1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 200 North Kaufman Street
CITY OR TOWN: Mount Vernon
STATE: Texas
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
CODE: TX
COUNTY: Franklin
CODE: 159
ZIP CODE: 75457

1. 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 ( _ nationally) ( _ statewide) (x locally). ( __ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

Date

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:

(x) entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet.
(determined eligible for the National Register
See continuation sheet
(determined not eligible for the National Register

(x) removed from the National Register

(x) other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

1.18.06
5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public - Local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY: CONTRIBUTING

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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 = County Courthouse, Jail

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT = County Courthouse, Government Office

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals = Classical Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION = CONCRETE
WALLS = CONCRETE, STONE, STEEL
ROOF = ASPHALT, METAL
OTHER = METAL

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-9).
The 1912 Franklin County Courthouse is a 3-story sandstone Classical Revival building with full height columned and pedimented porticoes on two elevations. An octagonal, domed clock tower tops the cross-hipped roof. The interior is arranged around a cross axial corridor with a double stair leading from the south entry hall to the second story courtroom, balcony, and basement. Designed by Architect L.L. Thurmon, the Franklin County Courthouse resembles other courthouses designed by Thurmon, in particular the Jeff Davis County Courthouse. The courthouse is located on a corner and faces the open public square across the street. Next to the courthouse to the north is the two-story sandstone county jail, also built in 1912 and designed by Thurmon. The jail is a utilitarian design with few distinguishing architectural features. Essentially square in plan, the jail features a modified hip roof and a grid of bars on most of the windows. Also sharing the block with the courthouse and jail, but not included in the nomination, is a parking lot and a row of one story commercial buildings to the east.

Franklin County is a small northeast Texas county near the Arkansas and Oklahoma borders. Mount Vernon, the county seat, is located in the center of the county at the intersection of State Highways 37 and 60.

The courthouse square in Mount Vernon is an open city block. One and two story brick commercial buildings, mostly occupied by retail and local government offices, surround the square. The courthouse and jail are located on the block directly north of the square. The courthouse faces onto the square at the intersection of Kaufman and Dallas Streets. Directly behind the courthouse, facing onto Kaufman Street is the 1912 county jail. East of the courthouse and facing onto the square are three one-part commercial block brick buildings occupied by retail. The northeast corner of the block is occupied by a parking lot, which serves the courthouse and jail, but is not within the boundaries of this nomination.

Landscaping around the courthouse and jail consists of a grassy lawn with elm and pecan trees, native plants, and concrete walkways. The site slopes gently down toward the northwest. A few non-historic memorials dot the grounds including a Registered Texas Historical Landmark Plaque, a 1998 statue depicting an Indian and a soldier shaking hands, and a 1988 confederate soldiers memorial, which replaced an earlier memorial of an unknown date.

Because the courthouse stands on a corner, there are two main elevations, one facing west onto Kaufman and the other facing south onto Dallas and the public square. Although almost identical, the west elevation is the primary elevation architecturally because the portico is wider, having six rather than four columns. Because the square is across Dallas Street, however the south elevation is the most visible, and is considered by most to be the main entrance according to Mount Vernon resident Ray Loyd Johnson, "The courthouse faces west. Count
the columns. People have lived in Mount Vernon a lifetime and never realized this.” On the interior, the main hall with double stair leading to the courtroom is located at the south entrance.

The courthouse is a rectangular H plan with a portico filling in the recess on the west elevation. A cross-hipped roof forms the pediments over the entries and flat roofs with parapets form the corners. A domed cupola rises from the center of the roof punctuating the building. The tower houses a bell and has a clock face above each courthouse elevation.

The base of the bell/clock tower is octagonal with double pilasters at each corner. The eight sides contain arched openings, some with windows, others with louvered vents. The cornice, which separates the base form the dome, arches above the clock faces, creating a hood molding for the clocks. The metal domed roof is accented with ribs and topped with an octagonal finial.

All elevations of the courthouse are symmetrical, a key element of classicism. Columns are of the Tuscan order. Although the elements of a classical entablature are present, it is simplified, with only horizontal divisions and no applied ornament. The pediments are similarly unadorned with only windows in the peaks. Stonework on the three story building is used to divide the building horizontally; horizontal struck joints define the main floor while the raised basement and second floor have a smooth finish with flush joints. Windows are primarily 1/1 double hung with wood sashes and flat stone headers and sills. With very few exceptions, the original windows are intact.

