

Preserving Georgia's HISTORIC COURTHOUSES



Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources

The Legacy of Historic Courthouses

Georgia has one of America's greatest collections of county courthouses, but many of these landmark buildings are endangered. Because these buildings are so important to the state's economic and cultural life, the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources selected Georgia's historic courthouses as the topic for its second publication in the series *Preserving Georgia's Historic Resources*. This publication is also in response to a recommendation of the Georgia Legislature's Joint Study Committee on Historic Preservation, which directed HPD to work with the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association to develop legislative and funding initiatives for the protection of Georgia's county courthouses and city halls.

Although Georgia is the twentieth largest state, it is second in number of courthouses—exceeded only by Texas. One hundred thirty-two Georgia courthouses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The buildings range from Greek Revival to International Style, illustrating nearly 170 years of Georgia history.

The courthouse is often the most prominent building in town, with the city planned around it. Courthouses are instantly recognized symbols of government and graphic icons of the aspirations and pride of their communities. They are



The **Lincoln County Courthouse**, designed by G. Lloyd Preacher, has served as the center of government in its community since its construction in 1915.

holders of community memories, not just in the records they contain, but in the collected memory of thousands of small and large transactions, meetings, and activities that have occurred there. People still gather in the buildings as they have for generations.

William Faulkner recognized the importance of the county courthouse in his book *Requiem for a Nun*:

But above all, the courthouse, the center, the focus, the hub; sitting looming in the center of the county's circumference ... musing, brooding, symbolic and powerful, tall as a cloud, solid as rock, dominating all: protector of the weak, judicate and curb of the passions and lusts, repository and guardian of the aspirations and hopes.

Courthouses also serve as indicators of a community's economic health almost as certainly as the canaries miners took down into the mines to measure the health of the mine's air. Courthouse renovations lead to downtown

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renovations, as local business owners are more likely to upgrade their businesses if the county rehabilitates the nearby courthouse. Towns are more likely to attract tourists for heritage tourism when such landmark buildings are in good repair. On the other hand, a courthouse in need of repair sets a tone for the community, leading to less business and tourism activity.

Many of these landmarks are now in danger. Growth is the culprit in many areas where counties need additional space to carry out their mandated functions. While some counties have sensitively expanded their historic courthouse or built nearby office buildings, others have demolished or abandoned wonderful buildings to build larger, often non-descript buildings on the outskirts of town. The movement of a courthouse to the edge of town often not only endangers a historically significant building, but also does major harm

to the city. Dislocating county services to the outskirts of town harms the restaurants and businesses within the walking downtown that depended upon that trade.

In other parts of Georgia it is the lack of growth that endangers the courthouse. Georgia's small, rural counties often have neither the population nor the tax base to keep their impressive courthouses in the condition they desire. And of course, deferred maintenance, often the result of lack of funding, is a major cause of physical threats to historic courthouses.

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of Georgia's courthouses, and much has been done within the state to help protect these historic buildings. Yet some other states are doing better in preserving their courthouses. Texas not only has more courthouses than Georgia, but is doing a better job of protecting them. Under the leadership of then Governor George W. Bush, the state appropriated more than \$150 million dollars to ensure that their courthouses exist into the next century.

It is hoped that this publication, with case studies of counties that have done an exceptional job of preserving their landmark buildings, will help local officials and residents in preserving this inheritance for the next generation. Courthouses are so central to a community's quality of life and economic and social life that every effort should be made to ensure that they continue as an active part of their communities. ■

—W. Ray Luce



Built in 1884, the recently restored **Newton County Courthouse** overlooks downtown Covington.

Estimated Costs of Historic Courthouse Rehabilitation in Georgia

Many Georgia courthouses—symbols of the state’s communities—need financial assistance for repairs if they are to continue serving their constituents. In 2002 a study prepared by the Office of Jack Pyburn, Inc., Historic Preservation Architects with the professional cost-estimating firm of Hanscomb, Inc., estimated that \$336,000,000 was needed to place the state’s historic courthouses in sound physical condition. The study was funded through a grant from the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to the Association County Commissioners of Georgia with support from the Georgia Municipal Association. The following is excerpted from the study’s Executive Summary.

This study is a direct result of the recommendations of the 1998 Final Report of the Joint Legislative Study Committee on Historic Preservation in Georgia. The committee identified historic courthouses and city halls as “invaluable community assets” that serve as “symbols of community pride and anchors for economic stability.” The study committee recognized that these buildings, as a group, were in many cases victims of deferred improvements that must be addressed soon for their continued viability. Further, it was determined that a supporting source of funding would likely be required to assist local communities in the rehabilitation of their historic city hall and/or historic courthouse. The estimate produced in this study is intended for use in determining the funding needed to rehabilitate Georgia’s historic city halls and courthouses.

The findings in this study (regarding courthouses) are based upon the following:

- The organization of existing information about historic courthouses in Georgia gathered from sponsoring agencies;
- Phone surveys of each county with a known historic courthouse;
- Site visitation to a select group of buildings to check existing data and phone survey information; and
- Cost data from consulting team projects involving the rehabilitation of similar historic structures in Georgia.

The study’s ultimate mission is to estimate a reasonable cost in current dollars to rehabilitate all of the historic courthouses in Georgia to a sound condition that preserves their

character-defining features and provides modern systems to support continued productive use. This task was challenging given the potential number of buildings involved, the resources for the study, and the state of available data on which to develop the estimated cost. In order to develop a viable rehabilitation cost the following study parameters were developed:

- Historic courthouses built prior to 1960;
- Historic buildings not originally built as courthouses that have been adapted to function for this role;
- Buildings that are likely eligible for the National Register by virtue of age and character in addition to those already on the National Register of Historic Places.

