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Preserving the Past for the Present: Courthouse Preservation and Community Values in Thomas County, Georgia

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Preserving the Past for the Present: Courthouse Preservation and Community Values
in Thomas County, Georgia

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Urban Studies

by

Lori Boyer

B.A. University of Texas, 1994

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	
Prologue.....	1
Overview of Thesis.....	4
Chapter 2: Literature Review	
Preservation and Public Space Literature.....	7
Critiques of Preservation	13
Conclusion	14
Chapter 3: Economic Development and Historic Preservation	
Placement of the Courthouse in the City of Thomasville	17
Purpose of Designating.....	20
SPLOST Initiatives.....	21
Solution.....	25
Conclusion	26
Chapter 4: Public Buildings	
Preservation of Courthouses.....	28
Courthouse Preservation Programs in Texas.....	29
Courthouse Preservation Programs in Georgia	31
Charleston.....	34
Security.....	35
Complex History of Courthouses	36
Chapter 5: History of the Thomas County Courthouse	
Introduction	39
County Incorporation.....	39
Greek Revival Construction	40
Grand-Hotel Era & Italianate Remodel.....	43
20 th Century Additions	44
Courthouse Square.....	46
Modern Repairs	47
Preservation Efforts	50
Conclusion	52

Chapter 6: Interiors and Adaptive Re-use	
Historic Interiors.....	54
Adapted Reuse.....	56
Security for the Courthouse and Space Needed Within.....	58
Conclusion.....	61
Chapter 7: Discussion	
Implications and Analysis	63
Conclusion.....	66
References	68
Vita	75

List of Figures

Figure 1	
Map of Thomasville’s Historic Districts	18
Figure 2	
Drawing of Original courthouse Built in 1858 Greek Revival Style	41
Figure 3	
Photo of 1858 courthouse showing public life	43
Figure 4	
Drawing of 1888 courthouse in the Italianate style.....	44
Figure 5	
Postcard of courthouse and annex circa 1937	45
Figure 6	
View of the 1858 courthouse and grounds from Washington Street	46
Figure 7	
Fountain moved from the Mitchell House to the courthouse grounds	47
Figure 8	
Thomas County courthouse in 2006.....	49
Figure 9	
View of the Interior showing carpet covering and lowered ceiling	53

Abstract

The Thomas County Courthouse is 148 years old and is in need of renovation. Special legal regulations require security upgrades, and doing so would compromise the architectural integrity of both the interior and exterior of the courthouse. The citizens of Thomas County have chosen to build a multipurpose judicial building to relieve the pressures and needs for security and space while renovating the historic courthouse to serve as a depository of its historical documents. Within the context of preservation, the Thomas County Courthouse serves as an example of how a community can preserve the architecture of the building and keep this public building functioning and relevant to both the commercial district it borders and to the community it serves, and maintain its use as a public building which serves all and excludes none.

Chapter One: Introduction

Prologue

The Thomas County Courthouse belongs to the citizens of Thomas County, Georgia. Though this is a county courthouse, it was built in the city of Thomasville, Georgia, and the building is as important to the development of the town as it is to the operations for the county. The courthouse building has been rebuilt and modified over time, but the location and lot size have not changed. The structure has served the county community well, but has become challenged by problems with space, security and neglect. This particular community needs a building to meet its security and court needs, yet also desires to retain the current building which is both a viable part of the community and also a physical representation of their past. Upgrading this courthouse to comply with safety and security standards will sacrifice the architectural integrity that denotes it as a valuable historic building. Funds became available in 2007 to build a separate court-function building and make repairs to the old courthouse.

The town of Thomasville is proud of its history of serving as the county seat and the courthouse is a visual and tangible representation of that. As of 2005, the population for the City of Thomasville was 18, 725. Homeowners make up 60% of the population, with the median household age at 36.5. Race statistics show the black population at 55.4% and the white population at 42.8%. The unemployment rate for the same year was four percent, with construction making up 17% of the city's jobs. New development projects occur in many neighborhoods including historic ones, but 37% of the town's structures were built before 1959 (census.gov).

Thomasville Landmarks, Inc. serves as the private preservation organization which drives many of the local preservation activities, including preparing nominations for historic districts and preservation education outreach. Their bylaws written in 1964 read, “The purposes of Landmarks shall be the preservation of historical and cultural sites, buildings and objects in the Thomasville-Thomas County area and to maintain the cultural and picturesque charm” (Mitchell, 1980). The city of Thomasville created the Thomasville Historic Preservation Commission by ordinance in 1987 to regulate historic preservation and government efforts (rose.net).

The courthouse remains significant not only to the citizens who use it but also to the commercial district which it borders. The position of the courthouse near the historic commercial district makes it economically viable to the town of Thomasville by attracting customers downtown to shop and conduct business and by preventing main business operations from locating to the edge of town. The relevancy of the courthouse to this community is important because of what it anchors both economically and historically. The relevancy can be broken down into two more parts: 1. the economic value of the courthouse, its contribution to the community and the costs of preventing demolition or restoring the building, and 2. adaptive reuse - what it means to keep the building functioning or having to change its function. Adaptively reusing the courthouse might be one method of saving the structure and its relevancy to the town’s economic future.

Emma Waterton (2005) claims that “heritage acquires value ‘because of, and through our desires.’” She is stating that communities read their heritage from their saved past, most visible through the buildings in their inventory, which they have consciously or unconsciously chosen to save. The public certainly values the courthouse through its efforts to save it over the years through designating it as a national landmark, through repairs and maintenance and through its

inclusion in a local historic district. The citizens desire to use the building and therefore must preserve it. The community recognizes the building as a reflection of the community's history, through its approved additions and repairs over time.

Saving fine architecture often ignores the stories of ordinary people and only values or recognizes the elite few. Recognition of the courthouse for its fine architecture or for certain events or persons attached to the building may exclude some of its history. In the act of preserving this courthouse, preservationists could use this opportunity to tell the whole story of the courthouse, including its entire past, or they might hide behind the white-washed patina of the courthouse and disregard certain unflattering stories. If the community writes a narrow history of this courthouse, it will sacrifice the historic integrity of the building as much as modern alteration would. But, demolition of the courthouse would eradicate every story held within its bricks.

Research and writing in contemporary history incorporates the complex and shadowed themes of the past. As Peter Burke (2001) states, "the new history has come to be concerned with virtually every human activity." Historical writing once focused principally on political movements, but the "new history" has expanded to include lower history and analysis of individual social groups and grassroots movements. According to Dubrow and Graves (2002), the historic preservation movement has not yet added a similar complexity to its discourse. Which complex issues are buried in the history and walls of this courthouse? The documents inside could weave a rich interpretation of the community's past. Yes, the documents alone could tell a story, but how can the public relate to the story without the courthouse structure to remind them? Recognizing an "interpretive quality of preservation" (Barthel, 1989) signifies that places are valued for who or what they represent to individual communities and these are

legitimate reasons for “conserving heritage” (Waterton, 2005). Thomas County and the town of Thomasville should embrace the complex nature of their courthouse and preserve all facets which make their experience unique.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis explores how preservation has evolved in America, the themes of preservation in the story of the courthouse and the tactics the community used in saving it. Interweaved in this story of the courthouse are themes of the relevancy of buildings to their surroundings and districts in preservation movements. The thesis addresses issues of security facing the courthouse and how the preservation of the building is preventing security upgrades. This thesis explores the definition and applied meanings of adaptive reuse, building function, and historic preservation as an economic development tool.

The second chapter introduces topics in preservation and public space. This literature review will provide a context for the story of the courthouse, illustrating how major trends in preservation and uses of public space are represented in this case of the Thomas County Courthouse. The third chapter presents the issues of keeping this courthouse relevant to the city, and how economics and preservation are uniquely linked to each other. City governments use historic preservation as an economic development tool in their comprehensive plans. This courthouse and the commercial corridor it borders share a symbiotic relationship, relying on business and interest to keep each relevant to the city.

The fourth chapter presents the preservation of public buildings and more specifically the preservation of courthouses. Courthouses are recognizable government and public buildings which historically were built as grand structures to emphasize the status of government in the

lives of its citizens. Many states have specific preservation programs dedicated to saving county courthouses. This chapter in addition to the second chapter delves into the subject of the shadowed past, exploring what it means and why it is important to uncover and include the undesired stories of the past.

Chapter five introduces the history of the courthouse and the changes it has undergone. The story of Thomasville and Thomas County seem to mirror the changes of the courthouse structure itself. It is important to note the changes to capably develop the themes of this paper. This chapter also elaborates upon some of the primary issues facing the courthouse.

The citizens saved the courthouse by approving funding for its renovation. The courthouse will undergo repairs and restoration of its beautiful interiors, an action characterizing the heart of preservation – keeping historic materials in working condition and not discarding them. But, there are deeper issues involving the adapted reuse of the courthouse because its court functions are being moved to a different building. Chapter six will explore the implications of that action.

Research was conducted on the courthouse using primary and secondary documentation from the Thomas County Historical Society, the Genealogical Library, the Thomas County Public Library and files at Thomasville Landmarks, Inc. Local Thomasville preservationists and court officers were interviewed regarding the issues the courthouse faces and how to best save it. Attendance and observance at several meetings in Thomasville recorded the process of securing funding for the courthouse preservation and the successful marketing campaign which garnered a favorable vote for the county SPLOST in July, 2006. Research also included incorporation of the literature on the different issues represented in the preservation movement and also of theories of the uses of public space and public buildings.

This thesis is a case study of one journey in preservation and how this particular case exemplifies the characteristics of the preservation movement. This thesis will convey the story of how the community has utilized the economic factors available to it to not only save and repair this courthouse, but to continue to make it relevant and keep it in continuous functioning use. This thesis is also a story about how this courthouse manages as a public building and how the history held and told there relate to its physical, architectural framework. The courthouse anchors the city and county as a story and depot of its past, as an economic stabilizer and as a representation of the community's desires and values.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Preservation and Public Space Literature

Preservation of historic buildings involves safeguarding the building from demolition, maintaining the structural masonry and protecting its place in the community. Historic preservation is an approach which idealizes the perpetuation of a building's physical existence by promoting the aspects which unite it with the community. The physical aspects can be a structure's architectural innovation, the ornamental patterns or design form. A building can also be acknowledged for the people or events associated with it. Any particular building must be recognized as both historic - customarily older than 50 years - and significant - architecturally, culturally or patriotically.

The United States preservation movement has evolved from its beginnings in the 19th century (Tyler, 2000). Initially, preservation included action by private citizens to save structures related to important patriotic figures. Local governments became involved in the early 20th century by passing laws to protect historic structures. Preservation has also evolved from saving individual buildings to saving entire historic neighborhoods and the ideals of preservation and the preservation movement now include valuing structures for their history, architectural aesthetics and context (Tyler, 2000; Datel, 1985).

Historic preservationists and academic architectural historians' ideals converged in the later part of the 20th century when preservationists expanded their outlook and adopted the conceptual and interpretive categories of architectural historians. By recognizing the built form as aesthetically worth saving, preservationists have begun to recognize a building's placement within the built environment and the need to retain their context (Bluestone, 1999).

