

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Tallulah Book Club Building is a one story stucco structure standing on a small rectangular lot on the outskirts of Tallulah's business district. Brushy Bayou flows nearby and can be viewed from the building's rear windows and exit. The building was constructed in 1930 in a very restrained version of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Except for the loss of some lighting fixtures, it looks exactly as it did upon completion. As a result, its National Register eligibility remains intact.

The building's Spanish Colonial Revival elements include:

- 1) textured walls,
- 2) a pair of arched windows and a small curvilinear decorative buttress mimicking the appearance of adobe,
- 3) a flat roof,
- 4) curvilinear shaped parapet walls,
- 5) small round openings on the front and rear suggestive of canales (water spouts),
- 6) a stuccoed fireplace whose firebox opening is outlined by tiles, and
- 7) two surviving Spanish wrought iron light fixtures.

Other elements of interest include large windows designed to allow plenty of light into the interior, lozenge shaped decorative tiles found on the facade above the arched windows, a sign on the facade identifying the structure as the Tallulah Book Club, entrance doors surmounted by transoms, built in bookcases, a stage flanked by Ionic columns and light sconces featuring frosted scalloped glass in embossed geometrically shaped metal holders. The interior contains a large central entertainment area which separates the vestibule, library, and powder room on one end of the building from the stage and kitchen at the other end.

The Book Club has remained amazingly intact through the years. In fact, except for problems of general deterioration, only one exterior light fixture and the glass inserts of the light sconces described above have been lost. However, the inserts have been carefully replicated as part of a current restoration effort. In conjunction with this restoration, the exterior stucco has been repaired and the interior walls re-textured, much of the ceiling has been replaced, and additional lights have been added to the kitchen. These repairs contribute to rather than detract from the integrity of the structure, which would still be easily recognized by anyone from the historic period.

Significant dates	1930-1941
Architect/Builder	William Stanton
Criterion A	

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

The Tallulah Book Club Building is locally significant in the areas of education and social history. It was the first, and throughout the period of significance, the only library available to the citizens of Madison Parish. It also served as the community's social center and the site of all its major social events. The period of significance for this nomination ranges from the structure's 1930 completion date until 1941, the required 50 year cutoff. (The building continued in both significant roles past the 50 year cutoff date.)

Like many rural Louisiana parishes, Madison had no public library facility until the mid years of the 1940s. However, this important educational void was filled by the Tallulah Book Club.

Originally named the Tallulah Literary Club, this organization was founded in 1902 by a group of local women who needed a focus for their interests in music and literature. Their first goal was to provide a lending library for the citizens of their community and parish. Although their library was housed within the home of a member, all of the residents of Madison Parish were allowed to use the books. Meeting once a month in members' homes on parish plantations as well as within town, the ladies soon established several interest groups which greatly expanded the club's social and cultural activities. They also worked for local civic improvements such as the prohibition of grazing by animals on the courthouse lawn. By the end of the 1920s the club's membership had grown to 100, meaning that most members' homes were too small to accommodate meetings. It was this situation which led to the construction of the Tallulah Book Club Building in 1930. The structure was a significant milestone for the club's members, for they were the only Federated Women's Club in the state to own its own building.

The new facility contained a large, sunny library room lined with bookshelves. Located at the front of the structure and served by its own entrance vestibule, the library could be used regardless of whether or not other activities were scheduled in the building. The club continued to make books available to non-members as a community service and provided a volunteer librarian who kept the facility open for several hours each week. The Tallulah Book Club continued to provide the parish's only library services until the Madison Parish Library opened in 1945. The new library was part of the Louisiana Library Demonstration Project, which had begun during the 1920s with the goal of assisting parish seats in establishing library facilities. Book Club members continued to use the club's books for a short time after the public library opened.

The club building was also the center of Tallulah's social and cultural life and appears to have been the only facility used for large functions and gatherings. It was, in effect, the small town's community center from its construction up to and past the fifty year cutoff. Although the high school did have an auditorium, it apparently was not used for non-school functions. Book Club members held a variety of social and cultural events in their clubhouse during the 1930s. For example, the community's first "President's Ball" (apparently a charity event) was held there, with an orchestra from Memphis playing for 200 dancers. In addition to club business meetings and educational lectures, other activities held in the building included concerts and recitals, dramas, card games, art and flower shows, and many dances. The members also made the facility available for meetings of other local groups such as the Rotary Club and the Girl Scouts, catered special banquets held in the building's large central entertainment space, and rented the facility to local citizens for private parties. Surviving Book Club members state that the building was used extensively by the community during and beyond the period of significance. The Book Club itself survived into the 1980s, when changing social patterns led to a decline in interest.

Major Bibliographical References

Interviews with Beatrice Neill and Geneva Rountree Williams, both former members of the Tallulah Book Club, August 26, 1991.

Minutes and other records of the Tallulah Book Club, copies in National Register file.

Madison Journal Centennial Edition, August 14, 1975.