Lexington County Courthouse
Name of Property

Lexington County, SC
County and State

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

164

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Lexington County Courthouse

other names/site number Old Lexington County Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 139 East Main Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Lexington ☐ vicinity

state South Carolina code SC county Lexington code 063 29072

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ 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 _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** _x_ **local**

Elizabeth M. Johnson 3/4/2014

Signature of certifying official Date

Elizabeth M. Johnson, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Columbia, S.C.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Lexington County Courthouse
Name of Property

Lexington County, SC
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

for Carson N. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

4.21.14
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

	private
x	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

x	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/*Courthouse*
GOVERNMENT/*Government Office*

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/*Courthouse*
GOVERNMENT/*Government Office*

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

OTHER: *Modern Classic*

OTHER: *PWA Moderne*

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: BRICK

STONE: *Limestone*

roof: ASPHALT; OTHER: *Tar and Gravel*

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Lexington County Courthouse is a two-story red brick and limestone building located at 139 East Main Street on the eastern end of the core commercial downtown area of the town of Lexington, South Carolina. Laid in a variation of American or common bond, it is bordered on the east by South Lake Drive, on the south by Maiden Lane, and by neighboring commercial buildings on the west, and it is situated on a 1.78 acre lot with a large rear parking lot and front and side lawn. Constructed in 1939 according to plans by the Columbia architectural firm of Wessinger & Johnson [Jesse W. Wessinger and J. Carroll Johnson], and partially funded by the Public Works Administration (PWA) of the New Deal, the courthouse's design is classically-inspired and typical of the PWA Moderne or Modern Classic style. Its classically-referenced, monumental central pavilion is made more modern in appearance through the stylized ornamentation found in many public buildings built by the federal work relief programs of the 1930s. The courthouse is a local expression of what had become by 1939 federal architecture in both spirit and reality. Despite rear additions on either side of the large courtroom block of the building by one of its original architects in 1970, the building retains its 1939 design and, through its continuous use as a courthouse, a high degree of architectural integrity.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The historic inverted T-shaped, symmetrical core of the courthouse is two stories with a basement. The crossbar of the inverted T runs parallel to East Main Street and is set upon a brick foundation with projecting limestone water table and plinth. The building features a flat roof with a molded limestone-capped brick parapet. The stem of the T runs parallel to South Lake Drive and has a large low-pitched gable-front roof set back of the crossbar. The north-facing, horizontally-oriented facade is composed of a projected monumental limestone central pavilion with two equally sized wings. Smooth pilasters frame the central pavilion and are topped with stylized compositions of fasces framing a lotiform-supported cartouche incised with "LC" for Lexington County. Between these decorative elements, on a slightly-raised flat tablet are large applied bronze letters reading "Lexington County Court House" and is topped with a thin limestone cornice. Between the monumental smooth pilasters is a three-bay composition punctuated with four smaller fluted pilasters of a simplified Roman Doric order, supporting a stylized ornamental frieze of alternating paterae and incised, paired vertical lines simulating the visual effect of triglyphs in a classical Doric order frieze. The outer two pilasters are only half visible as they die into the monumental framing pilasters of the central pavilion. Atop each fluted pilaster is a paneled block with lozenge overlay. A simple thin block modillioned cornice completes the entablature. A set of ceremonial granite steps flanked with leads to a tiled porch and the main entrance into the first floor of the central bay. The building's main entrance is set tightly between the two central pilasters. The full-length, glass-paneled paired doors with large glazed transom are inset within a rosette-studded, thick-fluted entry portal surmounted by a denticulated pediment with a disk-studded and foliated tympanum. Atop the entrance portal and within the three bays of the central pavilion on each floor

are paired six-over-six windows with articulated sills. Between the windows of each floor are undecorated limestone-paneled spandrels.

The flanking wings are a composition of alternating brick and limestone and are symmetrical to each other. The brick walls are divided into five limestone bays, each containing a single six-over-six window in the first and second stories, with the same full length limestone panels, undecorated paneled spandrels, and articulated sills. The wings feature a slightly-projecting flat frieze that wraps the wings, much as a stringcourse would do, but in a manner that is unifying to the overall brick and limestone design composition. Above each window bay, the frieze is articulated with stylized paterae and triglyphs in the same manner as the central pavilion. The intervening red brick sections have the visual effect of pilasters, with those at the corners providing the visual effect of larger corner pilasters or cantons.

The east end elevation of the building, facing South Lake Drive, is similar to the facade and is divided into five bays, with the same six-over-six windows within the two-story limestone paneled units, intervening brick pilasters, and ornamental frieze. The projecting central bay features stone steps with limestone-capped brick cheek walls leading to a side or secondary first floor entrance. The full-length glass-paneled double doors and transom are recessed within a raised paneled limestone-framed portal and limestone-lined entry, with four bracketed limestone corbels beneath a shelf architrave that supports a small second story classically-inspired balcony. The pattern continues along the setback stem portion of the second story. Five round clerestory windows or oeil-de-boeuf punctuate the wall below the setback roofline and above the parapet and cornice of the stem of the T-shaped core. Along the perpendicular stem is a single story flat-roofed addition, which fills in the T and creates a square building in first floor plan. This addition on either side of the T stem was designed in 1970 by Jesse W. Wessinger and John T. Drafts. Three pairs of six-over-six windows echo the two-story window panels and a stone belt course wraps around the corner. The west elevation is essentially the same, but the door and balcony are replaced by another bay of windows.

