

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
MAY 23 1977
DATE ENTERED DEC 12 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ******
Leon County Courthouse and Jails

AND/OR COMMON
Leon County Courthouse; Old Jail; 1918 Jail

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Public Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN
Centerville

VICINITY OF

STATE Texas CODE 048 COUNTY Leon CODE 289

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
County of Leon

STREET & NUMBER
Public Square

CITY, TOWN Centerville VICINITY OF STATE Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Office of the County Clerk, Leon County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Public Square

CITY, TOWN Centerville STATE Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Recorded Texas Historic Landmark & Historic Sites Inventory

DATE
1966 & 1976
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN Austin STATE Texas

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 Centerville public square is the site of several county structures. All located on the square, the Leon County Courthouse and two county jails survive in good original condition. All three are fine examples of buildings constructed to serve government in counties with small populations and modest financial means. Small in size, the buildings display attractive although restrained design features.

The plan of the Leon County Courthouse is unusual in Texas. Built on a scale that characterized the earlier antebellum temples of justice of the Lone Star State, the plan is rectangular with a single corridor extending lengthwise through the ground story. On either side are three offices. A single stair in the corridor provides access to a landing on the north side of the second story. On either side of this landing is a small jury room; the courtroom occupies most of the second-story space.

The construction of the courthouse is similar to other Texas county governmental buildings dating from the 1880's. A foundation of bricks was laid upon firm clay bearing three feet below the surface. For the walls, it was specified that English Portland cement be used in the mortar rather than lime. Floors were structured with wooden joists. To protect the ground floor joists against rot, cast-iron ventilators were installed in the brick walls--also a common practice.

Stylistically, the temple is noteworthy for a conservative composition typical of antebellum courthouses, but the details are consistent with other late-nineteenth-century work. Brick pilasters with corbeling intended to represent Classical Doric capitals supporting an architrave articulate the facades into five bays on the north and south and four bays on the east and west--which had been typical of the Greek Revival. Brick stringcourses, two of which are located at window sill level further relieve the severity of the wall. A sheetmetal cornice containing a gutter terminated the composition. Window and door openings are spanned with stilted arches of brick. On both stories window sashes, with two over two lights, are hung with cords and weights. Above the second-story windows a transom was installed to accommodate the high ceiling space of the courtroom. Window sills are iron. On the east the two center openings of the ground story are filled with brick panels.

A small portico supported by paired iron columns with pedestals and Corinthian-esque capitals emphasized the south entrance. These bear upon low brick walls and support a wooden balcony with a decorative iron railing.

The interior still retains most of its nineteenth-century character. The ceilings on the first and second floor are beaded lumber, rather than plaster and pressed metal. According the commissioners' court records the windows on the ground story had shutters while blinds were hung on the outside of the upper story windows--details which are now gone.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Leon County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The building was well provided with fireplaces. Each of the six ground-story offices had a fireplace and mantle; one was installed in each of the second-story jury rooms and two were installed in the courtroom. Outside, the chimneys with their ornamental caps provided a broken skyline.

Located on the northeast corner of the public square, the nineteenth-century jail also survives in near original condition. Typical of many in Texas it is a two-story brick building. Openings, some which are now filled with bricks, are spanned by stilted arches, reflecting the architectural style of the courthouse. Brick stringcourses girdle the building on both stories and intersect the openings at the level of the arch imposts. Located between the cornice and the upper stringcourse, corner pilasters incorporating brick corbeling are unusual features. Iron "S" shaped plates located at the corners tie the brick walls into the second-story floor. A hipped roof covers the structure. This building now serves miscellaneous functions.

Near the southeast corner of the public square, is located a jail built in 1918. This is a two story structure which originally contained sheriff's quarters on the ground level and cells in the upper story.

The style of the 1918 jail symbolized strength. Incorporated into the design are corner towers and crenellations--representations of Medieval military architectural features.

Other features of the building, however, are straightforward. Openings are spanned with lintels and the walls have little relief. The main accents are provided by buff-colored brick stringcourses.