Preservationists crusaded with urbanists during urban renewal approaches in the 1960s to protect and preserve their structures and neighborhoods. They moved forward with this new preservation to define a sense of place, “to give orientation using structures to the society and using objects of the past to establish values of time and place” (Rogers, 1987).

Urbanism and historic preservation share the common interest of preservation of their buildings and urban contexts. Because a building’s use or setting is never fixed, preservationists are intent on saving any form of a building. Bluestone (1999) states, “preservationists understand that history involves taking measure of the way in which people and culture build, use and change architectural and urban spaces.” Historic preservation evaluates original intention and form, but it also includes the cultural changes by putting them into context.

Preservationists can be viewed as custodians of American culture. The preservation movement is based on action and its tenets maintain that preservationists must stand guard to ensure that buildings and neighborhoods are not forgotten or neglected. Preservationists strive to keep buildings related to the neighborhood’s history. More of the recent purpose of preservation is to include the surrounding history of the building, to place it within the context of its development and address the surrounding culture. The process can occur building by building or whole neighborhoods can be preserved. By saving the structures from different periods they are also saving the cultural norms associated with them. To be preserved, each building or neighborhood must have distinguishing significance. The act of preserving structures and their surrounding environments gives preservationists and the local community the opportunity to interpret the context and the history of a building, who physically built or designed it, and its function and the people it serviced.

The designation of time as a factor of merit is based on the need for objective evaluation and not on current taste (Stipe and Lee, 1987). Ideals of preservation do not include whimsical action. Principles require fifty years as the yardstick for measuring what is historic. This allows contemporary buildings to settle into the fabric of the community to be objectively evaluated at a later date. Any preservationist or activist citizen may decide the architecture has become a part of the community's landscape and campaign to save that particular version or period of the community's past.

By designating a structure as historically significant and placing it on the National Register or under local historic protection, the preservationists within that community are helping to prevent its demolition or future alteration. Designating a building as historic recognizes the past life of a building or area and ensures the future of the building and those engaged with those buildings are part of a "continuum" of belonging. According to Date (1985) preservationists fight to give built environments a place of permanence in their communities, recognizing the contributions of individual districts, the community, or city or region at large.

Though nothing remains permanent in communities as they grow and evolve, the preservation movement addresses the fear of loss of what makes the community unique, whether in great buildings or poor neighborhoods. Protection is needed mostly for neglected buildings, not for those neighborhoods or buildings which are viable and in good condition. Buildings which will soon lose their functional purpose or those districts which are falling into disrepair tend to rally preservationists (Datel, 1985).

Local ordinances began to appear in the 1930s when most of the power to control and regulate was concentrated locally. When the federal government stepped in to codify preservation with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966, they left regulation

power to the local and municipal governments, assigning other duties to state and federal governments (Tyler, 2000). The NHPA written in 1966 opens with, “Congress finds and declares that the spirit and direction of the Nation are founded upon and reflected in its historic past, that the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people” (Woodcock, 1998).

Local preservation ordinances favor and often require designs which are compatible with the neighborhood – those which are built in context with the surrounding areas, with the “established sense of place” (Datel, 1985). The heights of buildings are kept in line, the materials used for maintenance and repair should match the original materials when possible, and the size and placement of windows and bays are kept uniform as much as possible and codified in these local preservation ordinances. Citizens must apply for approval from their local preservation boards before any changes can be made to buildings or houses within a local historic district. Each applicant will have the opportunity to work with their local boards to find an agreeable solution, with a possibility for an appeal.

Preservation in America exists within private and public partnerships and in three levels of government – federal, state and local. The state acts as an intermediary between the local and federal governments, checking nomination forms and providing education about preservation resources available from the federal government. The local governments are given power to prevent most change in historic structures, as only local governments have the power to review and approve the plans for homes and other structures within historic districts. Acquiring public funds is a pressure facing preservation and its future. What is important to the local community may not translate into importance for the nation. Public support is a necessary part of

preservation because the public can be a barrier or provide needed funding source to preservation efforts (Stipe and Lee, 1987).

Buildings themselves through their individual materials help explain the “conditions of urban life” (Hayden, 1997). The setting and function of a building do not tell its entire story because those who built it or those who were displaced by it are often physically left out of the story being told (Sorkin, 1992). Setha Low (2005) argues that people look for representations of themselves or their cultures in their public spaces, whether parks or buildings. Who is the custodian of culture and history and whose part in the story is told?

The architectural and building tradition in America was to reserve and assign public space at the center of town for government and public affairs (Low and Smith, 2006). Histories are as tied to the changes in public spaces as they are to the buildings which encompass them, creating a certain “personality of a location” (Hayden, 1997) and a struggle for control of public space. Historic government buildings were places of assembly and discourse (Low and Smith, 2006).

Developers tend to look at historic buildings as a “footprint upon which to build something new” when the newness can simply come from renewing the building (Longworth and Miller, 2001). Clem Labine describes preservationists as “represent(ing) the cutting edge of a true cultural revolution, a revolution generating new perceptions that will have a dramatic impact on America’s way of thinking in the next fifty years. We are taking individual buildings and whole neighborhoods that have been discarded and trying to make them live again. We are cleaning up after society’s litterbugs” (Tyler, 2000). The most comprehensive story includes not only the diversity of the city and the uses of space, but values them when developing urban sites (Hayden, 1997).

When preservationists rehabilitate a building, there should be more revealed and saved than just the history and architectural elements. According to Lamei (2005) and Dubrow and Gates (2002), socio-economic and cultural issues tied to the buildings or neighborhoods would give a complete integration of history. The most inclusive interpretations would involve every change and every person associated with a property over time. Preservationist Paul Leon agrees stating, “We must preserve buildings as they are, respecting the contribution of successive generations” (Tyler, 2000). The Secretary of the Interior guidelines suggest that changes which have occurred over the years are as vital and important to the building as its original materials, because the changes tell the full story (Tyler, 2000).

Public spaces provide venues for many types of activities. These activities can include those of the government, commercial vendors or the leisure activities of individual citizens. Low and Smith (2006) argue that public places are currently seen as places of commerce and public surveillance, rather than democratic places with freedom to assemble. The cost of security is the loss of freedom (Sorkin, 1992). The way that the public have rewritten our public spaces due to development, historic preservation practices or even in the name of security, some are actually excluded from participating (Low, Sheld and Taplin, 2005). There are many associations and discourse on public space because it belongs to everyone. Everyone has a stake in what space becomes and how it is used and financed (Low Sheld and Taplin, 2005).

Preservation remains a public act because it encourages and requires public participation. The public can be viewed as the watchdogs, choosing to safeguard the community’s architectural and historic assets through vigilant maintenance and action. The public is also the benefactor of preservation action and results because perpetuating a community’s unique contribution of resources should be considered a benefit to all. When the government intervenes in preservation

projects, public participation in the process is required. Individual citizens may choose to exclude themselves from the debate, but the public must be invited and no group intentionally or purposefully excluded.

Critiques of preservation

One common criticism of preservation is that the movement tends to promote nostalgia and repetition of older styles, which prevents creativity in new development. If too many old structures are being saved, there is less room for the creativity of new development in modern architecture. Critics argue that preservationists might have prevented the ingenuity of the architecture of the 19th century they are fighting to save in the 21st century if their efforts had occurred back then (Lowenthal, 1989). But, this argument is refuted because new development occurs in every city. Individuals may admire particular styles or periods, but preservation does not remain static. Newer buildings are becoming older every year, increasing the inventory for preservationists.

A related criticism is that the preservation movement (Rypkema, 1989) promotes new buildings at the edge of town and the creation of suburbia because preservationists align themselves with those who are anti-development. If new development is prevented in the center of town where most historic properties typically were constructed, developers will seek localities at the edge of town or in suburbs where they can make their profit without preservation restrictions. These critics automatically assume that preservation is anti-development and that one must choose between preservation and development. But, preservationists and developers often work as partners on the same projects which benefit both groups. Developers can adapt historic buildings for commercial use by applying tax credits. New development could also be

designed within the guidelines of preservation ordinances to maintain conformity and continuity of form.

Lowenthal (1989) notes, “endurance in perpetuity is preservation’s guiding aim.” Lowenthal argues that preservationists wish to keep structures “frozen in time” and ignore the progression of culture and development the building has endured. He argues that preservationists value one particular period of a building and highlight that period as its reason for significance. Replication or restoration may occur in house museums which display particular time periods for the public, but it is not the typical approach to preservation.

Waterton (2005) presents a fair assessment in stating that “(the past) is never complete and is perpetually under construction, and thus can never be satisfactorily relegated to just one past or another, or one present.” Laws and regulations in preservation have recognized the value of the evolution of buildings. Local ordinances are written to allow for alteration and modification. The ordinances allow owners to modify their buildings or create additions and usually require some form of review. Because each owner is allowed to present their projects, each project is evaluated individually and no absolutes are imposed without review.

Conclusion

According to Stipe and Lee (1987), “A person, a community, a society or a nation paints its own portrait by what it chooses to save.” Historic preservation might be considered autobiographical, each saved structure telling a story of the community’s past, because the saved structures are part of the stories the community itself tells. The buildings which remain and the built environments which are preserved are only an adaptation or version of their story of the past, because preservation does not necessarily provide an objective representation of history

(Schwarzer, 1994). The preservationists who save the structure have some responsibility in telling the story and their version is often the one told.

The old architecture of buildings provides a link to the community's past and communities express desire to tell their story (Datel, 1985). Jerry Rogers (1987) argues that a building site can only be read once and the archeologist reading it must make it palatable and legible to others. Yes, moments in history are finite, but interpretations are mutable. In Rogers' argument, if he is concluding that a building can only tell one story, he ignores that history has layers and that the one telling history does not always remain the storyteller. Hayden (1997) claims that, "Finding these buildings and interpreting their history is one additional way to fuse the social and political meanings of space with the history of the urban landscape."

Where only the historic significance of the person or event attached to a structure was once valued, preservationists now value buildings for their aesthetic or architectural significance and their contribution to the community or its inventory of historic buildings (Datel, 1985). Preservation as a movement has embraced more of buildings' elements; now the movement should examine and explore the complex and full histories of places. Every place or structure contains disputed histories or untold stories of suffering or exclusion, and those people who are part of the story should be included in the preservation of a place. Preservation should be considered complex because it thrives at a local level where individual histories and community priorities can drive any preservation movement. Waterton (2005) argues that because "identities change over time" it should be expected that the process which manages heritage must also change and adapt alongside.

There is an inherent tension within preservation because every project involves resisting change, whether it is preservationists opposing developers who seek demolition or conservators

fighting the inevitability of environmental decay. Add the complexity of preserving the cultural context of each building and the project becomes more complicated because any person may encounter the building uniquely. Experience of a building will change its meaning for each person who encounters it and stories will be interpreted in many ways.

