

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Claiborne County Courthouse

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related multiple
property listing

Historic County Facilities in Tennessee, ca. 1770-2025

(Remove "N/A" if property is part of a multiple property listing and add name)

2. Location

Street & Number: 1740 Main Street

City or town: Tazewell

State: TN

County: Claiborne

Not For Publication: ☐

N/A

Vicinity: ☐

N/A

Zip: 37879

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

☐

national

☐

statewide

☐

local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

☐

A

☐

B

☐

C

☐

D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official:

Date

Title:

**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal
Government**

DRAFT

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) ☒
District ☐
Site ☐
Structure ☐
Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	1	objects
5	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

GOVERNMENT/Correctional Facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Monument

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Monument

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick; Concrete; Stone; Asphalt; Metal; Wood

Narrative Description

The Claiborne County Courthouse is a three-story Classical Revival building with Art Deco and Streamline Moderne details. The building's style, height, massing, and central location allow it to stand out architecturally in the small county seat of Tazewell, Tennessee (2026 estimated population 2,397). Major characteristics include the façade's prominent pedimented portico with dentils, modillions, fluted columns, and first-level ashlar concrete section; red brick veneer; other classical detailing including keystones and lintels, quoins, and a stringcourse. Significant interior features include historic terrazzo and concrete floors, marble wainscoting, wood trim, original wood and steel doors, and moldings. The courthouse includes subtle Streamline Moderne details, such as at the curved and banded main entrance surround as well as the solid, curved staircase banisters. Courtroom doors included elements of Art Deco detailing on the surround including molded steps and a prominent central band of ornamentation. The courthouse has four additional resources that contribute to the property's historical significance: the 1965 Annex, the ca. 1940 Maintenance Building, the ca. 1940 Juvenile Court Building, and a ca. 1950 Veterans Monument. There is only one non-contributing resource, a ca. 2000 monument to the First Magistrates, which does not have sufficient age. The property as a whole retains its integrity to convey its significance under Criterion A and C.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Site Features and Setting

The Claiborne County Courthouse is set on a 0.58-acre lot. The building is slightly elevated from the street with a stone retaining wall that created a small, level, grassy area. As indicated in historic photos, the retaining wall appears to date to the previous courthouse built in 1867, though the top of the wall was removed at an unknown date (see Figure 3). Two monuments (described and inventoried later) have been installed in this grassy area. A flat grassy lawn was also on the north side of the courthouse, upon which the Juvenile Court Building was built ca. 1940.

The courthouse entrance is accessed via concrete steps with metal pipe handrails. Two low concrete walls frame the entrance, atop which are metal, non-original lanterns; historic photos indicate that there were originally shorter metal lanterns. Small bushes and trees are near the building's foundation; while these are new plantings, historic photos indicate there have always been bushes or trees in those locations (see Figure 1).

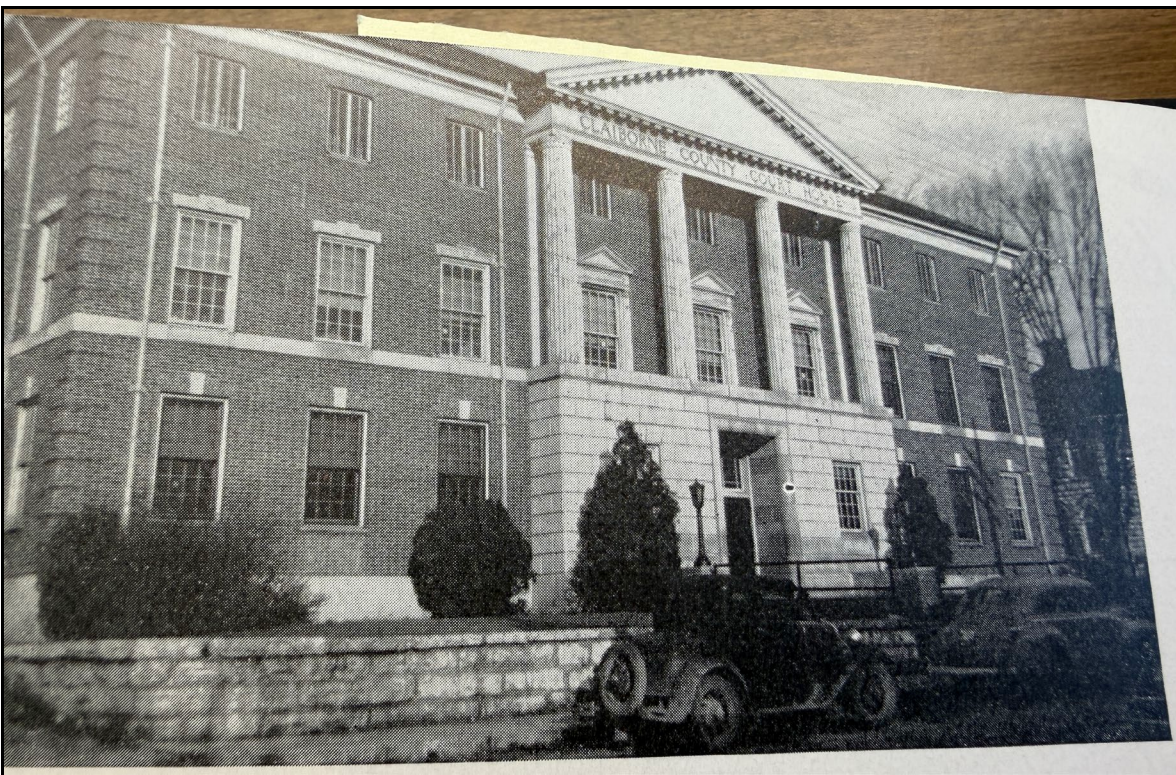


Figure 1: ca. 1946 Photo of the Claiborne County Courthouse, showing the facade and landscape features. From *Beautiful Claiborne County Tennessee: Rich in History, Resources, and Good Neighbors*, 1946.

The rear (northwest) section of the lot slopes upwards, requiring cuts in the hill to allow light to first level office windows. Rocks are on the hill to control erosion. An asphalt driveway runs on the south side of the courthouse, alongside the 1965 Courthouse Annex, and provides access to the back of the property, where a Maintenance Building is also located. Eppes Streets runs closely adjacent to the courthouse's northwest elevation. A portion of a gravel parking lot is at the north edge of the property boundary, alongside the courthouse and the Juvenile Court Building. As the entirety of the resource is not within the boundary, it has not been inventoried separately, and it is not considered a contributing feature to the property's significance.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Claiborne County Courthouse, 1932 (Contributing Building)

The Claiborne County Courthouse is a three-story Classical Revival-style building with Art Deco and Streamline Moderne details. The roof is hipped with shed sections, all covered with asphalt shingles.

The most notable alteration are replacement windows ca. 2000. The majority of the original 12/12 double-hung wood windows on the first and second level were replaced with single light, fixed metal windows with faux muntins that simulates 24 lights. The smaller, third level windows at the county jail level were similarly replaced but those windows retained the metal bars that have always characterized the openings on that level. A few original windows remain and are noted in the description below.

Exterior

Façade (Southeast elevation)

The façade is three stories, nine bays wide with quoins and a concrete stringcourse at the top of the first level. The foundation level is mostly obscured by vegetation but has three courses of concrete worked to look like ashlar stone. There is a dedication block near the entrance that states: "CLAIBORNE COUNTY COURT HOUSE 1932."

The center three bays are dominated by a large, full-height pedimented portico supported by four free-standing and two engaged fluted columns that rise from an ashlar concrete base at the first level. The portico has large modillions. On the frieze band is "CLAIBORNE COUNTY COURT HOUSE" with a row of dentils below. A plain cornice extends along the roofline and wraps around to cover part of the southwest and northeast elevations.

The portico's base is essentially a projecting section of the first level. The main entry is centered in a recessed area with curved walls with three groups of horizontal bands. The entry is single-leaf wood with a large window and metal kickplate. There are flanking single-light wood sidelights. A wood 15-light transom tops the entryway, with a Craftsman-like pattern whereby the middle row of lights is significantly larger than the others. The top of the door surround has a group of vertical bands. Above the entry is "1740" for the building's address number. Single windows flank the entryway.

The other bays are comprised of windows with concrete sills. On the first level, the windows have keystones and flat arch lintels. The second level windows below the portico have prominent pedimented surrounds with modillions, panels, and engaged unfluted columns. Other second level windows have stepped concrete lintels with decorative features. All third level windows have flat arch lintels, and the original metal bars are visible behind the replacement windows (this floor historically held the county jail).

Southwest Elevation

The southwest elevation has an irregular appearance due to a variety of massing. Window openings are generally evenly spaced. The east section of the elevation, which is four bays wide, repeats many of the decorative motifs of the façade with the unornamented but large cornice, quoins, string course, and variety of lintel patterns. One bay on the first level has a metal door with one light, sheltered by a metal bell curve awning. A non-original black metal fire escape has been affixed to this section, which includes three runs to the third level where an original window opening was replaced with a door. An adjacent window was bricked in. The fire escape is covered with a metal roof. The fire escape was installed to satisfy requirements for safety for the county jail.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

The west side of the elevation is comprised of two and three-story sections. All windows have simple sills and brick soldier course lintels. The first level has one window on the three-story section and five window bays (four single, one paired) on the two-story section. There are two windows on the second level. The second level has a shed asphalt-shingle roof. The third level has five original 12/12 wood windows, four of which have added shed enclosures with single-light windows. Above the windows are three louvered wood vents.

Northwest Elevation

The northwest elevation is primarily comprised of windows with simple brick soldier course sills and lintels. The massing of the elevation is comprised of five sections; the center section projects the most, while the flanking sections are slightly recessed in a step-back fashion.

The first level has six windows, four of which are single and two are paired. The paired windows are in the center section. The second level has two fixed windows in the center section and triple-hung 12/12/12 windows in the next sections. The southern-most section has no windows, only cables for HVAC units. The northern-most section has one window and an added metal door and metal ramp with metal canopy, which provides an accessible access to the second-level from Eppes Street and nearby parking lots.

Northeast Elevation

The northeast elevation mostly mirrors the southwest elevation with an irregular appearance due to a variety of massing.

The east section of the elevation, which is four bays wide, repeats many of the decorative motifs of the façade with the unornamented but large cornice, quoins, string course, and variety of lintel patterns. One bay on the first level has a metal door with one light, sheltered by a metal bell curve awning. All other bays are windows with the same sills and lintels as noted on the southwest elevation. An additional small original three-light metal window is the only variation at the third level.

The middle section of the elevation, which is one bay-wide and three stories tall, features a first level two-panel, nine-light entry door sheltered by a metal bell curve awning. This door access the secondary stairwell. Two windows light the stairwell, located at the midway point between the first and second level, and then at the second and third level.

The west side of the elevation has a two-story and three-story section. The two-story section has four windows on each level (all single except for one paired window on the first level). This section is below-grade and therefore the first level is slightly obscured from view. The third-story section is recessed and features five windows, four of which have added shed roof enclosures with a single-light window. Three wood louvered vents are above.