Although the building is no longer used for detention, it is still sound and serves county functions. Offices of the county surveyor are located within, while an annex adjacent to it is the home of the Leon County Abstract Company.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1918	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Courthouse - 1886 Jails - 1893-1894; 1918	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Courthouse - W. M. Johnson Jails - 1893-1894, unknown; 1918 - Southern Structural Steel Company
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			

The Leon County Courthouse and Jails have both architectural and historical significance. The courthouse and old jail are simple yet dignified expressions with Classical lines; the 1918 jail displays Medieval military architectural elements. All are located on the Centerville public square which has been the center of governmental activities since the founding of the town.

Located in East Texas adjacent to the Trinity River, Leon County was created in 1846. Upon the organization of the county, the town of Leona, located near the southern county line, became the county seat. However, in 1850 the seat of government was moved to Centerville near the geographical center of the county where it has remained. Although the 1870 county population of 6,523 had increased to 16,583 by 1910, the Texas Almanac, 1976-1977 lists the 1973 population at 8,300. Centerville contains less than 1,000 people.

In 1858 the original courthouse was replaced by a brick building. This Antebellum courthouse, which must have been a Greek Revival styled work, served well through the Civil War and Reconstruction. Nonetheless by the 1870's numerous repairs had become imperative and in 1873 a tax was levied for building a new jail and repairing the courthouse. The courthouse roof was recovered and the old shingles were sold. In addition the chimnies and windows were repaired.

Late in 1885 this courthouse burned but one or more of the safes survived. Subsequently, in response to an urgent need for a safe depository for records, an order was issued by the commissioners' court to build two fireproof vaults on the site of the old courthouse using bricks from the ruins. A new temple of justice was to be built around these. These vaults were to be located in the space that had existed between the offices of the county and district clerks. Then a resolution was introduced to build a new courthouse on the same plan as the old. Early in 1886 the plans and specifications of Wm. Johnson were accepted and invitations for bids were published in the Democrat (Centerville), the Galveston Daily News, and the Fort Worth Daily Gazette. The contract was awarded to P. J. Gillen, a contractor from Mississippi, for \$11,750--an exceptionally low figure for new Texas courthouses at this time.

Several years later the county judge and four county commissioners determined to build a new jail. To be sure, facilities for the detention of criminals had never been satisfactory. The orders which had authorized a new jail in 1873 culminated in the purchase of a store building from V. H. McAnnally for \$2,500. This served as a temporary jail which was entirely unsatisfactory. (This structure was located on lot 73, block 18).

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CONTINUATION SHEET Leon County ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Finally in 1893 a contract for the construction of a new jail was awarded to contractors Robb and Wilson for \$3,850 and shortly thereafter the old temporary jail was sold at public auction. Early in 1894 it was completed and a new fence was set up around the building. In 1906 new cells furnished by the Southern Structural Steel Company were installed, and various repairs were made.

Since this jail evidently proved inadequate, a second jail was built near the courthouse and the earlier jail. In 1918 the southern Structural Steel Company of San Antonio was contracted to build a new jail, according to plans they furnished. The building was completed and accepted that year.

The courthouse and two jails have served the county for over a half century and continue in use today.

Several new structures have been built on the square since the 1918 jail was completed. The sheriff's offices and the jail cells are now in a new building on the northwest corner of the square. In 1973 a courthouse office annex designed by Robert W. Caldwell and Associates was erected east of the 1918 jail. At the time of preparation of this form another new building is under construction near the center of the public square. It is intended that the structures built within the past fifty years be excluded from National Register status.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Leon County Commissioners' Court Minutes, Office of the County Clerk, Vols. C, D, E, F. Galveston Daily News, March 9, 1886.

Walter Prescott Webb (ed), The Handbook of Texas.

Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952, vols. I, II.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	21,6	4,2,5	34,6,1	8,6,5	B					
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The public square on which the courthouse and jails are located is bounded on the west by highway US 75 and on the east by Farm to Market Road 1119. State highway 7 bounds the property on the south. The street on the north is unmarked and the local residents interviewed were unable to identify it.