Using the above parameters, a considerable cost database on recent historic rehabilitation projects, and a thoughtful

methodology to project costs for the group of buildings for which there was no available data, the study findings are as follows:

- There are approximately 3.2 million square feet in historic courthouses found in 157 buildings.
- An estimate of the total cost to rehabilitate Georgia’s historic courthouses is \$336,000,000.
- Courthouses included in the study had an average rehabilitation cost of \$2,100,000 per building.

Georgia’s historic city halls and courthouses are valuable resources. They are physical reminders of Georgia’s heritage and architectural symbols that continue to support the delivery of public services. Many of these historically significant and viable structures are in need of rehabilitation and yet cities and counties struggle with a lack of adequate funding. These civic buildings have been useful and productive for previ-

ous generations and will continue to serve long into the future if their historic character is preserved and they are maintained in sound condition. This study has defined the funding required to ensure that these buildings continue to be a part of Georgia’s architectural heritage, a source of civic pride, and a productive agent for community revitalization across the state. The total dollar value estimated to rehabilitate these buildings falls far short of their value to Georgia’s history and future. ■



Citizens of **Coweta County** celebrated the centennial anniversary of their historic courthouse in 2004. The courthouse, located in downtown Newnan, is an excellent example of the Neoclassical style of architecture.

Courthouse Rehabilitation Issues

Rehabilitating a county courthouse may seem to be a formidable undertaking; however, with proper planning and adequate funding, courthouse rehabilitation can be a rewarding experience that produces a revitalized and functional building. A licensed architect experienced in preservation projects should be hired to assist your county. The architect's first step should be to evaluate your courthouse and produce a preservation plan that contains guidance for its repair and continued use. Recommendations should be prioritized according to urgency of need starting with securing the building from water infiltration and with building safety.

The following pages discuss issues that may arise when rehabilitating a historic courthouse, along with case studies describing work completed by counties around the state on their courthouses. Of course, not all the guidance provided in the publication is applicable to every courthouse, but an attempt has been made to identify those issues that seem to be typical in courthouse rehabilitation. For more detailed guidance, you may wish to view *The Georgia Courthouse Manual* at <http://www.gashpo.org/content/display/navigation.asp?TopCategory=21>. The manual, prepared by the firm of Jaeger/Pyburn, Inc., was produced in 1992 by the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and the Office of Historic Preservation (now HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to assist counties that were planning improvements to, or possible rehabilitation of, their historic courthouses. (The manual is in the process of being updated.)



The restored clock tower, located on the southeast corner of the historic **Taliaferro County Courthouse**, can be seen throughout downtown Crawfordville.

Building Features: Repair Before Replace

For a courthouse to have historic integrity, it must retain its historic features. Elements such as windows, doors, plaster, flooring, trim, mantels, and balustrades individually and collectively create a building's character and contribute to its significance. In a rehabilitation project, it is essential that these features be retained. Today, there are many approaches to

A COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE:

1. An executive summary that includes a brief property history, current use, any use restrictions, and requirements for any adaptive reuse.
2. A conditions assessment that identifies character-defining features, materials, and spatial arrangements and the condition of the building systems and envelope components.
3. A historic *Context* that provides a historic architectural, landscape, setting context overview and documentation of changes to the building over time.
4. Special considerations, such as life-safety code and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, new use building code requirements, existing structural capacity and/or other necessary modifications.
5. Analysis of and recommendations for adaptive reuse options or proposed new uses, including physical impact to the historic property.
6. Recommended treatment for building components, systems, and historic elements.
7. A maintenance schedule.
8. Other recommendations such as additional building investigations, material analysis, and space programming that is outside the scope of preservation planning.
9. A cost estimate tied to a scope of improvements and phasing as appropriate to guide funding decisions and project implementation.
10. Supplementary information, such as building and site plans, historic photographs, and technical reports.

Case Study JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Johnson County Courthouse, located in Wrightsville, was designed by architects Golucke and Stewart and constructed in 1895. This Romanesque Revival/Colonial Revival style courthouse with a four-entrance cross-plan floor layout is centered within the courthouse square. Interior remodeling occurred in the mid-1900s at which time it appears that parking and a jail annex were added to the site.

In the 1990s, when the county government proposed vacating the historic courthouse in favor of building new facilities, citizens opposed the plan. Instead, the courthouse underwent rehabilitation, completed in 1996, using \$1 million in SPLOST funds and a Georgia Heritage grant from the Historic Preservation Division for \$19,000. Related to the courthouse rehabilitation was occupation of a nearby storefront building providing additional space for government services.

The 1996 rehabilitation included a new roof, refinished interior walls and woodwork, restoration of the courtroom, and a new elevator, that used space provided by two existing small rooms, one directly above the other. The overall rehabilitation retained historic character-defining features, including some remaining pressed



metal ceilings, windows, wainscot, stairs and railings, fireplaces, trim, and most of the building's floor plan. The courtroom retains most of its historic features. The notable exception is its ceiling, which was once pressed metal as evidenced by the extant cornice, but now is gypsum board with beams and a central molding ornamentation. The mid-1900s renovation caused the loss of one of the first floor corridors, but exterior doors were kept intact and visible from both the interior and exterior. Maintaining non-functional doors intact was repeated in the 1996 work at the new elevator location. A 2003 Georgia Heritage grant of \$24,000 helped stabilize and repair the historic clock tower. Future plans for the courthouse include converting the jail annex into office space.

Rehabilitation of the Johnson County Courthouse benefits the local community as it continues the use of a landmark public building. Activity generated by the courthouse in its central location contributes to the stability of the downtown business district and promotes an awareness and appreciation of local historic resources.

preserving significant features that are seemingly beyond repair. A qualified professional should be capable of providing direction for the preservation of deteriorated historic features. If you think you have a significant historic feature that is beyond repair, consult with HPD for an additional opinion before its removal.