Interior

The majority of the courthouse's floorplan has not changed, but non-historic partition walls are present in some offices. All walls and ceilings are original plaster (or drywall on partition walls), unless otherwise noted. All floors are original terrazzo or concrete, unless otherwise noted. All doors are original and wood, unless otherwise noted. Trim and casings are original wood, unless otherwise noted.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

First Floor

The main entrance on the southeast façade provides public access to the courthouse. The entrance leads to a hallway with four steps. On the south side of the hallway, near the main entrance, is a dedication plaque set into the marble wainscoting. At the top of the short staircase are two-panel wood doors, one on either side of the hallway, which are staff entrances to county offices. A beam crosses the hallway; crown molding and painting on each side of the beam creates the appearance of two coffered ceiling sections. The entrance hallway terminates with an arched opening to the octagonal lobby, located in the center of a cross hallway. All hallway openings are arched, and terrazzo floors cover the entire lobby and the hallways. Marble wainscoting is located on all lobby walls and the main entrance hallway. All other hallways are painted to match the color of the marble but do not have wainscoting. Marble baseboards are located in all hallways and the lobby. The lobby has elaborate four-tier crown molding with decorative ornamentation at each tier. Four pairs of single-panel, single-light wood doors provide access to county offices between the hallway openings.

The office entry doors from the lobby open into small public reception areas, one in each of the front county offices (Trustee's Office suite of three rooms and closet in east corner; County Clerk four-room suite in south corner; Register of Deeds two-room suite in west corner; and Driver's License Services in north corner (former location of the County Sheriff's Office)). The reception areas are octagonal in shape and are separated from the staff area by wood counters. Terrazzo floors, a chair rail, and crown molding characterize all public reception areas.

Non-historic floors are located in the staff areas. The Trustee's office has LVP flooring that mimics wood; the County Clerk has vinyl tile and carpet; the Register of Deeds and Driver's License Services has tile. Most offices have vaults with original steel doors and painted concrete floors. The ceiling in the Trustee's Vault shows structural terra cotta tile.

The southwest and northeast hallways have concrete staircases to the second level. The hallways terminate at exterior metal exit doors with single-lights. Storage closets are located below each staircase. Restrooms are located in each hallway, as well as a staff entrance door to county offices. Restrooms have tile floors that are likely non-historic replacements. An added elevator is located in the northeast hallway.

The northwest hallway terminates at a hallway that stretches across the width of the building, which provides access to additional county offices. The Assessor's Office suite comprises three rooms at the west corner. All floors are non-historic vinyl tile. All rooms have wood baseboards, and one room has a wood chair rail. The public entrance door is single-panel with single-light but all other doors are two-panel.

The County Mayor and Reception Area comprise two rooms at the north corner of the building. Closets, a small restroom with concrete floors, and a vault with concrete floor separate the two rooms. The reception area has LVP flooring and a wood chair rail. The Mayor's Office has carpet, a wood chair rail, and crown molding.

Adjacent to the County Mayor's office is an office for Economic Development and a ADA-accessible restroom with tile floors. Opposite the County Mayor's suite are three offices created by subdividing the former County Sheriff's office. The area now has six offices: Driver's License Services, Security, Veteran's

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

Services, and other offices. All offices have non-historic tile floors. Some also have drop acoustic panel ceilings.

Second Floor

The second floor contains two Courtrooms, offices for court officials, Jury room, and other small rooms now used for storage. The second floor is mainly accessed via the elevator or the staircases in the northeast and southwest hallways. The staircase are concrete with thick, closed balustrade that curves at the dogleg landing. A wood handrail tops the balustrade, and circular wood rails are affixed to the walls. A wide hallway extends across the building connecting each staircase. The elevator, courtrooms, office for the Clerk and Master, office for the Circuit Judge, and office for the Circuit Court Clerk are all accessed from this hallway.¹ Doors to the courtrooms are double two-panel with multilight transoms. Doors to the offices are single-panel with single-light.

A narrow hallway extends from the main hallway to the northwest. On the north side of the hallway are small rooms, historically used for court purposes but now used for storage. A slightly larger jury room with carpeted floor and a single-person restroom is at the north end of the hallway, immediately adjacent to an exterior exit door. Also accessed from this hallway is a secondary concrete staircase, comprised of a series of doglegs, which extends from ground level to the third floor. This staircase was historically used for transporting county jail prisoners between floors.

The Circuit Court is a large open room, accessed via two doors. The door surrounds have a prominent wood surround with stepped casing and vertical bands, a characteristic that references popular Art Deco styling at the time of the building's construction.

The courtroom has a tall ceiling with non-original acoustic ceiling panels. Walls are covered with tall wood wainscoting, above which are smaller windows that provide natural light into the courtroom while preserving privacy. The public viewing area on the southeast side of the room has concrete floors with permanently affixed wood benches.

The trial area, on the northwest side of the room, is separated from the public viewing area by a low wood wall. The trial area is covered with new carpet. The original Judge's bench is permanently affixed wood with flanking boxes for witnesses and staff. Adjacent is the original wood jury box, comprised of two levels of twelve permanently affixed wood swivel chairs. A two-panel door near the jury box provides access to the secondary hallway and jury room. A two-panel door on the opposite side of the courtroom provides access to the Circuit Court Clerk's office.

The Chancery Court is located on the southeast side of the main hallway. This courtroom is significantly smaller than the Circuit Court with a lower non-original acoustic panel ceiling and new carpeted floor. The public viewing area has permanently affixed wood benches on the south side of the room. A low wood wall separates the public viewing area from the Judge's area. The wood Judge's bench has two flanking boxes for staff and witnesses. The entire room has wood wainscoting. The main door surround matches the main door surround seen in the Circuit Court. A two-panel door in the east corner of the room leads to the Clerk and Master's office.

¹ The offices were not accessible at the time of the survey. They are presumed to have similar finishes seen in the rest of the building.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Third Floor

The third floor was historically the Claiborne County Jail. It was vacated after the Claiborne County Justice Center was completed in 2006.² The third floor is now used for storage. All floors are concrete, unless otherwise noted. All walls are painted concrete blocks, unless otherwise noted.

The third floor is accessed via the elevator or secondary staircase. Both open into a small vestibule. An open doorway on the northeast accesses a small office, which has a single-person restroom with two-panel wood door. On the southeast side of the vestibule is a wood door that leads to a hallway. On the northeast side of the hallway is an open doorway that leads to the kitchen, which has metal counters and sink. A storage closet is on the northside of the kitchen.

The southwest side of the hallway are steel walls with two steel doors, which accesses the main cell block. The cell block is double-loaded, each with steel bars and steel access doors. At the end of the hallway is an open doorway that leads to another vestibule. On the north side of the vestibule is a steel door, beyond which is a cell block that was historically used for female prisoners. The cells have steel bars and steel access doors. On the south side of the vestibule is a steel door that leads to a walkway alongside the main cell block. A red line on the floor runs the length of the walkway. The line historically defined where visitors could stand while seeing prisoners; the line ensured visitors and prisoners would have no physical contact.

At the south end of the walkway is a wood and drywall partition wall and door, which lead to a small vestibule at the corner of the building. On the west side of the vestibule are steel bars and door, beyond which is a cell block that historically housed maximum security prisoners. Accordingly, cells in this block have two sets of steel bars, one set in a grid-pattern used elsewhere in the building and the other in a honeycomb pattern. On the southwest side of the cellblock is an added steel door, which leads to the fire escape exit. This door replaced a window. At the northwest end of the cell block is a steel door that leads to a small room. Adjacent to the door is a small area that appeared to have historically contained a shower.

Courthouse Annex, 1965 (Contributing Building)

The Courthouse Annex is a two-story rectangular plan building with red brick veneer. The building is topped by a non-original front gable, asphalt-shingle roof with vinyl siding in the gable field. The southeast façade has five bays on each level with a central non-original paneled metal door. Two wythes of tan brick surround the door, and a dedication plaque is located immediately to the north of the entrance door. All windows are six-over-six vinyl with brick sills and concrete keystones (this is the appearance of windows on all elevations). Quoins mark the edges of each elevation. The northeast elevation has three windows and three in-filled windows on the first level and seven windows on the second level. The northwest elevation provides access to the second level via two doors, each with two-panel, nine-light door covered by a vinyl storm door. Flanking the doors are two windows. The southwest elevation is not visible due to the presence of an adjacent building.³

Juvenile Court Building, ca. 1940 (Contributing Building)

² "Claiborne County," American Courthouses, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://courthouses.co/us-states/o-u/tennessee/claiborne-county/>; Information on the timeline of when the third floor became used for storage was provided to author by county and Sheriff's Department staff during a site visit on March 19, 2026.

³ The interior of the Courthouse Annex was not accessible at the time of the survey.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Claiborne County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

One-story building with red brick veneer, quoins, and rectangular footprint. A course of soldier brick is at ground level and below the eaves of the front-gabled, asphalt shingle roof. A circular louvered vent is below the apex of the roof, and small modillions line the roofline. The southeast façade has a metal, single-light entry door. The northeast elevation has three single-light windows with brick sills. The northwest elevation has a central entry door with metal single-light door and a single-light window. A louvered attic vent is below the gable's apex.⁴

Maintenance Building, ca. 1940 (Contributing Building)

One-story concrete-block building with a square footprint. The exterior is painted beige, and the front-gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingle. A non-original six-panel metal door with three-paneled sidelights is on the south elevation. Besides the door, small louvered vents are the building's only openings; two are located on the north and south elevations.⁵

Veterans Monument, ca. 1950 (Contributing Object)

Small stone rectangular monument with text that honors Claiborne County Veterans.⁶ The monument includes symbolism of an eagle with olive branches with the text that states:

“FOR GOD AND COUNTY LEST WE FORGET
ERECTED
IN HONOR OF THOSE FROM CLAIBORNE COUNTY
WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY IN ALL WARS AND
DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
THAT FREEDOM MIGHT LIVE”

First Magistrates Monument, ca. 2000 (Non-Contributing Object)

Stone slab monument with rough edges. The east face is smooth but mostly covered by a metal plaque that provides quotes from Claiborne County Court Minutes that names the first Magistrates (first county officials) and describes the establishment of the county seat of Tazewell.

Integrity

The Claiborne County Courthouse and its contributing resources retain integrity. The courthouse is located at its original location, set within the commercial areas of the county seat of Tazewell, Tennessee, as it always has been. The Courthouse and its contributing resources retain the majority of their materials, design, and workmanship. Extant character-defining features include the Courthouse's classical detailing as conveyed by its portico, quoins, and keystones at windows, some of which were originally replicated and intact on the contributing Annex and Juvenile Court Building. Interior character-defining features include the overall floorplan with central lobby and cross hallways, interior doors, terrazzo and concrete floors, marble wainscoting and baseboards, wood chair rails and wainscoting in courtrooms, courtroom door surrounds, staircases with curved banisters, and other details such as the tiered crown molding and arched openings in the public lobby. Alterations are limited to interior application of new floors atop historic floors, replacement

⁴ The interior of the Juvenile Court Building was not accessible at the time of the survey.

