

(Oct. 1990)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Loving County Courthouse
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Bounded by Pecos St., Collins St., Dallas St. and SH 302
CITY OR TOWN: Mentone VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Loving CODE: 301 ZIP CODE: 79754

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination) (request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets) (does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally) (statewide) (locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of certifying official

3.22.06
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet
 determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

[Handwritten Signature]
Signature of the Keeper
Edson H. Beall

Date of Action
5.10.08

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	1	0 OBJECTS
	2	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT: courthouse, jail; RECREATION AND CULTURE: marker

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT: courthouse; RECREATION AND CULTURE: marker

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: Moderne

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK, TILE, CAST STONE
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

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Description

The 1935 Loving County Courthouse is a Moderne Style two-story brown brick and tile building in Mentone, Texas. The building is set in the middle of a sparsely landscaped block bounded by Pecos Street, Collins Street, Dallas Street and State Highway 302. The building is nearly devoid of ornament, and serves as a stark example of a Depression-era governmental building, whose simple design is likely due to both the influence of modernist design principles as well as a desire to keep costs low. Despite the replacement of all windows and introduction of new interior wall finishes in the late 1970s, the building retains a good degree of integrity.

Mentone (unincorporated) is the only town in Loving County, Texas (2005 pop. 67). The terrain is relatively flat with a few low-rolling hills and gravelly loam soils supporting mesquite, desert shrubs and cacti. The 1935 Loving County Courthouse occupies a prominent site along SH 302, and remains the only 2-story building in the county. Mentone's austere landscape includes many empty lots, trailers, and collections of oil-field equipment, along with a single church (Mentone Community Church, the former Porterville School, RTHL 1964), the abandoned Mentone Public School (1935, altered), a handful of homes, one café, and several abandoned commercial buildings.

Mentone's regular street grid is set roughly along the ordinal directions, so the courthouse faces southeast, southwest, northwest, and northeast. The building sits the middle of a sparsely landscaped block on a small grassy lawn surrounded by an asphalt parking lot. To the southeast of the courthouse, a 1936 gray granite Texas Centennial marker (contributing object) stands amongst cacti at a gravel plot at the site of the vault from the 1931 courthouse. Two sheds sit at the north corner of the block.

The building sits on a four-inch concrete slab foundation. Despite the lack of ornament, variations in materials, along with subtle setbacks and corbelling prevent the building from reading as a plain brick box. The ground floor exterior is finished with light brown brick that extends above the second story's floor line, and the upper floor is finished with a lighter brown rough-texture face tile. The base of each floor is stepped back over five brick courses, and this slight setback, along with the change in facing materials distinguishes the upper floor and makes it appear shorter than the first floor. The building is topped by a corbelled brick stringcourse, a tile parapet, and a concrete coping.

Each façade of the courthouse is symmetrical, and nearly identical, with variations only in the treatment of window and door openings. Each elevation has five bays, with the outer (first and fifth) bays on each floor featuring paired windows, and each second and fourth bay featuring a single window. Accessed by a short flight of concrete steps between low concrete and brick abutments, each doorway occupies the lower central bay, while its corresponding bay on the upper floor has paired windows. Each doorway is framed by buff brick, distinctly lighter than the surrounding tan brick, with a cast stone lintel with clipped upper corners. The lintels read: "Loving County Court-House 1935." The original wood panel double doors and multiple light transoms have all been replaced with metal double doors topped with single-pane transom windows. A 1977-78 remodeling program replaced all the original metal tilting sash windows with dark brown single-hung sash windows with reflective glazing. The fixed upper sash on each window is taller than the single-light lower sash, and is divided by a vertical muntin.

The *southeast* façade reads as the primary elevation only due to the placement of a 1935 dedication plaque to the left of the doorway. All of this elevation's original window openings are intact. The doorway of the *southwest* elevation serves as the entrance to the county sheriff's office. The window in the fourth bay of the ground floor has been bricked in. The

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single windows in the first and second bays of the second floor (historically housing the jail) are covered by metal vents. The *northwest* elevation is generally considered to be the rear of the building because the original doorway has been bricked in due to placement of an elevator, and this side of the building serves as the location of HVAC equipment, a detached diesel generator shed, electrical boxes and conduit, a radio tower and a utility pole. The window opening in the fourth bay on the ground floor and the central bay on the upper floor have been bricked in. The fifth bay on the upper floor has a metal vent similar to those on the southwest elevation. The *northeast* façade is distinguished by a concrete accessibility ramp with a steel railing attached at the entrance.

The building originally featured a square cross-axial plan on the ground floor, modified in the 1970s with the addition of an elevator and the extension of the sheriff's office. The southeast and northeast hallways retain their original ten-foot widths, but the northeast hall is entered through a glass and metal doorway, and functions as an extension of the county treasurer's office, with tables and filing cabinets lining both sides. Restrooms have been added to the left side of the northwest hallway, reducing its footprint by roughly half. This hall leads to the elevator, which blocks access to the original northwest entrance. A steep flight of stairs leading to the second floor are to the left of the northwest hall. The southwest hall has been narrowed by half with the addition of closets on the left side, and truncated by the extension of the sheriff's office at the original southwest entrance. All office walls are covered with flat hardwood paneling, while public hallways are finished with white marble. The original wood ceiling molding with dentils is intact, but the ceiling is finished with acoustical tiles.