Building System Modernization

The need to modernize building systems in historic courthouses is one of the most common reasons to undertake rehabilitation work. Such work includes upgrading heating, air conditioning, ventilation, fire suppression, alarm, electrical, and communication and data systems. These types of improvements have the potential to have a major negative impact on a historic courthouse if not handled sensitively and a major positive impact on the continued use of the courthouse if installed properly and with respect for the building's historic character.

Critical to building system modernization is identification of character-defining features, understanding of structural design, and detailed planning. Building system modernization should be accomplished in a manner that minimally impacts significant features.

Secondary and utilitarian spaces, such as closets, attic, and basement and crawlspaces should be used where pos-

sible to run cables, wire, and ductwork. If the structural system allows, wall studs and ceiling/floor joist cavities should be used, recognizing that to do so may require making access openings. If this is not possible, ductwork and conduit can be left exposed organized neatly in the design and construction phase of the project and painted out to blend in with the balance of the space. In any event, ductwork and conduit placement should minimize the alteration of significant historic building features. If a major physical alteration is necessary, such as a vertical chase, it should house as many services as allowable and be located in a secondary space.

Each new system should be designed to take advantage of access opportunities created by other systems. This may require phasing projects, installing spare conduit runs, leaving temporary access panels, and using temporary surface or exposed systems until such time as they can be hidden. Consult with building code officials to be sure they understand the design approach and be certain that combining service areas is accomplished consistent with applicable building codes.

Additional guidance for dealing with modernizing HVAC systems in historic buildings is available by consulting *Preservation Brief No. 24: Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches* (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief24.htm>.)

Repairing Historic Windows

Windows are some of the most important character-defining features of any historic building, but are also the most often replaced due to issues of energy efficiency and deferred maintenance. Like all other historic features though, windows should only be removed and replaced with new windows when they are deteriorated beyond repair. *Preservation Brief No. 9: The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows* (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief09.htm>) describes three levels of repair for wooden windows. Windows should be surveyed in place to determine what repair category they fall into before replacement is automatically assumed. The repair categories are defined as follows:

Category #1: Maintenance. Many windows appear to be in worse condition than they actually are because they have been subjected to a deferral of regular maintenance. Maintenance includes painting, replacement of glazing and glazing putty, weatherizing and making sashes operable.

Category #2: Repair to deteriorated wood through the use of epoxy or other consolidants.

Category #3: Parts replacement. This involves using the non-deteriorated parts of some windows to repair others. Often this is done so that the main façade of one building can feature all historic windows while the secondary facades are filled in with replacements.

If a window frame and/or sash is so deteriorated that it cannot be repaired, then replacement is appropriate.



The windows of the 1885 **Randolph County Courthouse**, located in Cuthbert, are extremely detailed.

Replacement windows should match the historic windows in appearance. New frames and sashes should be to the same measurements, muntins (wooden strip separating panes of glass in the sash) should be the same width and profile, and glazing openings should be of the same dimensions as the historic. Construction details should also be considered to make sure that the new windows are as authentic as possible. Typically, full replacement of a window frame and

sash is not necessary and certainly replacement of all historic windows is seldom, if ever, justified. Replacement should be based on a detailed inspection by a knowledgeable professional. Replacement window components will often have to be custom made which is done at a greater expense but will ensure that the integrity of the historic courthouse is retained and is typically less costly than full window replacement. ■



Window detail from the **Taliaferro County Courthouse**, built in 1902.

Myth: Old windows are the major cause of wasted energy and replacing them is the obvious solution to achieve energy efficiency.

Reality: Air leakage and infiltration can account for 50 percent or more of heating and cooling costs. However, windows are only one of numerous sites in a building that can be the source of this type of wasted energy. Other sources include the rough framed openings for windows and doors, ductwork, plumbing chases, piping and wiring holes, electrical boxes, and attic access openings. In fact, the largest sources of air infiltration are holes which connect conditioned spaces with unconditioned attics, crawlspaces, and basements, while ductwork leakage, accounting for over half, is the single biggest source of energy loss. Sealing ductwork, holes, and other wall and ceiling penetrations are the easiest, cheapest, and most cost effective measures that can be taken to achieve significant energy savings.

Myth: Installing double-glazed windows achieves energy savings unobtainable by repairing single-glazed windows and installing storm windows.

Reality: U.S. Department of Energy and other studies demonstrate that repairing single-glazed windows and using storm windows will provide similar energy savings as double-glazed windows. In Georgia, the range of energy savings for either approach is \$0.40 to 0.70 per square foot. To achieve such savings in either case requires proper sealing and caulking of the window openings.

Case Study LINCOLN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Lincoln County Courthouse, constructed in 1915 in the Neoclassical Revival style with a four-entrance cross-plan floor layout, is located on a lot in a residential area several blocks from the Lincoln downtown commercial district. Other than maintenance repairs, roof replacement, and some cosmetic work, the courthouse had undergone little renovation, and many of the original features and finishes had been left intact.

In the early 1990s, the county government proactively recognized that the courthouse needed to be brought into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). At the same time, other major work necessary to keep the building functioning effectively was identified, and the Historic Preservation Division was consulted to discuss design issues and identify important historic features to retain. Preservation-sensitive plans were developed, and the courthouse underwent rehabilitation. Using \$800,000 in SPLOST funds, the project was completed in 1996 and coincided with the county's bicentennial.

Rehabilitation included installation of a new metal roof to replace asphalt shingles and the use of fiberglass to recon-



struct missing terra cotta Corinthian capitals. Determining the design and appropriateness of both these items was aided by the acquisition of original drawings of the courthouse from the heirs of Willis Irwin, an apprentice to the architect-of-record G. Lloyd Preacher.

