1. NAME
   COMMON: Old Davidson County Courthouse
   AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: Main Street at Center Street
   CITY OR TOWN: Lexington (Fifth Congressional District)
   STATE: North Carolina
   CODE: 37
   COUNTY: Davidson
   CODE: 057

3. CLASSIFICATION
   CATEGORY (Check One)
   [ DISTRICT ] [ SITE ] [ STRUCTURE ] [ OBJECT ]
   [ BUILDING ]

   OWNERSHIP
   [ PUBLIC ]
   [ PRIVATE ]
   [ BOTH ]

   PUBLIC ACQUISITION:
   [ IN PROCESS ]
   [ BEING CONSIDERED ]

   STATUS
   [ OCCUPIED ]
   [ UNOCCUPIED ]
   [ PROTECTION WORK IN PROGRESS ]

   ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
   [ YES: ]
   [ RESTRICTED ]
   [ UNRESTRICTED ]

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   OWNER'S NAME:
   Davidson County Courthouse
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   West Center Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Lexington
   STATE: North Carolina
   CODE: 37

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
   Davidson County Courthouse
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   West Center Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Lexington
   STATE: North Carolina
   CODE: 37

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
   TITLE OF SURVEY:
   DATE OF SURVEY:
   [ ] FEDERAL [ ] STATE [ ] COUNTY [ ] LOCAL
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   CITY OR TOWN:
   STATE:  CO De  
   CODE:  D  

7. FOR NPS USE ONLY
   DATE:

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INSTRUCTIONS:

- Check one or more as applicable for Ownership:
  - [ PUBLIC ]
  - [ PRIVATE ]
  - [ BOTH ]

- Check one or more as Appropriate for Present Use:
  - [ AGRICULTURAL ]
  - [ COMMERCIAL ]
  - [ EDUCATIONAL ]
  - [ ENTERTAINMENT ]
  - [ GOVERNMENT ]
  - [ INDUSTRIAL ]
  - [ MILITARY ]
  - [ MUSEUM ]
  - [ RELIGIOUS ]
  - [ SCIENTIFIC ]
  - [ TRANSPORTATION ]
  - [ OTHER (SPECIFY) ]
  - [ COMMENTS ]

---

CODE:

- [ ] Davidson
- [ ] North Carolina
- [ ] 057
The old Davidson County Courthouse, built of stuccoed stone, is a superb temple-form building with a prostyle hexastyle portico. The slightly attenuated fluted Roman Corinthian columns support a well-executed entablature. Especially notable is the cartouche in the tympanum molded in high relief. Above the portico is an octagonal clock tower which rests on a low square plinth. The sides of the tower are marked by louvered round-headed arches, those parallel to the edges of the plinth being wider than those at the angles. At the top of the tower is a semispherical roof resting on a bold modillion cornice.

The only openings on the front wall of the building are the large central pedimented portal and a triple window with round arched heads above it. The great expanse of unbroken wall beneath the portico is a brilliant subtlety of design which increases the visual effect of the fine detail of the order.

The sides of the building are seven bays long with a round-headed window above a trabeated one in each bay. At either end the terminal bays are flanked by single fluted pilasters.

The rear elevation features a fully developed pediment which rests on a pilaster at each end. There is no ornament in the tympanum. On the first level is a wide central entrance with double doors, transom, and paneled soffit. This is flanked by long rectangular windows on either side. In the second story there are four windows with round arched heads.

All first floor windows have four-over-four sash while the second floor windows have six-over-four. The building rests on a high foundation of roughly dressed ashlar.

On the interior most of the original first floor arrangement has been changed, but many of the heavy door and window cases have survived. Across the front of the building runs a stair hall with broad flights of steps ascending at each end. These feature enormous newels and heavy turned balustrades. Each stair gives access on the floor above to a similar hall which runs along the rear of the courtroom. Above this hall is a gallery. From the hall two sets of double doors open into the rectangular courtroom in the center of the building. It has a sloping floor, five windows on each side divided by fluted pilasters, and a heavy entablature which carries around the room. Most of the interior fittings of the courtroom seem to date from at least two periods of remodeling.

Behind the rear wall of the courtroom are three small rooms. The two outer ones have fireplaces with simple Classic Revival mantels. In one of them is a most interesting security device in the form of a metal cage used no doubt to control the most belligerent offenders.
Davidson County, named for General William Lee Davidson, who was killed in the revolutionary war, was created from part of Rowan County on December 9, 1822. It was first decided to locate the county seat on the lands of Martin Owens. John Moore, chairman of the new county court, purchased 108 acres of land upon which the proposed county seat, Marion, was to be built. Many lots had already been sold at public auction when the people of nearby Lexington were able to have the selection of Marion as the county seat reevaluated and to persuade the legislature to change the county seat to Lexington. On March 23, 1824, Alexander Caldeleugh, Benjamin D. Roosaville, and Jesse Hargrave deeded to John Moore, for the benefit of the county, twenty-five acres in Lexington for fifty cents an acre. Profit from the sale of this land was to be used to build a courthouse and jail. People who had purchased lots at Marion were given their money back, and the lots were reconveyed to the original owners. By 1825 a courthouse was built in Lexington which served the county for over thirty years.

At the February term of court in 1856 it was ordered that a new courthouse for Lexington be built, and the court appointed five commissioners to superintend the location and building of the new courthouse. The building was constructed in the northwest corner of the public square. The square was divided into four parts by the four streets which originally ran north, south, east, and west from the former courthouse which stood in the center of the square. A monument to the Confederacy now stands near the site of the original courthouse. In 1918 the building was remodeled extensively. A new courthouse was constructed in 1959 on Center Street. The ground floor of the old courthouse is now used by a few government offices. The second story has been leased by the Davidson County Historical Society for use as a museum.

Though much of the original interior has been removed, the exterior of the old Davidson County Courthouse is one of the finest and most architectonic in the state. The many subtleties of its design, especially the great scale, splendid proportions, and detail of its heroic portico, make it one of the more important buildings of the Classic Revival in the South. There are many similar county courthouses but few that can equal it.
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2 Acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES:

STATE: North Carolina, Code: 37

STATE LIASON OFFICER CERTIFICATION:

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [X], State [], Local []

Name: Dr. H. G. Jones
Title: Director, State Department of Archives and History

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register
Old Davidson County Courthouse
Main Street at Center Street
Lexington, North Carolina

North Carolina State Highway Commission
Scale: 2"/1 mile
January 1, 1961

Latitude

Longitude

degrees minutes seconds
degrees minutes seconds

35° 49' 30"
80° 15' 13"