The upper floor features an asymmetrical plan designed to house the courtroom, two consultation rooms, a jury room, and a two-cell jail accessed by a steel door. The jail cells (west corner) have been removed, and this section of the building now serves as a storage room. The size of the jury room (north corner) has been reduced by the extension of a former water closet into two full bathrooms. The elevator occupies the north corner of the courtroom entry foyer at the top of the stairs. The courtroom and associated consultation rooms occupy the southeast half of the second floor, with the judge's bench facing northeast. The size of the courtroom has been reduced slightly by the extension of the consultation rooms behind the bench. The jury box on the southeast side of the room has been lengthened, and the wooden railing separating the visitor's section from the bench and jury box has been moved a few feet to the northeast to allow adequate space for the bench and consul table. All walls are finished with flat hardwood paneling.

The courthouse is the visual and social focal point of the community, and despite changes to the exterior and interior, it retains a good degree of integrity.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Government

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1935-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1935

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Wood, Evan J.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-11).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-12 through 9-13).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government: *Loving County Courthouse*
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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Statement of Significance

County courthouses are the preeminent building type associated with local government in Texas, and are often the most prominent and sophisticated buildings of the counties in which they stand. The 1935 Loving County Courthouse is the only 2-story building in the least populated county in the United States. The building stands as the lone symbol of county government and serves as the visual and social focal point for the town of Mentone. Designed by architect and contractor Evan J. Wood of Pecos, Texas, the Moderne Style building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places, under Criterion A, in the area of Politics/Government, at the local level of significance.

Loving County, Texas

Loving County, in the Permian Basin of west Texas, is approximately seventy-five miles west of Odessa, and is bounded on the east by Winkler County, on the south by Ward County, on the west by the Pecos River and Reeves County, and on the north by Eddy and Lea counties, New Mexico. The desert terrain is primarily flat, with a few low-rolling hills, and vegetation is limited to desert shrubs, cacti, range grasses, and salt cedars along the Pecos River. The average rainfall is about ten inches. In 1936 the Red Bluff Water Improvement District built the Red Bluff Dam across the Pecos near the Texas-New Mexico border, but the river water is not potable, and residents haul water in from outside the county.¹

The area of Loving County was part of the Bexar land district from 1837 to 1874, when it became part of the newly-created Tom Green County district, with the county seat at Ben Ficklin. In 1854, Captain John Pope surveyed the area to identify possible locations for a railroad line to the Pacific. Pope identified a Pecos River crossing – later named “Pope’s Crossing” – and established a headquarters there with support of a small detachment of U.S. troops, who provided protection during the course of drilling water wells. The Butterfield Stage maintained a way station at Pope’s Crossing from 1858 to 1861. The crossing also served a route of the Goodnight-Loving cattle trail, and the county was later named after cattleman Oliver Loving, who was killed in the area by Indians in 1866.²

Loving County is the only county in Texas to be organized twice. The first organization occurred in 1893, when six men from Denver, Colorado, organized the Loving Canal and Irrigation Company of Mentone, with the intent to construct an irrigation canal from the Pecos. The 1890 United States census reported a population of only three in the area. Water company officials filed applications for title to hundreds of acres of public school land in the county, and they laid out the town of Mentone, about twelve miles northwest of the current county seat on the Pecos River. On June 13, 1893, company officials filed a petition – allegedly signed by 150 Loving County residents – with the Reeves County Commissioners Court requesting separate organization for Loving County.³ After the court approved the petition, the county was divided into four precincts, and an election was held the following month. With a return of eighty-three votes, county organization was approved, and Mentone became the county seat. Irrigation company organizers and several nonresidents were elected to county offices in sixteen races, only one of which was contested. The Loving County Commissioners

1 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “LOVING COUNTY,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

2 Dunn, Robert W. *The History of Loving County, Texas* (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin), 1948, pp 22-27.

3 *Ibid.*, 36.

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Court issued bonds valued at \$20,000 to build an adobe courthouse and jail in Mentone, but the courthouse was only partially completed.⁴

Several families lived in the vicinity of Mentone for a few months in 1893, but in August a Pecos River flood destroyed the irrigation project, and by the end of the year the families had moved away and the small general store closed.⁵ Irrigation company officials, however, retained control of county government. In the spring of 1894, H. C. Withers and A. H. Randolph traveled to Loving County on behalf of Condra, Drake and Strauss, a New York company which owned a large amount of property in the county, to investigate reports of an illegal county organization. Withers and Randolph reported finding only three people in Mentone, and when Withers asked to examine the tax records, sheriff and tax collector W. A. Hunter reported that county clerk R. G. Munn had taken the records to Denver, Colorado. Loving County reportedly held a county election on November 8, 1894, with all the company organizers and several nonresidents reelected to office, but by 1897, every county official had left the area. The county failed to collect taxes for the years 1893 through 1897. The Texas legislature de-organized Loving County on May 12, 1897, and attached it to Reeves County for judicial purposes. The Reeves County Commissioners Court taxed Loving County landowners to pay off the county debt. Mentone was abandoned.⁶

Subsequent farmland irrigation projects in the area produced little results through the early twentieth century, but several cattle ranches were established in the area. Livestock in the county was valued at \$568,406 in 1900, with the Johnson brothers' W Ranch as the leading producer, with 4000 head.⁷ By 1900, the county had a population of eleven white females and twenty-two white males. E.L Stratton promoted settlement of Loving County in 1909 according the *Dallas Morning News*, which reported that two train cars carrying fifty "prospectors" passed through Abilene on their way to build a town to serve as a county seat.⁸ The 1910 U.S. census reported 248 residents (all white except one African American), and a settlement in the southwestern corner of the county named Juanita, soon thereafter named Porterville. Porterville had a post office, several businesses, and the first school and church in the county. A severe drought in 1910 reduced the population to sixty by 1914. Rancher John Z. Means of Jeff Davis County owned thirty-five sections of Loving County by 1915, and the Texas and Pacific Railway owned 145 sections, but neither entity settled in the county. Throughout its history, the largest landowners in Loving County have never resided there.