Other work included installing an elevator and accessible bathrooms by using existing bathroom space on the first floor and a portion of the judge's chambers on the second floor; installing new HVAC designed as several separate systems to overcome non-connecting crawlspaces on the first floor and to use attic space to service the second floor; refinishing interior historic woodwork and pressed metal ceilings; repairing the windows and entry doors; and restoring the courtroom, which included replacing existing theater-style seats with benches on the main

courtroom floor and retaining theater seats in the balcony.

Rehabilitation of the Lincoln County Courthouse enables the local community to continue to use a landmark public building. Retaining government activities in the historic courthouse resulted in several adjacent houses being renovated and adapted for county offices as expansion needs occurred.

Courtroom Rehabilitation

The courtroom is the grand ceremonial space in the courthouse. Historically significant, the space was often ornately designed and encompassed the entire second floor. Many courtrooms exhibit features such as pressed tin or beadboard ceilings, elaborate wood trim and paneling, decorative plaster work, colored window glass, large light fixtures, open balconies and, of course, the judge's bench, witness stands, jury box and audience seating.

During the mid-twentieth century, many courtrooms were renovated to introduce modern mechanical and electrical systems. When this work was performed, suspended ceilings were used to conceal HVAC ducts and electrical conduit and inexpensive wood paneling was installed on top of the original plaster walls, thus altering the original character of the space. Behind and beneath these coverings, original and important historic features may still be intact. A quick investigation can easily determine if this is the case—acoustical ceiling tiles can be pushed up from their framework; paneling can be removed in individual sheets; and corners of carpet can be pulled up. If historic materials are still intact, then those non-historic features that distract from the often dramatic character of the courthouse can be removed and historic materials properly repaired.

Likewise, in other mid-twentieth century renovations,



Courtroom of the Greek Revival style **Greene County Courthouse**.

balconies were often simply boxed-in rather than removed. If remaining, they should be examined by a qualified preservation professional with a structural engineer to ensure their structural soundness. If not sound or if the stairs that access them are too narrow or steep, the balconies should be used for interpretive purposes only.

Where historic building materials do not remain, research using county records, photographs, newspapers, and oral accounts of the courtroom's appearance may uncover descriptions of historic features. Several companies currently

make reproductions of historic features and fixtures, providing opportunities for these features to be reconstructed. Documentation and research can also be used to determine the appearance and layout of other items that may be missing, like the judge's bench and jury box. When such information is not sufficiently complete to support accurate reproduction of original features, a preservation professional should be consulted to assist in considering the alternatives for treatment of these conditions to best interpret the remaining historic features.

As discussed earlier, the question of how to treat updated mechanical system features may arise when dealing with the repair of historic features. When replacing these systems, new conduit and ductwork can be run in floor and ceiling cavities and in attics, basements and crawl spaces, so that they cause little visual impact to the historic space.



The **Appling County Courthouse**, located in Baxley, was designed by architect H.L. Lewman and constructed in 1908. In the mid-1960s, the courthouse interior was modernized; wooden paneling was used to cover courtroom walls and columns; and the ceiling was dropped (as shown in photo above) concealing the historic pressed metal ceiling, wooden columns, and balcony.

buildings compared to new construction. The International Building Code 2000, which is the governing code for Georgia, reflects this flexibility, stating in Chapter 34, Existing Structures, under the section titled Historic Buildings: "The provisions of this code relating to the construction, repair, alteration, addition, restoration, and movement of structures, and changes of occupancy shall not be mandatory for historic buildings where such buildings are judged by the building official to not constitute a distinct life safety hazard." Other Georgia law also recognizes and accepts this need for compliance flexibility, including Official Code of Georgia 8-2 and 25-2 (<http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/GaCode/index.htm>), which codifies acceptable compliance alternatives.

Within the specific building and life safety codes are descriptions of compliance options available when dealing with existing (historic) buildings. Compliance alternatives may be necessary in

Alternative Building Codes

Current fire and life-safety codes and related statutes allow flexibility in complying with the codes regarding historic

order to maintain character-defining features. These alternatives can be achieved with open dialogue and negotiation with the local building code authority starting early in the

Case Study DECATUR COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Decatur County Courthouse is a 1902 Neoclassical Revival building designed by Georgia architect Alexander Blair. It sits on the Bainbridge city square, formed around a block-sized park.

In the late 1990s, the county government recognized a need for additional space and updated systems, but was committed to remaining in the historic courthouse. Project work included rehabilitation of the courthouse, conversion of the 1930s jail addition into judicial offices and an auxiliary courtroom, conversion of the 1970s jail addition into office and storage space, and construction of a small addition for stairs and restrooms.

Courthouse rehabilitation consisted largely of the removal of non-historic materials and the repair of historic features. The courtroom had been greatly altered in previous renovations with the addition of modern materials, such as a dropped ceiling to hide HVAC ductwork,



and a balcony enclosure. All non-historic features were removed revealing an intact balcony area and pressed metal ceiling, which only required minimal repairs. Original windows, shutters, and curly-pine paneling were also intact. New mechanical systems were installed in the courtroom in a manner that caused minimal visual or physical impacts. These include hidden HVAC ductwork and a state-of-the-art computer system that allows the jury to view projected images.

Rehabilitation of the Decatur County Courthouse was accomplished using \$5.6 million in SPLOST funding, a prisoner work program, and a lengthy planning process. The success of the courthouse project has been accompanied by rehabilitation of nearby fire and police stations by the city and rehabilitation in the commercial district, including the historic Bon Air Hotel, by private investment.



The citizens of **Polk County** use the old Cedartown City Hall (1935-36), designed by Otis Clay Poundstone, as their courthouse annex.

project. When considering compliance alternatives, remember that it may be necessary to over comply in one code area in order to compensate for another. An example is adding additional sprinklers and fire warning devices if there are less than the standard number of exits. Or, if the courthouse can only be modified with difficulty, some government services may need to be located elsewhere, such as a nearby vacant storefront building.