The rear elevation is solid red brick and lacks architectural detail. The stone belt course continues along the back, indicating the separation between the first floor and basement. A set of double doors with a flat roofed awning leads to the basement. A sixteen pane fixed pane window is located on the first story and a smaller window sits above it. The single story additions are flush with a stairwell and elevator shaft addition and corresponding extension to the historic core, also completed in 1970 by Wessinger and Drafts.

Also on the property are a monument to Confederate dead [located along the east elevation], a monument to World War I veterans, and a state historical marker describing the previous five courthouses on the site. Bronze plaques within the main entryway commemorate Public Works Administration [PWA] involvement in the building in 1939, the original construction in 1939 with commissioners, legislators, attorney, builders, and architects named, and likewise for the 1970 addition and renovation.

Interior

Just inside the main entrance on the first floor are two intersecting wide double-loaded corridors, which form an octagonal rotunda at their juncture. Entryways into the rotunda/lobby from intersecting corridors feature molded door heads, and the ceiling of the rotunda is coffered, reflective of the octagonal form. The floors are green, red, yellow, and white diamond patterned polished terrazzo and intersect in a sunburst design in the octagonal rotunda. The rotunda still has its original brass directory sign and globed lighting fixture. The walls of the main corridors are wainscoted with four foot high white marble and buff plaster, and the ceilings are covered with acoustical tile panels set on the diagonal with borders and corner blocks, to create a diamond and chevron pattern effect. Interior doors leading to offices and courtrooms have transoms to facilitate ventilation. Toward the rear of the building, the ceiling drops, indicating the beginning of the addition. Two stairwells leading upstairs, one in each wing, maintain the marble wainscoting and feature alternating twisted-rope and spindle iron balustrades with wood handrails, bronze-capped newels, and stone treads.

The second floor corridors have the same floors, marble wainscoting, and acoustic tiles. Doorways to offices in the corridor have transoms. Double doors labeled "Court Room" lead to the main courtroom area, which occupies the stem portion of the original T-shaped building. To the right and left are jury rooms and private juror restrooms. These hallways have dark wood wainscoting and blue carpeted floors which continue into the courtroom. The main courtroom is a large rectangular space filled with four ranks of wooden benches. At the front of the courtroom sits the paneled oak witness chair and judge's bench and rostrum, which is elevated and features a decorative wooden back panel with shouldered surround and a paneled entablature surmounted by a broken pediment with central cartouche. Flanking the judge's bench/rostrum are single-leaf paneled doors with shouldered surrounds and shelf architraves, as well as two paneled wooden jury boxes. Originally, the floors were tile, the ceilings were white plaster, and the windows were covered with Venetian blinds. The judge had private quarters and "witness rooms for both white[s] and Negro[s]...located across the

hall from the courtroom."[1] The circular clerestory windows [oiel-de-boeuf] and circular and other decorative plaster panels encircling the courtroom are accented by plaster moldings painted blue and other foliated panels, creating an interior decorative frieze. The acanthus leaf-molded coffered ceiling panels are now covered in acoustical tiles. From each of the twelve molded round panels at the intersections of each of the ceiling's large paneled box beams hang large original decorative brass and milk glass chandeliers. The room is well-lit, bright, and the most highly decorated room in the courthouse.

The basement level contains records and serves as a rear entrance to the interior stairwell.

Despite a few minor changes and a complementary 1970 addition, the courthouse retains many of its original features and design, and therefore its high level of architectural integrity.

[1] "Courthouse is Handsome Temple of Justice," *The (Columbia, S.C.) State*, 14 January 1940.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- [ ] 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.
- [x] 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 values, 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
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- [ ] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wessinger, Jesse W. (architect)

Johnson, J. Carroll (architect)

Moore, T. E.; Holcombe, J. R. (builders)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance is 1939 when construction on the courthouse was completed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of signficance and applicable criteria)

The Lexington County Courthouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C for Architecture. As a Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) project, the courthouse exhibits the modern yet restrained classical architectural elements typical of New Deal buildings. This Modern Classic style is rare for courthouses in South Carolina, as only one other National Register-listed county courthouse in the state (Beaufort) has a similar Depression-era design. Also, it is an excellent local example of the work of the well-known Columbia architect, J. Carroll Johnson, and designing partner of Lexington County native Jesse W. Wessinger, in the Columbia firm of Wessinger and Johnson. The courthouse is a good local example of the federal government's involvement in South Carolina's economy and architecture through the New Deal work relief projects.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Architecture