⁵ The interior of the Maintenance Building was not accessible at the time of the survey.

⁶ An exact installation date for the monument has not been found, but its style is similar to other monuments erected for World War I or II in the 1940s and 1950s. The monument appears in photographs that date to the 1950s and 1960s, such as a 1964 photo in the Claiborne County Historical Society's book *Claiborne County, Tennessee: Pictorial History 1801-2001* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 2000), 66

DRAFT

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

windows, and some layout changes within offices. The changes within the offices occurred in non-public spaces and therefore do not overly impact the visible character of the building. Window replacements are more noticeable; the attempt to recreate the light patterns helped to reduce the impact, but there are enough other character-defining features intact to convey the property's historic and architectural significances. The property retains clear association with its significance. Taking all factors together, the property retains its historic feeling and overall integrity.

DRAFT

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

N/A

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government/Politics

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1932-1976

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Baumann and Baumann

Nicholson, V.L., Company

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Claiborne County Courthouse is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Government and Social History and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Built in 1932, the Claiborne County Courthouse is significant as the headquarters of county government, housing all of the legally required essential services for local people, including Register of Deeds, County Trustee, the county courts, and originally the county jail. Over time, additional buildings were constructed nearby to house more county offices and services, including the Courthouse Annex and the Juvenile Court building. The courthouse was also a center of local social life, hosting numerous events and political events. Part of the courthouse's centrality to social life was the erection of a monument on the courthouse lawn that memorialized Claiborne countians who served in the armed forces. Designed by noted Knoxville architects Baumann and Baumann, the Claiborne County Courthouse is a locally significant example of the Classical Revival style with Art Deco and Streamline Moderne details. The courthouse retains hallmark characteristics of its style as applied to courthouse design, including masonry construction, prominent pedimented portico, overall height and massing, a cross-hall interior circulation pattern, terrazzo and concrete floors, marble wainscoting, and wood doors. The property meets the requirements of the Courthouse property type established in the Historic County Facilities in Tennessee, ca. 1770-2025 Multiple Property Documentation Form. The Period of Significance for Criterion C is 1932, the year the courthouse was constructed. The courthouse is the main resource for Criterion C. Under Criterion A, the period of significance is technically ongoing as the property continues to act as the headquarters of Claiborne County government operations. However, for practical purposes, the Period of Significance is 1932-1976, corresponding to the year the courthouse opened and ending with the current default 50-year cutoff.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Local Historic Context

Claiborne County, Tennessee is located in the northern section of East Tennessee, along the state's border with Kentucky and Virginia. The area was long inhabited by indigenous cultures, such as Mississippian people and later the Cherokee, Shawnee, and Creek. In the eighteenth century, European explorers found a gap through the Cumberland Mountains. The gap, and the ease with which one could travel through it to reach the other side of the mountains, had long been known to indigenous peoples, but the previously unknown area became known as the Cumberland Gap among European Americans. Land speculators and pro-expansion colonists pushed for the gap's usage for westward migration. In 1775, Daniel Boone led a company of thirty axmen to the gap where they built the Wilderness Road, a major thoroughfare into the area that later became Claiborne County, Tennessee.⁷

Claiborne County has a rugged, mountainous terrain with numerous creeks and abundant timber which historically led to several mining, milling, and logging operations (see Figure 2). Due to the terrain, agricultural crops were generally limited to burley tobacco and vegetable crops. The county's population

⁷ "Cumberland Gap," Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, National Park Service, updated December 4, 2024, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://www.nps.gov/cuga/learn/historyculture/cumberland-gap.htm>; Michael Toomey, "Daniel Boone (1734-1820)," Tennessee Encyclopedia, October 8, 2017, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/daniel-boone/>. The area encompassing the gap and the Wilderness Road later became part of the Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, administratively listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 (NRIS #66000353) with formal documentation under the name Cumberland Gap Historic District accepted in 1980 (NRIS #80000366). Another Cumberland Gap Historic District, associated with the Tennessee town Cumberland Gap in Claiborne County, was also listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 (NRIS #90000321).

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

increased quickly after the Civil War and reached approximately 24,000 by 1950. Shortly after, the county's population decreased as many of the natural resource extraction operations shut down, and people sought work elsewhere. By 1960 the population had dropped to approximately 19,000 and held relatively steady until it began to rebound in the 1980s when the establishment of new manufacturing companies drew people back.⁸ As of 2025, the county's population was approximately 33,000 people, and the area overall still retains its rural, mountainous character.⁹

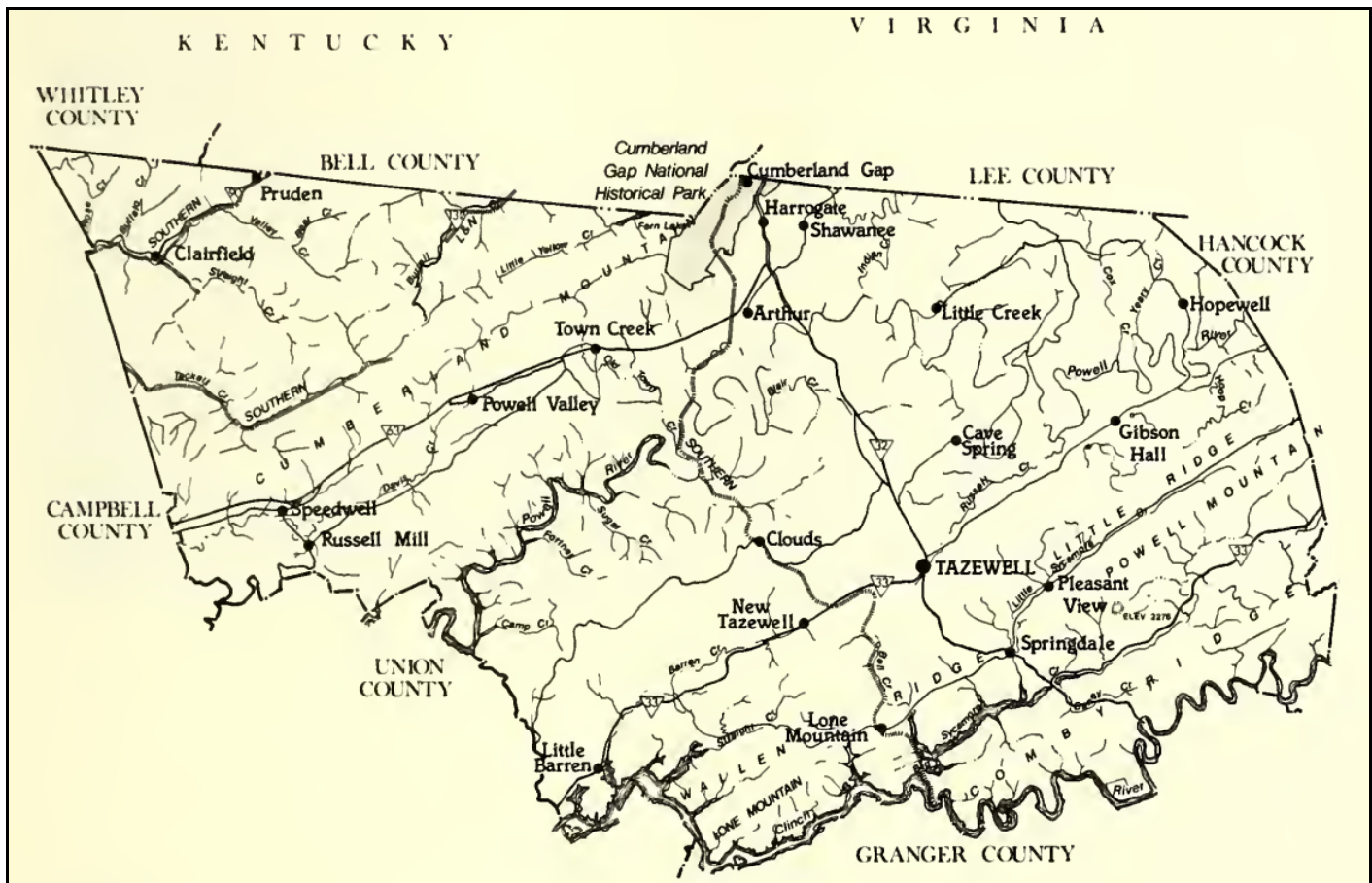


Figure 2: Map of Claiborne County Courthouse, depicting major communities, rivers and creeks, transportation routes, and landforms. From Edgar A. Holt, *Tennessee County Historic Series: Claiborne County*, 1981.

⁸ Joshua M. Bundren and J. Ethan Holden, "Johnson's Mill," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2026), 10; "Population of Tennessee Counties, 1900-2010", Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, March 7, 2011, accessed July 28, 2026, https://archive.knoxplanning.org/locldata/popdata/tn_counties_hist_pop.pdf; John J. Kivett, "Claiborne County," Tennessee Encyclopedia, October 8, 2017, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entries/clai-borne-county/>; *Beautiful Claiborne County Tennessee: Rich in History, Resources and Good Neighbors* (New Tazewell, TN: Claiborne County Kiwanis Club, 1946), Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

⁹ "Quick Facts: Claiborne County, Tennessee," United States Census Bureau, accessed July 28, 2026, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/clai-borne-county-tennessee/PST045225>.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

Claiborne County was formed on October 29, 1801, from portions of Grainger and Hawkins Counties. Tennessee Governor Archibald Roane appointed fourteen local men as Justices of the Peace to govern the county. Those fourteen men were later memorialized on a monument on the courthouse lawn. The first court met on December 7, 1801, at the home of John Owens in the Powell Valley, the location of the county's first European American settlements, near the Cumberland Gap on the north side of the county. Subsequent sessions met at other private homes in Tazewell, a more centrally located community that was designated as the county seat.¹⁰ In 1804, the county's first purpose-built courthouse, a small frame building, was constructed near the site of the present courthouse in Tazewell. A jail was completed about the same time, which was in use until 1819 when the county built a stone and brick jail that functioned until 1931 when the nominated courthouse and jail were built (NR 3/21/2007).¹¹

The courthouse was located in the commercial area of Tazewell, as was typical for most county courthouses. Over time, buildings immediately surrounding the courthouse became the offices of lawyers. The Hughes Office Building, built between 1890 and 1900 of stone rectangular blocks, is located directly adjacent to the courthouse to the north. The building housed several lawyers and was once the Post Office.¹² Local lawyer G. Howard Nevils shared offices in the Hughes Building before he moved to one-story twentieth century commercial building, located directly behind (northwest) of the courthouse, where he practiced for almost twenty years.¹³

The county's second courthouse was built ca. 1847.¹⁴ The building was destroyed in 1862 when a fire broke out while Confederate troops were evacuating the town. The fire destroyed much of Tazewell, including a large brick hotel and several brick store buildings.¹⁵ From 1862-1867, the courts met the Masonic Temple (non-extant). In 1867, W.H. Strum of Springdale built a new brick courthouse. Like many courthouses of the time, it was a two-story building with a side-gabled metal roof and a prominent portico that sheltered exterior stairways. The building was topped by a cupola (see figure 3).