Loving County remained sparsely populated through the teens, and the 1920 U.S. census reported a population of 82, but the production of oil through the 1920s increased the population to 195 by 1930. In 1921 the Toyah-Bell Oil Company leased acreage for drilling on the Russell Ranch, and Russell No.1 produced the first oil in Loving County later that year. The possibility of an oil boom in the area motivated land developers to promote the reorganization of the county and plan the plotting of "several county seat towns."⁹ Oilmen J.J. Wheat and B.F. Ramsey of the Toyah Bell Oil Co. laid out the future county seat of Ramsey in 1922, but it remained largely empty for a decade.¹⁰ In 1925, large-scale commercial oil

⁴ "Loving County May Again Be Organized," *Dallas Morning News*, Sec. 1, p. 14, December 12, 1921.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LOVING COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

⁷ *Ibid.*; Dunn, 56.

⁸ "Settlers for Loving County," *Dallas Morning News*, July 7, 1909.

⁹ "Loving County May Again Be Organized," *Dallas Morning News*, Sec. 1, p. 14, December 12, 1921.

¹⁰ Baker, T. Lindsay. *Ghost Towns of Texas*, p.95-96.

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production commenced when the Pecos Valley Petroleum Company developed the Wheat oilfield, which produced 1,233,801 barrels in 1931. Tax rolls for 1928 listed twenty-five oil companies with leases in Loving County, and in November 1929, the county had sixteen producing wells (up from twelve in June).¹¹

The oil boom led to the creation of the town of Ramsey and the second organization of Loving County in 1931, making it the last county organized in the state. Oilmen J.J. Wheat and B.F. Ramsey led the charge to organize the county, and in May 1931, the Reeves County Commissioners Court recognized a petition signed by 130 (out of 195) residents requesting the authority to establish Loving County.¹² The new county held its first election on June 30, and Ramsey, now known as Mentone, became the county seat. Most of the residents of Porterville (two miles south) moved to Mentone in the early 1930s.¹³ By 1933 the population reached a record 600, but by 1940 had declined to 285 (282 whites and 3 Hispanics) as reported in the U.S. census.¹⁴

The first business in Mentone was the Loving County Lumber Company, founded in 1930. In the spring of 1931 the county's only school building was moved from Porterville, and served as the county school until the construction of a new brick building designed by Dallas architect C.H. Leinbach in 1935. As in Porterville, the school continued to serve as a church in its new location. In June 1931, Lee Miller and Co. established a refinery in Mentone, with a capacity of 1,600 gallons per day.¹⁵ By July 1931 Mentone boasted "five cafes, five gasoline stations, two hotels, two drugstores, two recreation halls, two barbershops, a dance hall, a machine shop, and a dry cleaner," as well as a weekly newspaper, the *Loving County Journal*.¹⁶ The water supply was obtained from Balmorhea in Reeves County and the Randau Wells, about seven miles from town.¹⁷ In 1935, O.K. Anderson organized the Mentone Electric Company to provide electricity for the town.¹⁸

1931 and 1935 Loving County Courthouses

In July 1931, the Loving County Commissioners Court accepted plans by builder W.O. Scherer for a "vault and temporary house" to serve as the county courthouse, and hired Scherer to supervise its construction.¹⁹ The building was built on the south side of the current courthouse square. In January 1935, the commissioners court voted to construct a wind mill and storage tank on the square for the purpose of watering trees in the yard, none of which were native to the area.²⁰ That following August, the commissioners court announced that a bond election would be held on September 21 at the "old

11 Dunn, pp. 123-127.

12 "Last of Unorganized Counties, Loving, Sets Up Own Domain," *Dallas Morning News*, Sec I, p.1, May 15, 1931.

13 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "MENTONE, TX," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/MM/hnm33.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

14 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LOVING COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

15 Dunn, 140.

16 "New Texas Weeklies," *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 2, 1931, Sec 1, p.3; another paper, the *Mentone Monitor* was published from March 1932 to September 1935, when it was absorbed by the *Ward County News and Pyote Signal*.

17 Dunn, 83.

18 "To Build Light Plant," *Dallas Morning News*, sec. II, p. 3, January 5, 1935.

19 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, July 24, 1931. Vol. 1, p. 4.

20 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, Jan. 15, 1935. Vol. 1, p. 130.

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school building” regarding the issuance of courthouse and jail bonds, in the sum of \$25,000.²¹ The votes tallied 43 to 23 in favor of issuing the bonds, and on September 26, the county awarded architect Evan J. Wood of Pecos the contract to design and build the brick courthouse, for a fee equaling 5% of the total building cost.²² In April 1936, the commissioners court approved auctioning the old courthouse and jail buildings to the highest bidder.²³ The county accepted the completed courthouse on April 25, 1936, and Wood was paid \$2684.60.²⁴ On May 26 someone identified as “Winkler” won the old county buildings auction, with bids of \$50 for the jail and \$251 for the courthouse.²⁵

The Loving County Courthouse was designed as a multifunctional center of county government, providing office and meeting spaces for the county sheriff, judge, clerk, treasurer, attorney, and the district court. The vault holds valuable records, including birth certificates, marriage licenses, and land and estate records. Oilman Norman C. Hill had the distinction of being the first convicted felon in Loving County, sentenced to four years in state prison on the conviction of theft of pipe valued at \$4,000.²⁶ As of 2004, there have been 726 civil cases filed in district court since 1931, and all of the county's district court files dating back more than 30 years fit into four double-row filing cabinets. Most cases have involved car accidents on State Highway 302 or disputes between oil and gas business owners. The Loving County Courthouse hosted two civil trials in late 2003, the first jury trials tried to a verdict since the creation of the 143rd District Court in 1955. Achieving a 60-person venire panel for the trials required the presence of the county's entire population, and only two prospective jurors were not related to any other prospective juror. Because state law prohibits close family relatives from serving together on a grand jury, it is nearly impossible to assemble a grand jury in the county.²⁷