The Lexington County Courthouse was constructed in 1939 with federal funding from the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.). While the New Deal did not have an official architectural style, many public buildings exhibited the minimalist, starved classicism that became known as PWA Moderne, Federal Moderne, Modern Classic, Depression Modern, or Greco Deco.[2] These styles, popular from 1933 to 1944, feature classical organization with restrained Art Deco ornamentation. Classical elements are simplified, column capitals tend to be abstracted or deemphasized, and sculptural features are minimized or recede into the masonry. The "simple, finely detailed, and well-proportioned" architecture of the PWA "bred a monumentality immediately adopted for government projects" and offered strength and stability during a turbulent time.[3] Efficiency and waste reduction were essential and excessive ornamentation was deemed unnecessary, detracting from the beauty of a building.[4] The Lexington County Courthouse, with its minimalist, classically-inspired features and proportions, is an example of this New Deal architecture which predominated in the 1930s.

Of the thirty county courthouses in South Carolina listed in the National Register, over half date to the nineteenth century. Many were designed by or mimic the design typical of architect Robert Mills, while others were built in the Neoclassical style. Although a handful of courthouses, including those in Chesterfield, Fairfield, and Hampton counties, feature substantial winged additions from the 1930s, only the Beaufort County Courthouse, originally built in 1884 and remodeled in 1936, is an example of the Depression Modern style. The most recent courthouses prior to the Lexington Courthouse were constructed in the early 1920s in Allendale and McCormick counties. While other Modern Classic government buildings in South Carolina have been listed in the National Register, including the Wade Hampton State Office Building and World War Memorial Building in Columbia, the PWA Moderne style was rarely used in county courthouses. Therefore, the Lexington County Courthouse is significant as one of the few new courthouses built in the 1930s in this style.

The Lexington County Courthouse was designed by the Columbia-based architectural firm of Wessinger and Johnson. The firm formed in 1938 and flourished until 1942. J. Carroll Johnson (1882-1967) designed the building, which is typical of his work, in terms of form, design, composition, and materials. Johnson came to Columbia, South Carolina, early in 1910 to join the firm of Wilson, Sompayrac and Urquhart. Born in Kristianstad, Sweden, in 1882, he grew up in Chicago where he received his degree in architecture from Armour Institute of Technology in 1906, and early practical training with the celebrated firm of Jenney, Mundie and Jensen. In 1908 he earned a post-graduate degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, training there in architectural design under the direction of Paul Philippe Cret, the noted French Beaux-Arts architect and proponent of modern classicism in America. He gained additional study and training in France and Italy during 1909, while engaged with the Washington, DC firm of Wood, Donn and Deming. The following year he took the position as chief draftsman and designer for Wilson, Sompayrac and Urquhart in Columbia, and late in 1912 associated with James B. Urquhart in the firm of Urquhart and Johnson. After World War I, Johnson practiced alone until the mid-1930s when he associated with Jesse W. Wessinger in the firm of Wessinger and Stork. Subsequently, that firm practiced as Wessinger and Johnson until America's entry into World War II. He served as the University Architect

[2] Robert D. Leighninger, Jr., "Cultural Infrastructure: The Legacy of New Deal Public Space," *Journal of Architectural Education* 49 (May 1996): 228.

[3] Robert M. Craig, *Atlanta Architecture: Art Deco to Modern Classic, 1929-1959* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing, 1995), 19; Joan M. Marter, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 143-147.

[4] Richard G. Wilson, introduction to *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1933-39.*, by C.W. Short and R. Stanley Brown (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), ii-iii.

for the University of South Carolina from 1944 to 1956. Jesse W. Wessinger (1895-1978), a 1916 engineering graduate of Newberry College and an army veteran of the American Expeditionary Forces during World War I in Europe, obtained a position in 1919 with Wilson and Sompayrac, where he remained until he opened his own architectural firm in Columbia in 1929 with Robert C. Stork, another former employee of Wilson and Sompayrac. Wessinger was a well-connected Lexington County native and through those connections secured the commission for the courthouse. Other well-known commissions by these locally-based architects included Summerton High School (1936-37); Union High School (1937); additions to Rosewood Grammar School in Columbia (1937); the State Women's Penitentiary (1937); the Lexington County Jail (1937); the remodeling of the South Carolina House of Representatives Chamber (1938); Sims College (Women's Quadrangle) at the University of South Carolina (1938); Olympia High School and Vocational School in Columbia (1938); the auditorium and gymnasium for Edmunds High School in Sumter (1938); an educational building for First Methodist Church of Lancaster (1938); First Baptist Church of West Columbia (1941-42); Saluda County Courthouse addition and remodeling (1942); the Edisto Apartments in Wales Garden, Columbia (1942), as well as a number of residential commissions in and near Columbia.[5]