Changes in laws and public perception have changed the definition of “public,” who is invited to the discourse and not discriminately left out. In America, the democratic majority guides the course of action and inevitably, someone is always left in the minority. Preservationists must recognize that there may be no correct interpretation or answer to these complex issues, but it is always worthwhile to study and address them.

In the specific case of the Thomas County courthouse, the story of the courthouse is reflective of the community and the community is made up of people who have individual desires and motivations and are complex themselves. The complexity of the courthouse is not only in the richness of the designs and building materials, but also in the interpretations and exclusions in its history.

This thesis evaluates the complex themes of historic preservation and public space and how those themes are reflected in the story of the Thomas County Courthouse. The courthouse serves many purposes for the community it serves, and as a public building it theoretically remains open to all. The history of the courthouse is as complex and rich as the history and settlement of the town and county, and preservation of the courthouse will reflect that complexity by inviting all to the discourse. This thesis is not a comprehensive story of the town of Thomasville or even of the courthouse itself; it is only one perspective.

Chapter Three: Economic Development and Historic Preservation

Placement of the Courthouse in the City of Thomasville

The issues discussed in the literature review can be applied to a particular case in Thomasville, Georgia and the citizens' drive to restore the historic county courthouse located there. Thomasville has a successful city-wide historic preservation program and a recognized Main Street Program for its historic downtown district.

Thomasville was settled radiating from the courthouse square. The current courthouse sits at the edge of the downtown commercial district. The city of Thomasville is the county seat and the county population was 45,135 by 2006 (census.gov) with a projection of growth for the future. The courthouse anchors the commercial district, serving both as an anchor for economic progress and also as a historic marker for the town's historic development. The current location for the courthouse is important because the town was intentionally developed around it.

The county designated the location for the courthouse, and the construction of the courthouse secured the development of the city of Thomasville. The courthouse served as the hub of business and legal transactions and as the site for public records. The square provided a venue for community entertainment and social events. Businesses opened nearby to create a commerce corridor to provide services for the courthouse patrons and also for the surrounding residential community. Because this was a county courthouse, it also served the residents of outlying rural areas, providing a central place to conduct their affairs. The courthouse has remained in consistent productive use and remains a vital hub of the downtown district.

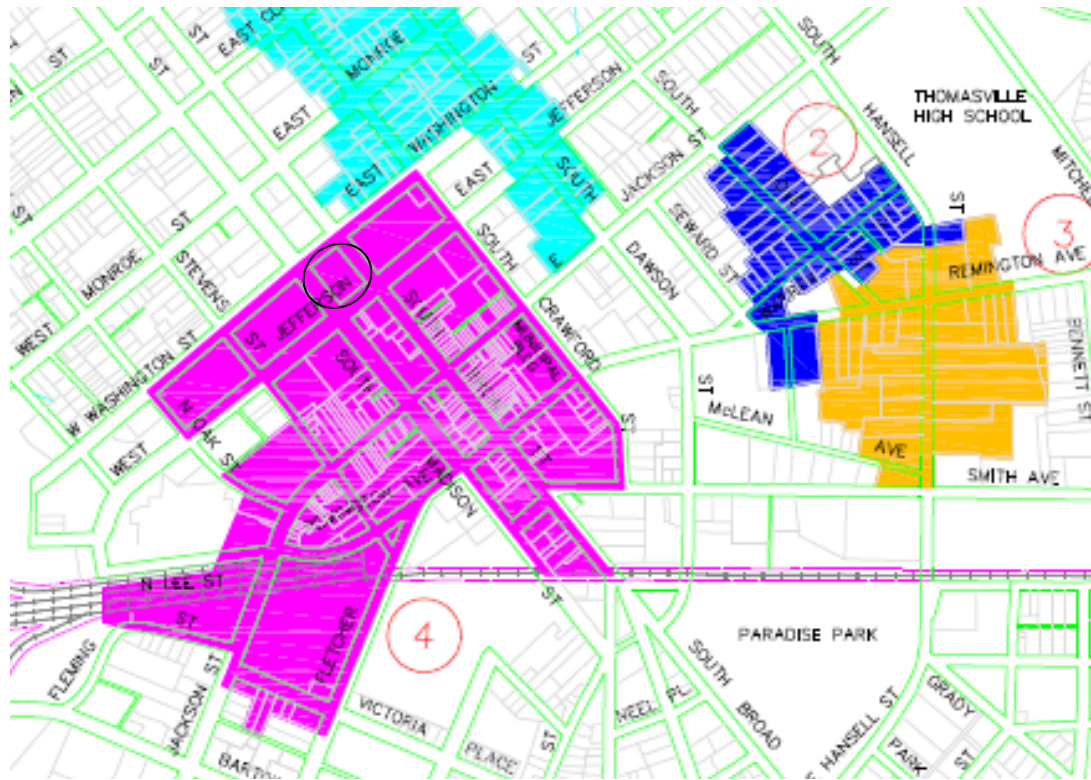


Figure 1. Map of Thomasville’s Historic Districts. The Commercial District is highlighted in Pink.

The Courthouse Square is circled.

In recent years, a state road on the edge of town has encouraged development and construction of nationwide and big box chain stores. A commercial shopping district has developed, serving the citizens of Thomasville as well as county residents. This area is built up with strip malls of restaurants, grocery stores and banks. There are no historic properties designated there.

Thomasville has been able to maintain its working commercial district downtown by preserving it as a designated local historic district, incorporated in 2000. The courthouse sits on the northern edge of this historic district. Defense lawyers, tax attorneys and architects keep their offices downtown where they remain relevant to the business conducted within the courthouse or in the nearby annex one block away. Retail stores and restaurants service those

who work in these businesses downtown. The Thomasville Planning Commission is currently studying their downtown neighborhood with a plan to bring more residential space over businesses as a way to maintain and encourage its economic vitality.

The current site of the courthouse stabilizes the business and residential community surrounding it. But in order to keep the courthouse in productive use, security upgrades are required and more storage and working space is needed. The needs of the community and county require a larger and more modern building to sustain development and growth.

The historic commercial district surrounding the courthouse helps to bring business to downtown and thus connects the courthouse to the location. The courthouse is seen as vital to the community by not shifting the center of town to the edge where new development is occurring. As Hayden (1997) points out, “today suburban malls and edge cities are proliferating and many inner-city neighborhoods struggle for economic viability.” If a new courthouse or government building were constructed in a different part of town, the downtown business district would feel suffer. Desire for proximity to the courthouse would require lawyer’s offices and other related to court businesses to move as well as the supporting businesses.

In an article for Georgia’s Preservation Division, W Ray Luce (2005) concluded that, “courthouse renovations lead to downtown renovations,” because businesses relying on the courthouse view preservation projects as favorable to their business. This is displayed through the patrons who continue to visit the area. Rehabilitation projects also bring more money to local merchants, and small businesses are “insulated” by the nearness of the project (Rypkema, 1994). Whether these conclusions are based on statistical research or on pure conjecture, the relationship of the courthouse to the downtown corridor remains compelling. One could argue that each relies upon the other symbiotically.

Purpose of Designating

Historic preservation has been shown to promote downtown revitalization and it is often included in the economic development plans for cities (Rypkema, 1994). Historic preservation can be defined as, “the careful management of a community’s historic resources (Rypkema, 1994). Economic development and historic preservation essentially attempt the same goal – “saving scarce resources” (Rypkema, 1994). Local preservation groups form alliances with the business community, and developers desire the political backing of the community and often partner with preservation in symbiotic relationships (Reichl, 1997). Though every situation and venue is unique and may differ, these concepts held by Rypkema and Reichl help to invalidate the assumption that preservation hinders development as discussed in chapter two.

Are the economic arguments for historic preservation more important than the aesthetic, cultural, social or political ones? Because money is necessary for any project, the economic reasons are often given more emphasis (Rypkema, 1989). Historic preservation is considered both a method for saving money and as an instrument to make money (Rypkema, 1989). Historic preservation projects save public dollars because the infrastructure which must be built for new construction is already in place. According to Leithe and Tigue (2000), rehabilitation projects create more jobs than new construction because the percentage in the amount of labor required is ten to twenty percent more for preservation projects.

“The economic impact of historic preservation is primarily local” and particularly within the downtown commercial districts (Rypkema, 1994). In Georgia specifically, case studies show that utilizing historic preservation as an economic growth tool attracts private investment money to the state’s downtown neighborhoods (Leithe and Tigue, 2000). This is not unique in downtown Thomasville, nor is it a recent phenomenon. Employees working in a courthouse in

Manhattan rely on area businesses and the businesses rely on them as customers (Saulny, 2004). Research by Carl Lounsbury (2005) shows that the York County Court in colonial Virginia attracted extra business for local taverns and shops when it convened once a month.

The Main Street program, administered by the National Trust, has been a large part of this preservation and revitalization movement. Main Street programs were instituted in the 1980s in small towns of America to promote economic revitalization of downtown areas. The Main Street Program of Thomasville began in 1981 as one of the first National Trust programs. Thomasville's Main Street program remains a vital part of the city's economic development plan. Thomasville Landmarks, Inc., the local private historic preservation organization, was formed in 1964 before the NHPA was written because its founders understood the value of recognizing their historic resources and saving them. The courthouse was only placed within a historic district in 2000 when the city approved the downtown commercial historic district. It was nominated and added to the National Register in 1970.

SPLOST Initiatives

Despite the economic benefits, funding remains the biggest obstacle to preserving historic structures and this challenge applies to the current situation of the Thomas County courthouse. Though the Thomas County courthouse is listed on the National Register, because it is in public use and does not provide income for its owners, tax credits intended for historic buildings are not available. On page 17 of its draft, Southwest Georgia Regional Development Center, one of the programs established by state law to prepare plans for each region in Georgia, values a need to “understand a relationship between historic preservation and economic development to encourage preservation and maintenance of regionally significant historic resources”

(swgrdc.org/agenda.pdf). The organization sets goals and objectives, but does not provide grants or funding directly. The county commissioners, as elected public custodians of the courthouse, would need to apply for grant funding, perhaps from the Georgia Natural Resources or the Regional Historic Preservation Office, or collaborate for private funding. Georgia has used “scarce public dollars through a variety of programs to attract private investment in historic buildings” (Leithe and Tigue, 2000).

Because few grants were available, the county commissioners decided to institute a Special-Purpose Local-Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). A SPLOST is a one-percent county sales tax that citizens must approve and must be used exclusively for capital improvement projects in a county. The SPLOST may be approved for up to six years, and the sales tax is collected until the end of the time period approved (accg.org). Because this is a county tax, it may only be initiated by the county commission who calls for a referendum after a public hearing. During the hearing, the commission announces their proposal for the SPLOST and which specific projects will use the funds collected. The commissioners may specify the exact amount for each detailed project, but doing so limits the actual approved amount. If the project is approved for six years, the commission must enter into an intergovernmental agreement with the participating municipal governments. No public funds may be used to promote or market the SPLOST, only to prepare descriptions. To continue receiving funds, a new SPLOST must be written and approved by voters when the original SPLOST is over (accg.org).

