significance is in #7

accept

B. Gravens

11/11/76

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

*for such an unusual bldg, it
deserves stronger statement of sign*

Accept

Labovitz

12/1/76

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept

BRANCH CHIEF

Accept

Cole

12-3-76

KEEPER

W. H. H.

12/8/76

National Register Write-up _____

Send-back _____

Entered

DEC 12 1976

Federal Register Entry

2-1-77

Re-submit _____

INT:2106-74



Wise County Courthouse

Decatur, Texas

Wise Co., Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 1970

Texas Historical Commission

Southwest oblique

Photo #1 *43*

OCT 26 1976

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DEC 12 1976



Wise County Courthouse

Decatur, Texas

Wise Co., Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 1970

Texas Historical Commission

Detail of southwest entry

Photo #2 *43*

OCT 26 1976

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DEC 12 1976



Wise County Courthouse

Decatur, Texas

Wise Co., Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 1970

Texas Historical Commission

Southeast oblique

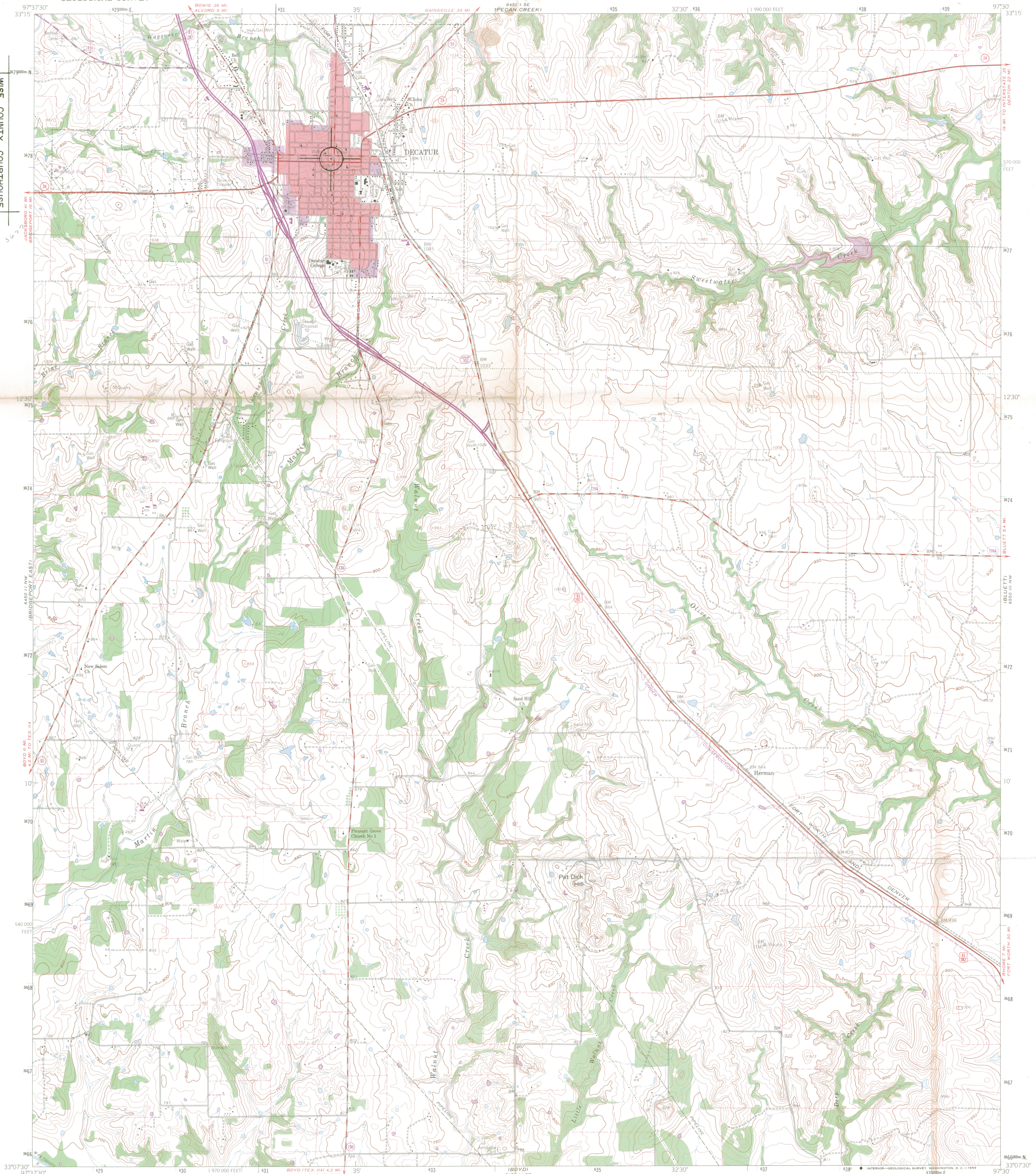
Photo #3 of 3

OCT 26 1976
PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
DEC 12 1976

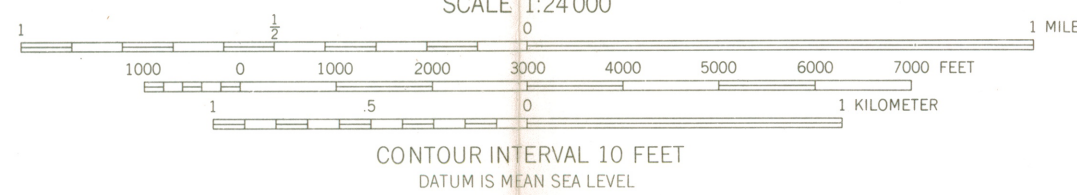
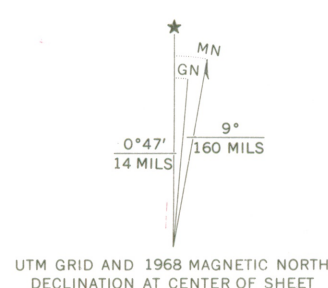
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DECATUR QUADRANGLE
TEXAS-WISE CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NE/4 BOYD 15' QUADRANGLE

WISE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
DECATUR, TEXAS
14 / 631630 / 3677950



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1957 Field check 1960
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,
north central zone
