

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

RECEIVED  
FEB 19 1992

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

*Historic name:* 1915 Taylor County Courthouse

*Other name/site number:* 5320

2. LOCATION

*Street & number:* 301 Oak St.

*not for publication:* N/A

*City/town:* Abilene

*State:* TX     *County:* Taylor

*code:* 441     *zip code:* 79602

3. CLASSIFICATION

*Ownership of Property:* Public-local

*Category of Property:* Building

|   |                     |                                 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Number of Resources within Property:</i> | <i>Contributing</i> | <i>Noncontributing</i>          |
|   | <u>  1  </u>        | <u>      </u> <i>buildings</i>  |
|   | <u>      </u>       | <u>      </u> <i>sites</i>      |
|   | <u>      </u>       | <u>      </u> <i>structures</i> |
|   | <u>      </u>       | <u>      </u> <i>objects</i>    |
|   | <u>  1  </u>        | <u>  0  </u> <i>Total</i>       |

*Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:* 0

*Name of related multiple property listing:* Historic and Architectural Resources in Abilene, Texas





**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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*Historic:* Government

Sub: Courthouse

*Current:* Government

Sub: Government office

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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*Architectural Classification:* Classical Revival

|                              |            |
|------------------------------|------------|
| <i>Materials: foundation</i> | brick      |
| <i>walls</i>                 | brick      |
| <i>roof</i>                  | asphalt    |
| <i>other</i>                 | cast stone |

*Describe present and historic physical appearance.  See continuation sheet.*

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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*Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:* local

*Applicable National Register Criteria:* A and C

*Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) :* N/A

*Area(s) of Significance:* Politics/Government and Architecture

*Period(s) of Significance:* 1913-1939

*Significant Dates:* 1913-1915

*Significant Person(s):* N/A

*Cultural Affiliation:* N/A

*Architect/Builder:* Burnett, George

*State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  See continuation sheet.*



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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
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Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Historic and Architectural Resources  
of Abilene, Taylor County, Texas

## Description:

The 1915 Taylor County Courthouse is a 3-story brick Classical Revival building with a rectangular plan and a concealed flat roof. The building utilizes a variety of materials on the exterior walls of the basement and three upper stories including brick, cast stone and terra cotta. The building is the lone building on the block, a feature that enhances both its scale and grandeur.

The front, facing west onto Oak Street, features giant order Ionic columns that form a continuous colonnade around the building; a bas relief spandrel connects the columns and forms the break between the second and third floors. A central primary entrance has a tripartite architrave of bracketed hoods crowned by cast stone pediments. Only the center architrave serves as an entrance doorway, however. A string course acts as the architrave of the building's entablature. A modillion cornice that encircles the top of the building caps the sparsely detailed frieze. Although the original wood sash windows have been replaced with aluminum frame windows that detract from the building's historic character, the courthouse retains its original fenestration and enough of its integrity to be recognizable to its period of significance.

## Statement of Significance:

Erected in 1913-1915, the Taylor County Courthouse is nominated at the local level of significance. The building is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government, for its representation of Abilene's triumph as Taylor County's leading city and its service as the county's seat of government until 1972. It is also nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as an outstanding example of Classical Revival architecture. The building is associated with the historic context "The Railroad and Abilene's Development into a Wholesale and Distribution Center in West Texas, 1881-1939." Abilene's oldest and most intact governmental building, moderate and easily reversible alterations detract only minimally from the historic character of the courthouse and it retains its most important architectural features.

When Texas & Pacific Railroad officials established Abilene in 1881, Buffalo Gap at the eastern center of the county was the seat of government. Two years later, county residents voted to move the county seat to Abilene where the railroad ensured the city's success. A 2 1/2-story courthouse, designed by Martin Byrnes and Johnston, was built on Block 31 of the original townsite.

This first courthouse building remained a prominent landmark in the community until the early 1910s when citizens of Abilene called for the construction of a new courthouse. A report presented to County Commissioners in 1913 confirmed suspicions that the building was unsafe, although some doubt remains whether or not the building truly was a hazard to the public. In fact,



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Historic and Architectural Resources  
of Abilene, Taylor County, Texas

Martin Byrnes and Johnston designed and built several courthouses and jails throughout the state that are at least 100 years old, yet they remain in good and stable condition. Possibly, citizens of Abilene wanted a new courthouse that would be more symbolic of the city's progressive and modern character. Voters approved a bond package to finance the construction of a new courthouse (Commissioner's Courts Minutes).

The County considered four architectural firms: E.G. Withers of Stamford, C.H. Page and Brother of Austin, L.L. Thurmann of Dallas and George Burnett of Waco. Although Withers initially was recommended, the Commissioners finally decided upon Burnett and a contract was prepared that included a provision for the Architectural School of the University of Texas to approve the plans (Commissioner's Courts Minutes).

The early courthouse was demolished to make way for the new one and county offices relocated temporarily to the Grace Hotel (National Register, Abilene Commercial Historic District, 1991). Bids for the actual construction of the courthouse were received from a number of firms. A.Z. Rogers' bid of \$119,785 (later reduced to \$117,900) was the lowest and his company was hired.

Construction work took two years and on May 12, 1915 the new building was officially designated as county courthouse. It served in that capacity until 1972 when another facility was erected. The county still uses the 1913-1915 courthouse to house offices.

The 1913-1915 Taylor County Courthouse is an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture, a popular design used by governmental entities during the era. Classical columns and symmetrical facades are features typical of classically inspired architecture.