Methods of construction were also important to the architectural integrity of PWA buildings. Designed by professional, contractual private architects, such as Wessinger and Johnson, and preapproved by the PWA, buildings had a simplicity yet elegance in their designs, as well as solid engineering. The supervision of projects by a PWA resident inspector-engineer ensured sound, quality construction, which raised the standards and "made the PWA sign the hallmark of quality in the construction field."[6] Architect-designed PWA buildings such as the Lexington County Courthouse, which was praised "as a splendid and enduring monument to the enterprise and vision of the people of Lexington County," were high quality construction and many remain in use as testaments to the long-term investments made by local governments.[7] As Harold L. Ickes (director of PWA, 1933-1939) prophesied, "each dollar spent will not only return many times its value in immediate benefits through the lessening of unemployment and the supplying of some community need; it will continue to pay incalculable social dividends to generations of Americans still unborn."[8]

The Lexington County Courthouse reflects the local economic impact of the New Deal in South Carolina's cities and towns. Although the 1920s had seen the nation's largest building boom, the first jobs lost in the Depression were in the construction industry.[9] The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, which came to be known as simply the PWA, was created in June 1933 under Title II of the National Industrial Recovery Act, as "Public Works and Construction Projects." Under the supervision of Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, it initially earmarked $3.3 billion, the largest amount ever set aside for public works, and "had the dual objective of relieving unemployment and of increasing purchasing power through the construction of public works."[10] Therefore, the PWA, through its private contract agreements and high prevailing union wages, sought to provide honest work to one of the nation's largest and underutilized labor forces.[11]

As of 1939, under state director J. L. M. Irby, the PWA in South Carolina had employed 180,778 men on construction sites and an additional 451,945 men employed in the associated construction industries as a result of the new construction projects. This total of 632,723 men worked on seventy-four projects costing $21,481,768.[12] Ickes' philosophy, that "our business is to put men to work, to do it quickly, and to do it intelligently," certainly guided the $36 million spent on the construction of 179 highway projects, eighty-seven schools, ten courthouses, eleven hospitals, low cost housing, sewers, a shipyard, and two major hydroelectric dam projects in South Carolina from 1933 to 1939.[13] The PWA tended to finance larger, more traditional building projects costing over $25,000, while its more prolific rival, the Works Progress

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[5] John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The South Carolina Architects, 1885-1935: A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1992), 83-86, 196-197; "J. W. Wessinger, Architect, Dies at 83," *The (Columbia, S.C.) State*, 16 February 1978.

[6] Wilson, introduction, ix; Public Works Administration, *America Builds: The Record of the PWA* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 76, 82.

[7] "Historical Sketch of Lexington County's Five Courthouses," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 11 January 1940; Robert D. Leighninger, Jr., *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 218.

[8] Harold Ickes, *Back to Work: The Story of the PWA* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1935), 80.

[9] Ickes, *Back to Work*, 197; PWA, *America Builds*, 2.

[10] Jack Irby Hayes, Jr., *South Carolina and the New Deal* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 71; US Works Progress Administration, *Summary of Relief and Federal Work Program Statistics, 1933-1940*, by Theodore E. Whiting and T. J. Woofer, Jr. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), ix, University of South Carolina, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

[11] Ickes, *Back to Work*, 33, 216.

[12] US Office of Government Records, *Activities and Accomplishments of Assistance Agencies in South Carolina* (Columbia, December 1939), 23, University of South Carolina, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

[13] Wilson, introduction, xii. Note that much of the PWA archives were sold during World War II for scrap paper. Hayes, *SC and the New Deal*, 74.

Administration, completed smaller projects with a greater focus on immediate work relief rather than architectural excellence.[14]

The PWA did not design building projects itself, but acted primarily as a bank or lending agency. It financed both federal and nonfederal building projects, and invited local governments to sponsor projects and submit proposals for grants and loans. Applications which passed review by legal, financial, and engineering teams were sent to Ickes, then to a "special board for public works," and finally to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[15] Sponsors were required to hire from local relief rolls, advertise sealed bids for the lowest bidder, and use local resources whenever available to be as efficient as possible and make the greatest economic impact.[16]

Approved projects were eligible for grants of originally up to thirty percent of project costs, and later up to forty-five percent. The local sponsors borrowed the remaining funds at four percent interest rates for thirty years, which was low enough to help, but not low enough to attract sponsors who had the stable credit to borrow from private lenders.[17] The PWA was praised for its equally accessible financial assistance to both small and large communities.[18] Up to 1938, the PWA offered $399,052,222 in grants and $124,428,743 in loans for nonfederal projects nationwide, and was well distributed in South Carolina as nearly every county in the state received financial assistance.[19] In 1938, Lexington County, South Carolina received major PWA funding for its new courthouse.