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

5/2/77

ORGANIZATION

Division of Architecture, Texas Tech University

DATE

(806) 742-2464

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 4499

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Lubbock

STATE

Texas

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

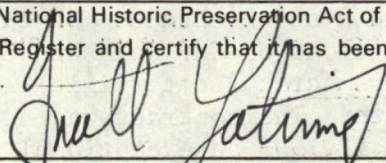
NATIONAL

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



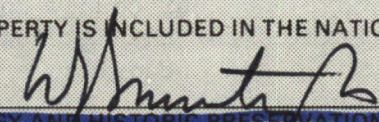
5-18-77

TITLE Texas State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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



DATE

12/12/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:



DATE

12-9-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

77001458

Property Leon County Courthouse and Jails
State Texas Working Number 5.23.77.818

Leon

TECHNICAL

Photos 4
Maps 1

CONTROL

pl
OK- 5.25.77

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ENTIRE SA (3 ACRES) NOMINATED, BUT ONLY
HISTORIC BUILDINGS ARE BEING CONSIDERED RESOURCE.
HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS JUSTIFY
LISTING SA AND EXCLUDING LATER BLDGS.

Accept
Lebovich
6/27/77

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

accept
Braham
11/21/77

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
Lebovich
12/8/77

BRANCH CHIEF

Hung
12.9.77

KEEPER

Wm
12/12/77

National Register Write-up _____
Federal Register Entry 2-7-78

Send-back _____
Re-submit _____

Entered DEC 12 1977

INT:2106-74



LEON COUNTY

JCT
75

LEON COUNTY ABSTRACT CO.

Leon County Courthouse & Jails
Centerville, Texas

Will Robinson, 1977
Negatives at TX Hist. Comm.

MAY 23 1977

Southeast oblique of the courthouse
and 1918 jail in the background.

Photo #184

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DEC 12 1977



Leon County Courthouse & Jails
Centerville, Texas

Will Robinson, 1977
Negatives filed at TX Hist. Comm.

Southeast oblique of the 1894 jail.

Photo #2 *84*

MAY 23 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DEC 12 1977



Leon County Courthouse & Jails
Centerville, Texas

Will Robinson, 1977
Negatives filed at THC

South elevation of the courthouse.
Photo #3 *84*

MAY 23 1977

DEC 12 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



LEON COUNTY ABSTRACT CO.