Loving County Since 1936

Although oil companies provided much of the county revenue, cattle ranches remained economically important in Loving County in the 1930s and 40s. The Red Bluff Dam on the Pecos River, completed in September 1936 at the cost of \$2.6 million, created a reservoir that provided water for irrigation of farms in the area, but large-scale crop production never materialized. By the end of the 1930s, oil production had tapered off from the peak in 1932, and no new oil fields were discovered in Loving County between 1938 and 1946.²⁸ By 1940 the county population dropped to 285, with 110 residents in Mentone; by 1946 only three businesses operated in town. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s the population of Mentone hovered around 110, and the number of businesses continued to decline. By 1950 the county population continued to decline, to 227 residents. The population in 1960 was nearly the same (226), except the number of black residents had increased to ten. A historical marker erected by the State of Texas in 1967 noted the town's status as the “Smallest County Seat in Texas,” and listed various things common to every other county seat that Mentone *lacked*, including a “water system...bank, doctor, hospital, newspaper, lawyer, civic club,” and noted only two recorded graves in

21 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, Aug. 13, 1935. Vol. 1, p. 163.

22 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, Sept. 26, 1935. Vol. 1, p. 184.

23 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, April 13, 1936. Vol. 1, p. 212.

24 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, April 25, 1936. Vol. 1, p. 213. The only other building attributed to Wood is the 1929 Fort Davis High School, for which served as the contractor, with architects Page Brothers of Austin.

25 Loving County Commissioner Court Minutes, May 26, 1936. Vol. 1, p. 218.

26 “Last Texas County Gets First Felon,” *Dallas Morning News*, sec. I, p. 12, April 4, 1936.

27 Council, John. “A Lawyer-Free Zone: Welcome to Loving County, the Land Without Lawyers,” 10-08-2004.

<http://www.law.com/jsp/article.jsp?id=1097097868225> (accessed November 2, 2005).

28 Dunn, 153.

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the county along with "some Indian skeletons."²⁹ *Dallas Morning News* columnist Frank Tolbert went even further, noting that the county had "no theaters, no pool halls, no dentists, no chiropractors, no funeral homes, no football teams, no night clubs, no factories, no auto salesmen, no newspapers, no race problems, no traffic jams..."³⁰

By 1970 the county population had fallen to 164 residents – all white, with 44 living in Mentone. The county at that time had three teachers and thirty students in the lower grades, while the seventeen high school students commuted 28 miles to attend school in Wink.³¹ The Loving County school system closed its only school 1972, when only two students were enrolled (at an annual cost of \$146,000), and the students were transferred to Winkler County.³² Between 1972 and 1984 no businesses operated in Mentone.³³ The 1935 courthouse was renovated in 1977-78 by the architectural firm McMurtry and Craig, with Oasis Builders, Inc., serving as contractors. Not requiring any exterior additions, the renovation consisted of replacing windows, adding an elevator, installing new wood paneling and marble finishes to the interior, reorganizing interior office spaces, and slightly reconfiguring the courtroom.

The county piped drinking water to a 500-gallon tank for use by residents of Mentone until the summer of 1988, when the county established a well. At the end of 1989 the estimated population had increased slightly to 100, but Loving County and Mentone remained

generally undeveloped because the land was mostly held by absentee owners, because good water was scarce, because cattle grazing made the best use of the unimproved arid surface, and because oil and gas income from the subsurface obviated the need for highly productive surface use. At the end of the 1980s Loving County had no economic farming or manufacturing.³⁴

The economy of Loving County is still largely based on oil and gas production, resulting in the small population of Loving County having the highest per-capita income of all United States counties in 1989 (\$34,173). The area nevertheless remains undeveloped and isolated. The county population in 2005 was 67.

As the center of county government, the 1935 Loving County Courthouse has continued to play a primary role in the community, as nearly a third of the county residents are elected officials or are employed by the county government. The building is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Government at the local level of significance.

29 Texas Historic Sites Atlas, <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us/>

30 "Loving County People Challenge Head Count," *Dallas Morning News*, sec. A, p. 28, February 19, 1967. Tolbert did report on activity at Wanema Hopper's service station.

31 "Federal 'Love' Lost on Loving County," *Dallas Morning News*, Sec. A, p.7, March 1, 1970.

32 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LOVING COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

33 Ibid.

34 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LOVING COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed November 1, 2005).

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<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl13.html> (accessed August 25, 2005).

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "MENTONE, TX,"
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/MM/hnm33.html> (accessed August 25, 2005).

Loving County Commissioners Court Minutes

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 13

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Loving County, Texas Historical Commission state historic resource survey cards and Texas Historical Marker files,
Austin.

