

PH0691623

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 6 1977

DATE ENTERED DEC 26 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOWTO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Denton County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

—NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Denton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

24

STATE

Texas

— VICINITY OF

CODE

048

COUNTY

Denton

CODE

121

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

—DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

—STRUCTURE

—SITE

—OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

—PRIVATE

—BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

—IN PROCESS

—BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

—UNOCCUPIED

—WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

—YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

—NO

PRESENT USE

—AGRICULTURE

—COMMERCIAL

—EDUCATIONAL

—ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

—INDUSTRIAL

—MILITARY

—MUSEUM

—PARK

—PRIVATE RESIDENCE

—RELIGIOUS

—SCIENTIFIC

—TRANSPORTATION

—OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Denton

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Denton

STATE

Texas

— VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF PUBLIC OFFICE of the County Clerk, Denton County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Denton

STATE

Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

1970

—FEDERAL STATE

—COUNTY

—LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Austin

STATE

Texas

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In the Denton County Courthouse in Denton, architect W.C. Dodson, a prominent figure in Central Texas architecture, modified the traditional crossaxial plan to allow the erection of a high central masonry tower. In the three-story structure, the large central spaces including the courtroom were placed on either side of a single main corridor, allowing the supporting walls for the tower to pass through the center of the structure.

A corridor running east-west provides the main circulation space. On either end is a large stair prefabricated from cast iron components. As is typical of Texas courthouses, offices of the county clerk, tax assessor, and tax collector are located on the ground floor while the large district courtroom and offices of the district clerk and judge's chambers are situated on the second floor. The third floor contains additional offices.

Handsome materials were used on the interior. A paneled wainscot adds to the richness of the corridors and stairways. This paneling along with the doors and door openings are finished with oil, highlighting the natural beauty of the wood.

Centered in the public square atop an eminence, the Denton County Courthouse is comprised of a group of imposing masses. Each facade consists of a five-part composition with a projecting pavilion emphasizing the entrance. Each entrance pavilion is enriched by a Roman-arched opening, two ranges of columns and a triangular pediment. At each corner is a series of balconies surmounted by a tower with an ogival roof.

The dominant feature of the composition is the central octagonal tower rising above a broad platform with four ancillary domes, a composition which was most certainly inspired by the dome of the French Cathedral, Florence Italy (1296). Two columns support the cornice over an observation platform in the tower base and a railing is formed with masonry units.

Openings are spanned with stone lintels throughout, except at the entrances and the corner towers. The tower openings are spanned by Roman arches. Each entrance is emphasized by a Roman arch flanked by rectangular openings resulting in a composition of voids recalling the Palladian motif. Above the entrance columns bearing on pedestals support balconies with stone rails.

Masonry of harmonizing hues produces an impressive facade. The walls were tan quarry-faced sandstone in a shlar pattern and the column capitals were carved in a basket weave motif in red stone from the Ganzer quarry. The voussoirs, water table, string courses, and lintels are of cut sandstone in light brown color. The column shafts were of pink

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CONTINUATION SHEET Denton County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

granite from Burnet. These columns, eighty in number, were fabricated in Fort Worth and were among the first to be finished with electric equipment. They were employed in the pedimented entry pavilions at each facade and in balcony features at each corner.

Other decorative features contribute a subtle additional richness to the exterior. Stone carvings ornament the cornice which is surmounted by a balustrade, the posts of which are also enhanced by carved stone details. A bull's-eye window accents each pediment.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1895-1896

BUILDER/ARCHITECT W.C. Dodson

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Denton County Courthouse possesses both architectural and historic significance. In Romanesque style, one of Texas' most prominent nineteenth-century architects created a building with extraordinary richness incorporating a combination of forms that is similar in concept to many other courthouses but unique in composition. Since the founding of Denton, the public square on which this temple of justice is located, has been the focus of political activities in the county and the present courthouse has been the center of local government for three-quarters of a century.