Additional guidance on using code compliance alternatives is available by consulting national model codes for existing buildings, rehabilitation codes specifically developed for historic and existing buildings, and code related publications such as “Fire Safety Retrofitting in Historic Buildings.” It may also be necessary to request an opinion from the State Historic Preservation Office (HPD) to initiate consideration of compliance alternatives.

Space Needs

As county governments try to provide their growing communities with an ever-increasing variety of services, they sometimes find they are out-growing their space. There is pressure to abandon their historic courthouses and build new facilities on the outskirts of the downtown commercial districts. When a courthouse moves out of the central business district, the courthouse employees and the hundreds of citizens that do business with the county on a daily basis are no longer coming into the downtown area. Removal of the courthouse from the heart of town can lead to a dramatic

decline in downtown business.

Communities have also realized that though they could build a larger, new courthouse and abandon the historic one, the new structure might never equal the character and stature or realize the quality of materials and detail of the historic building. It would be impossible to afford a comparably designed and detailed building today. As an alternative to a replacement courthouse, communities have opted to construct additions, adapt an existing underutilized downtown building or build an annex on an adjacent or nearby tract to their historic courthouse. However, additions may not always be appropriate, particularly if the courthouse sits in the middle of a central square and is visible from all sides. Courthouse squares are most often too small to handle an addition of sufficient size to accommodate needed space over a longer period of time.

If deemed an appropriate alternative, an addition should be designed to be compatible with and subordinate in



The 1936 former **Baxley Post Office** now serves as the Appling County Magistrate Office.

scale and design to the historic courthouse. Typically, it is desirable for an addition to not disrupt or alter the primary historic views of the historic courthouse. Construction should cause the least amount of damage to the original structure, so that if restoration of the historic structure is ever undertaken, the addition can easily be removed leaving historic fabric intact. Finally, additions should be designed

to complement the style of the historic building, but not exactly duplicate it. There should be no confusion as to which part of the building is historic and which is new. New additions should borrow design references from the historic building, but should not outright duplicate the historic.

The **Tift County Administration Building** is located on a block adjacent to the Tift County Courthouse. This Neoclassical style building was originally constructed as a public school in 1917 but has been used as the Tift County Administration Building since the 1960s, housing various county offices such as the tax assessor, community development, finance, county commissioners, district attorney, and state probation offices.



Case Study TALIAFERRO COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Taliaferro County Courthouse, located in Crawfordville, was designed by architect L.S. Goodrich and constructed in the High Victorian style in 1902. The three-story, 15,000 square foot structure is centered on the courthouse square.

Restoration began in the early 1990s with the second-floor courtroom. Work included restoration of three sets of paired stained glass windows, the 48-lite decorative art-glass transoms, and the historic balcony. In the late 1990s, repair and replacement of the main roof was completed.

In 2002, the county received a Georgia Heritage grant from HPD to restore the courthouse's two towers located on the northeast and southeast corners of the building. Tower work included installing new pressed metal shingles to the roofs and milling trim profiles to match damaged and deteriorated wood trim. All of the exterior woodwork was replaced with



redwood to insure resistance to decay. Clock machinery was repaired and the original four clock faces were restored and a chime was incorporated. In addition, controls were added in the administrative offices that allow the time to be changed remotely.

In 2003, the county received a Georgia Heritage grant to produce a feasibility study with cost estimates on the restoration of the entire courthouse. The study indicated that these costs would be approximately \$500,000. The county anticipates funding future rehabilitation endeavors with a SPLOST and/or additional grants.

As evidenced by its ongoing efforts, Taliaferro County has been an admirable steward of its historic courthouse. Their continued maintenance and planned

phasing of restoration work as funding is available serves as an excellent model for other counties to emulate.

Communities are coming up with creative solutions to address space problems in their historic courthouses. For instance, some functions can be housed outside of the courthouse in separate buildings. One alternative is to use empty commercial buildings near the courthouse for needed office space. Johnson and Mitchell Counties are among those that have used other buildings located around the courthouse square.

The former Baxley Post Office has been converted for such purposes. Built from 1935–1936 by the federal Public Works Administration, the post office served as the community's center for mail distribution for more than 60 years. The Appling County Board of Commissioners successfully completed rehabilitation of the historic building at a cost of approximately \$149,000 and in June 2001 moved the County Magistrate Office into the structure. The building still retains its historic post office appearance and feel while providing much needed additional space for the county in what was an abandoned community landmark.

Removing all county use from the historic courthouse should only be done as a last resort. If this must occur, a new use should be found as soon as possible, since vacant buildings deteriorate more quickly than occupied ones. Several historic courthouses in Georgia have been leased to local historical and arts organizations and serve as county history museums, art galleries, and performance arts facilities, including the courthouses in DeKalb, Haralson, and Fannin Counties. However, a non-profit organization should carefully consider its decision to take ownership of such a

facility, since raising funding to maintain the structure is often difficult for smaller non-profits.

Dealing with Hazardous Materials

Rehabilitation projects often involve dealing with potentially hazardous materials, such as asbestos, lead-based paint, and bird, bat, and rodent droppings. Before work begins, an evaluation should be completed to confirm the presence of these materials and to determine whether they actually constitute a hazard.

An important part of the evaluation process for these materials is surveying and testing, which is needed to determine the location and extent of materials and finishes containing these substances. These materials may be found in historic features, such as plaster walls or painted woodwork. The wholesale removal of building features to remove hazardous material is not necessarily the only response to dealing with these materials. State and federal regulations do not mandate the wholesale removal of materials that contain lead-based paint or asbestos from historic buildings. Again, a preservation professional, experienced in managing these types of decisions, can assist in identifying the appropriate management approach for each material in question.