Riney, James E., et al. Inventory of County Records, Loving County Courthouse, Mentone, Texas. (Denton, Tex. : Texas
County Records Inventory Project, North Texas State University), 1981.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	13	632777	3508773

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The property is the city block bounded by Pecos St., Collins St., Dallas St. and SH 302

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historical associated with the building

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Gregory Smith, National Register Coordinator

ORGANIZATION: Texas Historical Commission

DATE: November 2, 2005

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 12276

TELEPHONE: 512-463-6013

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78711

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-19 through Photo-25)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-14 through Figure-18)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Loving County, Texas (attn: Judge Donald Creager)

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 193

TELEPHONE: (432) 377-2362

CITY OR TOWN: Mentone

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 79754-0193

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 14

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Loving County Courthouse, c. 1939
Source: Texas Department of Transportation



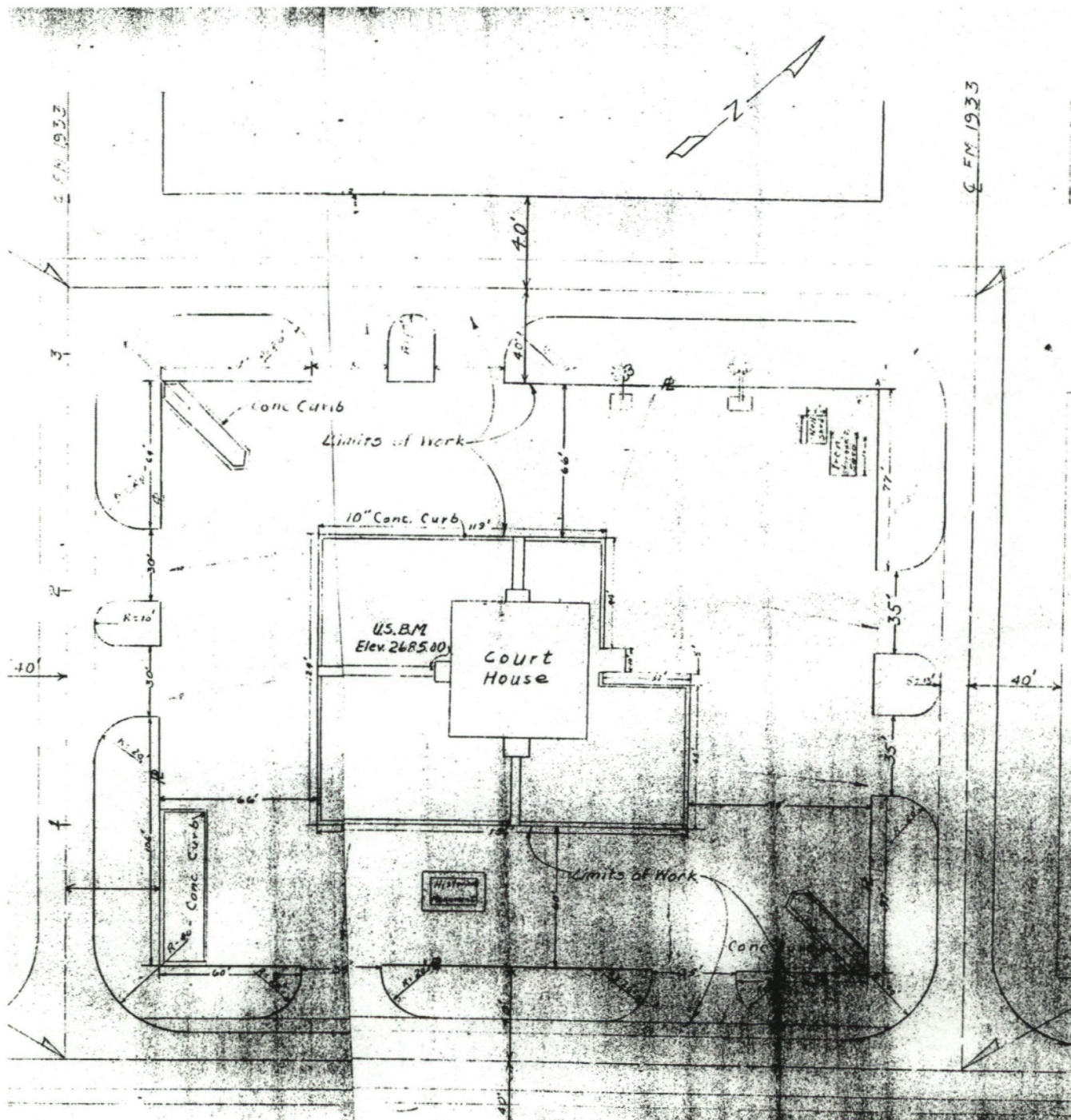
United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 15

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Site plan, c.1978.