The Lexington County Courthouse got its momentum from the New Deal-funded construction of a new county jail. In August 1937, the PWA approved the Lexington County Board of County Commissioners' request for a $20,000 loan and $16,363 grant for the jail, with Jesse W. Wessinger as the architect. On November 1, 1937, J.C. Shepherd of Lexington came to the county council and offered to sell the two lots adjacent to the old jail lot for a reasonable price. He said living near a jail was undesirable and suggested it would be an ideal lot on which to build the new jail. The county purchased the lots behind the old jail on Depot Street, the current South Lake Drive, for $3,500 on November 30. The council noted "if ever a new courthouse was to be built the old jail site would be a very good location."[20]

In March of 1938, Senator A.L. Harmon suggested building a much needed courthouse, as the current courthouse was insufficient. He argued "the county eventually must build a new courthouse and they know that it will never be able to do it at any time at less cost to the people of the county than right now."[21] On July 1, the county council submitted an application to the PWA for a $35,000 grant and $65,000 loan for the courthouse, with Wessinger and Johnson of Columbia as the architectural firm. The consensus was that the courthouse should be built on the large lot by the old jail and connected to the new jail.[22] The people of Lexington approved the courthouse on August 30, by a vote of 4,642 to 3,061, and the PWA accepted the proposal and approved the financing in October 1938 for a total cost of $118,180.[23]

Later that month, the WPA approved a $1,682 demolition of the old jail building to make room for the new courthouse.[24] The Kohn Construction Company of Columbia, the lowest bidder at $1,741, began groundbreaking for the foundation on December 12.[25] In January, the Lexington County Board of County Commissioners began selling courthouse notes in denominations of $1,000 and $500 in order to raise the funds for construction. By January 25, 1939, they had raised the

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[14] Leighninger, "Cultural Infrastructure," 228: 226; Hayes, *SC and the New Deal*, 58.

[15] Leighninger, *Long-Range Public Investment*, 41.

[16] Leignhninger, *Long-Range Public Investment*, 206; Hayes, *SC and the New Deal*, 71; Wilson, introduction, vi.

[17] WPA, *Summary of Relief* 14; PWA, *America Builds, 63;* Ickes, *Back to Work,27.*

[18] PWA, *America Builds, 197.*

[19] US Public Works Administration, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration,* by C.W. Short and R. Stanley Brown (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 680, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.; "Five WPA Projects in County Cost $355,409," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 31 March 1938.

[20] Lexington County Board of County Commissioners Minutes, 1937-1939, Lexington County County Council Minutes, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[21] "A Good Time to Build a Courthouse," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 24 March 1938.

[22] Lexington County Board of County Commissioners Minutes, 1937-1939; "Application Made to PWA for Courthouse Contract," *Lexington Dispatch News,* 4 August 1938.

[23] "Two Important Questions to be Submitted to People," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News*, 18 August 1938; "Official Vote on New Courthouse, Salaries," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News*, 8 September 1938; "PWA Approves $53,180 for New Lexington Courthouse," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 13 October 1938.

[24] "WPA to Demolish Old Jail Building," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 27 October 1938; "Work Begins Monday in Tearing Down Old Jail," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 3 November 1938.

[25] "Contract Let for Excavation and Footings of Courthouse," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 8 December 1938.

$65,000 necessary to pay back their PWA loan.[26] Columbia builders T.E. Moore and J.R. Holcombe won the lowest construction bid at $92,400 and began actual work on the courthouse in March.[27] The courthouse was finally completed, approved by the PWA resident engineer-inspector A.R. Carlisle of Columbia, and began preparing for opening in December of 1939.[28]

The courthouse was officially dedicated in a lavish parade and ceremony on January 15, 1940. The parade, which began at 11:00 AM and took an hour and a half to pass, depicted two hundred years of Lexington County's history, including the county's six previous courthouses. Each high school in the county had its own float depicting an era of Lexington County's history, passing by in chronological order. A "Miss Lexington" float featured Demetra Kotsiakos, Miss Lexington, of Batesburg-Leesville High School and her nine maids in waiting, who were "representative of the grace, graciousness, and beauty of Lexington County."[29] Following the parade, the Lexington County Bar Association hosted a lunch for dignified guests, featuring menu items named after each town in the county.[30] The first session of court in the new courthouse convened the following Monday, under Judge William H. Grimball.[31]

The PWA funded courthouse in Lexington County is illustrative of the federal government's involvement in building nonfederal buildings in South Carolina during the Great Depression. The funding application and construction process were carefully followed, and the grants and loans received by the county are typical of PWA financial assistance. The courthouse and jail, which took advantage of the unique financing opportunities of the New Deal era, also replaced an older, insufficient pair of judicial buildings, reflecting the growing legal needs of Lexington County. With the county jail and sheriff's home just west of the courthouse, it made "everything convenient for the handling of prisoners."[32] The 1970 addition by Jesse W. Wessinger of two more courtrooms and a rear stairwell, as well as the 2003 new judicial center across the street which has taken over many of the courthouse's former functions, have continued to emphasize the county's progress and growth.[33]