The courthouse structure is steel reinforced concrete with smooth faced ashlar sandstone veneer forming the envelope. The columns and fascias are constructed of compound stone and the cornice and clock tower are framed in wood and clad in sheet metal. The cross gable roofs are covered in pressed metal roofing, while the flat parapet roofs are asphalt.

The west elevation sits atop a base of low basement windows. Three of these basement windows are the original 1/1 wood sash windows, while the two others on either side of the staircase have newer multi-light fixed pane windows. The concrete stair, framed by a solid concrete balustrade, leads to the main floor where six Tuscan columns and a pediment frame the entrance. Hidden from view is a basement entry door under the stairs. The portico projects from the building and the entry bay is recessed to form a wider porch area. The wood and glass double door entry has two horizontal recessed wood panels at the base with a solid light above. The transom window is divided corresponding to the double doors. Fenestration on this, and all other elevations, is symmetrical. The central recessed entry bay consists of two 1/1 light windows on either side of the door, and taller 1/1 light windows on the second floor corresponding to the courtroom. The window above the door is slightly wider than the others and has 2/2 lights to match the dimensions of the door. Beyond the

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1 Hicks, *A Walk Through Mount Vernon*, 97
recessed entry bay, the outer corners of the building consist of four 1/1 windows of equal height; two on the main floor and two on the second floor. A double 1/1 window occupies the pediment above the portico.

The south elevation is narrower than the west, but the layout is similar. The site slopes down slightly to the west so the basement windows on the west are longer than those on the east, which have been filled in. This elevation also contains a basement entry under the stairs. The concrete stair with solid concrete baluster leads to the portico, which is defined by four Tuscan columns. Although the portico projects from the body of the building, the elevation is flat, making the south portico narrower than the west. The door and transom are the same as those on the west elevation. Fenestration in the entry bay behind the portico consists of one 1/1 window on either side of the door with matching windows on the second floor flanking a double 1/1 window. The pediment on this elevation contains a small double 1/1 light window. The outer corners have three 1/1 light windows on the first and second floors.

The east elevation is long with a recessed central bay that corresponds in width to the portico on the west elevation. There is no entry on this elevation, although a gabled pediment above the recessed bay carries the portico motif to this elevation as well. Basement windows on this elevation have window wells and are therefore full-length 1/1 light windows. Fenestration is identical on the first and second floors, although the second story windows inside the recessed bay are taller than those on the first floor. The recess contains a double 1/1 light window in the center with two 1/1 light windows on either side. The outer corners of the elevation have two 1/1 light windows on each floor. The gable end has been clad in non-historic sheet metal and contains a round louvered vent.

The north elevation faces the jail. Although this elevation is also flat, a gable and pilasters approximate the porticos on the primary elevations. The basement has been excavated on this elevation and the basement windows are full-length 1/1 lights. A modern door to the basement has been installed to replace a first floor door, which is no longer accessible due to the excavation. On the first floor, the historic door remains at the center of the elevation, even though it is no longer in use. The door consists of a single wood door with three horizontal recessed panels below a window. Sidelights, which have been filled in, and a transom frame the door. The four pilasters divide the central portion of this elevation into three bays with the door at the center and 1/1 light windows in the outer bays. Beyond the pilasters fenestration consists of three narrow 1/1 light windows on the first floor with the same pattern repeated on the second floor except for shortened windows closest to the portico. The gable end is similar to that on the south elevation with a shortened double 1/1 light window.

**Interior**
The interior is arranged with a central north-south corridor with a double stair on the south and a smaller secondary stair at the north end. There is a full basement, two floors, and a partial third story balcony over the courtroom. Currently the courthouse basement contains offices of the County Tax Assessor-Collector, County Treasurer, County Commissioner, record storage, break-room, women’s restroom, janitor storage, elevator, and
equipment room. The first floor provides space for the County Judge and Commissioners’ Court, County Attorney, County Clerk, Justice of the Peace, record storage, men’s restroom, janitor storage, and elevator. The district courtroom occupies the entire central portion of the second floor with auxiliary rooms including the District Clerks Office, jury room, law library, and restrooms, in the north and south wings. A storage area on the north (originally the jury sleeping room) provides access to the clock/bell tower.