By 1930, the county was exploring the idea of building a new courthouse. In December 1930, the county publicly shared plans that they had obtained from an architect in Knoxville. The architect (not named in the source) made plans for a \$85,000 courthouse. This initial drawing did not include a new county jail, which reportedly many locals believed was needed.¹⁶ While it is unclear whether the county was going to move

¹⁰ Claiborne County Historical Society and County Heritage Inc. *The People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II* (Wadsworth Publishing, 2005), 13; Edgar A. Holt, *Tennessee County History Series: Claiborne County* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press), 9; Fred Smoot, transcriber, "The Goodspeed Publishing Co., History of Tennessee 1887, Pages 847-850, History of Claiborne County," TNGenWeb Project, accessed July 30, 2026, <https://www.tngenweb.org/goodspeed/claiborne/>.

¹¹ Smoot, "The Goodspeed Publishing Co., History of Tennessee 1887, Pages 847-850, History of Claiborne County"; Andra Kowalczyk, "Claiborne County Jail," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2007).

¹² *People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II*, 15.

¹³ *People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II*, 355.

¹⁴ Claiborne County Historical Society and County Heritage Inc., *The People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II*, 13

¹⁵ Smoot, "The Goodspeed Publishing Co., History of Tennessee 1887, Pages 847-850, History of Claiborne County."

¹⁶ "May Get a Courthouse," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, December 26, 1930.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

forward with building a new courthouse, circumstances made it inevitable. In October 1931, the courthouse burned down.¹⁷



Figure 3: The 1867 Claiborne County Courthouse. Date of Photo unknown. From Tennessee State Library and Archives.

The county decided to reuse the same site for the next courthouse.¹⁸ The County's Building Committee included F.F. Overton (County Judge and Committee Chairman), Frank Richardson (Secretary), B.C. Fugate, J.R. Ketron, and W.C. Rose.¹⁹ The county hired the prolific and well-reputed Baumann and Baumann architecture firm from Knoxville to design the courthouse (it is unclear whether this firm drew the earlier plans or not). The county hired V.L. Nicholson Co. from Knoxville as general contractor.²⁰

The new courthouse cost was \$150,000, which was paid for with bonds.²¹ The as-built design incorporated the new county jail that local people wanted. The county jail was located on the top floor with limited access

¹⁷ *People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II*, 13; "Courthouse Burns," *The Atlanta Journal*, October 1, 1931.

¹⁸ *People's History of Claiborne County Tennessee 1801-2005 Volume II*, 13.

¹⁹ Dedication Plaque in the Claiborne County Courthouse, 1932, Tazewell, Tennessee.

²⁰ Sophie Crane and Paul Crane, *Tennessee Taproots: Courthouses of Tennessee*, Rev. ed. (Franklin, TN: Hillsboro Press, 1996), 17; Dedication Plaque in the Claiborne County Courthouse, 1932, Tazewell, Tennessee.

²¹ John W. Carpenter and Michael Emrick, *Tennessee Courthouses: A Celebration of 200 Years of County Courthouses* (London, KY: John. W. Carpenter, Publisher, 1996), 26-27; "Tennessee Bonds," *The Knoxville Journal*, March 8, 1936.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

while county courtrooms were on the second floor. County offices were located on the first and second floors, and the plan utilized an arrangement common in Tennessee courthouses of this time with a central lobby at a cross hallway that provided easy access to multiple offices. Prominent materials included marble, terrazzo, wood, and concrete.

For the exterior appearance, Baumann and Baumann utilized the Classical Revival style, by the far the most popular style for courthouses in Tennessee. Character-defining features of the style as evidenced on the Claiborne County Courthouse is the overall massing with symmetrical fenestration (particularly on the façade), the prominent portico with fluted columns, pediment with modillions and dentils, wide cornice, quoins, stringcourse, and window surrounds, both simple and elaborate. In a further nod to styles popular at the time, the Baumanns utilized accents that reference the Streamline Moderne and Art Deco styles, which are evident at the main entry and on the surrounds of courtroom doors. The pattern of massing on the side and rear elevations of the building may also have been a reference to massing common to the Art Deco style, which frequently used setbacks. The new courthouse was dedicated in October 1932 with dedicatory and political speeches.²²

Significance and Registration Requirements

The Claiborne County Courthouse meets the registration requirements for the Courthouse property type established in the Historic County Facilities in Tennessee, ca. 1770-2025 Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). As further explained in the MPDF, courthouses fulfilled a direct and important local role in Government. The Claiborne County Courthouse meets the requirements for Government significance under Criterion A. The county courthouse and its associated facilities were the headquarters of local county government since construction, housing all essential county offices and courts that form the basis for local life and administration.

It is within the courthouse that the county government made decisions that affected the county's development and overall operations. For example, it was within the county courthouse that the county court (later named the county commission) made decisions about building or improving new roads and bridges, which better connected Claiborne countians to other counties and improved the transport of the county's raw goods. In the 1950s, the county court approved legislation to create utility districts, which improved infrastructure and access to basic services like water and electricity. In 1952, the county court voted to apply for Hill-Burton Act funding to build the Claiborne County Hospital, the first section of which was built in 1959 to provide access to modern healthcare in this rural area that was otherwise far removed from health facilities in urban areas. Throughout the years, the county government approved contracts from the county courthouse for construction projects of places such as community centers and schools. From the county courthouse, county staff and the county court also worked with other agencies and organizations on such problems as economic development or the development of an airport in the 1960s.²³ This myriad of examples establishes that the Claiborne County Courthouse has been central to local government operations since its opening to the present-day.

²² "Dedicate Courthouse at Tazewell Oct. 22," *The Knoxville Journal*, October 19, 1932.

²³ Edgar A. Holt, *Tennessee County History Series: Claiborne County* (Memphis: Memphis State University Press, 1981), 65-66, 77, 79, 81-84.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

The Courthouse also housed the county jail and Sheriff's department staff during the Period of Significance, thus further contributing to the building's local role in local law enforcement and government. County jail functions were on the top floor with law enforcement staff offices located in various areas of the building.²⁴ Inmates were escorted to court via the secondary staircase, and thus the entirety of law enforcement at the local level was carried out in this building, though inmate sentences may ultimately have resulted in them being transferred elsewhere such as to one of the state penitentiaries. Like most twentieth century jails in Tennessee, the Claiborne County Jail experienced periods of criticism for conditions, mostly having to do with maintenance, limited facility space, and outdated mechanical systems.²⁵ Amounts of inmates ranged widely, but a 1970 national Jail Survey noted that the Claiborne County Jail housed both adult and juveniles, with most inmates in residence while they were serving a sentence of one year or less (one year was the maximum sentence that could be served in this jail, at that time).²⁶

Like most counties, Claiborne County eventually decided to build a new Justice Center, which was built near the Claiborne County Fairgrounds southwest of Tazewell. The Justice Center opened in 2006, resulting in the move of approximately fifty prisoners and Sheriff's Department staff to the new facility.²⁷ Since then, the top floor of the courthouse has been used to store county records.

In addition to its central importance in local government, the Claiborne County Courthouse was a significant local place for Social History, both as a place for community events and as a place of remembrance. Several music performances occurred at the courthouse, including an Old-Time Fiddlin' convention held at courthouse in 1938.²⁸ In 1946, the courthouse hosted performances of the Silvertone Quartet, which was sponsored by the local Rosenwald School.²⁹ The quartet has been considered one of the greatest gospel quartets of the mid-twentieth century. Black miner and Alabama-native Claude Jeter formed the group in West Virginia in 1938. The group soon moved to Knoxville where they began to perform on the radio under the sponsorship of the Swan Bakery, leading to the adoption of the additional names, the Swan Silvertones or Swan's Silvertone Singers. The quartet was among the first gospel groups to add instruments and have been inducted into multiple hall of fames, including the Vocal Group Hall of Fame in 2002 and the West Virginia Hall of Fame in 2013.³⁰ Additional musical performances occurred in conjunction with political rallies and speeches.

²⁴ According to current Sheriff's Department staff, at the time the county moved the county jail to the new Claiborne County Justice Center in 2006, the sheriff's department had offices on the first floor, where the Driver's Services are currently located. Information was provided to the author during a site visit on March 19, 2026. Newspaper documentation also referenced detective's offices on the second floor of the building, "Cache of Marijuana Stolen," *Elizabethton Star*, April 25, 1994.

²⁵ "Jury Assails Jail Conditions; County Judge Doesn't Agree," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, August 5, 1977.

²⁶ *Local Jails: A Report Presenting Data for Individual County and City Jails from the 1970 National Jail Census* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, January 1973), 127.

²⁷ Kowalczyk, "Claiborne County Jail," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, Section 8, Page 8.

²⁸ "New Tazewell," *The Knoxville Journal*, March 27, 1938.

²⁹ "Rosenwald School News," *Hancock County News*, September 13, 1946.

³⁰ "The Swan Silvertones," West Virginia Hall of Fame, 2013, accessed July 29, 2026,

https://www.wvmusichalloffame.com/hof_silvertones.html; "Past Inductions," Vocal Group Hall of Fame, accessed July 29, 2026, <https://vocalgroup.org/past-inductions/>.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

The courthouse has been the launching point for political campaigns and the meeting place for political rallies. The courthouse's dedication ceremony in 1932 included speeches by the Republican and Democratic candidates for governor.³¹ During his ultimately successful run for governor in 1936, Gordon Browning spoke at the Claiborne County Courthouse multiple times, as well as other courthouses across the state. Press articles noted that the Claiborne County Courthouse was 'large,' with the implication being that it accommodated larger crowds and thus was a prime spot for candidates who were seeking as many votes as possible in one locality. At least one speech that year drew more than 500 viewers while another in 1938, after he won the election, drew about 3,500 people.³²

In 1952, Browning again visited during a gubernatorial campaign where he was ultimately defeated by Frank G. Clement. With musical accompaniment provided by Cas Walker's Hillbilly Band, Browning spoke to a crowd of approximately 1,000 people who "came into town in droves," sitting along the courthouse lawn's stone wall and standing on Main Street to hear Browning's speech from the courthouse steps.³³

Various congressional candidates spoke at the courthouse, including William E. Miller who spoke to a crowd of approximately 500 in 1948 and Howard H. Baker, Jr. in the 1960s while he was running for a U.S. Senate Seat.³⁴ Baker ultimately prevailed and served in the U.S. Senate from 1967-1985, including as Senate Minority or Majority Leader for eight years, during which he returned to Claiborne County Courthouse to speak in support of other party members' campaigns.³⁵ During his 1958 gubernatorial campaign, Memphis Mayor Edmund Orgill's largest reception in East Tennessee was identified as having occurred at the Claiborne County Courthouse, where he spoke to a crowd of approximately 500 farmers who waited an hour for his arrival.³⁶ In 1962, Haynes Elliott used the Claiborne County Courthouse grounds as the launching point for his campaign for a U.S. congressional representative.³⁷ Other politicians held open meetings at the courthouse, such as members of both parties, including U.S. Senator Bill Frist and U.S. Representative Jim Cooper.³⁸

The courthouse was the place where people went to participate in government or civic organizations through public meetings.³⁹ Various county commissions and groups met at the courthouse, such as those associated with the county hospital and the county fair.⁴⁰ Vegetable producers from multiple counties met at the

³¹ "Dedicate Courthouse at Tazewell Oct. 22," *The Knoxville Journal*, October 19, 1932.

³² Sam Neal, "Browning in Republican East Tennessee Again Links Dossett to John McCall's Candidacy," *Nashville Banner*, July 15, 1936; "3,500 Listen to Browning at Tazewell," *The Knoxville Journal*, June 29, 1938.

³³ James Ewing, "Crump Organization Lashed by Browning," *The Commercial Appeal*, August 2, 1952.

³⁴ "Miller to Speak at Shady Valley School Wednesday," *Kingsport Times*, June 14, 1948; "Miller Names Managers for Hawkins Drive," *Kingsport Times-News*, June 20, 1948; "Miller Attacks Phillips' Record," *Morristown Gazette Mail*, June 21, 1948; Dale Enoch, "Fair Skies Greet Return of Baker to Own District," *The Commercial Appeal*, October 31, 1964; "Baker Proposes Commission To Evaluate US Defense," *The Commercial Appeal*, July 17, 1966.

³⁵ Marta Warnick, "Bakers Sees GOP Gain of Several Senate Seats," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, October 7, 1982.

³⁶ Richard T. Allen, "Zoo Atmosphere Aids Orgill in Big East Tennessee Trek," *The Commercial Appeal*, August 1, 1958.

³⁷ "Elliott Launches Campaign," *Johnson City Press*, July 1, 1962.

³⁸ Jan Maxwell Avent, "Rep. Cooper Cites Woes of the Economy," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 27, 1988; Jerry Dean, "Frist sets Lincoln Day Meetings in Oneida, Tazewell, Maynardville," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, March 3, 1996.

³⁹ "Bad Road System is Main Complaint," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, May 18, 1979.

⁴⁰ "Fair Association Meets Thurs., 7:30 P.M. At Tazewell," *Hancock County News*, February 18, 1960; "Legal Notice to Bidders," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, February 3, 1958.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

courthouse.⁴¹ Like many courthouses, the Claiborne County Courthouse hosted a County Extension office to provide information to local farmers about the latest agricultural techniques. The courthouse continues to host the Extension Office in the Annex.⁴²

The State Highway Department (later renamed the Tennessee Department of Transportation) held public hearings at the Claiborne County Courthouse to discuss upcoming highway projects, which had substantial effects on communities. For example, in 1969, Highway Department officials held a session in the Chancery Courtroom on the second floor to discuss a project for State Route 33.⁴³ Upon completion approximately two years later, the project created a new four-lane highway that paralleled Main Street in Tazewell and shifted traffic patterns throughout the county. Whereas Main Street had originally been a major thoroughfare and central location of commerce and churches, the new state route shifted traffic one street and thus led to adjacent organic creation of new low-density commerce that was oriented towards automobiles rather than pedestrians as was the pattern of the older section of town.⁴⁴ Thus, this example shows how the courthouse was a place of crucial information gathering and sharing regarding government-funded projects that had a distinct effect on rural citizens who were otherwise far-removed from the state and federal government centers in Nashville and Washington, DC.

Other state departments have similarly held hearings or information sessions at the Claiborne County Courthouse, such as Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) hearings on proposed catch-size limits for fishing, hunting seasons, and informational sessions on managing wildlife populations.⁴⁵ Other information sessions included multiple Town Hall meetings geared towards local tobacco farmers to hear from a representative of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture about the National Tobacco Growers Settlement Trust Fund, which was part of a 1998 agreement to settle dozens of lawsuits related to smoking-related illnesses; the fund provided compensation to growers who would be affected by the agreement which sought to reduce tobacco usage due to the negative effects of smoking.⁴⁶ As burley tobacco was long the number one crop for Claiborne County, such concerns were central to the lives of its residents and thus easily accessible public meetings to discuss these developments was important.⁴⁷

The Claiborne County Courthouse hosted numerous informational meetings, such as a talk on pensions for the elderly in 1946.⁴⁸ A major development in the post-World War II era was the proliferation of programs

⁴¹ "News Notes," *The LaFollette Press*, March 9, 2000.

⁴² "Pesticide Recertification Meetings Set," *The LaFollette Press*, September 25, 2008.

⁴³ "2 Highway Hearings Scheduled in E-T," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, July 17, 1969.

⁴⁴ Based on TN-SHPO staff survey and United States Geographic Survey Maps, 1936, 1943, and photorevised 1971.

⁴⁵ Sam Venable, "Bass Limit and Woodie Season on 'To Do' List," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, April 13, 1980; "17 Involved in Hunting Accidents," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 24, 1982; "Claiborne County Raccoon Meeting Set," *The LaFollette Press*, January 21, 1982; "Norris Task Force to meet Nov. 14 at Cove Lake," *The LaFollette Press*, November 3, 1994.

⁴⁶ "Attention Tobacco Farmers," *The LaFollette Press*, November 11, 1999; "The Master Settlement Agreement," National Association of Attorneys General, accessed July 29, 2026, <https://www.naag.org/our-work/naag-center-for-tobacco-and-public-health/the-master-settlement-agreement/>; Memorandum, "Tobacco Settlement: States' Allocation of Phase II Funds," U.S. General Accounting Office, December 3, 2002, accessed July 29, 2026, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-03-262r.pdf>; "Goins to Host Town Meeting on Tobacco Settlement Funds," *The LaFollette Press*, September 21, 2000.

⁴⁷ According to the 1946 booster publication *Beautiful Claiborne County*, Claiborne County was at that time the third highest in the state of Tennessee in terms of production of tobacco.

⁴⁸ "To Talk on Pensions" *The Knoxville Journal*, April 1, 1942.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

for Veterans, which were partly conveyed to veterans through a series of informational programs held at courthouses or comparable large halls. Such as talk by a representative from the U.S. Veterans Administration was hosted at the Claiborne County Courthouse in June 1946.⁴⁹

During the Great Depression, the federal government created a stamp system to give people greater access to food than what they could normally afford. The program was permanently enshrined in federal law in 1964 with the passage of the Food Stamp Act. The following year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture held a series of informational meetings to explain the new, permanent program to grocers, who could voluntarily participate. In the upper East Tennessee region, meetings were held at buildings that were centrally located and could accommodate larger crowds; thus, the county courthouses in Claiborne County and Campbell County were chosen. To reach remote, mining communities in the region, meetings were also planned at the city hall in Jellico, Tennessee and the American Legion Building in Oneida, Scott County, Tennessee.

More recently, the courthouse also hosted traveling exhibits for the Tennessee Century Farms program, which is jointly administered by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.⁵⁰

The courthouse was also the centralized location used to provide public services, such as vaccines. In 1945, a typhoid epidemic hit the county, with most cases in New Tazewell, down the road from the county seat of Tazewell. As typhoid is caused by contamination in water or food, Claiborne County officials decided at a courthouse meeting to undertake a project to replace the water system. The county also sponsored inoculation clinics at the courthouse for residents to receive vaccines for typhoid, diphtheria, and smallpox.⁵¹

Additionally, the County Courthouse meets the requirements for significance under Criterion C. As further explained in the MPDF, county courthouses were often among the largest and most high-styled buildings in small communities. In some cases, they were the only examples of their style in the community. The Claiborne County Courthouse is a significant local example of the Classical Revival style, which was by far the most popular style for extant county courthouses in Tennessee. Character-defining features include its overall massing, the central pediment supported by classical columns, symmetrical fenestration pattern with keystones, and masonry construction with red brick exterior. The courthouse also has significant interior features, including original terrazzo and concrete floors; plaster walls; marble wainscoting; wood doors and trim particularly in the courtrooms which also retain wood wainscoting; steel vaults; and the overall floorplan. The courthouse also exhibits influences from the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles, both popular at the time of the courthouse's construction. Curved walls at the entrance and at stairwells evoke Streamline Moderne, while the courthouse door surrounds feature stepped designs that reference the geometric designs popular in Art Deco.

The local architecture of Tazewell is characterized by vernacular expressions of late nineteenth and twentieth century building types and styles, including one and two-part commercial block, Ranch and Minimal Traditional houses, and automobile-oriented commercial buildings like strip malls with large parking lots,

⁴⁹ "VA Delegate to Visit E-T Towns," *The Knoxville Journal*, June 2, 1946.

⁵⁰ "Traveling Exhibit Features Tennessee's Century Farms," *The LaFollette Press*, September 7, 1989.

⁵¹ "500 at Tazewell Given Inoculations," *The Knoxville News-Sentinel*, June 22, 1947.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

modern style banks with drive throughs, and fast food restaurants. In the oldest part of Tazewell, where the courthouse is located, many buildings have been lost leaving behind empty lots or parking lots. Of those remaining, arguably the most notable architectural resources are those that were constructed with masonry, especially those that used stone in part or in whole. The ca. 1890-1900 Hughes Office Building at 1746 Main Street (see Figure 4), the Tazewell Baptist Church at 1801 Main Street, and the Stone House at 1802 Eppes Street (see Figure 4-5) are in the courthouse's immediate viewshed and stand out for their masonry design. Slight further away, two blocks to the south along Main Street, are the Graham-Kivette House (NR 5/29/1975) (see Figure 6) and the Methodist Episcopal Church South at Tazewell at 1702 Main Street (NR 7/16/2026) (see Figure 7), both of which were listed in the National Register of Historic Places for their architectural significance. All of these buildings are notable for their stone construction, some of which incorporated elements of high style design, such as the Gothic Revival style on the Methodist Episcopal Church, as conveyed by features such as pointed arch windows. None of these notable buildings have features that convey the Classical Revival style.

Among this local architectural context, the Claiborne County Courthouse stands out as a significant example of the Classical Revival style. No other extant building has comparable stylistic features embodying the style. There was once a building located across the street that incorporated aspects of Colonial Revival, a close architectural cousin of the Classical Revival style. The Claiborne Hotel was historically comparable architecturally, as indicated by its brick pilasters, two main level arched windows with keystones, windows with corner stone, and multilight window patterns (see Figure 8). Many of these features are shared on the Claiborne County Courthouse. While the Claiborne Hotel was a historic comparable, this building is non-extant, which leaves the Claiborne County Courthouse as the only remaining example of its style. The building retains numerous important features that allow it to retain integrity and convey its significance.



