

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY
NOMINATION FORM

Continuation Sheet

Item Number

Page

Name Historic: Oconee County Jail

Location: Short Street

Common

DEMOLISHED 1985

Classification: Building

Owner: Oconee County

West Main Street

Walhalla, S.C. 29691

Representation in Existing Surveys: Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina, 1981

Description: The Oconee County Jail, constructed between 1901 and 1906, is a two-story, stuccoed brick building with an asymmetrical plan and two sections: a forward section containing the sheriff's office and residence, and a rear block containing jail cells. The forward block is two stories with a hip roof and three gabled eills. The facade (southwest elevation) of the building has a gabled eill on the left with a stepped parapet and a long wing on the right terminating in a polygonal bay with a crenellated parapet. A one-story porch with patterned metal shingle roofing and grouped wooden posts on brick piers spans the facade, running around the forward eill. The forward eill has two one-over-one windows on each story, a single multi-light attic window beneath the parapet, and a rudimentary cornice. The right side of this eill has a single bay. To the right of the eill is the main block of this section. It has two bays, one of which is a doorway opening from the porch into *(continued on back)*

Significance: Oconee County was created, and the town of Walhalla was chosen as the county seat in 1868.⁷ In 1869 a contract was made for the construction of the first jail, which was to be built of wood on the town square.⁸ In February 1901 the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina voted to lend the county of Oconee \$12,000 out of the sinking fund of the state to be used for the construction of a new county jail and for the repair and remodeling of the county courthouse.⁹ The county commissioners of Oconee County decided to build the jail on a new location, and the lot where the former jail stood was exchanged with R. T. Jaynes for a lot behind Main Street between Church and Tugaloo.¹⁰ At least by 1906 the new jail had been completed.¹¹ *(continued on back)*

Acreage less than one

Verbal Boundary Description The nominated property is shown bounded by the red line on the accompanying Oconee County Tax Map #500-15, drawn at a scale of 1 inch = 100 feet. This boundary includes only the historic Oconee County Jail building, excluding adjacent buildings

UTM Reference Point

17/310700/3848680

Other Information

Description Continued: the central hall of the building. The right elevation features the polygonal bay with a single one-over-one window in each facet on each story and a one-story porch to the right of this bay. An auxiliary entrance opens onto this porch on the first story, while three one-over-one windows overlook the porch from the second story. A tall, stuccoed chimney rises from the junction of the main block and the projecting polygonal bay. On the left (northwest) elevation, the main porch continues around the facade's projecting ell until it abuts another projecting ell which has a stepped parapet. There are three bays to the right of this ell with a stuccoed chimney rising between the second and the third. Doorways open onto the porch from the left bay and from the right side of the projecting ell. The northwest face of the ell has paired one-over-one windows on each level.

The detention wing, to the north of the main block, is two stories, of poured concrete construction with stucco finish. The wing is low and has an unornamented parapet and a flat roof. Plain metal-barred windows light the corridors. This wing was built in 1938-1939 to replace the original detention wing.

Interior: The forward block of the Oconee County Jail served as the sheriff's quarters and office. This part of the building has an L-shaped hallway opening onto the southwest and northwest elevations; four main rooms are grouped around this hall. These rooms have narrow wooden flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, and wooden window and door surrounds with routed ornamentation. Some of the plaster is crumbling. A staircase with turned newels and balusters rises from the west leg of the L-shaped hall to the second floor.

A steel door, with a small pass-through on the right, leads to the detention wing. This detention wing has single and double cells in two groups on either side of the central passage, with another passage around the perimeter of the block. The second level of the wing has a large, caged bunk room, a dining area, and a shower.

Surroundings: The Oconee County Jail is located in downtown Walhalla adjacent to several other county office buildings and the new courthouse. The site is overgrown with weeds.

Significance Continued: In October 1915 the State Board of Charities and Corrections of South Carolina reported that J. W. Davis, the county sheriff, also acted as the jailer. The average daily number of prisoners in the jail was 3.7. In accord with South Carolina law, the male prisoners were segregated according to race. Negro males were kept in four cells; white males were kept in a large room. There was only one room for female prisoners, but it was usually unoccupied. The prisoners' diet on the day the jail was visited by members of the State Board of Charities and Corrections consisted of the following: breakfast -- fried bacon, hominy, biscuit, coffee, and syrup; dinner -- boiled bacon, peas, cabbage, and corn bread; and supper -- same as dinner. Oconee was one of the few counties in the state that provided three meals a day. The prisoners performed practically no labor.¹²

The jail continued to serve as a detention facility and sheriff's office and residence until 1978 when the new law enforcement center opened.