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

The Lexington County Courthouse was the setting for a rare case in the history of criminal justice in South Carolina. On July 22, 1942, a murder trial began after a change in venue from Edgefield County. The case, which began as a violent dispute over $20 and resulted in a murder-for-hire revenge scheme, placed widow Sue Logue, her brother-in-law George Logue, and their hired gunman Clarence Bagwell on the defendant's stand. The case was moved from Edgefield County to Lexington County on January 5, after it was argued the defendants could not get an impartial jury. Presiding Judge George Duncan Bellinger, Jr. explained "it would be absolutely humanly impossible for a panel of Edgefield men to take their places in that box and, no matter how hard they try, to erase the feelings that lie there."[34] After a conviction by the jury at the Lexington County Courthouse and the death sentence with no recommendation for mercy as an accessory before the fact of murder delivered by Judge G. Duncan Bellinger of Columbia, Sue Logue was held at the South Carolina State Penitentiary. She appealed three times to the State Supreme Court, once to the US Supreme Court, and made a plea for executive clemency to Governor R. M. Jefferies, to no avail. On January 15, 1943, Mrs. Logue was the first woman in South Carolina to be electrocuted. She was the first of the three to die, after three minutes and fourteen seconds. Her body was claimed by relatives and buried in Edgefield County. Logue was one of only two women in South Carolina to be electrocuted. The other was Rose Marie Stinnette, who was executed on January 17, 1947.[35]

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[26] Lexington County Board of County Commissioners Minutes, 1937-1939.

[27] "Courthouse Contract Goes to Columbians for $92,400," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 9 March 1939; "Actual Work Began Monday on County's New Courthouse," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 23 March 1939.

[28] "Courthouse Completed -- and Accepted by Commissioners," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 7 December 1939.

[29] "200 Years Lexington County History to be Depicted in Big Parade," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 11 January 1940; A. Frank Lever, "Copy of Prologue and Description of Historical Floats in Bi-Centennial Celebration Parade," 15 January 1940, Lexington County Courthouse Vertical Files. Lexington County Museum, Lexington, South Carolina.

[30] "200 Years Lexington County History to be Depicted in Big Parade," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 11 January 1940; "Luncheon for Prominent Visitors Enjoyable Event of Celebration," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 18 January 1940.

[31] "Lexington Grand Jury is Announced," *The (Columbia, S.C.) State,* 14 January 1940.

[32] "Courthouse is Handsome Temple of Justice," *The (Columbia, S.C.) State,* 14 January 1940.

[33] "Bid Opening Set on Expansion of County Courthouse," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 16 July 1970.

[34] T. Felder Dorn, *The Guns of Meeting Street: A Southern Tragedy (*Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 148.

[35] "Trio Dies in Chair for Edgefield County Murder," *Lexington (S.C.) Dispatch News,* 21 January 1943; "Logues and Bagwell Die in the Chair," *The (Columbia, S.C.) State,* 16 January 1943; Dorn, *Guns of Meeting Street,* 253-260.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

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Ickes, Harold. *Back to Work: The Story of the PWA*. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1935.

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Secondary:

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Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton. *The South Carolina Architects, 1885-1935: A Biographical Dictionary.* Richmond, VA: New South Architectural Press, 1992.

Wilson, Richard G. Introduction to *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1933-39*, by C.W. Short and R. Stanley Brown, #. New York: Da Capo Press, 1986.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____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:

_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
_x_ Local government
_x_ University
____Other
Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.78
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.981164 Longitude: -81.236283
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of the nominated property is shown as the heavy black line marked on the accompanying Lexington County GIS Map, printed at a scale of 1 inch = 79 feet.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the historic 1939 courthouse and the grounds on which it is located.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jessie Childress (with the assistance of SHPO staff)

organization University of South Carolina Public History Program date April 29, 2013

street & number 817 Henderson Street telephone 520-275-4814

city or town Columbia state SC zip code 29208

e-mail childrjk@email.sc.edu

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Lexington County Courthouse

City or Vicinity: Lexington

County: Lexington **State:** South Carolina

Photographer: Jessie Childress

Date Photographed: April 24, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 19	North (main) facade, camera facing south
2 of 19	North (main) facade detail, camera facing south
3 of 19	Northeast oblique, camera facing southwest
4 of 19	East elevation, camera facing west
5 of 19	East elevation oblique, camera facing northwest
6 of 19	West elevation oblique, camera facing southeast

7 of 19	South elevation, camera facing north
8 of 19	Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest
9 of 19	Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast
10 of 19	Octagonal rotunda, interior
11 of 19	Main corridor facing south, interior
12 of 19	Main corridor facing south, addition, interior
13 of 19	Eastern stairwell, interior
14 of 19	Courtroom doors, interior
15 of 19	Main courtroom, interior
16 of 19	Main courtroom, judge's bench, interior
17 of 19	Brass directory in rotunda, interior
18 of 19	Plaque in front entryway, exterior
19 of 19	1940 Historic Photograph (Lexington County Museum Collection)

