

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Madison Parish Courthouse (1939) is a handsome two story stucco over masonry Colonial Revival building located in downtown Tallulah. Despite the addition of side wings, the building retains its National Register eligibility.

The five bay hip roof courthouse has an elegantly proportioned Ionic portico with a lunette set in the tympanum. The building culminates in a two-stage English Baroque cupola consisting of a square base, a balustrade, and an octagonal lantern with round arch openings and an ogee cap. The rest of the exterior detailing is fairly convention Colonial Revival with louvered shutters, twelve over twelve windows, and light window cornices. The entrance opens into an off-center hall with an ornamental steel staircase which ascends to an upper lobby which gives access to the courtroom. Aside from these spaces, the building is entirely given over to offices with transomed doorways and heavy oak doors. The interior detailing is restrained.

Since the courthouse's construction, two single story side wings with parapets have been added. Evidently they were added fairly soon after the courthouse was built because their detailing is identical to the original building. Although these wings have altered the courthouse's exterior appearance, the original central block still stands forth and still dominates architecturally. The wings have not decreased the courthouse's monumentality or its status as a local landmark.

Significant dates	1939
Architect/Builder	Architect: J. W. Smith & Associates, Monroe Builder: M. T. Reed Construction Co.

Criterion C

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

The Madison Parish Courthouse is of local significance in the area of architecture as the landmark among the surviving older buildings in the parish seat of Tallulah. Although the town was founded in 1857, floods and other factors have taken their toll on the building stock. Today there are perhaps 150 50+ year old structures, most of which are plain bungalows, nondescript cottages, Colonial Revival cottages or plain commercial buildings. There are also a handful of fairly generic Queen Anne Revival cottages. In contrast to this comparatively humble patrimony, the courthouse is a grand and imposing building with an impressive presence on the town's main square. Its elegant five bay facade features one of only two pedimented porticoes in all of Tallulah. In addition, of these two porticoes, it is the only one with a fully developed Greek order (i.e., Ionic). (The other has square posts with molded capitals.)

Major Bibliographical References

Brasseaux, Carl A., Conrad, Glenn R., and Robinson, R. Warren. The Courthouses of Louisiana. Lafayette, Louisiana: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1977.

Windshield survey of Tallulah by National Register staff, Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office.