Leon County Courthouse & Jails
Centerville, Texas

Will Robinson, 1977
Negatives filed at THC

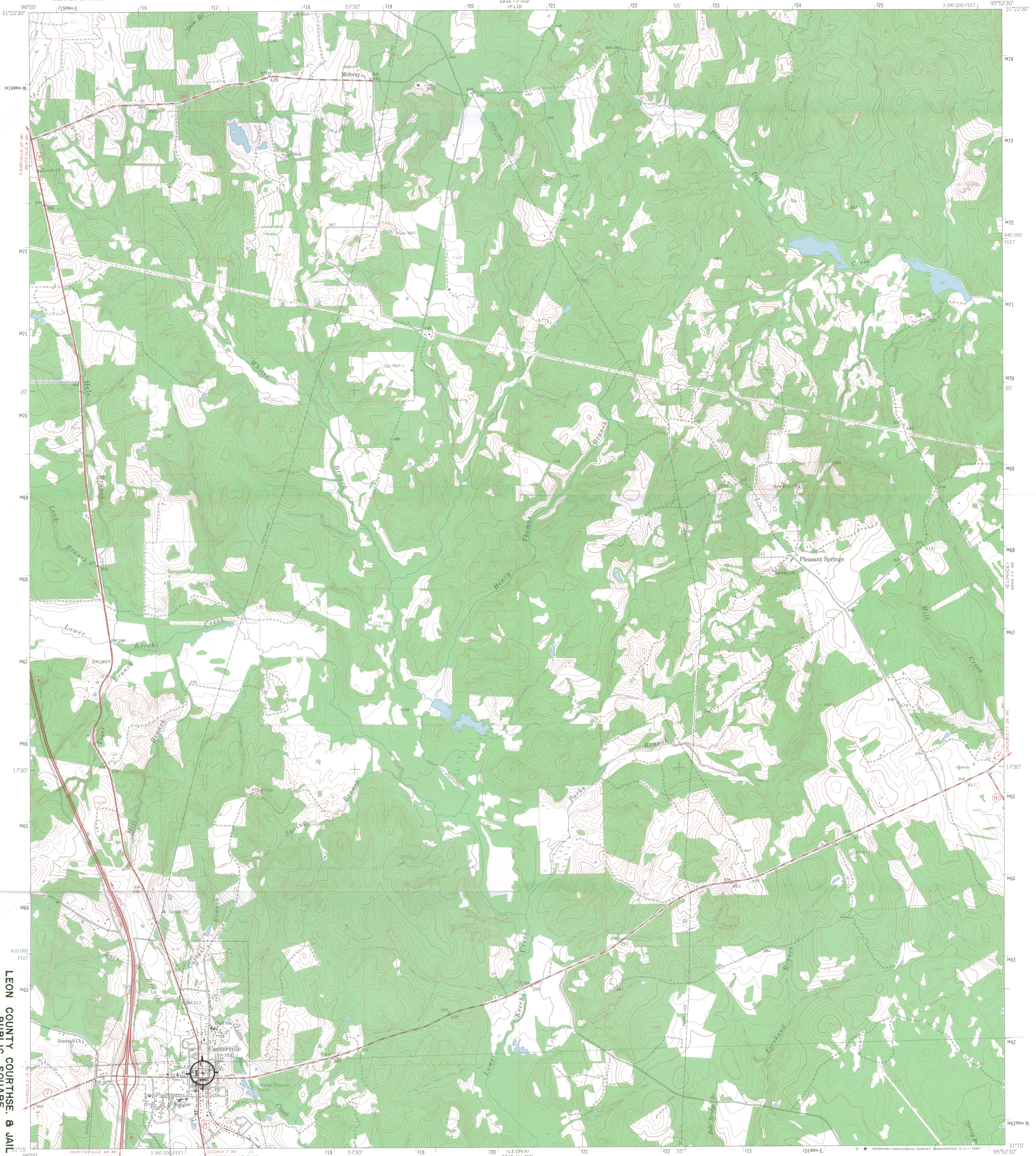
MAY 23 1977

Southwest oblique of the 1918 Jail
Photo #4 *of 4*

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

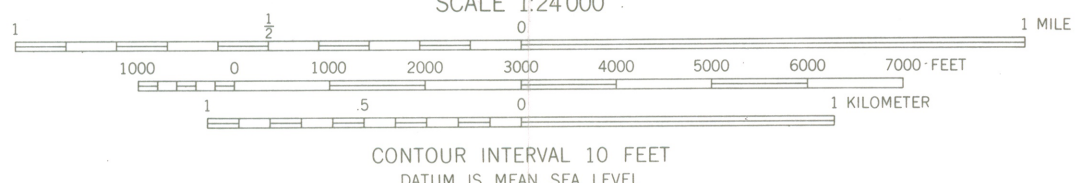
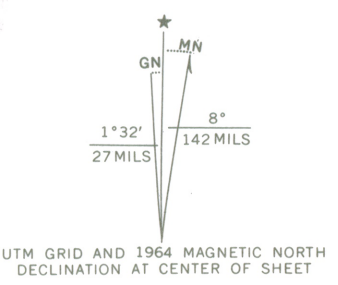
DEC 12 1977

6846 1/4 NW
LAKE LEON



LEON COUNTY COURTHOUSE & JAIL
PUBLIC SQUARE
CENTERVILLE TEXAS
15/216425 / 3461865

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1964
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines



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 ———
Interstate Route ——— U.S. Route ——— State Route ———