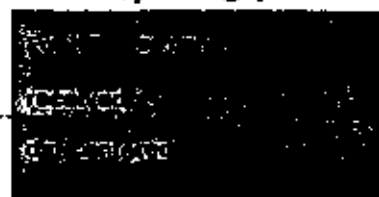
At present the future of the jail is uncertain. Although deteriorated, the building is structurally sound. Adaptive rehabilitation of the building is being studied and encouraged by the Oconee County Historical and Recreational Society, Inc.

The Oconee County Jail is important as one of the few remaining nineteenth or early twentieth century jails in upper northwestern South Carolina. For example, the county jails for Spartanburg, Greenville, Cherokee, and Anderson Counties have been demolished. In addition, the Oconee County jail is the oldest county building remaining in Oconee County.

EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



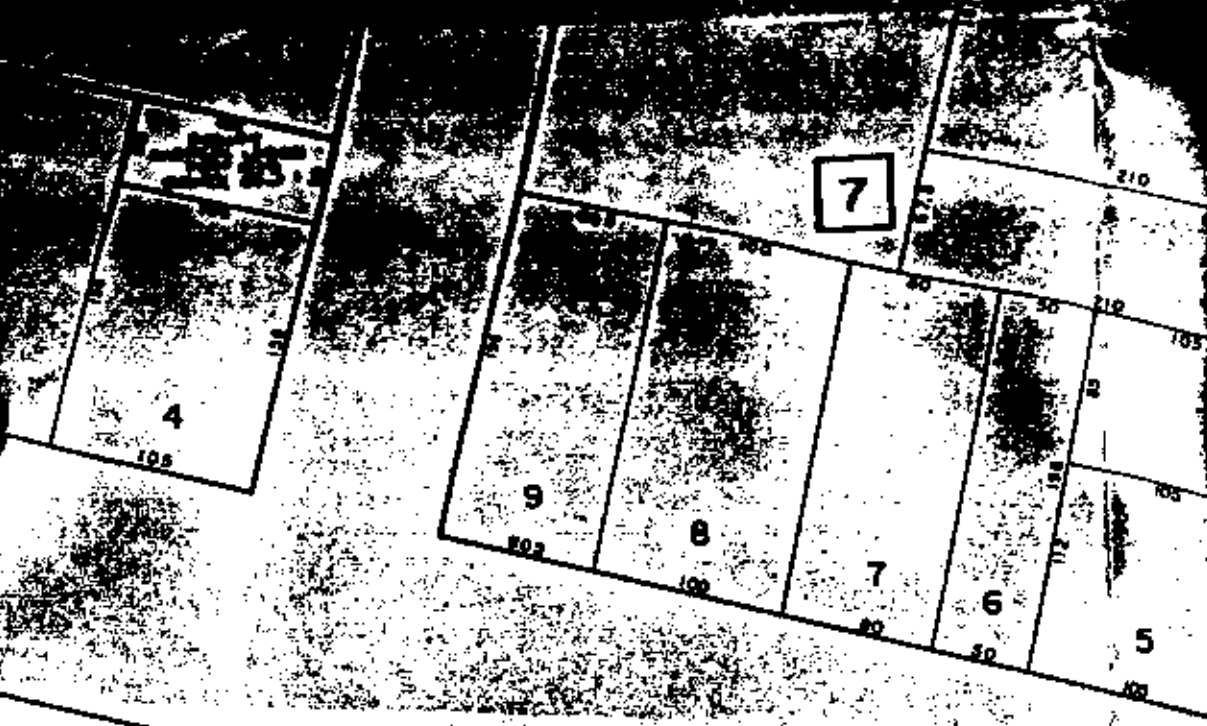
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Architecture: The Oconee County Jail is a locally important public building which incorporates several elements of neo-medieval design. The stepped and crenellated parapet, the asymmetrical plan with projecting polygonal bays, and the suggestion of a tower are direct architectural references to the popular conception of a medieval castle. It is likely that this architectural quotation was a deliberate attempt to relate the building's incarcerative function with the image of a medieval donjon, keep, and stronghold. The Oconee County Jail bears a striking resemblance to the Anderson County Jail, which was built ca. 1898 and designed by noted architect Frank P. Milburn. Milburn was known to re-use plans (the plans for the Forsyth County Courthouse in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, were re-used to build the Anderson County Courthouse in Anderson, South Carolina, ca. 1898)*, and it is possible that the Oconee County Jail was built from plans by Milburn.