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

x See bibliography for associated historic context.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 (Texas Historical Commission)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government (City of Abilene Planning Department)
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Abilene Preservation League

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreege of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

|   |     |        |         |   |     |     |     |
|---|-----|--------|---------|---|-----|-----|-----|
| A | 14  | 431120 | 3589960 | B | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| C | ___ | ___    | ___     | D | ___ | ___ | ___ |

Verbal Boundary Description:

Abilene Original Townsite, all of Block 30

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the area that has been historically associated with the property and that retains its historic and architectural integrity.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (assisted by Amy E. Dase, Historian, THC staff)

Name/Title: David Moore, Historian  
 Organization: Hardy Heck Moore  
 Street & Number: 2112 Rio Grande  
 City or town: Austin

Date: June 1989; January 1992  
 Telephone: 512/478-8014  
 State: TX Zip: 78705

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Historic and Architectural Resources  
of Abilene, Taylor County, Texas

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James M. Radford Grocery Company Warehouse  
101 Oak  
Abilene, Taylor County, Texas  
Photographed by David Moore  
Winter 1989  
Negative with Texas Historical Commission  
Northwest oblique, camera facing southeast  
Photograph 33 of 48

Ed S. Hughes Company Warehouse  
135 Oak  
Abilene, Taylor County, Texas  
Photographed by David Moore  
Winter 1989  
Negative with Texas Historical Commission  
West facade, camera facing east  
Photograph 34 of 48

**1915 Taylor County Courthouse**  
301 Oak  
Abilene, Taylor County, Texas  
Photographed by David Moore  
Winter 1989  
Negative with Texas Historical Commission  
Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast  
Photograph 35 of 48

First Presbyterian Church  
402 Orange  
Abilene, Taylor County, Texas  
Photographed by David Moore  
Winter 1989  
Negative with Texas Historical Commission  
Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest  
Photograph 36 of 48



2/19/92

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Abilene MPS  
TEXAS

Date Listed

| COVER    | Substantive Review  | Date Listed |
|----------|---|-------------|
|          |   | 12/18/91    |
| 92000225 | 1915 Taylor County Courthouse   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000193 | Abilene Christian College Administration Building                       | 5/23/92     |
| 91001811 | Abilene Commercial Historic District                                    | 12/18/91    |
| 92000200 | Abilene Fire Station No. 2  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000205 | Abilene Street Railway Company Barn                                     | 3/23/92     |
| 92000191 | Abilene and Northern Railway Company Depot <i>owner only</i>            | 3/23/92     |
| 92000214 | Ackers, William and Mary, House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000234 | Blanton, Thomas L., House <u>Substantive Review</u>                     | 3/23/92     |
| 92000229 | Boyd--Hall House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000206 | Caldwell Hall <u>Substantive Review</u>                                 | 3/23/92     |
| 92000195 | Cash, W. A. V., House <u>Substantive Review</u>                         | 3/23/92     |
| 92000218 | Castle, David S., House <u>Substantive Review</u>                       | 3/23/92     |
| 92000211 | Chambers, Samuel A., House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000237 | Davis, George R., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000199 | Dillingham, O. D. and Ada, House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000222 | Dodd--Harkrider House <u>Substantive Review</u>                         | 3/23/92     |
| 92000204 | Evans, J. W., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000228 | Federal Building ( <i>now returned</i> )                                | Ret.        |
| 92000210 | Finley, Eugene L., House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000226 | First Presbyterian Church <u>Substantive Review</u>                     | 3/23/92     |
| 92000215 | Fritz, David C. and Docia, House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000192 | Fulwiler, William J., House <i>owner only</i> <u>Substantive Review</u> | 3/23/92     |
| 92000232 | Goodloe, Albert S. and Ruth, House                                      | 3/23/92     |
| 92000207 | Green, Roland A. D., House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000236 | Higginbotham, J. G., House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000196 | House at 1127 Ash Street  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000224 | Hughes, Ed S., Company Warehouse  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000212 | Jones, A. T., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000221 | Lanius, C. A., House <u>Substantive Review</u>                          | 3/23/92     |
| 92000194 | Luce Hall <u>Substantive Review</u>                                     | 3/23/92     |
| 92000220 | Magee, J. D., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000201 | McDaniel, George W. and Lavina, House                                   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000219 | McDonald Hall   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000209 | McMurry College Administration Building <u>Substantive Review</u>       | 3/23/92     |
| 92000198 | Minter, William A., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000216 | Motz, Charles, House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000230 | Parramore, D. D., House   | 3/23/92     |
| 92000223 | Radford, James M., Grocery Company Warehouse                            | 3/23/92     |
| 92000231 | Reading, Jhules, House  | 3/23/92     |
| 92000235 | Roberts, Nathan J. and Nancy, House                                     | 3/23/92     |
| 92000233 | Sacred Heart Catholic Church  | 3/23/92     |



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: 1915 Taylor County Courthouse

MULTIPLE NAME: Abilene MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Taylor

DATE RECEIVED: 2/19/92      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/06/92  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/22/92      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/04/92  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 92000225

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    3/23/92 DATE

Entered in the  
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_  
REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_  
DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



CLASSIFICATION

\_\_\_count \_\_\_resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

\_\_\_historic \_\_\_current

DESCRIPTION

\_\_\_architectural classification
\_\_\_materials
\_\_\_descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

\_\_\_summary paragraph
\_\_\_completeness
\_\_\_clarity
\_\_\_applicable criteria
\_\_\_justification of areas checked
\_\_\_relating significance to the resource
\_\_\_context
\_\_\_relationship of integrity to significance
\_\_\_justification of exception
\_\_\_other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

\_\_\_acreage \_\_\_verbal boundary description
\_\_\_UTMs \_\_\_boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

\_\_\_sketch maps \_\_\_USGS maps \_\_\_photographs \_\_\_presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Phone

Signed Date







1915 TAYLOR COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
301 OAK  
ABILENE, TAYLOR CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 35 of 48

Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64500625