Denton, county seat of Denton County, was established in 1857 and named, as was the county, in honor of John B. Denton, whose remains are buried on the courthouse lawn. On a hundred acres of land donated by Hiram Cisco, William Loving and William Woodruff, the fourth county seat of Denton County was established and lots were sold at public auction on January 10, 1857. The first courthouse was a frame building on the north side of the square. It burned in 1875 and was replaced by a brick structure designed and built by J.H. Britton in 1876-1877. The building was located in the center of the town square.

After twenty years of service this structure ceased to be satisfactory and public pressure mounted for the construction of a new courthouse. On February 16, 1895, the Fort Worth Daily Gazette reported that, "several parties secreted on the upper stairway supplies of barrels, coal scuttles, bricks and the like, and at a given signal turned them all loose down the stairs creating a fearful state of mind of those familiar with the conditions of things."

On July 3, 1895, the Commissioners' Court authorized the construction of a new building specifying "the Romanesque style of Architecture for the Denton County Courthouse as shown in the design prepared by Architect J.R. Gordon." Subsequent study of Gordon's plans resulted in his discharge for some reason not recorded. The commission was then awarded to architect W.C. Dodson who was ordered to prepare plans, specification and details, as well as to supervise construction by contractor Tom Lovell. Dodson was to receive a 5% commission based on the cost of the building which was \$100,000.00.

Completed in 1896, the courthouse continues to serve its original function.



77001938  
Denton

Property Denton County Courthouse

State Texas Working Number 6.6.77.911

**TECHNICAL**

Platns; 3  
Maps 1

**CONTROL**

OK pl  
6.7.77

**HISTORIAN**

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

Accept.  
H. Bilt 9/20/77  
**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**

accept  
Braham 11/23/77

**HAER**

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_  
Review \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

Accept  
Lebowich  
12/15/77

**BRANCH CHIEF**

Hanning  
12.16.77

**KEEPER**

W. M.  
12/20/77

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Register Entry 2-7778

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_  
Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_

Entered DEC 20 1977

INT:2106-74



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Denton County Courthouse  
Denton, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 8-3-70  
THC

West elevation

Photo #1 93

JUN 6 1977

DEC 20 1977

Completed in 1896, the Denton County Courthouse in Denton, Texas, was designed in Romanesque Style. Located on the public square, this "temple of justice" has been the focus of political activities in the county since its construction. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. (Texas Historical Commission)

Return to Toni Lee, National Park Service, 343-9520



Denton County Courthouse  
Denton, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 8-3-70  
THC

South elevation

Photo #2 *73*

JUN 6 1977

DEC 20 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Denton County Courthouse  
Denton, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 8-3-70  
THC