There have been two recent attempts to pass a SPLOST in Thomas County to pay for the renovation of the old courthouse and to propose building a new multi-purpose court related building better equipped to handle the issues of space and security. In 2004, Thomas County had a six-percent sales tax where most other Georgia counties were carrying a seven-percent sales

tax, and the one-percent SPLOST would have raised the sales tax for Thomas County to the tax rate of other Georgian counties.

In 2003, county commissioners were seeking plans from architects for renovations to determine the cost analysis (Dozier, 11-30-03). In 2004, the county commissioners asked David Hutchings, the Clerk of Court, to head a steering committee to study the dual projects of renovation and building a new courthouse (Dozier, 12-30-04). In February 2005, the commission presented their findings to the public and introduced their choice of architect, Rusty McCall of Valdosta, Georgia, to design the new building and renovate the courthouse. McCall presented color drawings showing a brick building to be placed at the corner of Madison and Jefferson Streets. The new judicial building was designed to complement rather than overshadow the historic courthouse. The building was set back from the street and had landscaping surrounding the building. The new building would have had 260 parking spaces, with overflow available from the city library across the street (Dozier, 2-11-05, and 3-10-05).

The commissioners were very specific in their plans for the new building. They planned to move all courts and related offices in the new building with a secure entrance for transporting prisoners and for jurors to report. There would be one manned main entrance for the public with metal detectors and x-ray machines for bags. The county commission offices would remain in the old courthouse and the third floor courtroom would be used for their meetings and as an overflow courtroom. Tax offices would move back to the historic courthouse. The commissioners planned these specifications before calling for the referendum (Dozier, 2-11-05, and 3-4-05). The SPLOST for \$20 million, including five million dollars estimated for the courthouse renovation, went before county voters, but in March, 2005, voters denied that SPLOST by a 30% margin (Dozier, 3-16-05).

The courthouse remained an issue and the commissioners needed a successful SPLOST vote to properly fund the space and security concerns. If a second SPLOST failed, the commissioners would raise property taxes, but this was not the desired route. Renovation costs for the historic courthouse would be sacrificed to the funds needed for the new building (Olson, 2006).

In August 2005, Thomas County grand jurors inspected the courthouse and observed the same issues affecting its integrity. The courthouse was facing not only security and space issues but also dangerous safety concerns. The jurors had no concerns with the courthouse grounds. The jurors recommended the building of a county office hub to include a new judicial building at a cost and design acceptable to the citizens of the county (Dozier, 8-9-05).

The second SPLOST recommended by the county commission included other projects in addition to courthouse renovation and the proposal for a new building, perhaps to appeal to more voters for a positive outcome. This 2006 SPLOST included money for a communications upgrade for the county's emergency system, money for the expansion of the Thomasville main library and money for recreation projects throughout the county. A citizen advisory committee was formed to promote the renovation and new building and the passage of the SPLOST. The local newspaper included the courthouse in an article highlighting endangered historic properties of Thomasville (Dozier, 6-25-06). The commissioners invited the public to tour the interior of the courthouse building. Architects were interviewed and designs were presented to the advisory council, but none were presented to the public to avoid the mistakes of the previous vote (Olson, 2006).

With this type of publicity, the July, 2006 SPLOST passed by a 70% margin. Of the \$36 million approved, \$10 million is intended for a new judicial building and six million dollars for

the renovation of the courthouse (Dozier, 7-19-06). In the sixteen months since the failure of the former SPLOST, the citizens' minds had changed regarding the future of their courthouse. A highly publicized courthouse shooting had occurred in Atlanta, and security had become a greater issue for the county. There was a higher turnout for the July 18 vote perhaps because the county held elections that day as well.

Solution

The favorable SPLOST vote has saved the historic courthouse in many ways. The courthouse will not need the essential security upgrades which would threaten its architectural integrity. The historic courthouse will not face architectural review of any new additions which may have been added to create more space. The multipurpose building will automatically solve the issues of security and space. The rehabilitation of the courthouse has also now been funded. The interior can be restored to its original elements and the courthouse may also now undergo safety upgrades. The vault can be fireproofed and other safety issues the courthouse faces can finally be addressed.

The multipurpose building may solve the need for modern security measures, but the new building may overshadow the historic courthouse. Will the county or the town continue to value the historic courthouse twenty years in the future if the multipurpose building is conducting every function? Is the courthouse considered functional and relevant when it is used for office space and document storage?

The town of Thomasville has other government buildings in current use. The multipurpose building will not require architectural review for any changes, but the courthouse will. The multipurpose building may come to be regarded as the functioning courthouse and the

historic courthouse as a government building as each takes on its new role. If citizens are tempted to stop using public funds for an historic building which cannot be fully modernized, will there be a temptation to make the building a museum or perhaps to give it to private developers who may adapt its use for money making purposes?

If the downtown remains as economically viable as it currently is, the courthouse will remain in a desirable location, but which function will serve it best? The city is promoting plans to bring more residential space to the downtown corridor and could adapt the courthouse to an apartment building to help serve this purpose. These questions and topics will be explored in chapter six.

Conclusion

It has been argued that U.S. cities place economic development first in their comprehensive and regional plans. But, historic preservation has proven to provide more than rehabilitation of buildings and is a vital part of economic plans when it is politically beneficial to do so (Reichl, 1997). The economic value of preservation is measured in more than monetary ways. Historic preservation draws from community pride and what each community values and desires to save (Rypkema, 1989 and 1994).

Tyler (2000) asks where growth needs encouragement, within the city center or at the “urban fringe?” Because downtowns have existing infrastructure, either physically or as community activity, investing money there is the wise choice for both city growth and historic preservation (Tyler, 2000). As Rypkema (1994) points out, by including historic preservation in a city’s comprehensive plan as an incremental tool, downtowns benefit overall. Small businesses thrive from the competition and more money remains with local merchants. The community

participates in historic preservation projects and this helps bond them to the downtown area and makes them loyal patrons.

Because the Thomas County courthouse is located in the downtown of Thomasville, renovating that building will help to spur development and revitalization and economic action for the downtown corridor specifically, as Rypkema (1994) states. The courthouse is important to the community as an economic resource. This particular aspect of the courthouse was not specified in the commissioner's fight to pass a successful SPLOST. The commissioners highlighted the needs for repair and what upgrading the courthouse for security would sacrifice in the architecture. Yet, this role the courthouse plays in the town of Thomasville should not be overlooked and the relevancy plays an important part in determining what its role in history will be. If the courthouse does not remain tied to the downtown location, the need to keep it as a functioning courthouse will lose favor. The citizens may then seek a different function and change what the courthouse physically does in the community. Specific issues of adaptive reuse are discussed in chapter six.

Chapter Four: Public Buildings

Preservation of Courthouses

Public buildings, whether schools, government complexes, or a post office serve many people. These are recognizable buildings to communities because they are essential in citizens' lives and the public accesses them regularly. As public buildings, they can be accessed by everyone and may be part of their daily routines, from attending court or school to mailing letters, to processing and researching documents.

Courthouses are one distinct type of public buildings which preservationists target. As government buildings, courthouses may also have been built to reflect the importance of their activities and authority. The General Services Administration (GSA) is granted "construction, acquisition and management" capabilities through the 1976 Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act. Their programs which involve all federal public buildings include specific ones for federal courthouses, both historic and modern. The states and private entities are left to protect county courthouses which serve regional communities.

One fundamental question regarding the preservation of historic courthouses is whether the courthouse is currently functional or monumental (Utley and Brinkman, 2005). The courthouse square is a symbol for the entire county, and its current use will have a great impact on its maintenance and preservation. Courthouses which still contain court uses are more likely to receive funding for any preservation maintenance or upgrades than those which have been adapted as museums or are in other uses (Utley and Brinkman, 2005).

County courthouses were historically built as the center of town and the town and businesses subsequently developed around it. Courthouses were typically built on their own

square or plot of land, announcing their significance. They were situated in the county seats and those towns grew to become the largest in the county. Because county courthouses became likened to the county capitol, the architecture began to reflect that. Courthouses were rebuilt from their original log cabins into grander structures with higher architectural elements (Utley and Brinkman, 2005). The courthouse was not only the center of town, but the center of county life, symbolizing the collective memories for the community (Caldwell, 2001). Government buildings were central to keeping order for the colonies and a central location maintained a neutral forum for addressing concerns (Lounsbury, 2005). Courthouses served two main functions: enforcing regulations and recording and filing important documents. Everything about the individuals in a particular community was housed in one location and the courthouses began to “assert the corporate identity of the county authorities” (Lounsbury, 2005).

Courthouse preservation programs in Texas

If counties are considered part of the state government system, then county courthouses belong to the people of the state. This was the justification used for early state intervention programs for courthouse rehabilitation. Texas has 225 documented historic courthouses and providing an organized, comprehensive plan for a statewide program keeps the state involved and helps to provide funding for preserving these specific structures. In 1973, the Texas State Legislature required counties to notify the Texas Historical Commission, the state’s historic office, six months prior to any planned demolition or alteration. Since the adoption of this law, only three courthouses have been destroyed and one of those was due to arson. This notification requirement opened communication channels between state and county officials and preservationists (Utley and Brinkman, 2005).

A more comprehensive state-wide program was developed with the formation of the Texas Courthouse Alliance (TCA) in 1995. The TCA operates under the Texas Historical Commission, the state agency which regulates and maintains programs in historic preservation throughout the state. A fire in the Hillsboro County courthouse in 1993 triggered the call for action. The reconstruction effort was accomplished locally but alerted state officials to the need for a comprehensive documentation of their statewide historic resources. The TCA identifies endangered courthouses and photographs and documents their historic and architectural elements. The Alliance has identified an inventory of all 225 historic courthouses in their state (Utley and Brinkman, 2005).

Maintaining an inventory of resources allows the agency to better track where funding and protection may be needed most. This agency provides oversight for the 1973 law and helps to regulate and record any pending demolition or alteration and is a channel for alerting local authorities. The agency lacked a program for funding and lobbied Texas lawmakers, who provided legislation in 1999. The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) was a separate program instituted in 1999 by legislation signed by Governor Bush. This program promotes the preservation and rehabilitation of courthouses which are currently functioning as courthouses and restricts funding to those which are publicly owned, not privately owned. This program has provided funding for the restoration of 44 of its 225 historic courthouses. Matched funding is provided through grants from county and state offices to courthouses which meet the needs for restoration and the requirements set forth by the guidelines of the THCPP (thc.state.tx.us).

Most funding is used to upgrade the buildings' safety and compliance code requirements, including those which fall under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Because these courthouses

are historic, they sometimes also require structural upgrading such as electrical rewiring and fire suppressant systems. Regular maintenance on historic buildings requires greater funding than newer buildings and many of these older buildings need security upgrades in addition to conveniences, such as air conditioning (thc.state.tx.us).

The Texas Historical Commission proposes to keep as many of their historic courthouses as functioning courthouses so that future generations will be using them in the same capacity, while their buildings have been maintained and updated in compliance with preservation methods. Because towns grew around the county courthouses, the courthouse building is an actual and physical link to the town's past. This program promotes preservation as a fiscally responsible way to manage these properties. The Texas state program for courthouses unites the Office of the Governor, the State Legislature, State Preservation officials and local preservationists to promote this project (thc.state.tx.us).

