

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: North Carolina	
COUNTY: Polk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Polk County Courthouse

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Courthouse Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Columbus

Eleventh Congressional District  
The Hon. Roy Taylor

STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37      COUNTY: Polk      CODE: 149

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public      Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Polk County Commissioners (Fred Foy, Chairman)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
P. O. Box 308

CITY OR TOWN: Columbus      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Polk County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Columbus      STATE: North Carolina      CODE: 37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
East Capitol and Independence Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D. C.      CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: North Carolina
COUNTY: Polk
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DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Polk County Courthouse is a two-story T-shaped brick building, in the Greek Revival style. The five-bay main (west) facade is dominated by an engaged, three-bay portico with a plain pediment, supported by four square pillars. The large, six-over-six sash windows have stone lintels and sills. Though no shutters remain, the driven pentils which supported them survive. The central entrance consists of double doors with six panels in each leaf. Flanking the doorway are paneled pilasters and three-light sidelights, flanked in turn by engaged repeats of the pilasters. Above the doors and sidelights is a large, reeded transom bar and a nine-light transom, which is flanked by truncated pilasters. Framing the entire entrance are large engaged pilasters with molded capitals supporting an unadorned entablature. In the shallow north and south walls of the porch are six-panel doors. A wide, plain frieze carries around the building as does a molded brick watertable. Each corner of the building is defined by a brick pilaster with molded brick capital. A three-stage cupola sits astride the north-south roof ridge of the main facade block. The first stage, square in section, resting on an unadorned base, has an even row of quoins at each corner and is protected by a small hip roof. The next stage is shallow and has only corner posts for adornment. The third stage has a tall, round-headed, louvered ventilator in each face with a flat molded band outlining each arch and linking the arches. The pyramidal roof is pedimented above the four faces of the cupola and is adorned with dentils. A pointed finial, bulbous at its base, completes the cupola. Two interior end chimneys rise at both the north and south ends of the two-bay pedimented gable ends.

Extending east from the rear of the main facade block is the four-bay stem of the T. Brick pilasters separate the bays of the north and south sides of this rear wing, but not the bays of the four-bay gable end at the rear (east). This gable end is pedimented also.

Entering the front door, there is a large entry hall with office space to the left and right with a center hall running to the rear of the building, giving access to more office space. Rising from the north and south sides of the front door are unusually handsome, matching spiral stairs with moderately large turned newels, molded handrails and slender, rectangular balusters. The stair climbs gracefully to the second-floor stair hall which opens into the large courtroom area to the east and more office space to the north and south. The stair is continued, again in a matched pattern, in a straight run along the north and south walls, turning abruptly at the corners and rising to meet in the center where a door gives access to the upper sections. This second-floor stair is rendered in Federal style with a square newel which is tapered toward the top. The handrail is rounded and is supported by slender balusters. Simple architraves are used throughout the building, as are unadorned Greek Revival mantels which depend on proportion rather than ornament for their effect. In the courtroom, which has been remodeled, the window architraves continue to the baseboard and frame a flat panel beneath the window. Broad, flat moldings predominate throughout the building.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian;       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1859

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Polk County Courthouse, completed in 1859 by builders Ephraim Clayton and George W. Shakelford, is the first and only permanent courthouse serving this western county. Praised by Thomas Waterman in The Early Architecture of North Carolina, the courthouse is an imposing brick structure in dignified Greek Revival style, notable especially for its strong, simple classical detail and graceful double spiral stair.

Polk County was first created by the General Assembly in January, 1847, from portions of Rutherford and Henderson counties. In this act the Assembly authorized a group of commissioners to "lay off and locate the county seat . . . at or within five miles of the residence of Murrell /Marvill/ Mills. . . ." The proposed county seat was to be known as "Schuywicker" in honor of a courageous Cherokee Indian guide named "Skyuka," who is said to have assisted a group of white militiamen in 1776. In January, 1849, bitter disagreement concerning the exact location of this county seat resulted in repeal of the 1847 act authorizing the establishment of the county. Polk's lands and records were thereupon returned to the respective custodies of Rutherford and Henderson counties.