Southwest oblique

Photo #3

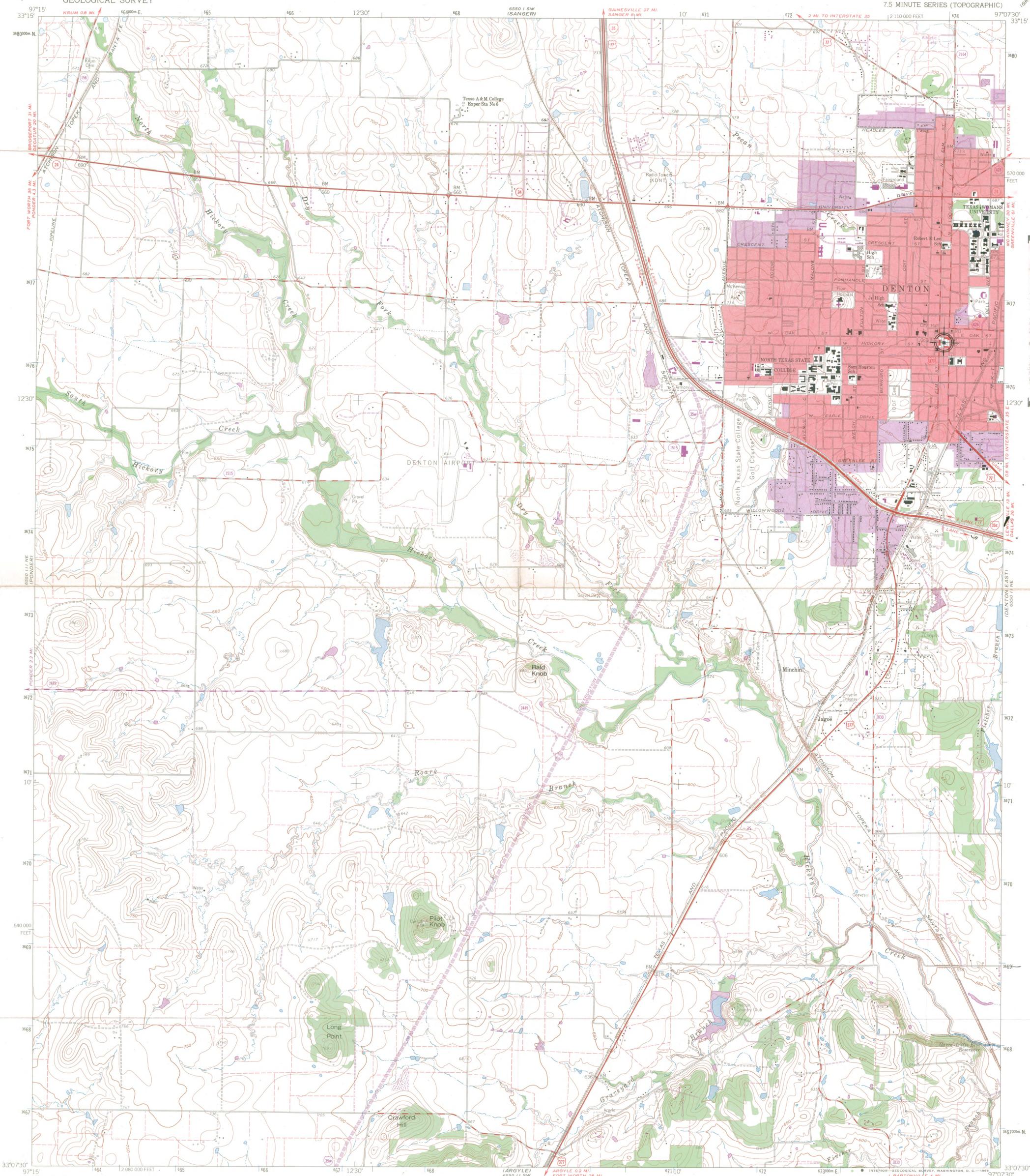
73

JUN 6 1977

DEC 20 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS

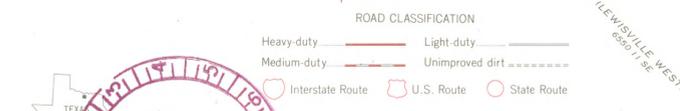
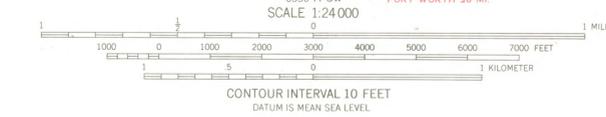
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1957. Field check 1960

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,  
north central zone  
1000 meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 14, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines  
where generally visible on aerial photographs  
This information is unchecked

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Area covered by dashed light-blue pattern is  
subject to periodic inundation to 532 feet  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from  
aerial photographs taken 1968. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



DENTON WEST, TEX.  
N3307.5-W9707.5/7.5

1960  
3397-113

APR 17 1969

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE      TEXAS

Date Entered      DEC 2 Q 1977

Name

Location

Hillem County Courthouse and Jail

Cameron  
Hillem County

Bluff Dale Suapanalou Bridge

Bluff Dale  
Erath County

Denton County Courthouse

Denton  
Denton County

Presidio County Courthouse

~~Yksn & cm County~~  
Presidio County  
Presidio County

12/23/77

Mott/js

880

Also Notified

Hon. Lloyd M. Bentsen

Hon. John G. Towar

Hon. W. R. Frost

Hon. Oscar L. ...