Courthouse preservation programs in Georgia

The State of Georgia is second only to the State of Texas in its number of historic courthouses. Georgia currently has 132 historic courthouses documented, but has no statewide program to fund their preservation and rehabilitation. Georgia Heritage which works under the State Trust is given the task of distributing funds for historic preservation projects within Georgia, but courthouses must compete with other historic projects for money (Luce, 2005)

A "Courthouse Manual" was written and published by the state of Georgia in 1992. It reflects the ideals of state officials and local preservationists regarding the maintenance and preservation of the courthouses in Georgia. Guidelines stress repair over replacement of original material. Their studies have shown that rehabilitation of an historic courthouse generates

economic viability for downtown areas and main streets (Jaeger and Pyburn, 1992; Luce, 2005).

Demolition of historic courthouses and the subsequent building of new more modern courthouses often relocates them to the outskirts of town and away from the historic downtown areas.

According to the Georgia Courthouse Manual, there was great importance to the placement of each courthouse particularly to the downtown area which developed around it (Jaeger and Pyburn, 1992).

Courthouses in Georgia have minimal protection from alteration and demolition. A 1990 Georgia State Law, 36-9-21, states that any courthouse built prior to 1905 cannot be demolished without citizen approval through a referendum process. This law does not protect any courthouse from alteration or additions, but it does prevent demolition without consent. The biggest threats to courthouses in Georgia are alteration and insufficient maintenance (Jaeger and Pyburn, 1992). While historic structures are not exempt from the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), historic structures in Georgia can be granted alternatives to safety hazards and codes. The governing code for Georgia is based upon the International Building Code 2000 which mandates that, “the provisions of this code relating to the construction, repair, alteration, addition, restoration and movement of structure, and changes of occupancy shall not be mandatory for historic buildings where such buildings are judged by the building official to not constitute a distinct life safety hazard” (Luce, 2005). Alternative compliance might be necessary to retain significant features which keep a building on the national register.

Not all courthouses remain functional. Many have been converted to museums. In Crawford County, Georgia, the community built a new operational courthouse and the vacant old courthouse was turned into a county history museum (Adams, 2004). According to a historical society member, the community had many ideas for adaptively reusing the historic structure, but

ultimately, keeping it as a museum was considered most beneficial to the community because it was the least harmful to the historical elements of the building (Adams, 2004). Perhaps this course of action was not the most beneficial, but was instead the path of least resistance from the community. If the State of Georgia provided a more comprehensive funding program, or if the community had sought other routes to funding, the courthouse may have remained in an operating condition.

Many states have courthouse preservation programs, but none rivals the program in the State of Texas. Texas is the most organized in providing funding for preservation projects. The Texas program details requirements which serves the purpose to fully educate the participants. Georgia falls far behind in organization, but not so far behind in the number of resources the state needs to protect. Until the law recognizes the significance of courthouses and provides a comprehensive funding plan, Georgian courthouses will need to rely on individual community efforts.

Perhaps an unintended, but positive side-effect of these comprehensive courthouse preservation programs was to foster preservation of the historic fabric in small towns. Counties do not always include large urban areas; instead many are comprised of rural areas with a few small towns. Preservation programs for buildings such as courthouses can become a catalyst for starting preservation programs on a town by town basis. Successful projects for restoring grand courthouses could galvanize programs for saving their historic homes and other buildings. More research may be needed in this area. The opposite seems to have occurred in Thomasville. In the latter half of the 20th century, local preservationists began to protect their grand residences and left the historic courthouse to fall into disrepair. The courthouse was included in the last

incorporated local district, after three residential districts were created. Plans for restoration are underway for the near future when funds are distributed.

Charleston

In 1989, media attention from the destruction caused by Hurricane Hugo brought the woes of the Charleston County Courthouse to the local public eye. The roof of the courthouse was damaged and the interior flooded by Hurricane Hugo. Hugo had not caused the years of neglect during which the building had fallen into and disrepair and partial disuse for what had once been a grand historic building. Citizens in Charleston had ignored the courthouse and Hugo acted as the catalyst for igniting the town to finally rally for the preservation of their courthouse. Local preservationists pushed for support and the citizens and authorities in Charleston listened and complied (Lounsbury, 2001).

The original architecture had been significantly buried under additions and overlays and the city had let the courthouse deteriorate, forgetting its once glorious structure. The Historic Charleston Foundation convinced the authorities to discard their plans for modern upgrades and move court functions out of the historic courthouse and into a nearby building. The original courthouse would not sacrifice its historic fabric and thus its justification for historic significance by undergoing modern alterations and code upgrades. All court functions would then remain downtown in the new building and the historic courthouse, by housing government offices, would keep its relevance to the government district. The businesses downtown relied on the court for economic viability and this proved to be a successful compromise (Lounsbury, 2001).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the town of Thomasville is utilizing this same solution of moving court functions out of the historic building and restoring their historic

courthouse after years of neglect. This solution is not unique to Thomas County but it remains a creative resolution for a preservation challenge. The solution may be unique to historic courthouses because they require security in ways that other public buildings do not. One distinction in the case of the Thomas County courthouse is that it has never been abandoned, though its need for repairs has been neglected. The next chapter will highlight some of the repair issues the courthouse faces.

Security

Courthouses must be secured. Courthouse buildings hold important documents and records of the county's history, but they are also charged with dispensing justice and the authorities within pass judgment on their citizens. According to United States Supreme Court Justice, Stephen Breyer, a courthouse does not belong to the government, but to the community and the people which it serves. He believes that the exterior should reflect the action which occurs inside where justice is more important than imprisonment (Loeffler, 2006). If the courthouse building is simply four walls with no distinguishing architecture or material characteristic, some may mistake the building for a prison. If the courthouse building is built to reflect the community's contemporary style, the characteristic of the building is less that of a fortress and more inviting to the public. Security is a considerable issue for everyone at the courthouse; yet providing security compromises the historic architecture on both the interior and exterior and creates buildings that are indistinguishable from another (Loeffler, 2006). According to Peters and Peters (1995), "The balance is often struck in favor of efficiency and security, and surely not metaphoric significance."

Security complicates the discourse in preservation, because courthouses are required by law to provide protection for the public who accesses the building. Courthouses need to be secure in order to perform the function they are built to provide. Everyone involved in the court process - defendants, prosecution, judges and jurors alike - should have protection. Perhaps providing security is a way to exclude or partition public access in a building which belongs to the people. In this way, though the courthouse is continuing to perform its public functions, the use of public space is limited and any preservation of it will tell a limited story.

Updating older buildings for security may threaten loss of historic significance, a problem the Thomas County courthouse faced. Thomas County has chosen to circumvent their security problems by building a new building instead of sacrificing their historic courthouse. They are also saving public access and the use of their public space in the old building by keeping entrances open and unencumbered by security devices. Other communities abandon their courthouses, as in Crawford, Georgia to build new ones and either demolish the old ones or perhaps adapt it to a museum.

Complex History of Courthouses

Courthouses reflect past and current society, but what or whose picture are they painting? Because these historic courthouses are preserved as monuments of a community's history, it would be unfair to disregard the controversial events tied to their past. Communities are complex and public participation ideally includes everyone within the community so their history, written or not, will include some topics the community may prefer to forget or never address.

In the colonial and American South, slaves were often sold on the steps of the courthouses and were considered, “chattels” (Peters and Peters, 1995). In Thomasville, there were separate entrances into the courthouse for black and white citizens on election days (Elizabeth Hopkins files). Women, though a driving force in preservation movements, were excluded from voting until the 20th century. Families can be torn apart through the legal system when justice is served (Dozier, 11-15-05).

The justice served and upheld in courthouses is not always just. Judges have upheld unjust laws such as laws excluding voting rights, civil rights and laws promoting discrimination or segregation. Citizens have rallied and laws and decisions have changed and continue to change, but the histories remain. Because of the past, different histories exist for whites and blacks as a specific example, and each group may think differently about courthouses and what they represent and mean to them in the present.

The following is an example in Thomasville recognizing how different groups approach the history of their courthouse. In the summer of 2005, Jack Hadley presented the county commissioners with a proposal for a monument, bought with private funds, to be placed on the courthouse grounds to honor six black residents of Thomasville who had sued for better government representation. The ruling caused the county in 1975 to redraw voting district boundaries to be more inclusive of the people they were representing. Placing the monument on the courthouse lawn was an ideal way to incorporate that specific history into the story of the courthouse. The ruling changed the way authority was dispensed from the courthouse and so it changed the way the public interacted with the building and changed the course of the history of the building (Dozier, 7-27-05, 8-24-05).

Commissioners hesitated at adding another monument to the courthouse, citing differing reasons like wishing to limit the number of monuments on the lawn or wanting to table the discussion for a later time. Hadley's wife remarked in the local paper, "This is a part of history being left out." Hadley himself regarded the monument as a way to unify the community because the ruling which the six citizens had caused benefited everyone in the county. Ultimately, the commission and Hadley reached a compromise and a plaque honoring the six citizens was placed inside the courthouse walls using public funds (Turley, 2006).

The above examples are a sample of whose history may be excluded when exalting the grand architecture and historic significance of public buildings. Courthouses in particular protect and serve, while also dispensing authority to remand and correct. They are complicated buildings in their purpose, so it follows that complicated histories are stored within. Focusing only on particular events in a community's history excludes the entire history which is recorded and held in prosperity within the courthouse walls. Preservation is richer when an entire history is captured and embraced.

Chapter Five: History of the Thomas County Courthouse

Introduction

“The architecture of Georgia’s courthouses speaks eloquently of the history of the South” (Caldwell, 2001). The history of the Thomas County Courthouse echoes the history of the city of Thomasville and the development of Thomas County. The community’s history and their decisions about preserving this courthouse are wrapped up in the stones and form of the building. The citizens of Thomas County have been guardians of their own story and culture and this has been echoed in the way their courthouse has been preserved through the years.

The Thomas County courthouse occupies a small block at Washington Street to the North, Broad Street to the East, Jefferson Street to the South and Madison Street to the West. The current structure was constructed in 1858 and has remained in continuous use as a courthouse, holding court and preserving historical records. Though significant architecture and stylistic changes have occurred over the years, the original form is detectable within (Peters, 1983).

County Incorporation

The town of Thomasville was chosen as the county seat of Thomas County in 1826. The original courthouse was constructed on the current site in 1827 as a pine log-cabin. It is probable that during this time, slaves were sold from the courthouse steps (Hadley, n.d.). That building was destroyed and a wooden courthouse replaced it in 1847. The courthouse remained a place of business, but it was still a rural town and hogs were reported to have invaded the courthouse (Rogers, 1963). The second structure was damaged in a storm in 1853 and declared unsafe in

1855 and a new building was required. The Inferior Court required, “a plan that will be sufficient for county purposes and in keeping with the growing importance of our county” (Rogers, 1963).