Figure 4: Claiborne County Courthouse and Juvenile Building (left), Hughes Office Building (center), and Stone House at Eppes Street (top right), 2025. Photo by author.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State



Figure 5: Stone House at Eppes Street, 2025. Photo by author.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State



Figure 6: Graham-Kivette House in 1971, at the time of its National Register listing for architectural and historical significance. Courtesy of the Tennessee Historical Commission.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State



Figure 7: Methodist Episcopal Church South at Tazewell, 2025. Courtesy of the Tennessee Historical Commission.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State



Figure 8: Claiborne Hotel, once located across the street from the Claiborne County Courthouse. Photo Courtesy of the Tennessee Historical Commission, 1977.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

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Claiborne County Courthouse

Claiborne County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

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"The Swan Silvertones." West Virginia Hall of Fame, 2013. Accessed July 29, 2026, https://www.wvmusichalloffame.com/hof_silvertones.html;

Toomey, Michael. "Daniel Boone." Tennessee Encyclopedia, October 8, 2017. Accessed July 28, 2026. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/daniel-boone/>.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)		State Historic Preservation Office
	previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency
	previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency
	designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government
	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University
	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other
	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A			

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.58 USGS Quadrangle Tazewell 154-NE

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

A. Latitude: 36.454588 Longitude: -83.569651

B. Latitude: 36.454439 Longitude: -83.569182

C. Latitude: 36.453947 Longitude: -83.569383

D. Latitude: 36.454014 Longitude: -83.569625

E. Latitude: 36.454122 Longitude: -83.569582

F. Latitude: 36.454188 Longitude: -83.569816

Verbal Boundary Description

The National Register boundary corresponds to the legal boundary of Claiborne County Parcel 096A A 021.00. The boundary is depicted on the enclosed boundary map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary corresponds to the property's legal parcel and encloses the resources and land historically associated with the property's significance.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

USGS Topographic Map



Original Map Scale: 1:24,000, USGS Map 1943, photorevised 1971.
The location of the Claiborne County Courthouse is indicated by the bold red circle.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Boundary Map



The National Register Boundary is depicted by the bold black polygon shaded light blue. The keys correspond to the coordinates noted in Section 10.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name	Dr. Rebecca Schmitt		
Organization	Tennessee Historical Commission		
Street & Number	2941 Lebanon Pike	Date	May 2026
City or Town	Nashville	Telephone	615-818-4476
E-mail	Rebecca.Schmitt@tn.gov	State	TN Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints. Photos should be submitted separately in a JPEG or TIFF format. Do not embed these photographs into the form)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. can be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps. They can also be embedded in the Section 7 or 8 narratives)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Claiborne County Courthouse
City or Vicinity: Tazewell
County: Claiborne
State: Tennessee
Photographer: Lane Tillner and Rebecca Schmitt
Date Photographed: March 19, 2026

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 38. East façade of Courthouse and Juvenile Building. Photographer facing northwest.
- 2 of 38. Oblique view of east façade and south elevation of Courthouse, including view of monuments. Photographer facing north.
- 3 of 38. Oblique view of south and west elevations of Courthouse and the Maintenance Building. Photographer facing northeast.
- 4 of 38. West Elevation of Courthouse. Photographer facing northeast.
- 5 of 38. North Elevation of Courthouse and oblique view of north and west elevations of Juvenile Building. Photographer facing south.
- 6 of 38. North Elevation of Courthouse and Juvenile Building. Photographer facing southwest.
- 7 of 38. First Magistrates Monument. Photographer facing northwest.
- 8 of 38. Veterans Monument. Photographer facing northwest.
- 9 of 38. East Façade of the Courthouse Annex. Photographer facing northwest.
- 10 of 38. North Elevation of the Courthouse Annex. Photographer facing west.
- 11 of 38. Main Entrance of the Courthouse, First Level, looking towards the lobby. Photographer facing northwest.
- 12 of 38. First Level Lobby of the Courthouse. Photographer facing northwest.
- 13 of 38. First Level Lobby of the Courthouse. Photographer facing southeast.
- 14 of 38. First Level Lobby of the Courthouse. Photographer facing west.
- 15 of 38. First Level Northeast Hallway. Photographer facing northeast.
- 16 of 38. Trustee's Office (Representative First Level County Office). Photographer facing east.

Claiborne County Courthouse

Claiborne County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

-
- 17 of 38. Trustee's Office (Representative First Level County Office). Photographer facing northeast.
- 18 of 38. Vault Door in the Trustee's Office (Representative Vault on First Level). Photographer facing north.
- 19 of 38. Interior of Vault in Trustee's Office (Representative Vault on First Level). Photographer facing southwest.
- 20 of 38. Trustee's Office (Representative First Level County Office). Photographer facing west.
- 21 of 38. Register of Deeds (Representative First Level County Office). Photographer facing west.
- 22 of 38. Former Office within the County Clerk, showing historic flooring, First level. Photographer facing southeast.
- 23 of 38. County Mayor's Reception Area, First Level. Photographer facing northwest.
- 24 of 38. County Mayor's Office, First Level. Photographer facing west.
- 25 of 38. Main Staircase on northeast side of building. Photographer on landing between first and second levels, facing south.
- 26 of 38. Main Hallway on Second Level. Photographer facing southwest.
- 27 of 38. Circuit Courtroom, Second Level. Photographer facing west.
- 28 of 38. Circuit Courtroom, Second Level, with close-up view of Judge's Bench and Jury Box. Photographer facing north.
- 29 of 38. Circuit Courtroom, Second Level, Interior Door Detail (representative of all public access doors to courtrooms). Photographer facing southeast.
- 30 of 38. Chancery Courtroom, Second Level. Photographer facing north.
- 31 of 38. Secondary Hallway, Second Level. Photographer facing northwest.
- 32 of 38. Jury Room, Second Level. Photographer facing east.
- 33 of 38. Secondary Staircase that provides access to Former County Jail on Third Floor. Photographer on second level, facing northeast.
- 34 of 38. Third Level Hallway to Former County Jail. Photographer facing southeast.
- 35 of 38. Third Level Doors to Jail Cell Area. Photographer facing south.

Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

36 of 38. Walkway between Jail Cells, Third Level. Photographer facing southwest.

37 of 38. Walkway on southeast side of the Cell Block. Photographer facing southwest.

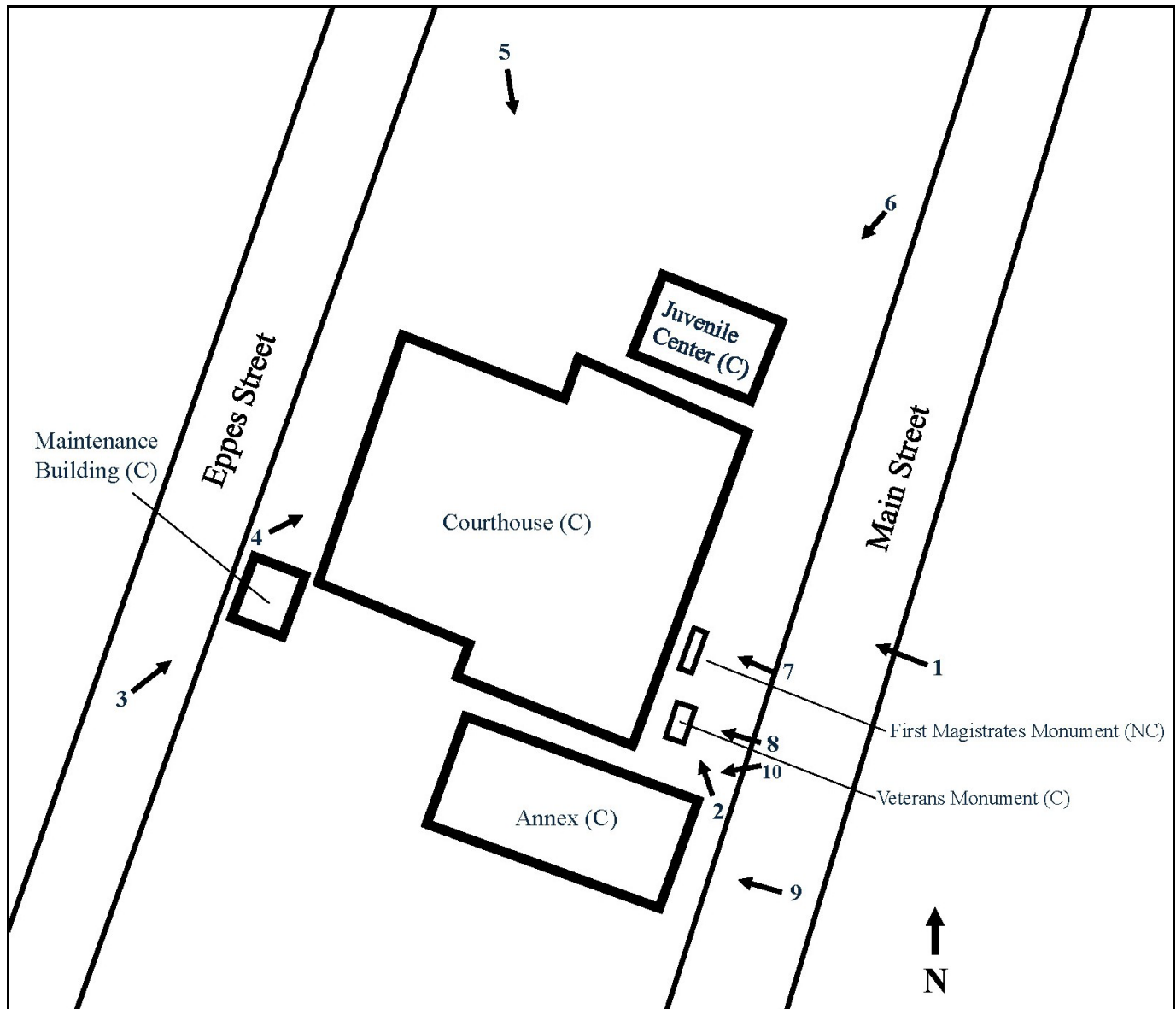
38 of 38. Walkway along southwest Cell Block. Photographer facing northwest.