Hon. Ray Roberts

Hon. Richard C. White

Regional Director, Southwest Region

State Historic Preservation Officer

Mr. Trutt Latisar

Executive Director

Texas Historical Commission

P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station

Austin, Texas 76711

# NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

1 NAME as it appears on federal register: **Denton County Courthouse** 2 OTHER NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 date of entry: **DEC 20 1977** 4 county and: **121**

5 LOCATION street & number **Public Square** city / town **Denton** vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state **TX** county **Denton** 6 NPS REGION: **SW**

7 OWNER:  PRIVATE  STATE  MUNICIPAL  COUNTY  MULTIPLE  FEDERAL (Agency name) \_\_\_\_\_ 8 ADMINISTRATOR: \_\_\_\_\_

9 EXISTING SURVEYS:  NAD  HALS  NHL 10 FUNDED?  YES  NO 11 CONGRESS DISTRICT: **24th** 12 SOURCE of NOMINATION:  STATE  FEDERAL (state who prepared form) \_\_\_\_\_

13 WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT?  YES  NO 14 WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK?  YES  NO 15 ACRES: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL  PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

16 CONDITION:  excellent  good  fair  deteriorated  ruins  unexposed  unexcavated  altered  unaltered  reconstructed  excavated  original site  moved  unknown

17 features: INTERIOR:  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1  NOT INTACT-0  UNKNOWN-4  NOT APPLICABLE-7 EXTERIOR:  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2  NOT INTACT-0  UNKNOWN-5  NOT APPLICABLE-8 ENVIRONMENT:  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3  NOT INTACT-0  UNKNOWN-6  NOT APPLICABLE-8

18 ACCESS:  YES - Restricted  YES - Unrestricted  No Access  Unknown 19 ADAPTIVE USE:  YES  NO 20 SAVED:  YES  NO IN PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT?  YES  NO

21 AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:  ANTHROPOLOGY-1  ARCHITECTURE-4  ART-1  ARCHITECTURE-4  AGRICULTURE-3  COMMUNICATIONS-2  ECONOMICS-3  EDUCATION-15  ENGINEERING-11  ENTERTAINMENT-10  EXPLORATION-17  HEALTH-17  INDUSTRY-13  INVENTION-14  LANDSCAPE ARCH-12  LAW-18  LITERATURE-17  MILITARY-16  MUSIC-18  PRESERVE-10  POLITICS-GOVT-21  RELIGION-22  SCIENCE-20  SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-23  SOCIAL/CULTURAL-24  TRANSPORTATION-25  RECREATION-26  SETTLEMENT-28  URBAN PLANNING-29  OTHER (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22 CLAIMS: explain 'first'  'oldest'  'only'

23 functions: WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: \_\_\_\_\_ CURRENTLY: \_\_\_\_\_ 24 dates: if (date) construction: \_\_\_\_\_ main (date) use: \_\_\_\_\_ historic photo: \_\_\_\_\_ 25 ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION: \_\_\_\_\_

26 architectural style(s): \_\_\_\_\_ 27 architect: \_\_\_\_\_ 28 master builder: \_\_\_\_\_ 29 engineer: \_\_\_\_\_

30 landscape architect / garden designer: \_\_\_\_\_ 31 interior decorator: \_\_\_\_\_ 32 artist: \_\_\_\_\_ 33 artisan: \_\_\_\_\_ 34 builder/contractor: \_\_\_\_\_

35 NAMES (give rule & date): PERSONAL: \_\_\_\_\_ EXHIBIT: \_\_\_\_\_ INSTITUTIONAL: \_\_\_\_\_

36 NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP