

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Built in 1930, the masonry neo-classical Catahoula Parish Courthouse is a landmark in the small town of Harrisonburg. Regardless of some unsympathetic modernization and a large addition, the structure retains its National Register eligibility.

Occupying an irregular shaped city block, the large rectangular courthouse is symmetrical, well-proportioned and sparsely ornamented, with the front and rear elevations identical. The whole mass rests upon a rusticated one story base, which gives the appearance of strength. On this ground story, a central grouping of three arches provides an axial entrance. A seven bay colossal piano nobile with engaged Ionic columns and coupled pilasters articulates the second and third stories. Both of the classical facades are set forward slightly, suggesting a central block with wings. A molded entablature with a denticular cornice encircles the entire building. Set back and practically hidden behind a balustrade and a brick parapet, a fourth and smaller attic story rests on a flat roof. This top space, which once served as the jail, is now utilized as a storage area.

The side elevations were identical before a recent addition covered the south entrance. The remaining secondary (north) entrance is an echo of the east and west facades. Here the arrangement consists of two colossal pilasters over a single arched entrance.

Alterations:

In 1974, the interior of the building was completely modernized by lowering ceilings, adding wallboard, and carpeting. The only original interior features remaining are a secondary staircase and the attic space.

Also, at this time all the original windows were replaced by modern metal ones with tinted glass.

As was mentioned previously, a modern large annex building was attached to the south elevation in 1974. Fortunately, the major portion of the annex does not rise above a single story.

Assessment of Integrity:

Despite these admittedly serious alterations, the mass, form, and essential neo-classical features of the courthouse remain. Moreover, alterations notwithstanding, it is still the architectural landmark of the parish.

Significant dates	1930
Architect/Builder	Architect: J. W. Smith & Associates Contractor: Tudor & Ratcliff Construction Co. - Alexandria, La.

Criterion C

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Catahoula Parish Courthouse is architecturally significant on the local level as the grand landmark of the parish.

Catahoula Parish has had a rich and colorful history, with a once thriving antebellum plantation economy and later a significant lumber boom. But floods, fires, and a changing economy have taken their toll, with the result that today the parish does not have much in the way of an architectural patrimony. The recently completed comprehensive historic structures survey has identified 418 50+ year old buildings, almost all of which are plain cottages, bungalows, or nondescript commercial buildings. There are also a few antebellum plantation houses, all of which are modest galleried cottages. The survey revealed that there are no impressive churches and no pretentiously articulated residences of any period. The courthouse is the only building in Catahoula Parish which can legitimately be regarded as a grand architectural landmark. It is a four story neo-classical pile with a strong rusticated base and a colossal piano nobile composed of engaged Ionic columns. As such, it stands far above the parish's rather humble patrimony.

Major Bibliographical References

Historic Structures Survey, Catahoula Parish, State Historic Preservation Office.

Brasseaux, Carl A., Conrad, Glenn R., Robinson, R. Warren. The Courthouses of Louisiana. USL Architecture Series No. 1, Center for Louisiana Studies, USL, Lafayette, 1977.