OCONEE COUNTY COURTHOUSE HISTORY

There were two courthouses in Watkinsville, built in 1806 and 1849, when it served as seat of government for Clarke County. When Oconee County was created in 1875, Watkinsville was designated county seat. A new courthouse was built that same year. The current brick courthouse, built by the Project Works Administration, was completed in 1939 and has undergone several renovations since, the latest being in 1998, when a courthouse addition also was constructed at the rear of the 1939 structure. Also in the 1990s, a county government annex was built on Ga. 15 just south of Watkinsville.

The legislation creating Oconee County designated Watkinsville as county seat (Ga. Laws 1875, p. 109). Settled around 1800, Watkinsville was named for Augusta lawyer Robert Watkins, who compiled Georgia’s first collection of statutory laws. It was designated county seat of Clarke County in 1802 (Ga. Laws 1802, p. 57). An act of Nov. 24, 1806 provided for three town commissioners with governmental powers (Ga. Laws 1806, p. 5). Though making no specific reference to incorporation, this act was the first to provide for a Watkinsville town government -- and for reasons cited below probably should be considered as the basis for de facto incorporation. Acts of 1815 and 1816 (Ga. Laws 1815, p. 76 and 1816, p. 52) extended the authority of town commissioners,...