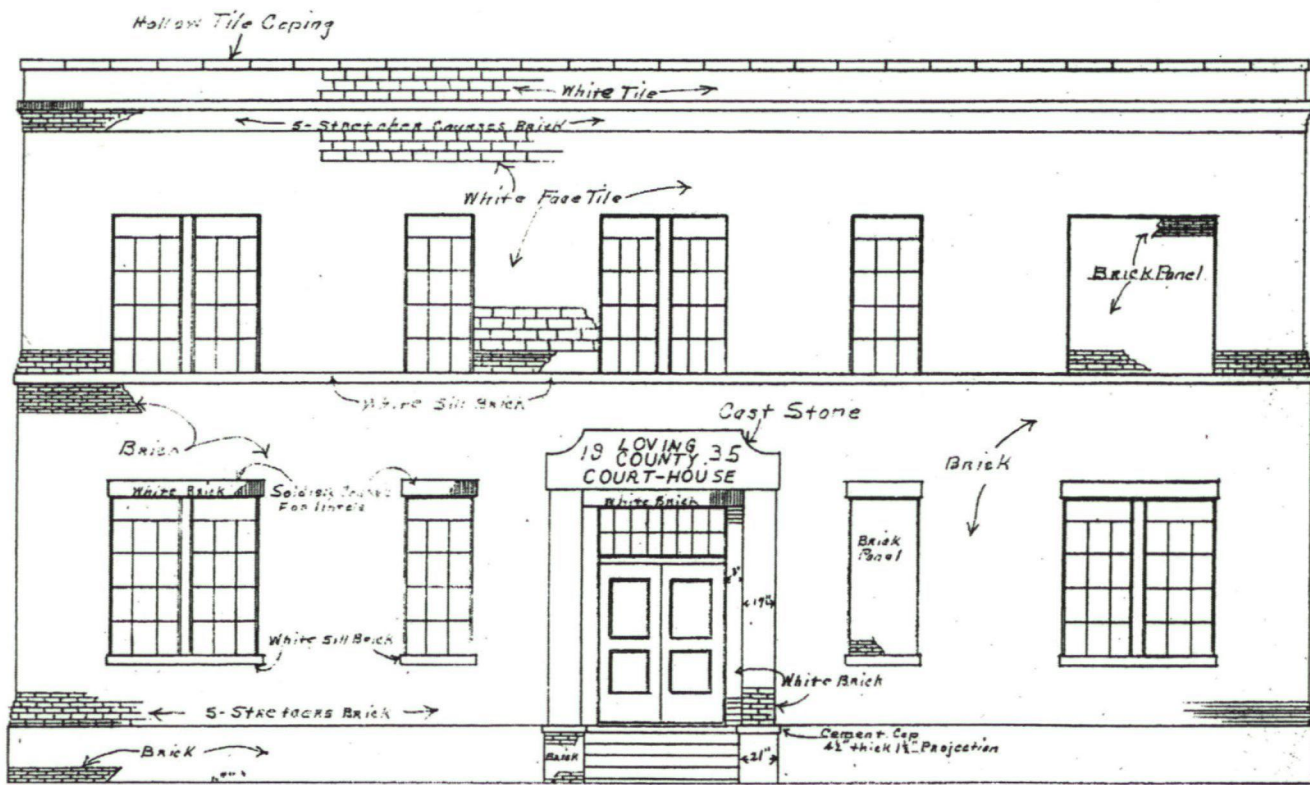
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 16

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Elevation by Evan J. Wood, 1935



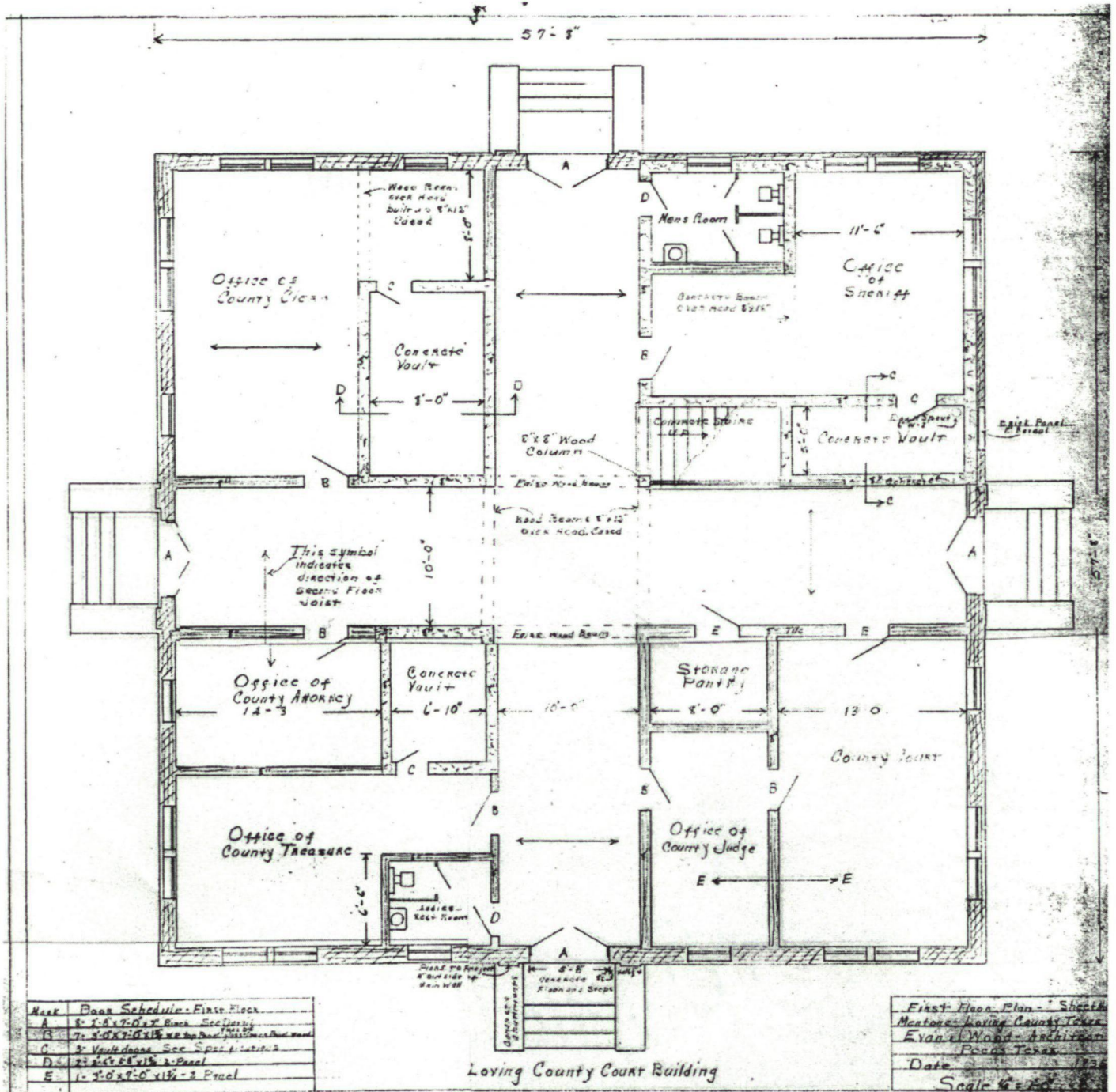
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 17