It is important to remember that lead-based paint and asbestos do not necessarily constitute a hazard merely by being present in a historic building. A qualified preservation professional can work with an environmental consultant to tailor an abatement strategy to properly manage identified

regulated materials while protecting the historic character of the building in the most cost efficient manner. Generally, these substances constitute a hazard when they are so deteriorated that they can be inhaled or otherwise ingested. Typically, this occurs when lead contaminated dust is created from wearing surfaces or when asbestos fibers become airborne. In such cases, the hazard needs to be addressed appropriately. This may include removal or other abatement measures.

If the material and surfaces containing lead-based paint and asbestos are stable, other controls such as a thorough cleaning or encapsulation may be a more preservation sensitive approach. In the case of lead paint, special encapsulant paints and coatings can be considered as permanent containment if they receive a 20-year manufacturer's warranty.

When dealing with bird, bat, and rodent droppings, the first step is to determine how the creatures enter the building and block their access. An evaluation should determine the animals' point of entry into the building and measures should be taken to eliminate access.

Additional guidance on dealing with lead-based paint and asbestos is available by consulting *HUD Guidelines for*



The ADA-accessible ramp and elevator at the **Brooks County Courthouse.**

the Evaluation and Control of Lead-Based Paint Hazards in Housing, Preservation Brief No. 37: Appropriate Methods for Reducing Lead-Paint Hazards in Historic Housing (<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief37.htm>), and *EPA Guidance for Controlling Asbestos-Containing Materials in Buildings* ("the purple book").

Achieving ADA Compliance

Governments are charged with making reasonable

modifications to publicly owned buildings to ensure that all patrons, including the disabled, have ready access to its programs, services, and activities. This requirement is called program access and historic courthouses are not exempt. It can be hard to know what changes may be necessary and reasonable to achieve program access for a historic building, including whether or not structural alterations are required. Fortunately, the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA) guidelines recognize this dilemma and provide some flexibility. In some cases, designated parking and the simple addition of a ramp will suffice. Different cases, where second floor courtrooms are in use, could require the installation of an elevator. New, wider doors and bathrooms of increased size are other typical necessary alterations. However, any

Case Study BROOKS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Brooks County Courthouse in Quitman was designed by architect John Wind and constructed between 1859 and 1864. This Renaissance Revival/Romanesque Revival style courthouse with a four-entrance cross-plan layout includes an open-air vestibule to mark the main entrance. The courthouse is centered on grounds located between the town's commercial and residential districts.

Rehabilitation began in 2002 with the removal of non-historic fabric in several of the first floor office spaces. Many of the building's historic features, such as mantels and moldings, were uncovered and then repaired and restored. The project continued with upgrades to achieve Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance and was completed in 2004 using \$140,000 in both general and SPLOST funds and aided by a \$20,000



Georgia Heritage grant from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources. ADA work included constructing a small ramp to access the front entrance, retrofitting new doors into the front and rear entrances, and adding an elevator and accessible restroom in the historically open vestibule area. The elevator doors are located only a few feet from the main entrance to the courthouse, providing excellent access to the building's first floor and second-story courtroom without negatively impacting the building's historic integrity.

The Brooks County Board of Commissioners is currently planning for the exterior rehabilitation of the courthouse to be funded with SPLOST and general operating funds. Future work will include courtroom restoration.

changes to the building should be part of a comprehensive plan to achieve ADA compliance while both respecting the historic integrity of the building and providing program access in an appropriately integrated setting.

Notwithstanding, ramps often can easily be added without an extensive plan. Their design should be compatible with the style of the building, located so as to not negatively impact its structural or visual integrity, and should be code compliant—properly sloped with appropriate handrails. If the courthouse’s floor plan allows, elevators can be inserted into an interior space, such as tucked into a side hallway, corner of a room, or converted maintenance closets stacked over each other. They might also be added within open porches or vestibules. However, utilizing part of the space of a main interior corridor should be avoided, even though the elevator should be easily accessed by one. Accessible bathrooms can usually be obtained by removing partitions from existing bathrooms to create fewer stalls. In some cases, they can effectively use leftover space from an interior elevator installation. In situations where an addition is appropriate, it should incorporate the elevator and bathrooms and follow new addition guidelines.

The local government should consult with community members with disabilities as well as various disability-related organizations to help identify, prioritize and address potential access barriers, and better ensure that all citizens can fully participate. For more information about ADA and making buildings accessible refer to *Preservation Brief No. 32, Making Historic Properties Accessible*, O.C.G.A. 120-3-20, and www.ada.gov.

Courthouse Grounds and Squares

Courthouse grounds and squares often serve as the location for downtown festivals, art and craft fairs, political speeches, Memorial Day celebrations, and other special events. They



The **Brooks County Courthouse** grounds contain features such as a flagpole, historic fountain, Georgia historic marker, monument to the Confederacy, and an obelisk in honor of those Brooks County residents that died during World War I and II, the Korean War, and Vietnam.



The **Greene County Courthouse** grounds contain many significant features such as a Georgia historic marker commemorating the formation of Greene County, three memorial monuments for the county war veterans, a flagpole, a bicentennial time capsule, and two monuments in honor of important individuals that resided in the county.

may contain features such as statues, plaques, monuments, memorials, and archaeological evidence of people’s activities in the past that are important to the community’s history.

Consideration of the use, care, and treatment of the courthouse grounds or square should always be included as part of the courthouse preservation plan. Before any work begins, an understanding of the outdoor character-defining features is critical. These include: site plan; landscaping; walkways and driveways; walls; fencing; statues, monuments, and memorials; fountains; lighting; benches; gazebos; trees, hedges, and plantings; and archaeological resources.