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Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Site Plan with Photos Keyed (Not to Scale)

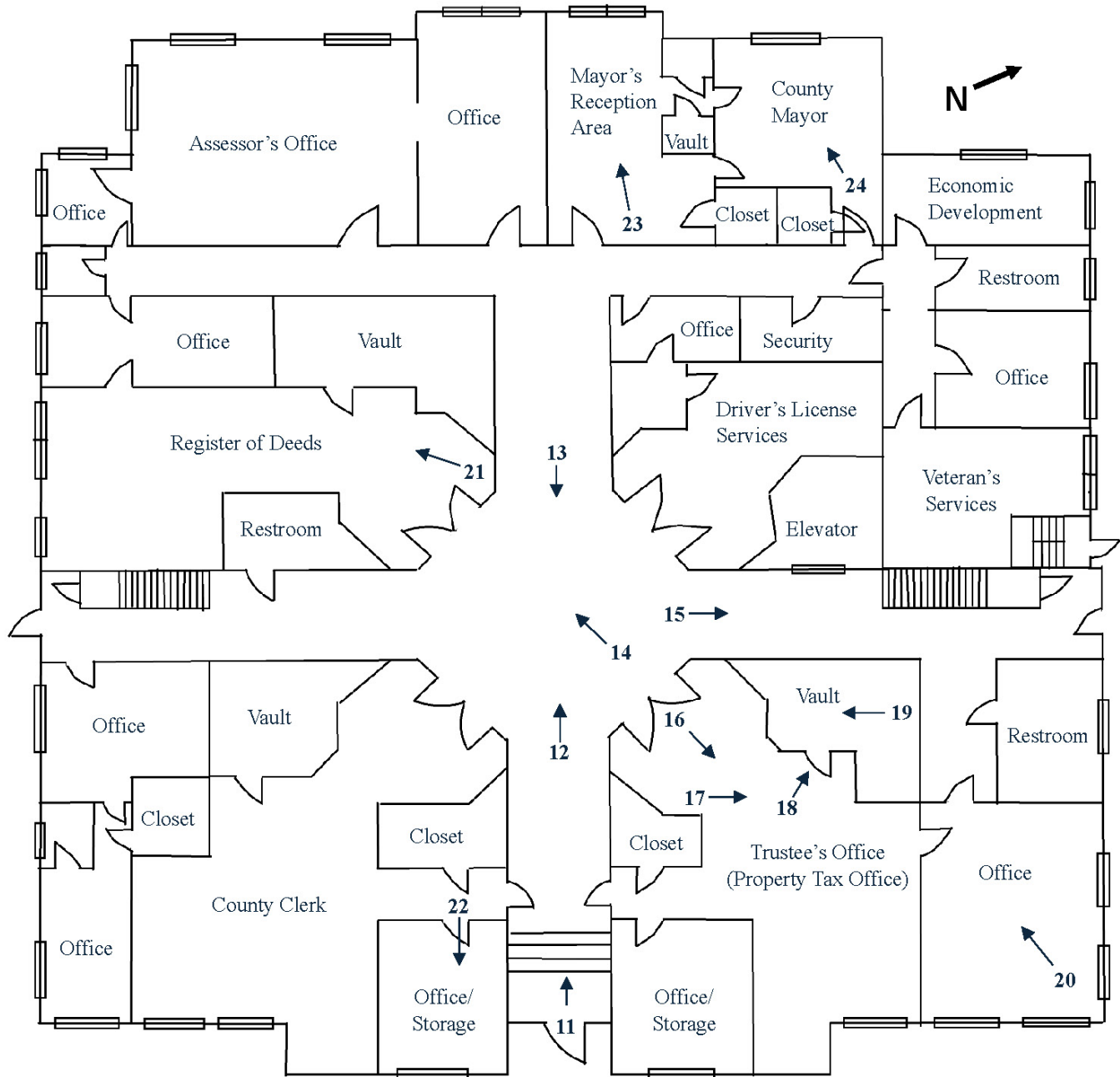


Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Floor Plans with Photos Keyed (All Not To Scale)

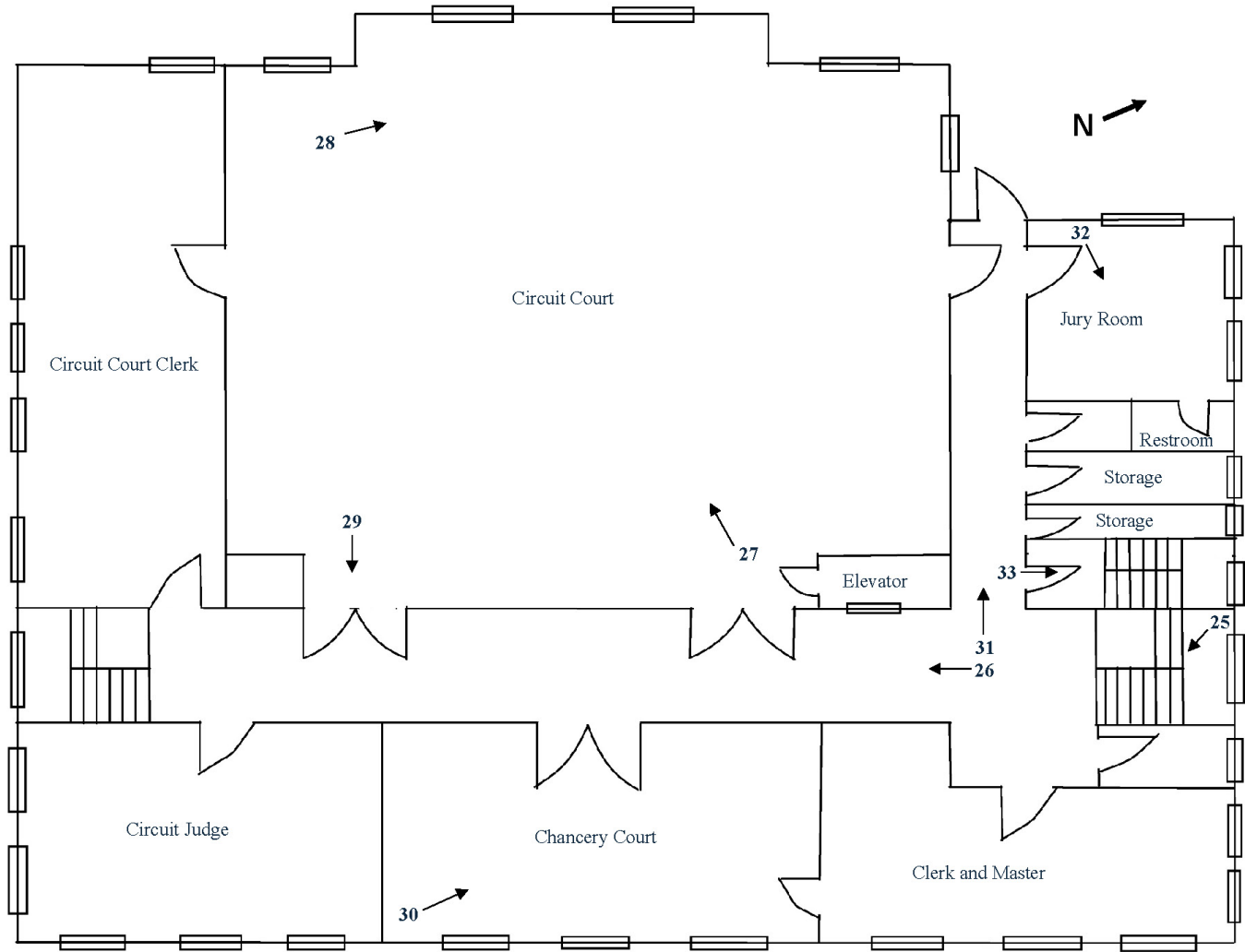
First Floor



Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Second Floor

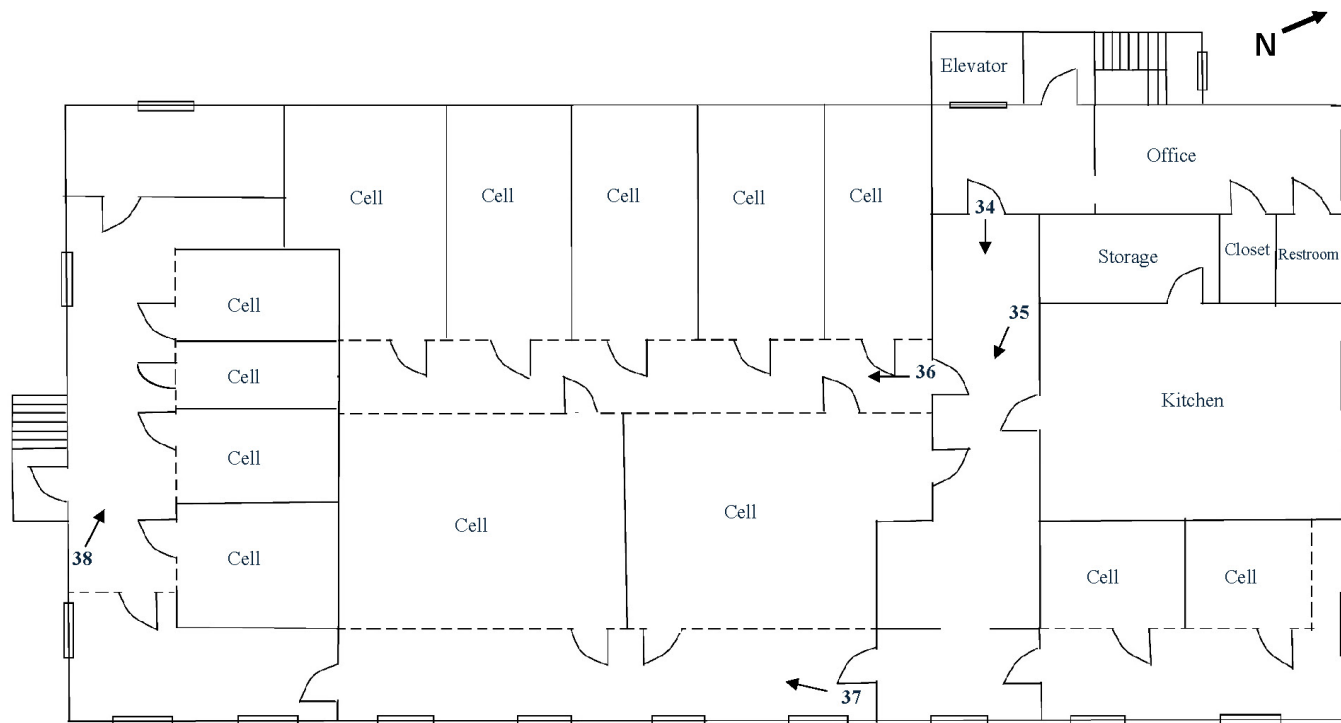


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Claiborne County Courthouse
Name of Property

Claiborne County, Tennessee
County and State

Third Floor



DRAFT

Property Owner(s):