The basement is accessible via three exterior doors; entrances beneath the west and south stairs, and the north entrance made possible by excavation. The main corridor runs north-south with offices on either side. A secondary corridor leads from the west entrance to the central hall forming a T. The first, or main, floor corridor configuration is the same as the basement: a long north-south hall intersected by a corridor accessing the west door. The double stairs, located on the east and west side of the main hallway, service the basement, second floor, and balcony. A single stairway on the north side of the building services the basement, first and second floors.

In a 1972 remodel, many of the offices were given dropped ceilings, wood panel walls, and resilient flooring. However, most of the original finishes, such as pressed metal ceilings and longleaf pine floors remain intact underneath. Most of the original interior hardware and millwork remains and is in good condition; although much of the original faux wood graining has been painted over. Some original furnishings also remain, especially in the District Courtroom. The basement and first floor hallways still retain the original terrazzo flooring. Although many of the original brass lighting fixtures have been removed, a simple two bulb brass fixture remains in the main stair hall on the first floor. The original stairs are also still intact. All stairways are cast iron with an unpainted wood handrail, square recessed-panel newel posts, and baluster pattern of straight posts grouped into four with a scroll at the top and bottom.

The District Courtroom occupies the entire central part of the second floor with offices and storage rooms in the outer wings. In 1989 the courtroom was restored to its original design by removing the dropped ceiling exposing the original pressed tin ceiling, skylights, and the balcony, which had been enclosed. The judge’s bench occupies the north end of the room with the public entrance at the south, underneath the balcony. The courtroom has wood floors and wood pew style seating. The stairs continue to the courtroom balcony, which also has wood floors, bench seating, and a square craftsman style railing. Except for the balcony area, the courtroom has high, almost two story, ceilings with full-height windows on the east and west walls. The ceiling is pressed metal with an octagon and cross coffer pattern painted solid white. There is a twelve-pane art glass skylight at the center of the courtroom ceiling.

Jail

The jail has minimal architectural features and is a much more utilitarian building than the courthouse. Also completed in 1912, the jail is two stories and essentially square in plan except that the south third of the building is slightly narrower, creating a recess of approximately one foot that divides the east and west elevations. The asphalt shingle roof is a modified hip with a flat center and hipped gables on the east and west
sides. The exterior is unadorned smooth face ashlar sandstone. The windows, many of which still contain the original grid jail bars, have flat stone sills and no headers.

The main entrance is on the west, facing onto Kaufman Street. The elevation is not symmetrical; instead it is divided by the recess. The door is located approximately in the middle of the building, but is offset within the porch that covers it. The porch consists of a concrete floor, four wood box columns and a hipped roof. The door is at the south end of the porch with two unbarred, 1/1 wood windows on the north. Directly above the porch are two jail (barred) windows. The recessed portion, which accounts for approximately one third of the west elevation, consists of a single jail window on each floor.

The south elevation faces the courthouse. There is a door at the center of the first floor with jail windows on either side and three jail windows on the second floor. A wood fence masking the utilities also obscures part of the south first story window. A sign on the fence reads Old Jail Art Center, one of the building’s current uses.

The east elevation has no entrance. Like the west elevation it is divided by a recessed portion. There is a single jail window on each floor of the recessed (south) portion of the elevation. The north end contains two non-jail windows on the first floor, one 1/1 wood window and one that has been partially filled in around a small non-historic louvered window. Directly above are two jail windows.

The north elevation contains a door at the east end accessed by a non-historic wood-framed porch. The three first story windows on this elevation are all 1/1 non-barred windows while those on the second story are all jail windows.

The Franklin County jail moved to more modern facilities in 1993. Today offices for the County Agricultural Agent occupy the first floor. The second floor still contains jail cells, some of which were brought from the first county jail built in 1875. The upstairs is currently vacant but will be occupied by the Franklin County Arts Alliance, who plans to leave the cells intact. Some modifications were made to the first floor to convert it from living quarters and offices for the jailer, however these mostly consist of interior partitions and furnishings. The exterior of the building has undergone very few alterations other than some changes to the entry porches. The bars, a defining feature of the building have been left intact.

Despite some alterations, the original materials of the courthouse and jail remain intact and in good condition. This lends to their integrity of materials and workmanship. The exteriors have undergone only minor changes, and remarkably few changes have been made to the interior partitions, retaining integrity of the original design. The buildings have always been on the northwest corner of the square and therefore retain integrity of location. Finally, because downtown Mount Vernon maintains many of its early 20th century characteristics, the courthouse and jail retain integrity of setting and feeling.
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: Politics and Government, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1912-1955

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1912

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: L.L. Thurmon

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-10 through 8-14).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-15).