*Frank A. Dickson, Journeys Into the Past: The Anderson Region's Heritage (Anderson: Frank A. Dickson, 1975), p. 47.

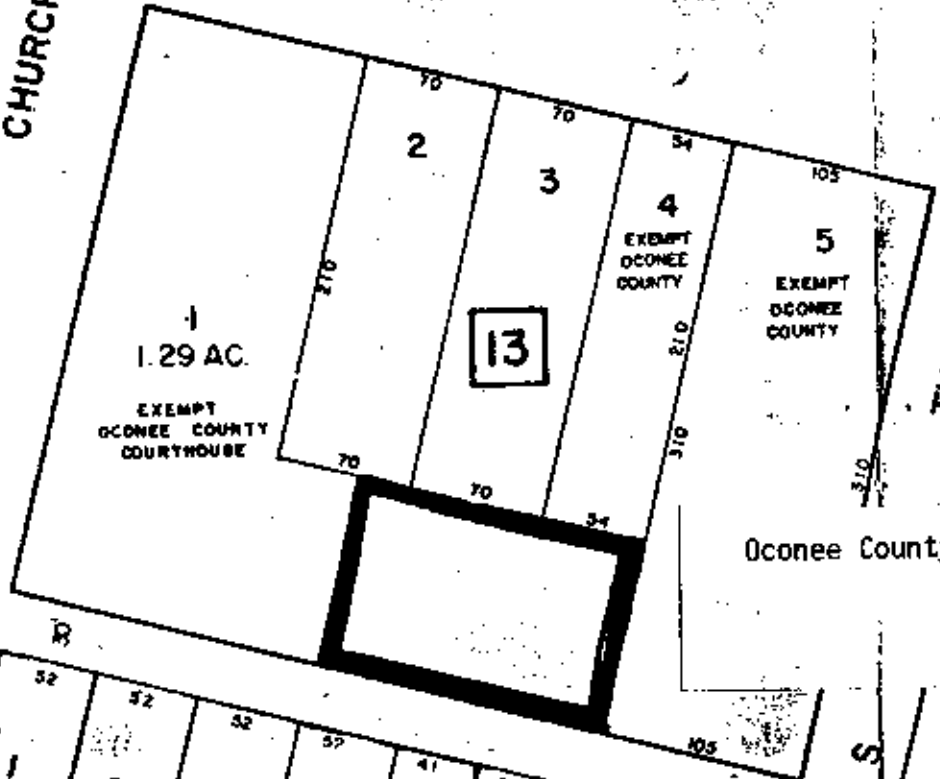


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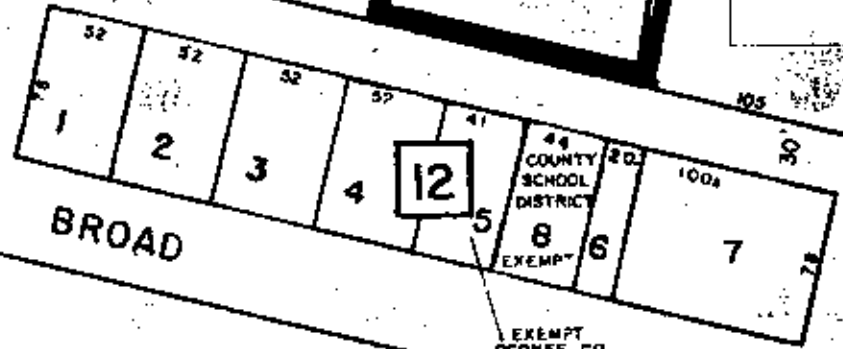
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TUGALOO

Oconee County

100'



BROAD

EXEMPT
OCGONEE CO.