To protect a site’s historic integrity, alterations should be accomplished in a manner that will result in minimal physical and visual impact. Additions and other substantial alterations should occur on secondary elevations or in previously altered or less significant areas. Changes that alter the historic character of the grounds or square should be avoided. Park-like grounds should not be changed into a formal plaza; exotic or ornamental landscaping should not replace native plantings. Careful consideration should be taken when choosing new features. Benches, lighting, fountains, memorials, or other new features should not be confused with the historic, unless they are replacements for missing features. They should be compatible with the site’s historic character, but distinguishable as contemporary changes.

A preservation site plan should be produced, which identifies, locates, and categorizes existing features according to their condition. It should indicate whether these features are original, historic, or contemporary alterations. Once this process is completed, appropriate treatment approaches can be developed for the rehabilitation of the site.

Significant features should be retained in their historic location when undertaking maintenance, repairs, or planning alterations. The historic context and relationship between the courthouse and the grounds or square needs to be taken into consideration throughout the process.

Clues to the relationship between the courthouse and courthouse grounds and information about the community's use of this space could be revealed in the archaeological record contained below the ground surrounding the courthouse building. The many day-to-day activities as well as special events occurring on the grounds likely left evidence as archaeological resources about the community's past. Unique and unobtainable elsewhere, this information



The **Emanuel County Courthouse** was demolished in 2000. This stripped classical courthouse was built circa 1940 and designed by architectural firm Dennis and Dennis of Macon after fire destroyed the county's previous courthouse.

can tremendously enhance the story of a community's history. Considering archaeology early in the planning of an alteration project, when changes are more easily made, facilitates completion of the project without delays or unexpected expenditures. Regardless of what the surface may look like, there is the potential for intact subsurface resources, and an archaeologist can assess that potential. If archaeology has not been done previously and ground disturbance is anticipated during future maintenance of

the courthouse grounds or square, it is recommended that an investigation be undertaken by professional archaeologists beforehand so that any significant resources can be identified and interpreted for the benefit of the community. ■

Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation* were developed to guide decisions when historic buildings are rehabilitated. The ten *Standards* are a set of guiding principles that express a national preservation philosophy resulting from the Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Developed in the mid-1970s, they provide the foundation for a uniform and sensitive approach to rehabilitating historic properties.

Most work undertaken on county courthouses will be considered a rehabilitation. To read the *Standards*, go to <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>.

Standard 1: A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Standard 2: The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Standard 3: Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Standard 4: Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Standard 5: Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical or pictorial evidence.

Standard 7: Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Standard 8: Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Georgia's Nationally Recognized Courthouses



When the early Georgia “temples of justice” were designed, they were the most modern buildings in town, had the most lavish spaces, richest detail, up-to-date lights, heating plants, water closets, and telephones. They may not be the most modern today, but they still have the richest detail, the greatest space. Nothing like them will be built again, for the county cannot afford it, nor are there craftsmen who can build in the same way.

—Jan Hardy and Anne Harman



The quotation above was written for the thematic nomination of Georgia's historic courthouses to the National Register of Historic Places, our country's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archaeological significance based on national standards. A thematic nomination simultaneously nominates groups of related significant properties to the National Register.

The Georgia courthouse thematic nomination was listed in the National Register in 1980 and included all existing courthouses built prior to 1930. In 1995, the nomination was amended to include courthouses built between 1930 and 1945.

Today, 132 of Georgia's county courthouses are listed in the National Register. The oldest of these still in use as courthouses are the 1848 Greene County and 1856 Columbia County Courthouses. The Douglas County Courthouse, constructed in 1958, represents the modern era. Listed in the National Register in 2002, it is now used as a museum.

For more information about nominating the historic courthouse (or other historic resources) in your community to the National Register of Historic Place, please contact HPD's National Register Coordinator at (404) 651-6782. ■



Top to bottom: The **Douglas County Courthouse**, constructed in 1958, is an excellent example of the International style of architecture popular in the second half of the 20th century. Located in Appling, the **Columbia County Courthouse** was designed by John Trowbridge. It was built in 1856 with Italianate detailing. Designed and built by David Demarest and Atharates Atkinson, the **Greene County Courthouse** in Greensboro was built between 1848 and 1849 in the Greek Revival style. Built in 1936 in the Colonial Revival style, the **Peach County Courthouse** was designed by Dennis and Dennis of Macon.

Temples of Justice

The Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) steadfastly believes in the preservation and celebration of Georgia's fascinating history. As the fabric of our state's political and social landscape, Georgia's history weaves through virtually every fiber of our current governing process. With that in mind, ACCG has become enthusiastically involved in several projects, all aimed at keeping the historical legacy and honor of our state at the forefront of our county government process.

On April 12, 2004 the ACCG hosted the video premiere of "Temples of Justice: Historic Courthouses in Georgia" at the new State Archives Building. This one-hour documentary was produced by Alan Pogue of Starrsville Pictures.

Mr. Pogue walked into the ACCG offices approximately seven years ago to discuss his desire to produce a video that would outline the historic presence and impact that Georgia courthouses have had in our great state. Mr. Pogue was aware that ACCG had been deeply involved in promoting policy positions in support of local preservation efforts. He knew that ACCG worked with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, the Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, and local preservation organizations in support of vital state legislation and appropriations.

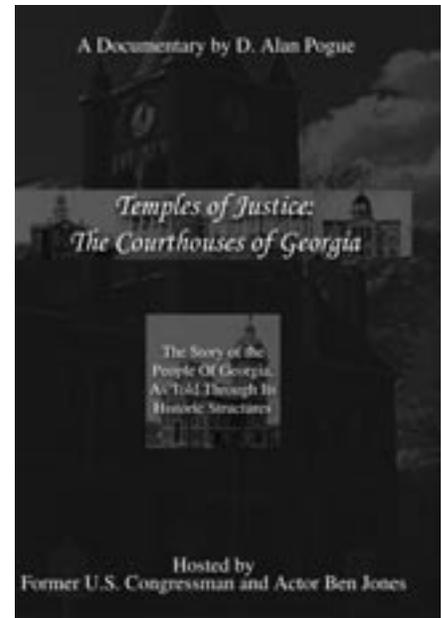
Mr. Pogue's project interested ACCG, and plans were set in motion to provide technical assistance as well as develop strategies for securing necessary funding. The effort took time but ACCG's persistence paid off when a major corporate benefactor, Comcast, entered the picture, providing critical funding

and in-kind support. Former Georgia Congressman Ben Jones served as the host of the video, and a number of organizations and individuals provided additional financing. The completed video premiered on GPTV on August 31, 2004. Copies are available to interested groups for a nominal fee.