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
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:
The Franklin County Courthouse and Jail were both designed by L.L. Thurmon and completed in 1912. The courthouse is an excellent example of an early 20th century Classical Revival courthouse, while the jail is a much more utilitarian design. Although the jail is no longer used as a jail both buildings have served an important role in the historical development of Mount Vernon and Franklin County. Built after rail lines brought growth and prosperity to the region, the courthouse and jail replaced a smaller single building located on the public square. The courthouse continues to serve as the symbolic and political center of county activity. The 1912 courthouse and jail are nominated under criterion A in the area of government and criterion C in the area of architecture, at the local level of significance.

Franklin County in northeast Texas is among the smallest counties in the state. The county is long and narrow with its largest dimensions being 12-by-30 miles, placing Mount Vernon among the state's most accessible county seats. The land is heavily wooded in many areas and industries include hardwood production, poultry, livestock and some produce farming.

**Early Settlement in the Region**

Archeological evidence indicates that Indians occupied the area as early as the Late Archaic Period, around 1500 B.C. At the time of first European contact the Caddo Indians, an agricultural people with a highly developed culture, occupied the area. The Cherokee Trace, a Caddo Indian highway and part of the Cherokee Trail of Tears, runs along the eastern boundary of the county. In the early 19th century, the trail brought several Indian and European groups into the area, but none settled permanently.²

The first European settlement in the area came in the summer of 1813 at Jonesboro, just north of present day Franklin County. John Humphries claimed that he lived on the Cherokee Trace in what is now Franklin County since the summer of 1818. When Texas obtained independence in 1836, numerous citizens filed land affidavits in the new county seat at Clarksville to prove their land title. By the 1840's, most of the remaining land in the county had been claimed and settled.³

**Franklin County and Mount Vernon**

Franklin County was first a part of Red River County, one of the sixteen original counties in the Republic of Texas. In 1846, Titus County, which included present day Morris, Titus, Franklin Counties and part of Camp County, was formed out of Red River County. Franklin County was created on March 8, 1875, by an act of the Legislature and was named for Judge Benjamin C. Franklin, a District Judge during the Republic period and a San Jacinto veteran.⁴ The election for county seat was held April 30, 1875, with Mount Vernon winning out over two other communities. Col. Dan T. Bolin, a resident who

² "Franklin County" Handbook of Texas Online
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
chronicled the early days of Mount Vernon in a series of newspaper articles in 1925 wrote: “The entire county voted in Mount Vernon on that occasion and I am sure I have never seen as great a throng of men and boys in Mount Vernon, many of them from adjoining counties. There were 900 voters participating in this election.”

The town of Mount Vernon had been laid off in lots and blocks in 1849 on land donated by the Keith family. The block designated for a public square was not the geographic center of the 24 acre townsite, instead, it was selected because it was the highest point in town. The public square was an open area until Mount Vernon became the county seat and the first courthouse was built.

The First County Courthouses
When Mount Vernon was elected county seat, a wooden storehouse at the corner of Houston and Dallas Streets was donated by J.E. Brooks to be used as the courthouse until a courthouse could be built.

Construction on the courthouse and jail began almost immediately after the election, but progressed slowly. The jail was completed first in 1875 and the courthouse followed in 1878. Although built separately, the two ultimately formed one building, located on the north side of the public square.

Col. Dan Bolin, described the construction of the jail:
After the new officers were sworn in, one of the first official acts the five justices of the peace...did was to let a contract for the building of a new jail. Mr. John Brem of this county was awarded the contract at a cost of $1,600; it was a wooden structure, two stories high, with a stairway going up on the outside at the west end, with two rooms on the lower floor; those two rooms were used for the county clerk and sheriff’s offices until the new courthouse was built.

Bolin also recalled the building of the courthouse:
Our commissioners court in the May term of 1878 let the contract for the building for a new courthouse. Mr. W. J. Carter of Mount Pleasant, Texas, brother-in-law of C. C. Vaughn of this town, was awarded the contract. Mr. Vaughn tells me it was at a cost of $5,500.00...Mr. Carter burned his brick near the northeast corner of our city’s beautiful park; while his brick were drying they were spread out all over where the park is now situated. The courthouse was near enough completed that he (Mr. Carter) gave a grand ball in it on the 24th of December, which

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5 Early Days in Franklin County, 5
6 Commissioner’s Court Minutes, v.C, p.154
7 A Walk Through Mount Vernon, 77
8 “Franklin County Courthouse” RTHL file
9 Early Days in Franklin County, 14-15
was largely attended by the young people of this and adjoining towns. Everybody seemed to be proud of our new courthouse.¹⁰

Mount Vernon resident Judge R. T. Wilkinson recalled that the early courthouse was “... heated by wood fires, lighted by oil lamps, cooled by nature, and watered from a well.”¹¹ Historic maps of the courthouse show the jail was attached to the northwest corner of the courthouse.