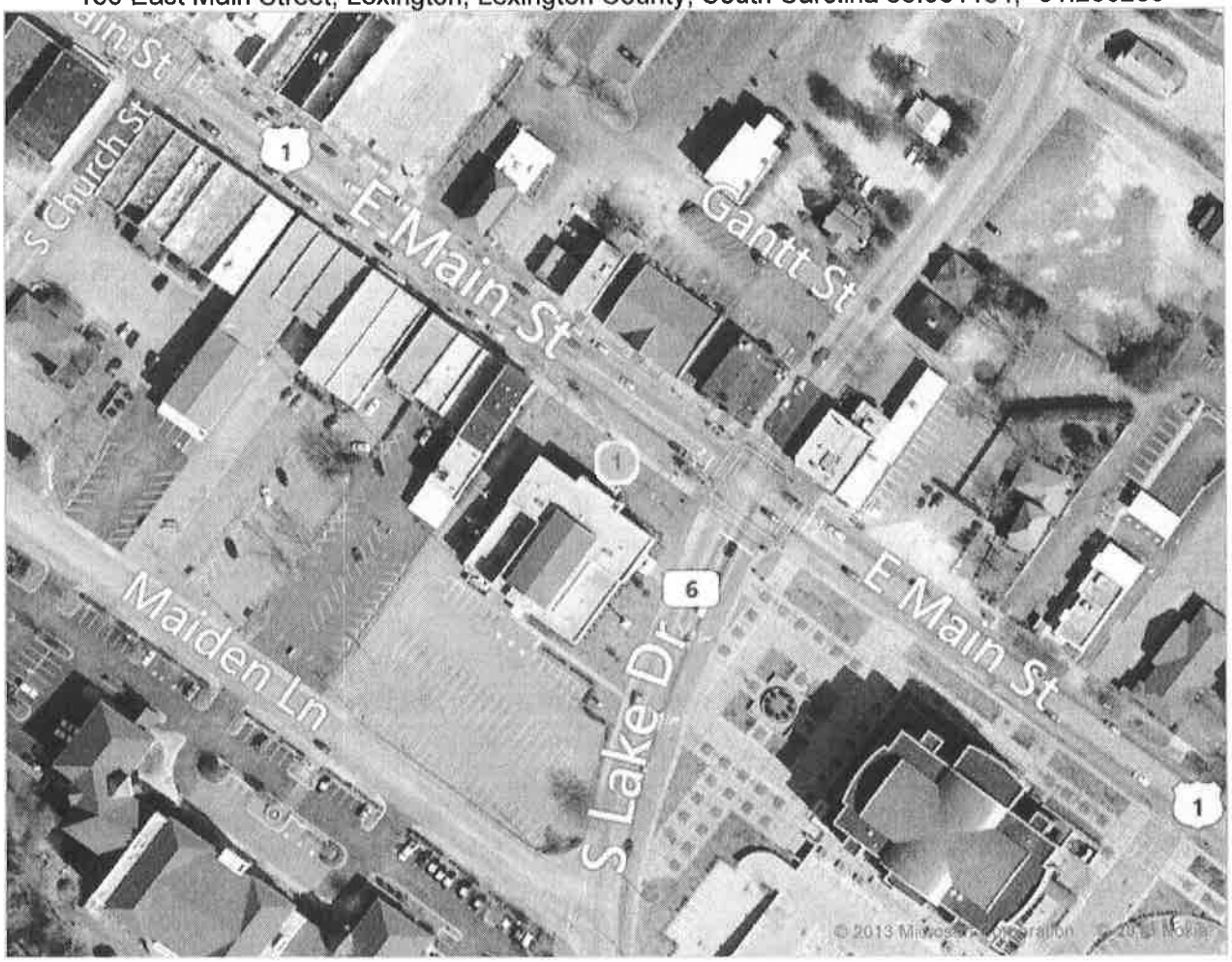
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