ACCG was also very supportive when Wilbur (Pete) Caldwell was preparing the reference guidebook *The Courthouse and the Depot*. This wonderful historical look at the Georgia courthouses and railroad depots was published by Mercer Press. Subsequently Mr. Caldwell began writing a monthly article highlighting specific courthouses for the ACCG *Georgia County Government* magazine. This publication is mailed to every county government elected official, key appointed officials, state legislators, state agencies, the Georgia congressional delegation, and to state associations of county government across the nation. For the past two years, ACCG has proudly published these articles under the heading "The Grand Old Courthouses of Georgia." This series has generated much interest and is provided as a public service to our membership.

Under the guidance of the ACCG Board of Managers and Executive Director Jerry Griffin, the staff of ACCG has worked to actively promote the importance of historic preservation throughout our state. ACCG will continue to highlight the importance of this topic, work on new technical assistance ventures and inform legislators of our preservation policy positions and appropriation requests.

ACCG's work in the area of historic preservation fits perfectly with the



guiding principles for the organization outlined in its mission statement: "It is the mission of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia to enhance the role, stature and responsiveness of county government in Georgia. Since counties are the level of government closest to the people and serve all the people of the state, ACCG will promote the ability of Georgia counties to provide public services responsibly, efficiently and cost effectively through cooperative legislative action, education of public officials, provision of quality member services and technical assistance, and increasing public awareness of critical local government issues." ■

This article was written by Ross King, Assistant Director, Association County Commissioners of Georgia. ACCG is a nonprofit organization that serves as the consensus-building, training, and legislative organization for the state's 159 county governments. Visit the ACCG website at www.accg.org.

Funding Sources for the Preservation of County Courthouses

Georgia Heritage Grants

During the 1994 Legislative Session, the Georgia General Assembly initiated appropriations for grant funding for the preservation of historic properties in Georgia. Since that time, the Georgia Heritage Grant Program, administered through the Historic Preservation Division, has provided seed money for the preservation of historic properties and archaeological sites throughout the state. The Program offers matching funds on a statewide competitive basis to local governments and nonprofit organizations for the preservation of Georgia Register-eligible historic properties.

For further information, contact the grants coordinator, Historic Preservation Division, Department of Natural Resources at 404-656-2840 or go to www.gashpo.org.

Transportation Enhancement Funds

Though these grants may not be used for work on the courthouse building, they can be used for landscaping and other beautification efforts around the courthouse square. For example, the Johnson County courthouse was the centerpiece of a \$300,000 TEA project awarded in 2001. The project involved downtown Courthouse Square improvements, including development of a historic plaza with engraved pavers, street furniture, landscaping and reproduction period lampposts on the west side of the courthouse and other related downtown streetscape improvements, such as buried cables and accessible sidewalks. This reimbursement program is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation and provides funds for transportation-related projects enhancements. State and local government agencies are eligible to apply. Grants are matching grants (20 percent local, 80 percent federal) with a \$1,000,000 maximum.

For more information, contact the grants coordinator at 404-657-6914.

SPLOST

The SPLOST (Special Local Option Sales Tax) Program is the avenue through which most municipalities can raise the extra funding needed to complete rehabilitation projects. O.C.G.A. 48-8-111 gives local municipalities the authority to use SPLOST money for capital improvements to the county courthouse.

Georgia Cities Foundation

Established in 1999, the Georgia Cities Foundation (GCF) is a nonprofit subsidiary of the Georgia Municipal Authority. The GCF's mission is to assist communities in their efforts to revitalize and enhance downtown areas by serving as a partner and facilitator in the funding of downtown capital projects in Georgia through their revolving loan program. The program provides low-interest loans to Downtown Development Authorities or similar entities for downtown development projects.

For more information, call 678-686-6297 or go to www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org.

USDA Community Facilities Grant and Direct Loan Programs

The Community Facilities Programs provide grants and direct loans to assist in the development of essential community facilities, such as courthouses, in rural areas and towns of up to 20,000 in population. Grants are available to public entities such as municipalities, counties, and special-purpose districts, as well as non-profit corporations and tribal governments. A grant may be made in combination with other CF financial assistance such as a direct or guaranteed loan, applicant contributions, or loans and grants from other sources.

For more information about the loan program, including rates and terms, go to www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/brief_cp_direct.htm. For more information on the grant program, go to www.rurdev.usda.gov/rhs/cf/brief_cp_grant.htm.

In addition to sources cited throughout this booklet, you may want to refer to the following:

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Jackson, Ed, et al. *Georgia Courthouses*. Carl Vinson Institute of Government. UGA. Atlanta, 1999. <http://www.cviog.uga.edu/Projects/gainfo/courthouses/contents.htm>

Jaeger/Pyburn, Inc. *The Georgia Courthouse Manual*. Published by the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs, 1992. (The manual is now available on HPD's Web site at <http://www.gashpo.org/content/displaynavigation.asp?TopCategory=21>)

Preservation Briefs (1-42). Published by the National Park Service. <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom.htm>

Temples of Justice: The Courthouses of Georgia. Produced by Alan Pogue. Starsville Pictures, 2004. [a video]