Also located on the square at that time were three wells where townspeople drew their water every morning.¹² A 1934 article in the Optic-Herald newspaper described the early public square:

A bunch of hogs wallowed in the waste water around the wells on the public square.
Mischievous boys would pour high-life in to make life interesting. Cows, calves, and horses – everyone kept plenty of each – were allowed to run at large.¹³

A picket fence surrounding the courthouse kept the livestock out of the buildings and raised walkway leading to the courthouse helped keep people out of the mud.

Along with a courthouse and jail, the late 1880s also brought two rail lines through the county. The East Line and Red River Rail was constructed through the southern part of the county in 1886 and the following year the St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas rail came across the center, turning Mount Vernon into a shipping center. The county was largely rural and the economy based on cotton and corn farming. The rail provided access to markets and the countywide population grew accordingly.¹⁴ Between 1884 and 1890, the population of the county seat grew from 350 to 700.

Current County Courthouse and Jail

By the early twentieth century, the courthouse and jail soon became outdated and were in disrepair. By 1910 the commissioners had to decide whether they would repair the old building or build a new one. Funding was problematic, and became a controversy ultimately settled by the Texas Supreme Court. On August 9, 1910 the commissioners voted to contract architect L.L. Thurmon to design a new courthouse and jail. Because the commissioners had proceeded without holding a bond election, public opposition to the project grew until the commissioners finally agreed to an election on November 18, 1910. Soon after, the Commissioners changed their minds and cancelled the election on December 7. At that same meeting they rescinded the contract with Thurmon, giving the contract for design to Andrew J. Bryan, a decision they reversed later that month, deciding again on Thurmon. The commissioners had decided that instead of holding an election they would finance the courthouse with warrants and began

¹⁰ Ibid., 19
¹¹ Judge R. T. Wilkinson, interview
¹² Mount Vernon Optic-Herald
¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ “Franklin County” Handbook of Texas Online
advertising for construction bids. Because there were no funds for a new building the warrants allowed the county to pay the contractor with a bond that would collect six percent interest per year, and would be funded by property taxes. C.C. Dupree, a former sheriff and newspaper owner, filed an injunction to halt construction arguing that this was not a legal means of funding. The case went to the Civil Court of Appeals in Texarkana, which ruled commissioners were not required to call an election for issuing bonds to construct facilities. The decision was appealed but the Texas Supreme Court decided on December 8, 1911 not to overturn. This legal case succeeded in clearing up what had been a grey area of Texas law and became a legal precedent. That same month the Franklin County Commissioners began considering bids for their new courthouse and jail as designed by Thurmon.

Instead of being located on the square where the original courthouse and jail had been, the new buildings were built across the street and the square once again became a public open space. The site of the current county courthouse was occupied by a blacksmith shop from 1878 until the new courthouse and jail were built. Upon completion of the new courthouse the old courthouse was torn down. The jail was removed to a residential lot on South Kaufman Street where it has been incorporated into a barn and still stands today. Cells from the 1878 jail were removed and installed in the upstairs of the new building, where they remain today.

Architect L.(Leslie) L. Thurmon, was a Louisiana native who had also spent time in Georgia before coming to Texas. He practiced in Dallas between 1910 and 1915 during which time he designed county courthouses in Mason, Kinney (NR 2004), Jeff Davis (NR 2002) (all 1910), Floyd (1911) and Henderson (1913). He may also be responsible for the 1909 Carson County courthouse, which is no longer standing. All of Thurmon’s county court houses are Classical Revival designs with clock towers, monumental full height porticos and symmetrical plans. Thurmon often reused the same plans, modifying them slightly from county to county.

Thurmon was far from the only architect at the time rendering courthouses in the Classical Revival style. Out of Texas’s 254 extant county courthouses, 100 are built in the Classical Revival Style. The style, particularly when topped with a dome, came to symbolize Republican self-government and was the dominant form for government buildings in the early twentieth century. The use of domed clock towers decreased in courthouses after 1920 but Classical Revival courthouses continued to be built even after World War II.