In the 1830s the county’s population reached 3000, but by the 1850s, it had exceeded 10,000 (Caldwell, 2001; Dozier, 3-6-05). Land had been cleared to plant cotton which was traded in Tallahassee. Still part of the “vanishing American frontier,” Thomasville stood as an outpost (Caldwell, 2001). The Atlantic and Gulf Railroad connected Thomasville to Savannah in 1860. Perhaps in anticipation of new growth, the Inferior Court wished to have a grander courthouse to reflect their county’s prominence (Caldwell, 2001).

Greek Revival Construction

The Inferior Court gave specific requests for the courthouse, imitating the designs from Asher Benjamin’s pattern book, *The American Builder’s Companion* published in 1827 (Peters, 1983). They requested a 60 square foot structure with three stories made of brick to be located in the center of the lot. There were to be four offices on the first floor, a courtroom on the second floor and a jury room on the third floor (Wright, 1969).

The Inferior Court offered the sum of fifty dollars to John Wind in August, 1855 for what they considered to be the closest and best plans for their considerations. John Wind, an Englishman, had arrived in Thomasville in 1847 and had no formal training as an architect, but he designed both Greenwood and Susina Plantations. The Bowen brothers, William and Hiram Bowen, were the chosen contractors. They were offered \$14,999 in January 1856 to build the courthouse designed by Wind (Dozier, 6-25-06).

Wind's original drawings are lost, but are referred to in detail in his specifications. His plans called for an 80 x 48 x 48 foot three-story brick structure, changing many of the specifications of the pattern requested by the Inferior Court. All exterior walls were to be plastered and to be colored burnt-umber or fawn and to be scored to three by one foot sections to resemble stone. There were to be two porticos at each of the two entrances on the second story. The courthouse was designed with columns on three sides, but the Jefferson (north) side fell during construction, killing two men. Columns were only added on the East and West sides at Broad and Madison Streets (Rogers, 1963; Peters, 1983).



Figure 2. Drawing of Original Courthouse built in 1858 Greek Revival Style. View from Broad Street.

Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville, Georgia

The basement level was divided into four rooms separated by passages (Peters, 1983). Each of the four rooms in the basement was to be equipped with iron doors for fire safety. The basement floor was bricked instead of cemented as called for in Wind's designs. There was to be stepped seating to view proceedings in the courtroom and a chandelier in the second story

courtroom. Wind designed a cupola at center of the hipped roof with a winding stairway to a viewing platform. Wind designs included a clock tower, but none was built.

Interior and exterior walls were to be white with green bronze doors and an oak varnish on the inside. The interior trim was to be buff and the stair railings were painted a chocolate color. The exterior stairs were granite. There were four large chimneys at each corner. Construction was completed on September 25, 1858. In October, 1858, an iron fence was placed around the property and repairs were made in 1860 due to winter storm damage.

This Greek Revival courthouse differed from other Georgian cities which were building cruder “wood-frame vernacular” courthouses and other buildings during this time period. Greek Revival was a popular style in America and though Thomas County and Thomasville were still considered the frontier in 1858, the citizens longed for a building which signified their status in the county. The courthouse was considered refined, perhaps signaling the commercial and economic success of Thomas county’s present and proposed future. The architectural ornamentation was not as significant as “the size and quality of construction” (Caldwell, 2001). According to Caldwell (2001), this new courthouse perhaps spoke more of the county culture than of the planters who had their grand residences in the city of Thomasville.

The courthouse was soon welcomed by the community. The courthouse became a vital part of community life, not only as a venue for legal proceedings, but also as a gathering place for its citizens. “The Inferior Court granted a petition in November, 1858 to hold a ball in the concert hall of the Courthouse...free of charge, being the first, thereafter a charge of ten dollars for each night of similar parties” (Muldawer and Patterson, 1971). Balls were held in the second story courtroom with the Bell sisters for entertainment at the stage set up for theatrical productions (Elizabeth Hopkins File).



Figure 3. Photo of 1858 Courthouse showing public life. View from Broad Street at Jefferson Street

Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville, Georgia

Grand-Hotel Era & Italianate Remodel

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Thomasville became a retreat for Northern visitors who sought the fresh pine air. The pine trees were advertised and praised for their medicinal qualities and the town was soon bustling with new residents and tourism. This was a period of great prosperity for the city of Thomasville and businesses moved to the city settling along Broad Street near the courthouse. Two grand hotels were built on Broad Street, the Piney Woods Hotel and the Mitchell House Hotel, both constructed in 1885. William McKinley visited Thomasville during this period while campaigning for the presidency and also during his presidential term.

Though the town was experiencing great prominence, the courthouse was neglected and by the 1880s, had fallen into disrepair. In 1886, the *Southern Enterprise* newspaper described the courthouse as “decayed and barely hanging together and a rendezvous place for goats” and pleaded for improvements (Dozier, 3-6-05). In 1888, Eaves and Wase were hired as contractors

to complete a remodel. The front portico and rear porch were enclosed and the columns on the East and West elevations removed. The windows were changed to Italianate style, with “rounded and segmented arches” (Caldwell, 2001 and Peters, 1983). This more refined style was a better reflection of Thomasville’s new stature as a resort town. The new Italianate styling was contemporary and considered more sophisticated than the brick Greek Revival building (Caldwell, 2001).



Figure 4. Drawing of 1888 Courthouse in the Italianate Style. View from corner of Broad Street at Jefferson Street.

Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville, Georgia

20th Century Additions

By the end of the first decade in the 20th century, Thomasville was no longer the famous resort town it had been in the previous two decades. Visitors stopped arriving for their constitutional pine air. Some Northerners did become permanent fixtures in the landscape and many had bought the decaying plantations of the areas, including Melrose, Greenwood, and Pebble Hill (Harrison and Sanford, 2001). These new owners remodeled their new homes to reflect their stereotype of what Southern plantations should look like. The plantations served as

farms but also operated as hunting grounds. This brought in a new clientele and the county, though less prominent was nonetheless worthy.

There were more changes made to the exterior of the courthouse in the first half of the 20th century. The clock tower, which John Wind had designed, was finally added in 1909. One-story additions were added to the Broad Street entrance in 1918 and 1922, each with a grand staircase on the exterior. The Neo-Classical annex, built in 1937 by Prince Jinright, Sr., a Thomasville architect, added more room for offices at the back of the building (Dozier, 3-6-05). Some of the basement windows on the north side were bricked after 1937.

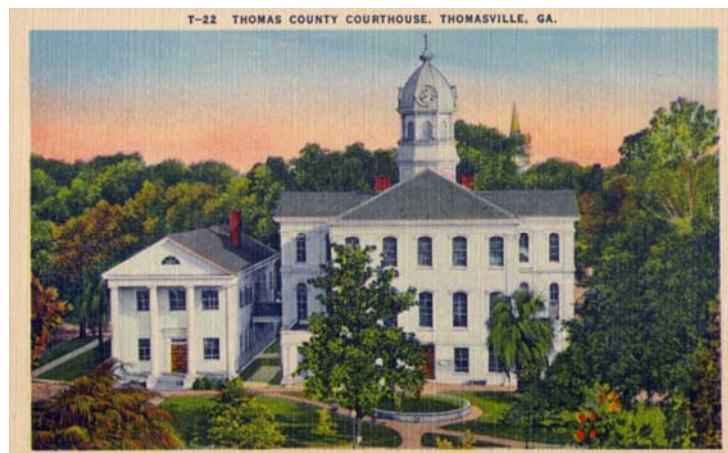


Figure 5. Postcard of Courthouse and Annex circa 1937. View from Jefferson Street.

Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville, Georgia

Courthouse Square



Figure 6. View of the 1858 Courthouse and grounds from Washington Street
Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville, Georgia

The courthouse grounds have been significant to distinguishing the courthouse square. After the end of the Hotel Era, the two-tiered fountain was moved from the Mitchell House Hotel to the Courthouse grounds in 1912. The fountain was used to dunk the winners on election nights (Dozier, 3-6-05; Adams, 1977). In October, 1901, the courthouse square was presented with trees from the “white house grounds” sent by President McKinley and his wife to commemorate their visit to Thomasville and they are now planted in the courthouse square (Elizabeth Hopkins files). Alderman William Miller requested and received three species of trees from the Bureau of Plant Industry in November of that same year (Elizabeth Hopkins files).



Figure 7. Fountain moved from the Mitchell House to the Courthouse grounds

Courtesy of Thomas County Historical Society, Thomasville Georgia

In May, 2003, the Thomasville Garden Club, Inc. unveiled the Blue Star Memorial Marker to honor the veterans of all wars. The monument sits in front of the courthouse on Broad Street at the main entrance. As mentioned in chapter four, there was a disagreement in 2005 about adding one more monument to the courthouse grounds to honor six black citizens of Thomasville who fought for voting rights. The commissioners eventually settled on plans to place a plaque honoring those citizens inside the first floor hallway of the courthouse (Dozier 7-27-05, 8-24-05; Turley, 2006). The original iron fence (as seen in Figure 2) surrounding the courthouse grounds was moved to the city cemetery at the northern end of Broad Street (Dozier, 3-6-05).

Modern Repairs

The courthouse has undergone maintenance repairs over the years. In April, 1970, the architecture firm, Jinright and Ryan, were contracted to restore the exterior finish of the courthouse, guaranteed for ten years. Their firm was also contracted to “clean, waterproof and

decorate all exterior surfaces of the courthouse including the courthouse, annex and the covered connection between the two buildings.” They replaced window sills with fiberglass (Wright, 1969). In 1970, there was also a partial restoration of the lower east arcade to its 1888 appearance (Larson, 1976).

The clock tower was repaired in 1999. Greg Jones of Clockworks of Norcross repaired the silent tower to make it chime and also to put each of the four sides in sync. The four faces each told different times. It was updated to be Y2K compliant. The clock was originally hand wound, presumably with a bell to chime, but motors were installed to make it electric. Everything else, including gears and plates remain original (Cassels, 1999).

In October, 2001, the clock tower again underwent repairs for the rusted shingles believed to have been the original ones from 1909. Historic photos showed the clock tower as light colored – silver on the upper and white on the lower part and the commissioners did not believe it to be historically proper to replace shingles with unpainted copper. Their final choice was stainless steel for the shiny appearance and their guarantee for fifty years. A new steeple ornament made by a Savannah resident joined the clock tower. The county government paid out \$105,410 to contract O’Neal Steeplejacks of Ochlocknee to install the ornament with a \$38,000 grant from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to help fund the project (Dozier, 10-11, 26-01).

In 2002, though the courthouse was painted entirely white, the commissioners chose to repaint in gray for the exterior walls with a white trim. The building had been painted eleven years prior as part of routine maintenance. The original color, as determined from black and white photos was deemed a sand color but the plaster applied in the 1960s to the outside made it impossible to determine the exact original color (Dozier, 6-19-02).



Figure 8. Thomas County Courthouse in 2006. View from Broad Street.