1000 meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 14, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines
where generally visible on aerial photographs
This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates extension of urban areas
Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from
aerial photographs taken 1968. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

DECATUR, TEX.
N3307.5-W9730.7/7.5

339-214

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE TEXAS

Date Entered DEC 12 1976

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Stark, W. H., House	Orange Orange County
Cleburne Carnegie Library	Cleburne Johnson County
Wise County Courthouse	Decatur Wise County
Britton-Evans House	Corpus Christi Nueces County
Comal County Courthouse	New Braunfels Comal County
Dallas Courthouse	Dallas Dallas County
Alamo Portland and Roman Cement Works	San Antonio Bexar County

Also Notified

Hon. John G. Tower
Hon. Lloyd M. Bentsen
Hon. Charles Wilson
Hon. Olin E. Teague
Hon. Omar Burleson
Hon. John Young
Hon. Robert C. Krueger
Hon. Alan W. Steelman
Hon. Henry B. Gonzalez
Regional Director, Southwest Region

State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Truett Latimer
Executive Director
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station
Austin, Texas 78711

NR Data Sheet

DATE: 12/1/76
Reviewer INITIALS: KP

NR

DOE

DEC 12 1976

NAME AS IT APPEARS IN FEDERAL REGISTER: Wise County Courthouse

OTHER NAMES:

LOCATION:

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Decatur

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 17

STATE

Texas

VICINITY OF 048

COUNTY Wise

code 497

OWNER OF PROPERTY: (Circle) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHER

ADMINISTRATOR (underline)

FEDERAL (AGENCY NAME):

NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N. ATLANTIC MID ATLANTIC SOUTHEAST MIDWEST

SOUTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST PACIFIC NORTHWEST

FEATURES:

INTERIOR

☒ Substantially intact-1
☐ unknown - 4
☐ not applicable - 7

EXTERIOR

☒ Substantially intact-2
☐ unknown - 5
☐ not applicable - 8

ENVIRONS

☐ Substantially intact-3
☒ unknown - 6
☐ Not applicable-9☒ Interior, exterior, environs not intact-0

CONDITION -

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED
☒ Unexcavated☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED
☐ Reconstructed
☐ Excavated☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED
☐ Unknown

ACCESS -

Yes-restricted

Yes-unrestricted

No access

Unknown

historic district?

YES

NO

WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT?

YES

NO

IF YES, NAME:

WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK?

YES

NO

IF YES, NAME:

ADAPTIVE USE:

YES

NO

Saved?

YES

NO

FUNCTION(S): (use vocabulary words)

then- courthousenow- courthouse

SIGNIFICANCE:

☒ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC☐ AGRICULTURE☒ ARCHITECTURE☐ ART☐ COMMERCE☐ COMMUNICATIONS☐ CONSERVATION☐ ECONOMICS☐ EDUCATION☐ ENGINEERING☐ EXPLORATION☐ INDUSTRY☐ INVENTION☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE☐ LAW/Gov't/politics☐ LITERATURE☐ MILITARY☐ MUSIC☐ PHILOSOPHY☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT☐ RELIGION☐ SCIENCE☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)☐ entertainment☐ health☐ recreation☐ settlement☐ socio/cultural☐ urban & commun
planning

Claims

"first"

YES

NO

"oldest"

YES

NO

"only"

YES

NO

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: ^{Richardsonian} Romanesque ^{with} ~~Reveral~~ ^{Sullivan-esque} Ornamentation

architect/m-builder: ⁽²⁾ J. Riely Gordon

engineer:

landscape/garden designer:

artist/artisan:

interior decorator:

builder/contractor: ⁽³⁾ J. A. White

ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES:

personal

(label role
&

appropriate date)

events

institutional

DATES:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1895-1897 ✓

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS: 1960

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S):

SOURCE:

(OF NOMINATION)

PRIVATE

STATE

LOCAL GOV'T

MUNICIPAL

COUNTY

OTHER

FEDERAL AGENCY:

ACREAGE:

(to nearest tenth of an acre)

2

COMMENTS: (include architectural information here)

~~Has a Green Grass with Angles Filled by Curved Structures,
Covered Towers, Gabled Dormers, Hipped Roof, Complex
Internal Tower~~

✓ ROCK-FACED GRANITE, 3 1/2 STORIES, ^{cross-shaped} CRUCIFORM; HIPPED ROOF SECTIONS WITH DORMERS ~~AND~~ 2-STAGE CLOCK TOWER WITH CORNER ^{TOWERS} ~~PIERS~~, BOWED BALCONIES AND PYRAMIDAL CAP; INTERIOR CHIMNEYS, REENTRANT CORNER ENTRANCE WITH ARCHED PORTAL AND SURROUNDING OPEN PORCH, CORNER TURRETS AND 3-STORY BOWED BAYS, SULLIVANESQUE ORNAMENTED FRIEZE AND COLONETTE CAPITALS; MARBLE INTERIOR DETAILS, CENT-

SIGNIFICANCE: (maximum two sentences)

~~The Wise County Courthouse is an exceedingly unusual variation on the ^{Richardsonian} Romanesque Reveral, showing a concern for original detailing that characterizes the late 19th and early 20th phase of architectural style.~~
→ EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF RICHARDSONIAN ROMANESQUE WITH REFINED DETAILING; SIMILAR TO ANOTHER OF ARCHITECT J. RIELY GORDON'S RURAL TEXAS COURTHOUSES AT WAXAHACHIE.

TX
geoff 8.4