



# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Mathews County Courthouse Square is a collection of six eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings reflecting the growth of the county since 1790, when the county was set off from adjacent Gloucester County.

The courthouse, in the northeast corner of the square, is a T-shaped, Flemish-bond brick building constructed in 1792-95 by Richard Billups, the builder of a number of distinctive houses in and around the village. The leg of the T is one-and-one-half stories high and contains the courtroom. The one-story arms join the main block at the lower (eastern) end of the courtroom, and each contains a single room. The entrances to the building, one into each section, are at the east end. The intersecting gable of the courtroom section is treated as a pediment and is provided with a three-part, semicircular window with intersecting tracery, Billups' trademark. The three doors are the only other openings in the facade. Over the central door, there is a rectangular transom with muntins radiating from a central point, while the other doors have plain transoms. Late nine-over-nine sashes are used in each of the building's windows. Two gabled dormers, with six-over-six sashes, fluted pilasters and open pediments each containing a blind fanlight, are located on each slope of the courtroom roof. There is a small interior end chimney on each of the three sections. A small brick room has recently been built at the rear of each of the arms of the T. The interior of the courthouse contains no original trim; what is there is mostly Georgian-style stock woodwork of modern origin.

South of the courthouse is the clerk's office, built in 1859 by William H. Brown. It is a three-bay, one-story structure built of brick laid in five-course American bond. It has six-over-six sashes, original metal shutters on the windows and doors, and semi-exterior end chimneys. A heavy partition with an iron door separates the smaller records room from the main room of the building.

Directly west of the clerk's office is the sheriff's office, formerly the jail. It is a single-cell, two-bay building with a Flemish-bond front and three-course American bond sides and rear, and a stepped water table. The present flue is a late nineteenth-century replacement of the original chimney. Strap-iron bars remain on the windows.

Along the south side of the square is the county office building. Built of brick, the comparatively long structure is a drab 1950s essay in the Colonial style. It has nine bays with two-bay cross-wings framing the central five bays with a centered, oversized Classical doorway.

West of the office building is the "Old Jail," now a furnace room. It is a two-bay, two-story, five-course American bond building with a corbelled brick cornice. The roof and fenestration of the mid-nineteenth-century building have been heavily altered in the course of its adaptation to its present use.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES	Courthouse: 1792-1795 Clerk's Office: 1859	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Courthouse: Richard Billups Clerk's Office: William H. Brown
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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mathews County Courthouse Square is a handsome, well-integrated complex of buildings and monuments which spans the history of the county, and which reflects its growth and the events which have shaped its citizens' lives. The T-shaped courthouse, the first and only courthouse the county has had, is particularly noteworthy as the oldest of the group and as the work of Richard Billups, the major builder-architect in Mathews County in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Mathews County was set off from Gloucester County in 1790 and was named in honor of Colonel Thomas Mathews, a local Revolutionary War hero. In December of that year the county justices were instructed to meet at the house of Thomas Williams to decide upon a central location for the courthouse and to arrange for the erection of public buildings. By 1792, the county sheriff was making payments to Richard Billups for work on the building as it progressed. Billups was well qualified for the work, having built several large houses in and around the courthouse area. Like the courthouse itself, they all bear his trademark, a distinctive three-part lunette with intersecting tracery, set in a cross-gable. It is not certain when Billups finished the work on the courthouse, but payments were being made as late as 1795. Billups himself was sheriff in 1794.

The jail, now the sheriff's office, may have been built at the same time as the courthouse and the original clerk's office. The latter was so decrepit by the late 1850s that commissioners were appointed to contract for the building of a new one, the present structure. The work was undertaken by William H. Brown, and by March 1859, the commissioners reported that the office was completed except for whitewashing the interior. They considered the building to be "fully fireproof and built in a substantial manner according to contract," except for a leak in the roof and the fact that "the floor has sunk," defects which the contractor agreed to remedy.

Additions of a library in 1930 and of the county office building in the mid-twentieth century are the only modern alterations to the square.

DTU

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Mason, Polly Cary, ed. Records of Gloucester County. Newport News: 1948.  
Mathews County Order Book G.