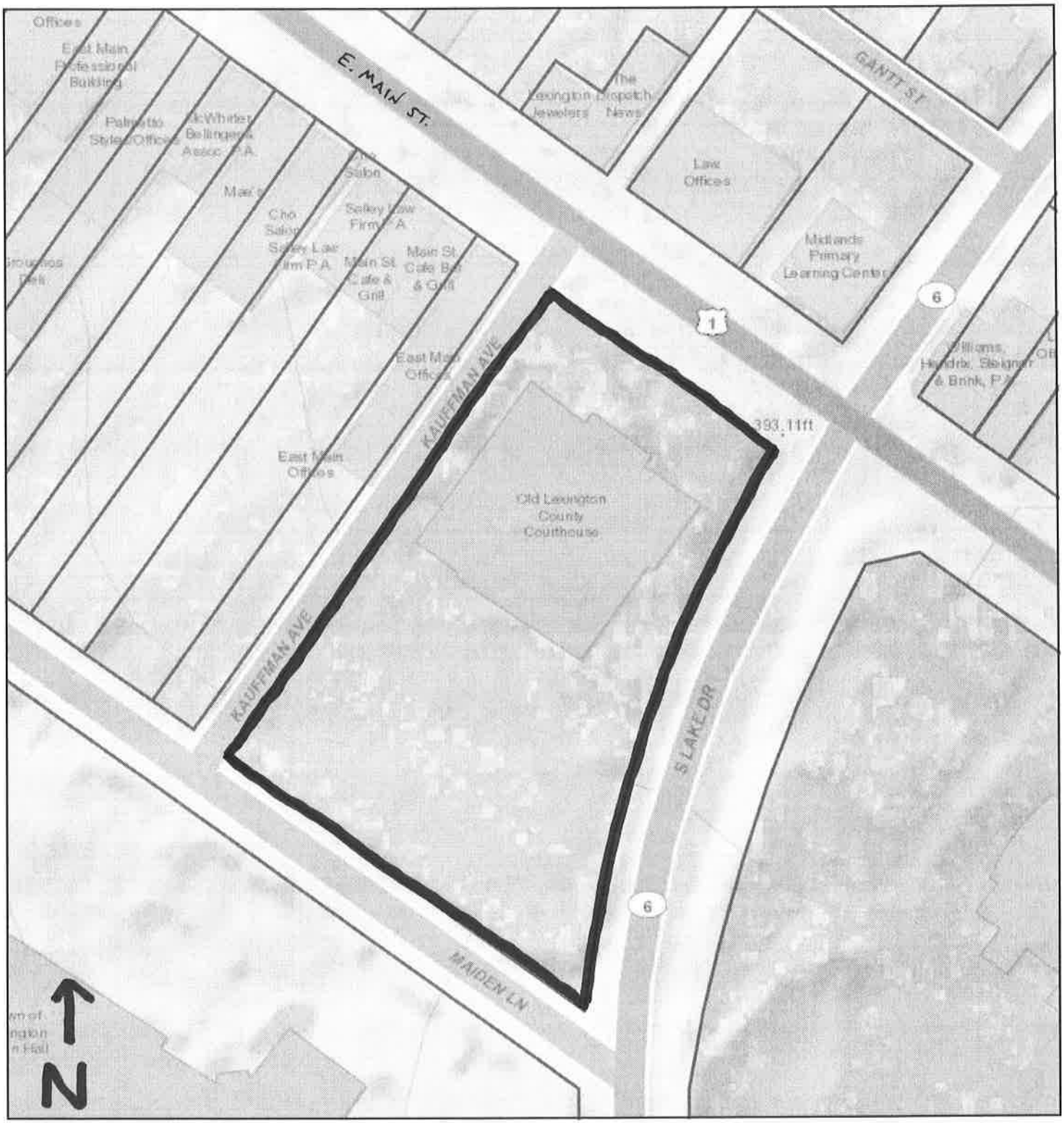
bing Maps

Unsaved places

1. **Lexington County Courthouse**
   139 East Main Street, Lexington, Lexington County, South Carolina 33.981164, -81.236283



Lexington County Courthouse



March 3, 2014

Property_8435

[redacted]

0 0.0075 0.015 0.03 mi

0 0.0125 0.025 0.05 km

1 inch = 79 feet

139 E. Main St., Lexington, Lexington Co., SC

XINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE

LEXINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE

LEXINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE
RED BANK
COLUMBIA
BATESBURG-LEESVILLE
APRIL 20
LAY PARK
www.

FIRST
FLOOR
ENTRANCE

LEXINGTON COUNTY
SUMMARY COURT CENTER
139 EAST MAIN STREET
RESERVED
4

LEXINGTON COUNTY
SUMMARY COURT CENTER
139 EAST MAIN STREET

LEXINGTON COUNTY
SUMMARY COURT CENTER
139 EAST MAIN STREET

EXIT

EXIT
EMPLOYEES ONLY

WOMEN

PROPER COURTROOM ATTIRE IS REQUIRED
NO SHORTS, TANK-TOPS, MINI-SKIRTS, ETC.)
YOU MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE
IF NOT DRESSED APPROPRIATELY
NO FOOD, DRINKS,
OR GUM ALLOWED
IN COURTROOM.
OCCUPANCY
BY MORE THAN
475
PERSONS IS
DANGEROUS &
UNLAWFUL
COURT ROOM
COURT ROOM

EXIT

DIRECTORY

WELCOME TO LEXINGTON COUNTY SUMMARY COURT

2ND FLOOR
MAIN COURTROOM

1ST FLOOR
CENTRAL TRAFFIC COURT
CENTRAL CDV COURT ADMIN.
LEXINGTON MAGISTRATE, JUDGE RAWL

GROUND LEVEL
PARKING LOT ACCESS

FOR ASSISTANCE, GO TO SUITE A

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY
PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION

JOHN M. CARMODY
FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

LEXINGTON COUNTY COURT HOUSE
1939

— LEXINGTON COUNTY —

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
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