Some of the renovations have addressed issues of safety. A grand jury in 1978 called for fire safety as a major priority for the courthouse because there were six violations from Fire Marshall's Report dated May 24, 1977. These included an inadequate number of exits, and signs designating such marked with lights, unprotected vertical openings such as stairways, elevator shafts. The courthouse needed to update their electrical wiring to conform to national standards and remove combustibles from the elevator shaft on the second floor. The grand jury noted several leaks, rotting floor boards, chipping and peeling paint, filthy windows, and haphazardly stored cleaning supplies in hallways among other violations. They recommended repairing the roof, installing hand rails on both sides of stairs, repainting woodwork and cleaning the windows (Freedman, 1978).

Jinright and Ryan addressed these issues in 1982 to make the building comply with modern safety standards and codes. They enclosed fire stairs between the annex and the original courthouse (Ray, 1981). The second floor was remodeled to make room to house the state court

when the third floor courtroom is in use. There was also an office created to be a waiting room for judges. They updated the heating and cooling (Hayes, 1981).

Safety issues included exposed wiring and leaks walls leaving a powdery substance from the dissolving plaster on the walls in the judges' offices. There was concern that sewage might back up onto documents in the clerk of court records kept in the basement. There was only one restroom on the first floor located in the annex. Windows were separating from the wall. Plaster walls were absorbing moisture and causing the vinyl wallpaper or the paint to peel (Dozier, 6-19-02).

Preservation Efforts

The Thomas County Commissioners wished to have a written history of the courthouse as none before was in existence and, in 1969, Russell Wright wrote a history of the Thomas County Courthouse for the Thomas County Commissioners of Roads and Revenues. Because changes made in 1888 were high quality, Wright recommended no restoration past that date and no attempt has been made to restore it to its original Greek Revival style. The one-story wings added in 1918 and 1922 were built in character with the building, so Wright did not recommend their removal (Wright, 1969). He did recommend restoring good landscaping of the square and removal of the parking area and service drive which cut through the north lawn. Wright desired relocation of the sidewalks and repair of the fountain. The reason for requesting this report was to have the Courthouse be included and nominated to the National Register. (Murphy, 1969)

Wright additionally found some major deficiencies with the exterior of the building. There was a need to remove the second-level metal porch. He wanted the ground level front façade restored. He recommended replacement of the rear, side and main entrance doors with

wood doors, either of the 1880s or with contemporary doors of “good design.” Because the basement windows could not be un-bricked, he recommended blocking their view with plants. When the repairs were bid for, he recommended that commissioners keep the original detailing and that any new paint should simulate the original texture of scored stone blocks (Wright, 1969).

Thomasville Landmarks, Inc was incorporated in 1966 as a non-profit preservation organization. They planned an inventory of their historic buildings and during this time, they concentrated only on buildings of high architectural value, not the vernacular buildings particular to Thomasville. Wright also conferred with Carl Feiss in 1969 on a survey of Thomasville’s historic buildings and they published their findings *The History of Thomasville – Inventory of Historic Buildings and Sites*. Wright and Feiss (1969) considered the Courthouse to be poorly landscaped, and “beneath the dignity and importance of the building.” They also desired a long-range plan for the Courthouse Square and saw it as essential since new civic centers were developing around the country (Feiss and Wright, 1969). Wrights drawings were included in the HABS in 1969 (Massey, 1969).

The courthouse was placed on the National Register June 22, 1970 (Peters, 1983). Its inclusion in the National Register guarantees review if any federal project may affect it. It is not protected from demolition except by Georgian Law. It is considered an important historic and economic resource for the community. The city placed it under local protection when it approved the Historic Commercial District located in downtown Thomasville in 2000.

Conclusion

Caldwell (2001) suggests that history can be narrated through a community's architecture, as "architectural design is difficult to judge outside of its historical setting" (Caldwell, 2001). The story of the Thomas County Courthouse truly reflects the changes which have occurred in the community over the years, both highlighting and masking them.

Currently, the Thomas County Courthouse remains the oldest working courthouse in Georgia. A new government complex where court will be held is planned caddy corner to this historic courthouse and the same funding will help renovate the courthouse. The Courthouse is still a working courthouse for the county. The courthouse is structurally sound, but functionally obsolete. There are many issues facing the courthouse which are recurring and have also never been fully addressed or completely repaired.

There is no fireproof vault for the Thomas County courthouse (Hutchings, 2006). This is an important issue that will require attention. Storage will immediately become available when the court functions move to the new multi-purpose building and create more space for storage and other purposes in the old courthouse. Documents are currently held in storage at a warehouse and rotated (Hutchings, 2006). The tax office is planning to move back to the courthouse and those documents will need protection as well.

Restoration of the courthouse should fix the leaking walls and resulting peeling plaster and mold. But, extra care should be taken to prevent reoccurrence. Funding should be set aside for such maintenance projects. Exposed electrical wires must be insulated so as to protect the public. Jack Pyburn, the architect selected by the County Commission to complete the renovation is well known for his work on historic buildings and courthouses in particular (Dozier, 9-12-06 and Olson, 2006).

The interior of the courthouse has been modified. The brick and wood floors in Wind's design are currently covered or replaced with tile and linoleum or carpet. The chimneys have been enclosed. The interior stairs no longer wear Wind's rich chocolate color, but have been painted beige. None of the original doors appear in the current courthouse (Jaeger and Pyburn, 1992). It is Pyburn's plan to restore many of the original features, by uncovering the floors and ceilings in addition to making repairs and resolving the ongoing problems discussed earlier in this chapter (Dozier, 9-12-06).



Figure 9. View of interior showing carpet covering and lowered ceiling.

Chapter Six: Interiors and Adaptive Re-use

Historic Interiors

The interior of a building contributes to or establishes the function of the building. An office building's interior will look different from a restaurant's interior the same as a retail shop's features distinguish it from a library. On the exterior, all of these buildings may look the same, perhaps even serving each function within the same exterior shell over the course of different owners and many years.

Privacy is respected in America and for residential homes preservation stops at the front door and does not enter to codify the walls within. But, preservationists may attempt to landmark significant interior elements in buildings which the public accesses, both private and public, because those elements are on display. Interior architecture of historic buildings can be as valuable to preservationists as the exterior architecture. The exterior is what the public first encounters and contains the most recognizable elements, and interiors are often sacrificed to keep the exterior of the building intact. Interiors can be modernized and the beautiful architectural elements portioned away or covered, as the building is adapted to a new use or updated to comply with modern codes. Preservationists sometimes must choose which battle is more important and which elements of the building can be sacrificed to retain any fabric. There are specific cases where interiors are landmarked within the limits of the law, such as the Plaza Hotel in New York City (Griffin, 2005) and the Art Moderne theatre in Yeadon, Pennsylvania (Hogan, 2006).

Historic preservation laws are written such that the exterior is valued over the interior though interiors can be landmarked. In some cases, the interiors cannot be landmarked, such as

with churches or religious buildings, according to the Massachusetts State Supreme Court in the *Society of Jesus of New England vs. Boston Landmarks Commission* decision. The Boston Landmarks Commission wished to landmark the historic and ornamental interior altar of the Church of the Immaculate Conception because the Church had plans for renovations to the altar. The Massachusetts State Supreme Court ruling stated that because this specific interior involved a religious entity, only the exterior of the building could be regulated. The ruling does not prevent regulation of the interior of non-religious buildings. Though this ruling applies to the State of Massachusetts, the decision is referred to in other cases and is considered precedent-setting.

This ruling is significant because the courthouse is not a religious building. The landmarking and protection of its interior are not prevented by this landmark case. However, section 9-105 of the Thomasville Municipal Code states that “interior alterations (are) not considered,” thus interior alterations are given no requirement for review (rose.net). Since the courthouse is part of the commercial historic district, any changes made to the exterior of a building require architectural review and approval before the Historic Preservation Commission, the local preservation authority (rose.net). Changes made to the interior of buildings do not require review or approval from the preservation board, but pass through the office of the building inspector. There are no conformity specifications or required use of specific materials.

The interior, however, is significant for the courthouse because the interior is an important reason the courthouse building maintains historic significance on the National Register. Commissioners weighed the need to provide security against the need to retain the historic fabric of their courthouse. There was no protection available locally for the interior which would have been sacrificed to upgrade security. Commissioners sought a different

solution and their decision was to split the functions of the courthouse between two buildings. This conclusion would save the historic fabric and also provide the required security measures.

Adapted Reuse

Datel (1985) defines adaptive use as, “old things symbolizing the past to serve the present.” Adaptive use is the modification of a building from its original use or function. An example would be the transformation of a school into an apartment building, changing the interior design while maintaining the original exterior. An example of an adaptation unrelated to preservation is the use of any distinctive fast-food restaurant structure as a retail shop. The exterior may look like a drive-through, but the interior performs a different function and may serve a different clientele. Preservationists have used tax incentives, passed by Congress in 1981 and 1986, to adapt historic buildings and thus retain them by promoting a different and perhaps more economical use (Tyler, 2000).

If the courthouse were to be adapted into an income-producing function, perhaps as an apartment building or offices, there might be possible tax credits for that adaptive reuse. From the outside, the courthouse would likely look the same, but the interior would be divided differently. If the sole goal is to preserve the shell of the building, then adaptive reuse would be a viable option for this building. The courthouse could become a museum, an apartment building, or perhaps a restaurant. The goal though, is to keep the courthouse in its original function to maintain the building’s use and its connection to the community and historic district.

Giving the building a function other than its original one will stop its continual use as a historic courthouse in the state of Georgia and the county will lose that favored claim. This is a source of pride for the community when highlighting their successful preservation programs and

the town's history. The community must address the question Donovan Rypkema (1994) ponders: is a public building serving the purpose for which it is intended, maintaining its full operation and security. Is this county courthouse holding court and providing other legal services along with recording and filing important tax and statistical documents?

The citizens of Thomas County were faced with an either/or situation. Either they could build a new courthouse or save the old historic courthouse. Either the county could comply with security requirements and destroy the historic fabric of their courthouse or they could continue operating in an unsecured and unsafe courthouse. Either the county could build a new building to compensate for what the old courthouse lacked in security and space or they could continue to accept the courthouse and its limitations in order to preserve its historic features and fame.

The county voted to do both. Perhaps the county was following examples in other towns like Charleston (Lounsbury, 2001) and Monroe, North Carolina (Durrill, 2002). Perhaps the county commissioners found their own creative solution by dividing the functions of a courthouse into two separate buildings to create a courthouse complex. The county voted to have a secure court and maintain the architectural integrity of its historic courthouse. Their actions show that this community is committed to the symbolism of this courthouse building and to its impact in the community. The historic building has outgrown itself and the solution the citizens chose keeps the building in working condition, holding onto its claim as the oldest courthouse in continuous working condition in Georgia.

Courthouses have the dual roles of 1. holding court by hearing cases and 2. keeping documentation of county histories. This courthouse will forego the operation of the courtroom in the name of security in. The new building will have the role of providing protection for its authorities and citizens who must attend court. The new building will have modernized security

equipment which addresses the concerns of the county citizens and their community value of seeking a safe environment for everyone during their legal interactions. The old courthouse will have more storage and upgraded safety measures to better store, file and record the documents which denote the county's past and present.