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

First Floor Plan by Evan J. Wood, 1935



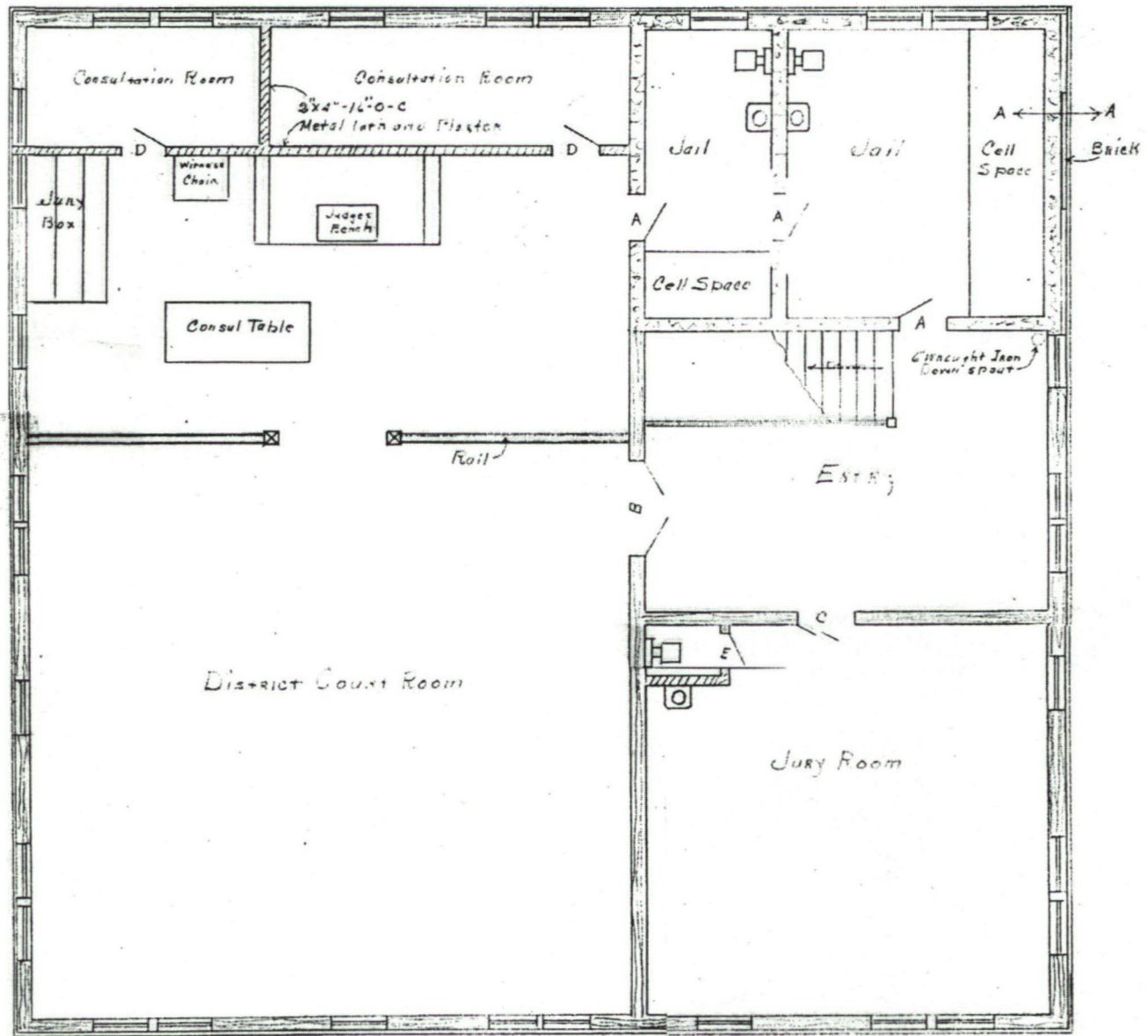
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 18

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Second Floor Plan by Evan J. Wood, 1935



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National Park Service

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Section Photo Page 19

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas
Photographed by Gregory Smith
September 2005

Southeast elevation



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 20

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Northeast elevation



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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 21

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

West oblique



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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 22

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Courtroom, facing south



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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 23

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

First floor hallway, facing south



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 24

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas

Loving County Courthouse
Mentone, Loving County, Texas
Photographed by Gregory Smith
September 2005

Photo 1
Northeast elevation
Camera facing west

Photo 2
Southwest elevation
Camera facing northeast

Photo 3
Southwest entrance
Camera facing northeast

Photo 4
Interior hallway (towards sheriff's office)
Camera facing southwest

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Loving County Courthouse
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Loving

DATE RECEIVED: 3/28/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/17/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/02/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/11/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000362

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5.10.06 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:
*Entered in the
National Register*

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



AuSprints 07 289 1131 N N N N 2

LOVING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MENTONE, LOVING CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 1



19 LOVINE
COUNTY 35
COURT HOUSE

04 291 1131 N H N 42

LOVING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MENTONE, LOVING CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 2