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15 A Walk Through Mount Vernon, 97
16 Ibid, 97
17 Jeff Davis County Courthouse National Register Nomination
18 Henry, 76
The only other Thurman courthouse to have a basement is Henderson County. It appears that the basement may not have been included in the original plans for Franklin. In January of 1912 the commissioners approved a basement addition for $13,000 more than the original bid. The courthouse and jail were completed by November of 1912 at a total cost of $55,000 including furnishings.

The courthouse is still in use today, but the 1912 jail was replaced in 1993 with a larger, more modern facility. The 1912 jail now houses offices of the Franklin County Agricultural Department and Agent. The cells on the upper floor remain. The Franklin County Arts Alliance plans to incorporate the cells into an art gallery.

For its historic and current role in the political development of Franklin County, the courthouse and Jail are nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A in the area of politics at the local level of significance. The courthouse is nominated under criterion C in the area of architecture as a good local example of the Classical Revival style.
Works Cited
Commissioners Court Minutes of Franklin County

Deed Records of Franklin County


Franklin County Courthouse Master Plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect


Hicks, B. F. Early Days in Franklin County (1998)

Hicks, B. F. A Walk Through Mount Vernon (2000).

Mount Vernon Optic-Herald, October 12, 1934.

Judge R. T. Wilkinson, oral interview by B. F. Hicks and handwritten note (date not available).

Jeff Davis County Courthouse National Register Nomination

“Franklin County Courthouse” Registered Texas Historic Landmark file

Texas Almanac (1999).
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES
1.

Zone Easting Northing
14 292917 3674501

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Mount Vernon Block 2, Lots 4 and 5. The courthouse is not located on a dedicated courthouse block, it shares the block with retail buildings and a parking lot which are outside the boundaries of this nomination.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION Nomination includes all property historically associated with the buildings.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Gerald “Jerry” W. Hubbell, Judge, with assistance from Hannah Vaughan, THC staff

ORGANIZATION: Franklin County

DATE: July 19, 2005

STREET & NUMBER: 200 North Kaufman

TELEPHONE: 903-537-2342 x2

CITY OR TOWN: Mount Vernon

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 75457

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-16 through Map 17)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-32)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheet Figure-18 through Figure 31)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Judge Gerald Hubbell, Franklin County, Texas

STREET & NUMBER: 200 North Kaufman Street

TELEPHONE: 903-537-2342

CITY OR TOWN: Mount Vernon

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 75457
Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Map 1  1849 Plat map of Mount Vernon showing Public Square
Map 2 1910 Site Map showing old courthouse and jail on public square
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 18

Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 1 Site Plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 2 First floor plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 3  Second floor plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 4  Third floor plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 5 Basement plan, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 6  West elevation, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 7 South elevation, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 8  East elevation, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Figure 9 North elevation, Gerald B. Bratz, Architect
Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 10  Southwest elevation 1911
Figure 11  Southwest elevation c.1912
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 29

Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 12 Southwest elevation c. 1930
Figure 13 Jail First Floor Plan

Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas
Franklin County Courthouse and Jail
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

Figure 14 Jail Second Floor Plan
Franklin County Courthouse
Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas
Photographed by Judge Gerald "Jerry" W. Hubbell
October 2005
Negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission

Photo 1
West elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 2
South elevation
Camera facing north

Photo 3
Northeast oblique
Camera facing southwest

Photo 4
Jail, west elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 5
Jail, southeast oblique
Camera facing northwest
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Franklin County Courthouse and Jail

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Franklin

DATE RECEIVED: 12/07/05
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/11/06
DATE OF PENDING LIST: 12/27/05
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 05001542

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 1/18/06 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

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.
FRANKLIN CO. COURTHOUSE & JAIL
MOUNT VERNON, FRANKLIN CO, TEXAS
PHOTO 2
FRANKLIN CO. COURTHOUSE + JAIL
MOUNT VERNON, FRANKLIN CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 4
FRANKLIN CO. COURTHOUSE & JAIL
MOUNT VERNON, FRANKLIN CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 5
TO: Linda McClelland  
National Register of Historic Places

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

RE: Franklin County Courthouse, Mount Vernon, Franklin County, Texas

DATE: December 5, 2005

The following materials are submitted regarding the Franklin County Courthouse:

- Original National Register of Historic Places form
- Photographs
- USGS map

COMMENTS:

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