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TEXAS
QUADRANGLE LOCATION

CENTERVILLE, TEX.
N3115-W9552.5/7.5
1964
AMS 6846 1/4 SW-SERIES V882

3195-232

DEC 12 1977-DOE

WIDELETON
15/216425

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE TEXAS

Date Entered DEC 12 1977

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Brinkmann, Otto, House	Comfort Kendall County
Leon County Courthouse and Jails	Centerville Leon County

Also Notified

Hon. Lloyd M. Bentsen

Hon. John G. Tower

Hon. Robert C. Krueger

Hon. Charles Wilson

Regional Director, Southwest Region

880

Mott/js

12/19/77

State Historic Preservation Officer

Mr. Truett Latimer

Executive Director

Texas Historical Commission

P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station

Austin, Texas 78711

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Leon County Courthouse and Jails
 ② OTHER NAMES:
 ③ date of entry: DEC 12 1977
 ④ county code: 289
 K80H

⑤ LOCATION street & number: Public Sq.
 city / town: Centerville
 vicinity of:
 state: TX
 county: Leon
 ⑥ NPS REGION: SW

⑦ OWNER PRIVATE STATE MUNICIPAL COUNTY MULTIPLE FEDERAL (agency name)
 ⑧ ADMINISTRATOR:
 ⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS HABS HAER NHL FUNDED? YES NO ⑩ CONGRESS. DISTRICT
 ⑪ SOURCE of NOMINATION STATE FEDERAL
 if state who prepared form?

⑫ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES, NAME NO
 ⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES, NAME NO
 ⑭ ACREAGE: 3
 LOCAL PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

⑮ CONDITION deteriorated altered original site
 excellent ruins unaltered moved
 good unexposed reconstructed unknown
 fair unexcavated excavated
 ⑯ features: SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1 SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2 SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3
 NOT INTACT-0 NOT INTACT-0
 UNKNOWN-4 UNKNOWN-5 UNKNOWN-6
 NOT APPLICABLE-7 NOT APPLICABLE-8 NOT APPLICABLE-9

⑰ ACCESS YES - Restricted YES - Unrestricted No Access Unknown
 ⑱ ADAPTIVE USE YES NO
 ⑲ SAVED? YES
 IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT? yes no

⑳ AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:
 ARCHEOLOGY - prehistoric-2 COMMERCE-6 ENTERTAINMENT-26 LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15 POLITICS / GOVT.-21 RECREATION-28
 ARCHEOLOGY - historic-1 COMMUNICATIONS-7 EXPLORATION-12 LAW-16 RELIGION-22 SETTLEMENT-29
 AGRICULTURE-3 CONSERVATION-8 HEALTH-27 LITERATURE-17 SCIENCE-23 URBAN PLANNING-31
 ARCHITECTURE-4 ECONOMICS-9 INDUSTRY-13 MILITARY-18 SOCIAL / HUMANITARIAN-24 OTHER (SPECIFY)
 ART-5 EDUCATION-10 INVENTION-14 MUSIC-19 SOCIAL / CULTURAL-30
 PHILOSOPHY-20 TRANSPORTATION-25
 ㉑ CLAIMS: explain
 'first'
 'oldest'
 'only'

㉒ functions WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT CURRENTLY: (Court Courthouse + jail)
 ㉓ dates of initial construction: 1886, 1893-4, 1918
 major alterations:
 historic events:
 ㉔ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION

㉕ architectural style(s):
 ㉖ architect: W.M. Johnson
 ㉗ master builder:
 ㉘ engineer:

㉙ landscape architect / garden designer:
 ㉚ interior decorator:
 ㉛ artist:
 ㉜ artisan:
 ㉝ builder / contractor:

㉞ NAMES give role & date
 PERSONAL:
 EVENTS:
 INSTITUTIONAL:

㉟ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP
 Example of late 19th/early 20th c civic architecture sited on the public square which has been the center of local activities since founding of the town
 Courthouse: rectangular, brick, hip, 2 stories, pilasters, drip moulding
 Jails: brick, rectangular, 2 stories
 * other bldgs less than 50 years old + excluded