Perhaps by securing a separate building, the community is valuing the necessity of procuring the courthouse and keeping it available to the public, as discussed in chapter four. Keeping court functions in the old courthouse would require modern equipment, such as a sallyport for a protected entrance that would not physically fit onto the courthouse grounds unless the building was altered. The public would be inconvenienced because the new equipment would cause delays and the old building cannot accommodate large crowds that may gather because of a delay. In this way, by moving the court functions and the necessity for modern security techniques out of the building, the old courthouse is leaving the entrances open and available to the public. It is serving its function and purpose of operating for the public.

The old courthouse is adapting to this necessity of security by moving those functions to a different building, the same way it adjusted to its lack of space by moving the tax and commissioner offices to other buildings. This courthouse has been refocusing its functions continuously as it faced new issues. It is readapting its role again by shifting its focus.

Security for the Courthouse and Space Needed Within

In addition to its maintenance woes, two key problems for the courthouse are security and space. The structure was built in 1858 and modified over the years as the needs of the community have changed and grown. The courthouse structure and the lot of land it sits upon are finite and there is no more room for the building to grow. The Annex built in 1937 is the last

creation of attached space for the courthouse. The County commission, along with the tax assessors office were moved to separate locations in nearby parts of town, and this provided more space for what was left inside the courthouse. Security concerns have grown over the years and have never been addressed.

As discussed in chapter four, security remains a legitimate issue for courthouses. Distressing events occur where lives are changed and emotions can run high. Changes are often made to structures after crucial events occur and the public demands measures to provide better protection. In the case of the courthouse, security has remained an important issue over time, yet one that has been ignored. One recent event occurred to change the perspective of the county commissioners regarding the security of the courthouse and its effect on the building's historic fabric.

Recent incidents in the State of Georgia have triggered the legislation to address the need for security in courthouses. In March, 2005, a judge and two others were shot in the Fulton County Courthouse in Atlanta. A judge and a court reporter were shot inside the courthouse and two more people were shot outside the courthouse. Because of this, security at all Georgian courthouses need to be addressed. The legislature passed Senate Law 462, which requires all sheriffs to submit plans for courthouse security. These plans will not be made public, but they will be required to be approved by the Chief Judge of the Superior Court (legis.ga.gov). County commissioners and all judges holding court will have access to the plans. Final budgets for any security improvements will require approval of county commissioners. The sheriff must also conduct a review of security plans every four years (legis.ga.gov).

Until the new building is built and court functions are moved to the new secure building, the sheriff remains in charge of security for the current courthouse. The sheriff is required by

law to write a security plan that focuses on the flow of people into and out of the building. The new building's architecture will address that issue. In the interim, the current courthouse must be secured without sacrificing its historic integrity and changing the architectural look of the building both inside and out. One way to address security immediately without changing the building is to close some entrances and require that all visitors enter through one entrance. This entrance can be secured with guards and metal detectors. Cameras, which act as deterrents visually, will be placed in public hallways (Hutchings, 2006)

Because the current courthouse was not designed for tight security, more manpower is needed to secure the building properly and in accordance with law. In the past year, the county sheriff, Carlton Powell, was granted a budget increase to hire four extra deputies to help with courthouse security. Judges request three security guards per courtroom and there are currently four operating courtrooms in the county. Budget limitations add to the security problems (Dozier, 9-22-06).

Related to the issue of security are the issues of space. There is lack of space for equipment (Hutchings, 2006) and there is no main hall for the main entrance. The main entrance lacks space to create a waiting room for people to congregate if there is inclement weather. Metal detectors and monitoring stations will need to compete for space within the courthouse along with offices and document storage (Hutchings, 2006).

As presented in chapter three, the courthouse has solved the problem. Thomas County approved a \$36 million SPLOST on July 18, 2006. Money has been specifically allocated to build a new multi-purpose court function building and to renovate the 1858 courthouse. The funding did not arrive until January, 2007 and construction is not likely to begin until July, 2007 (Dozier, 9-12-06).

The new multi-purpose building will house more of the court functions such as judges' offices and courtrooms and the current courthouse will remain functional as offices and document storage. Likely, the new building will be built before the old courthouse is renovated (Olson, 2006). The new building will help alleviate space and security issues, but it will not correct other issues like electrical coding and fire safety, moisture issues and the interior architectural changes which compromise the integrity of the historic building. Those will be addressed with the renovation of the old courthouse.

Conclusion

Will the public regard the old courthouse simply as a place for storage and resent its appearance? There are other proposed functions for the courthouse besides holding the documents for the clerk of court. The county commissioners will move their offices back into the courthouse and hold public hearings and meetings there. The tax assessors office will also move their staff and documents into the courthouse. The third floor court room will be used as an overflow courtroom if necessary and may also be used for county commission meetings or special functions (Dozier, 9-12-06).

The multipurpose building is planned for an adjacent corner lot to the current courthouse, within the downtown corridor, but outside of the protection of the local historic district. This will create a government complex and the two buildings will continue to anchor the economy of the downtown businesses and shops. Though care will be taken to ensure the new building complements the historic one, according to Thomasville's Municipal Code, the new building will not be regulated by the Historic Preservation Commission of Thomasville (rose.net). County

residents will continue to use the business corridor located at the edge of town, but the Broad Street businesses will benefit from the customers who are in town to use both buildings.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

Implications and Analysis

By the 1980s, a community in Monroe, North Carolina had built a new government complex to hold court and provide storage for deeds and important documents while renovating their historic courthouse to be used as office space for government employees (Durril, 2002). Wayne Durril wrote an article for the *Journal of Social History* stating, “as a compromise set in brick and mortar, the old courthouse now says to all who view it that a certain past will be remembered here and respected, the history of a group of developers who brought the community from the ruins of slavery to the beginnings of industrialization. It also tells local residents that the descendants of those leaders continue to wield power enough to have this memory enshrined at taxpayers’ expense” (Durril, 2002).

The author of this article is chastising the actions of the current authorities to retain a building which sanctioned slavery. He does not associate positive occurrences with the courthouse because the stain of slavery and the lifestyle supporting it have overtaken its walls. The only story he can read in the Monroe courthouse is that of slavery. This is his interpretation of that building and he laments that those community values which built slavery and the courthouse do not represent him.

The courthouse in Monroe, North Carolina did not exist solely to sell slaves. The author acknowledges this by explaining the new functions of each building. Perhaps when the decision was made, his voice was left out of the discourse and he was given no pulpit to express his outrage at the building’s past uses. When voices are excluded in the interpretation and telling of history, the story remains incomplete. If commissioners addressed this significant aspect of the

building's past, more of the public would have been included instead of left to wonder what their intentions were. Perhaps this article was meant to incite an apology or to draw attention to current discrimination occurring and the author used the building as a symbol or an instrument of his angst.

Public buildings and public space generate complexity because everyone is invited to participate and differences must be addressed. How can leaders and authorities in preservation projects best manage this process? Waterton (2005) writes that "heritage cannot be separated from those communities who are defined by it." The author of the above article felt that his definition of the courthouse was left out of the public's accepted preservation of it. Those in power, both government authorities and leaders in the preservation movement, must recognize the dissonance and help create an atmosphere of inclusion by addressing the public's individual values and interests.

Did Thomas County waver on addressing the needs of the present to avoid recognizing a dark moment in its past? Commissioners decided to place a plaque inside the walls of the courthouse instead of on the lawn of the grounds to honor Thomasville citizens who fought for their civil rights. The monument meant to honor a positive moment in the county's and courthouse's past a moment which progressed the county toward justice. The resulting plaque reflects the requests of those in the present to have their history told. This was a collaborative effort to include the heritage of the community and the community's spirit and values of unity (Waterton, 2005).

How do the actions of the community affect this courthouse? By acting to fund its renovation, the community is proclaiming its desire to hold onto its claim of having the oldest courthouse in continuous use. By moving compromising functions out of the historic courthouse

and giving them a home nearby to make the courthouse part of a judicial complex and not moving the functions to the edge of town, this community will be able to support its own Main Street and its own commercial corridor in this historic town. An important reason this courthouse will remain in functional use is because the community values their history and leaders of the community value the history of the courthouse as much as they do their safety and security. Preservation laws give the community some support to find ways to fund and save this courthouse. The community has also discovered some of their own conclusions.

By saving this courthouse and constructing a new government building, is Thomas County changing the definition of what a courthouse is or is it simply adapting to the needs of its community? As discussed in the previous chapter, the old courthouse remains a working courthouse because it retains one aspect of its original function and has essentially contracted out its court functions. Yes, a courthouse should seemingly hold court, but this courthouse will maintain its governmental authority which makes it such an important building to the county and community it serves. The commissioners will have their offices there and they are the county authorities as much as the county judges are. The county can hold onto its claim as having the oldest courthouse in Georgia in continual use.

“Architecture supplies us with a direct conduit to the spirit of the past” (Caldwell, 2001). Waterton (2005) argues that a community derives its values from acknowledging its past and that includes the unjust and terrible past. Thomasville values economic prosperity, security for its citizens, the openness of government and accessibility to authority and records of documentation, and the right of the public to embrace its own history. These are displayed in the case of this journey of preservation for this beautiful county courthouse.

Historic preservation respects the context of buildings in their environments and values the architectural elements which place a building in a point in history. Preservation movements in America strive to preserve not only historic buildings and structures but also their culture and surrounding framework. Caldwell (2001) considers that “architectural beauty is an active force in an interactive world.” The public must read this courthouse through both its architecture and the context it creates. Every step of architectural change and addition to this courthouse only serves to complicate and enrich the history because the community has changed alongside it. The courthouse is protected by the National Register, by historic district denomination and by the citizen’s belief that the courthouse represents something important in their history.

Conclusion

“A person, a community, a society or a nation paints its own portrait by what it chooses to save” (Stipe and Lee, 1987). What does the community value about this courthouse? The community values the history of the building, the beauty of the architecture, the relevance to the development of its downtown and the economic value of the courthouse. The community states these values by the actions of restoring the courthouse, the county commissioners working to find a creative solution to the problems of security and space and by the activities which occur at the courthouse on a daily basis and on special occasions. Preserving the courthouse is akin to preserving their own history because their stories are stored within the documents and within its walls.

The community has rallied to rebuild and restore and modify the courthouse over the years since it was originally built, and each change reflected the values of the community at that time. With the successful SPLOST vote in 2006, the community was voting its values of

including the public. This is shown by their acceptance of the decision to build a new building to offer protection and security to those who must access the courts paired with the decision to keep the historic courthouse building accessible to all by moving those security functions out.

This story about the Thomas County courthouse is one which highlights the progress of the historic preservation movement in America. The same way the preservation movement has evolved over the years to incorporate more and exclude less in their conversations of history, so have the citizens of Thomas County by embracing their past history more inclusively.

Preservationists and individual communities have intensified their individual programs to include specific ones to save courthouses or libraries. This courthouse has a great chance for preservation in the future because the community has taken careful steps to ensure its relevance, to prevent drastic changes to its historic and significant architecture and has opened the doors for future participation and inclusion.

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