A law enacted by the General Assembly at its 1854-1855 session provided for the re-creation of Polk County and ordered that John R. Logan of Cleveland County, Joseph Ervin of Burke County, and Benjamin Burgin of McDowell County be appointed commissioners "to lay off and locate the county seat of Polk County . . . upon which a town shall be laid off to be called Columbus, and on which the court house and public buildings shall be erected. . . ." The law further provided that proceeds from the sale of town lots be used to finance construction of the new county's public buildings.

In December, 1855, the Polk County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions ordered William S. Mills, newly-elected treasurer of public buildings, to "Contract with some suitable person for the Building of a Temporary Court House at Columbus . . . until a Permanent Court House can be Built. . . ." E. L. Foster was chosen to construct the temporary facility, which was utilized at least as early as March 3, 1856. Foster was paid \$190.87 for his efforts, which apparently included construction of a temporary jail. The court also ordered that a committee be created to assist Mills in entering into a contract with a low bidder for the construction of a permanent courthouse and jail and for the enclosure of a proposed public square.

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8.

Successful bidders on these projects were Ephraim Clayton and George W. Shakelford, both of Buncombe County. Clayton, son of Revolutionary soldier Lambert Clayton, is said to have been born in present-day Transylvania County in 1804 and to have spent most of his early life in the Asheville area. He became a building contractor at an early age and was the builder of the fourth Buncombe County Courthouse at Asheville, which he completed in 1850. This structure, like its counterpart at Columbus, included a cupola; unfortunately, it was completely destroyed by fire on January 28, 1865. In addition, Clayton was hired to enlarge and remodel St. John's in the Wilderness, an early Episcopal church located at Flat Rock in Henderson County. He designed the fence to enclose the proposed public square and probably designed the courthouse itself. After the Civil War he departed the construction trade and entered the field of railroad contracting. He is said to have suffered a severe loss when the Spartanburg and Asheville Railroad Company failed without satisfying its creditors.

Of G. W. Shakelford much less is known. He was born in Tennessee in 1818 and apparently settled in Buncombe County sometime before 1850. He spent a number of years in the Asheville area as a brickmason and died intestate and penniless in March, 1883. It is uncertain whether he practiced this trade throughout his entire lifetime.

At its March, 1857, term, the Polk County Court received word from William S. Mills that the courthouse had been commissioned and was "progressing verry well" in spite of a bitter winter which had delayed the original completion date of the new jail. Mills also advised that Shakelford had been paid \$4,999.13 on his contract. One year later Mills reported to the court that Clayton and Shakelford had been paid a total of \$10,591.93 on their total contract price of \$16,836, for "Building C H & jail and for enclosing the public square /, / for building Cupalo /and / furnishing a bell for the Court House. . . ."

Clayton and Shakelford apparently completed their work by September, 1859, when a grand jury reported to the court that the new public buildings were "in good order." The building survives today in essentially its original state and continues to function as the county courthouse.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Buncombe County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions. Minutes, July, 1840-April, 1854. Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh.  
 Buncombe County Record of Appointment of Administrators, Executors and Guardians, 1868-1890. Originals in State Archives.  
 Griffin, Clarence W. History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties, 1730-1936. Asheville: Miller Printing Company, 1937.  
 Patton, Sadie Smathers. Sketches of Polk County History. Asheville: Miller Printing Company, 1950.  
 Polk County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions. Minutes, March, 1855-March, 1866, State Archives.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35°	15'	05"
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Survey and Planning Unit

ORGANIZATION: Division of Archives and History DATE: 24 September 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
109 East Jones Street

CITY OR TOWN: Raleigh STATE: North Carolina CODE: 37

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Robert E. Stipe  
 Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date 24 September 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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9.

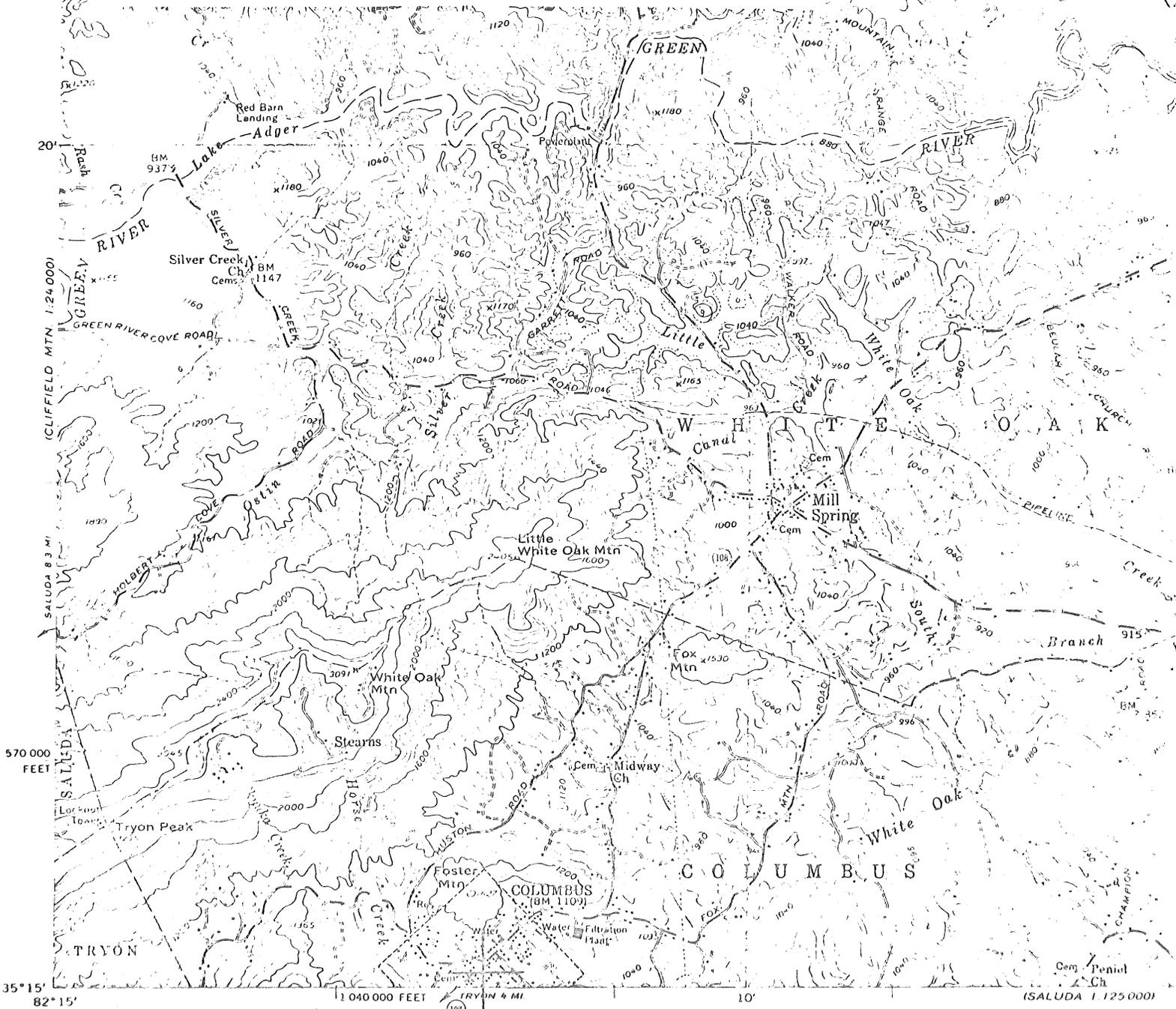
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Sondley, Forster Alexander. A History of Buncombe County, North Carolina.  
2 volumes; Asheville: Advocate Printing Co., 1930.  
Southern Home (Charlotte), September 28, 1874.  
U. S. Census Office. 1850 and 1860 census, Buncombe County.  
Western Democrat (Charlotte). "FIRE IN ASHEVILLE," February 14, 1865; quoting  
Asheville News.

Polk County Courthouse  
 Courthouse Street  
 Columbus, North Carolina

PL 4  
 Polk Co  
 Mill Spring quad

USGS Map, Lake Lure Quadrangle  
 Scale: 1: 62,500  
 Date: 1959

Latitude			Longitude		
degrees	minutes	seconds	degrees	minutes	seconds
35	15	05	82	11	54



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and TVA

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods.  
 Aerial photographs taken 1955. Field check 1959

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
 10,000 foot grid based on North Carolina coordinate system  
 1000 meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
 zone 17, shown in blue



CONTOUR INTERVAL 80 FT  
 DOTTED LINE. SOLID LINE 40 FOOT C  
 DATUM: MEAN SEA LEVEL