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name

Claiborne County Government, c/o County Mayor Joe Brooks

Street &

Number

P.O. Box 318

Telephone

City or Town

Tazewell

State/Zip

TN 37879



1 OF 38



2 OF 38



3 OF 38



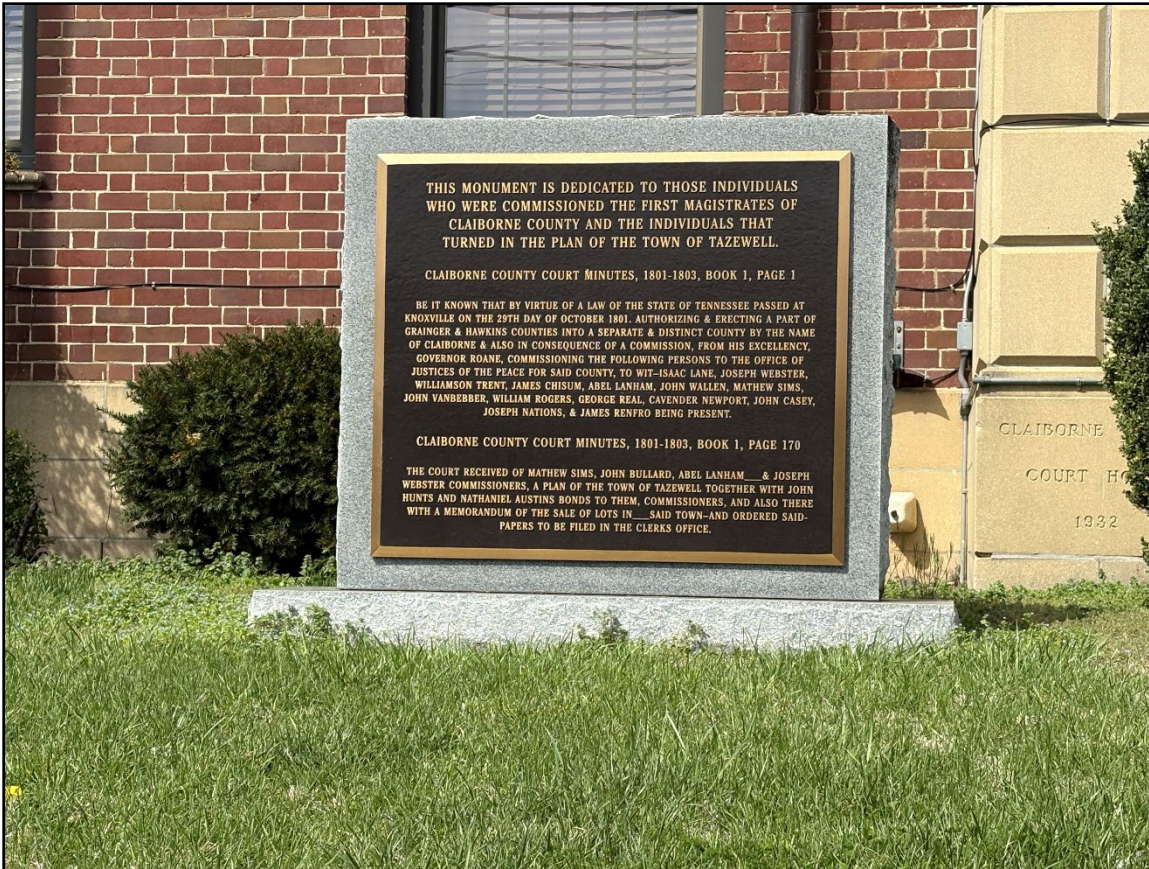
4 OF 38



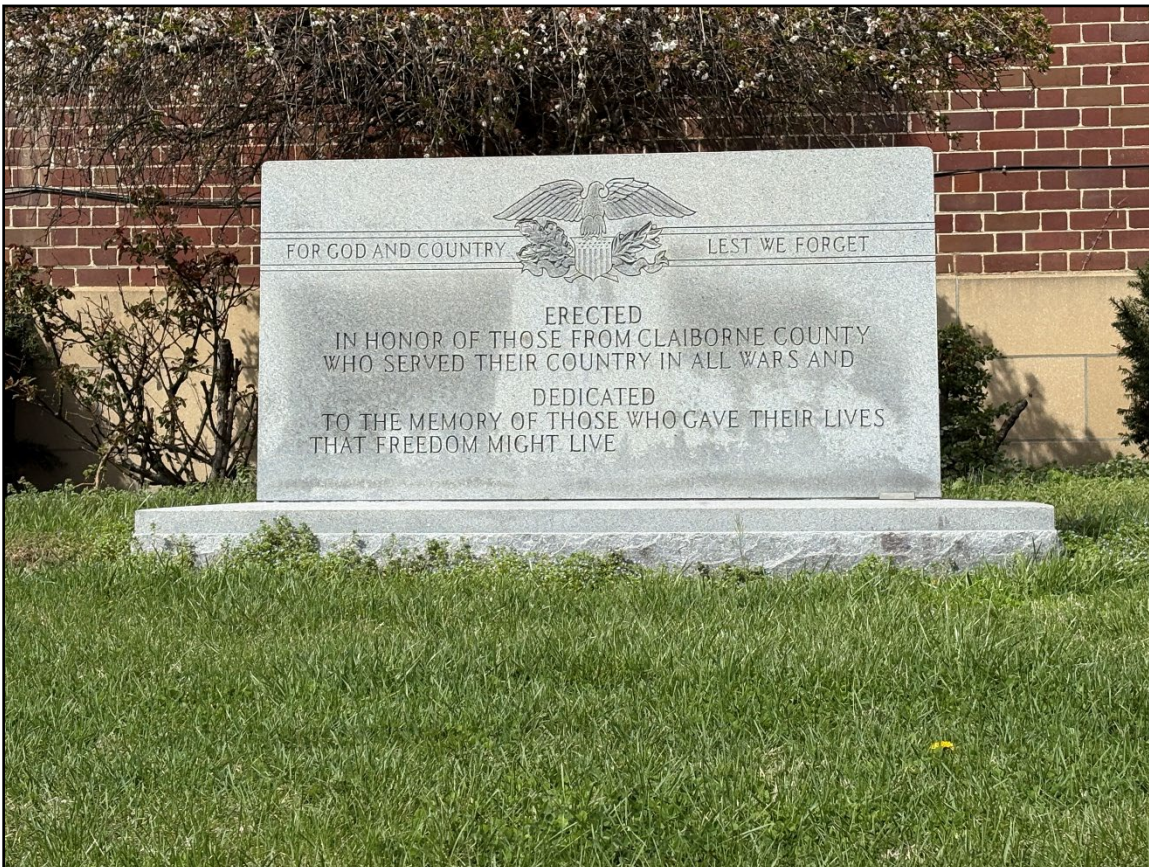
5 OF 38



6 OF 38



7 OF 38



8 OF 38



9 OF 38



10 OF 38



11 OF 38



12 OF 38



13 OF 38



14 OF 38



15 OF 38



16 OF 38



17 OF 38



18 OF 38



19 OF 38



20 OF 38



21 OF 38



22 OF 38



23 OF 38



24 OF 38



25 OF 38



26 OF 38



27 OF 38



28 OF 38



29 OF 38



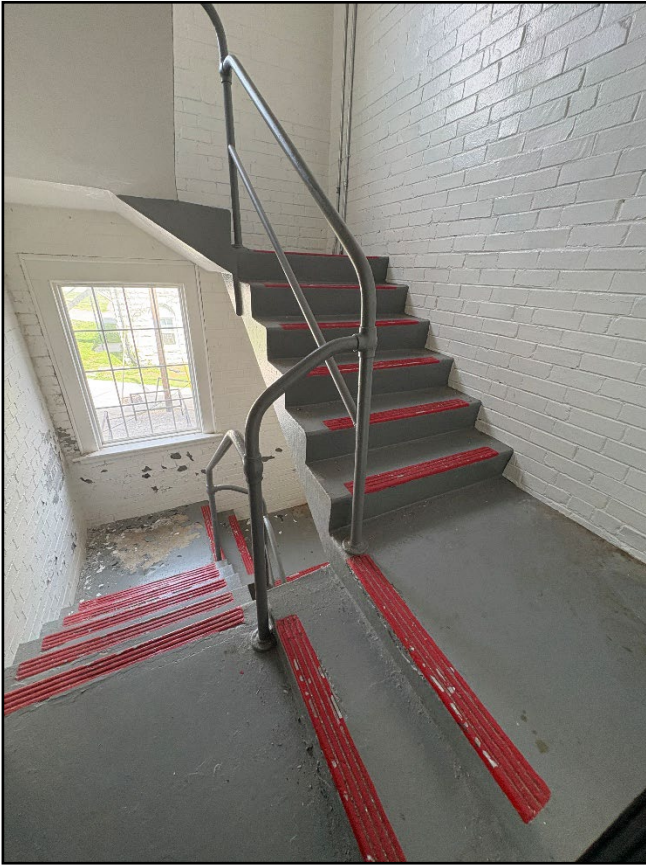
30 OF 38



31 OF 38



32 OF 38



33 OF 38



34 OF 38



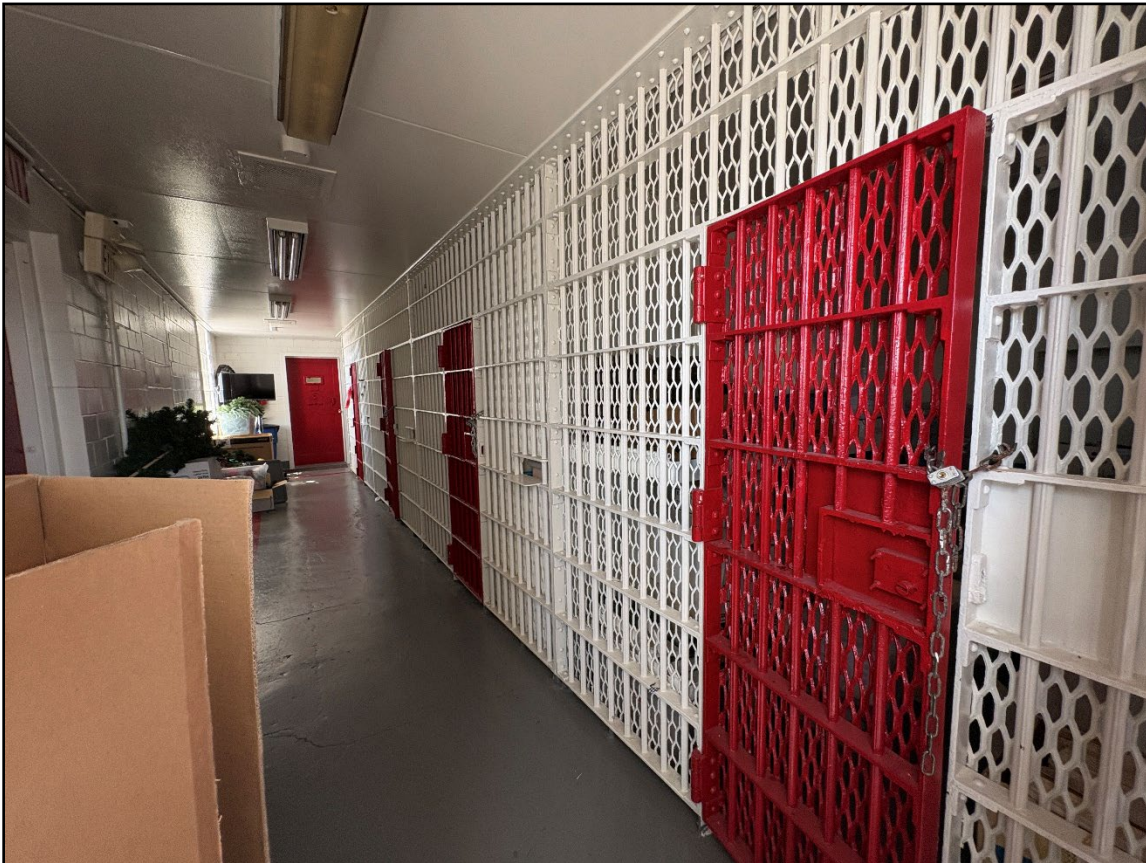
35 OF 38



36 OF 38



37 OF 38



38 OF 38