Street, Elwood. "Wellsprings of Democracy in Virginia, No. 17, Courthouse of Mathews County," Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dec. 21, 1941.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Approximately one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 8	3 82 9 9 0	4, 1 4, 3 5, 6, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

November 1976

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

221 Governer Street

(804) 786-3143

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Richmond

Virginia

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE DEC 21 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
1968, 1969, 1973 1975 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
Richmond, Virginia

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET #2 ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

In the northwest corner of the square is the Mathews County Library, a one-story, five-bay, common-bond brick building with interior end chimneys and a Roman Doric portico. It was built in 1930.

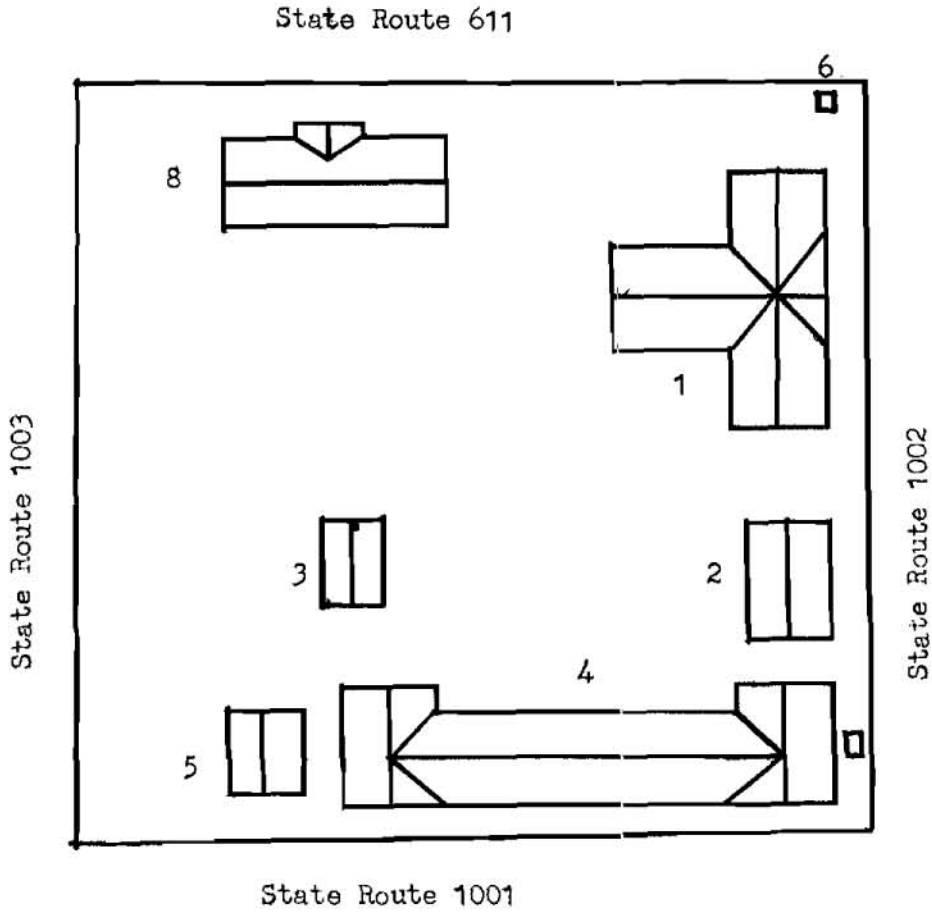
Several monuments occupy the square, notably the Confederate monument in the northeast corner, the 1928 Fort Cricket Hill monument at the southeast corner, and a World War I cannon at the center of the green.

DTU

MATHEWS COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE  
Mathews County, Virginia

Sketch Map - Not to Scale

- 1 - Courthouse
- 2 - Clerk's Office
- 3 - Sheriff's Office
- 4 - County Office Building
- 5 - Old Jail/ Furnace
- 6 - Confederate Monument
- 7 - Fort Cricket Hill Monument
- 8 - Library



4145

5758 IV NW  
(WARE NECK)

USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24,000)  
Mathews, Va. 1965

MATHEWS COUNTY COURTHOUSE SQUARE  
Mathews County, Virginia

UTM References:  
18/382990/4143560

4143

CARDINAL 0.2 MI

4142

25'

4141