19 LOVING 35
COUNTY
COURT — HOUSE



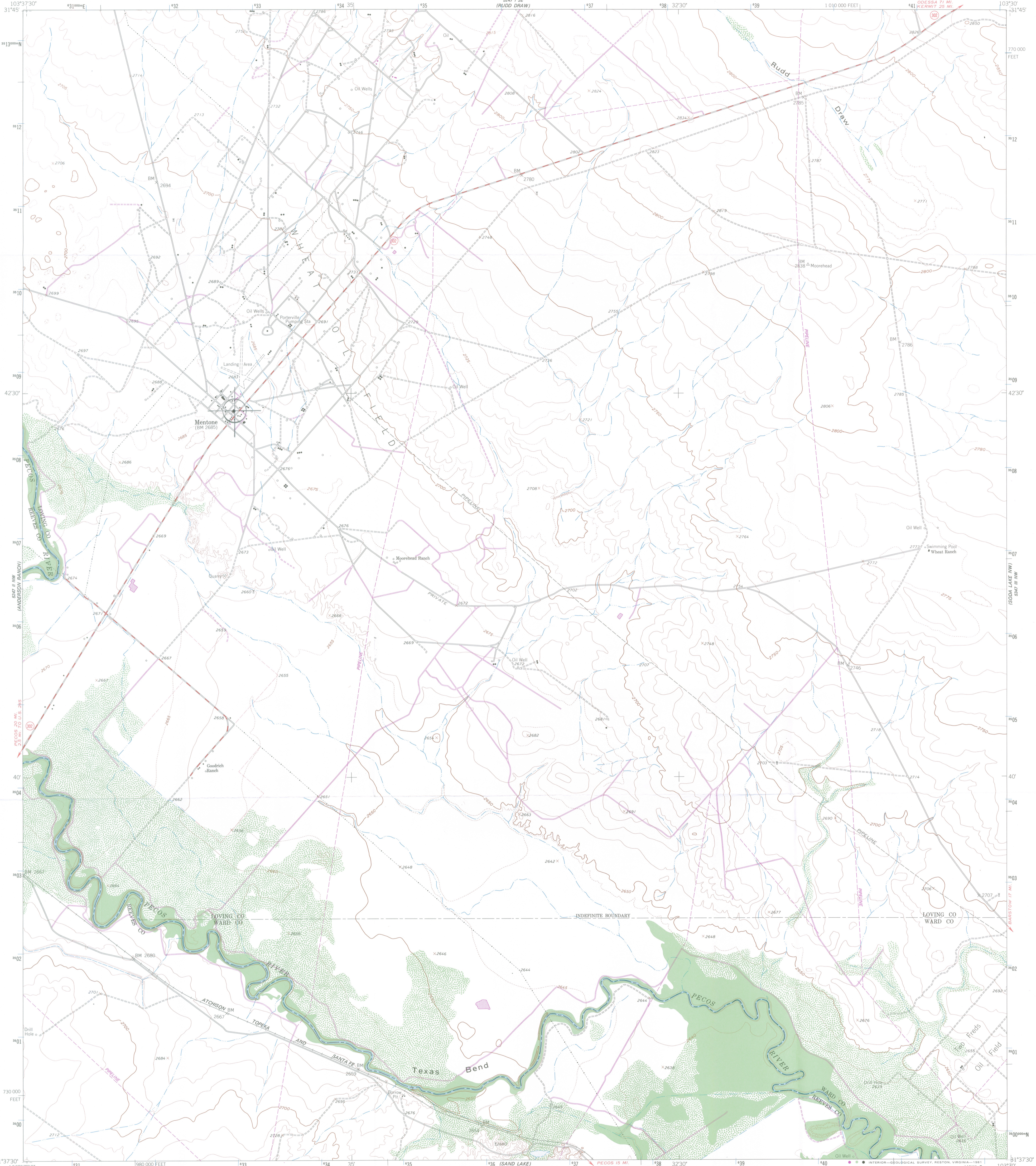
AuSPrints 06 291 1131 NMM 12

LOVING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MENTONE, LOVING CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 3



21 N N N 131 682 60 841 J 4304

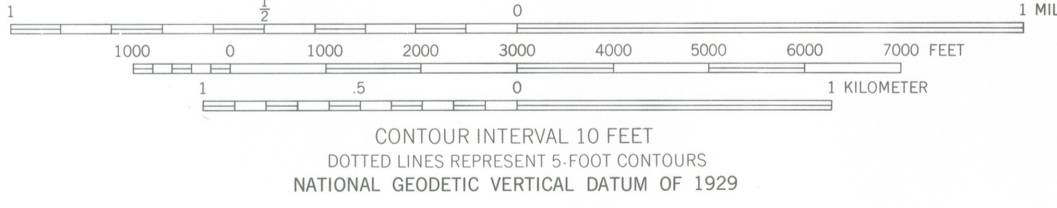
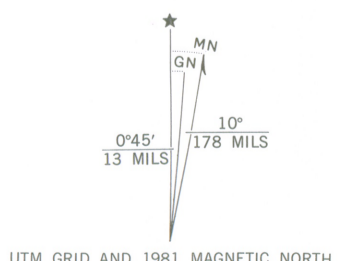
LOVING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MENTONE, LOVING CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 4



LOVING COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MENTONE, LOVING CO., TEXAS
UTM 13 032177E 3508773 N

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1958. Field checked 1961
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 13, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 11 meters south and
44 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1979. Map edited 1981. This information not field checked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Medium-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Unimproved dirt - - - - -
State Route ○

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

3103-314

MENTONE, TEX.
N3137.5-W10330.7.5
1961
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 5247 II NE-SERIES V882



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

Rick Perry • *Governor*

John L. Nau, III • *Chairman*

F. Lawrence Oaks • *Executive Director*

The State Agency for Historic Preservation



TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Loving County Courthouse, Mentone, Loving County, Texas

DATE: March 21, 2006

The following materials are submitted regarding:

- Loving County Courthouse:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	____ Resubmitted nomination
	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
	Correspondence
	Other:

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other