

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JUL 10 1984

date entered AUG 23 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Tucker County Courthouse and Jail

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number First Street and Walnut Street, not for publication

city, town Parsons vicinity of

state West Virginia code 54 county Tucker code 093

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Tucker County Commission

street & number Tucker County Courthouse

city, town Parsons vicinity of state West Virginia 26287

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tucker County Courthouse

street & number First Street and Walnut Street

city, town Parsons vicinity of state West Virginia 26287

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Tucker County Courthouse at Parsons stands on city lots 7 and 8 at the corner of First Street (U.S. Routes 219 and 72) and Walnut Street, in the center of a small community in rural and mountainous northeastern West Virginia. Adjacent to, and west of, the courthouse is the "jail and jailors residence." Built of red brick with stone appointments, this 2-story structure is a significant dependency of the courthouse. It was customary in many West Virginia counties at the turn-of-the-century for jailors and/or sheriffs to reside in an official residence, often adjacent to or part of, the neighboring county courthouse. The Tucker County buildings (courthouse and sheriff's residence/jail) are particularly fine, well-preserved examples of this associative tradition.

The Tucker County Courthouse (1898-1900) is a massive red, pressed brick structure combining dominant style elements of the Flemish Renaissance and Romanesque Revivals. Flanking the massive entrance portal of rock-faced stone are two towers. The principal tower, 4 stories in height, is capped with a steeply pitched 4-sided roof pierced with Gothic-style wall dormers containing clock faces. The subsidiary tower to the right of the entrance portal is 2 and ½ stories high and exhibits well defined brick eaves corbeling beneath a conical roof adorned with small hipped dormer vents. The whole of the well preserved building is appointed with contrasting stone voussoirs, label moldings, belt courses, and pressed or cast metal coping. The vertical massing of the structure and its Romantic styling recalling the medieval themes favored by Victorian builders lends the Tucker County Courthouse significance as an area example of Victorian eclecticism.

Unusual in West Virginia is the architect's use of curvilinear gables (those facing First Street and Walnut Street). Such elements are Baroque in spirit and recall American fascination with European historical styles; e.g., the Spanish Colonial and Flemish Renaissance revivals.

The "jail and jailor's residence" (1896), several years older than the courthouse, is a large red brick, 2-story modified rectangle with hipped roof and rear ell. Its principal architectural features are its stone appointed entrance porch, stone cornice running the width of the front elevation at the first story level, and a hipped wall dormer with an enriched cornice. The residence/jail, like the courthouse, is eclectic in design with Renaissance and Romanesque features present in window openings, roof massing and carved decoration. Corbeled chimneys that rise high above the roof are additional Victorian - era elements of interest that are currently (1984) well preserved.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Local history		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

**Specific dates** 1898-1900      **Builder/Architect** Courthouse: Frank P. Milburn, architect  
P.O. Shrake, builder  
**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Jail: Franzeim, Giesey & Ferris, Arch.  
William D. Bumgarner, builder

The Tucker County Courthouse at Parsons, West Virginia, is significant because it is a well-preserved example of late 19th-century public architecture in West Virginia. The building and its period dependency, the jail and jailor's/ sheriff residence, were constructed within several years of one another; they survive from a time when many counties in West Virginia built separate or detached residences for jailors and/or sheriffs that also contained the county jail. Both the courthouse and residence/jail were designed by architectural firms that were prominent in West Virginia at the time. Relating to the history of the Tucker County courthouse is the significant story of the rivalry between the county towns of St. George and Parsons and how the county court came to reside for all time at Parsons.

The courthouse at Parsons is an especially commanding structure in a small-town setting. The building's high degree of architectural and structural integrity reveal much about ideas of late 19th century design and construction. Exterior pressed brick, stone banding, and appointments of stone rustication enliven the elevations facing First Street and Walnut Street. The edifice's striking sense of verticality is an effect created by high-pitched roofs, both conical and pyramidal, by tall window openings (flat-headed and arched), and by ornaments of cast and pressed metals serving as finials, coping and solid balustrades. Few courthouses in West Virginia feature better preserved design features of high-style Victorian-era public architecture.

The Tucker County Courthouse was designed by architect Frank Pierce Milburn (1868-1926), an architect of considerable importance who practiced in the southeastern United States and in Washington, D.C., during the late 19th and early 20th century. Two of his West Virginia courthouses are found in McDowell County and Berkeley County.

The jail and "jailor's residence" are combined in a single structure that remains significant for its relationship to the courthouse; it is also a well preserved example of public residential architecture (1896) of the late 19th century designed by the prominent Wheeling, West Virginia, firm of Franzheim, Giesey and Ferris. The architects of this partnership were all talented, but Mr. Franzheim achieved particular prominence in West Virginia. In addition to the jail at Parsons, a substantial yet modest brick structure of late 19th-century eclecticism, Franzheim contributed to other outstanding buildings including the Fayette County Courthouse and the Vance Memorial Chapel in Wheeling.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

County Order Books; 4, pp. 243, 391, 409-10, 414, 503; 5, pp. 3- 5.  
Friend, Ferrell. "The County Seat War." Charleston Gazette-Mail, Sept. 25, 1977.  
Morgan, Maxine. "Historic Properties Inventory Form." Oct. 10, 1983 (Historic Preservation Unit)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3/4 acre

Quadrangle name Parsons, WV

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7
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6	1	4	0	8	0
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4	3	2	8	1	4	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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E 

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D 

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F 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Inclusive of City lots 4,5,6,7 & 8.

Bounded to the N. by First Street, to the E. by Walnut Street, to the S. by Second Street, and to the W. by an alley (188 ft. x 120 ft.)

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

Historic Preservation Unit

organization Department of Culture and History date April 4, 1984

street & number Capitol Complex, The Cultural Center telephone 304/348-0240

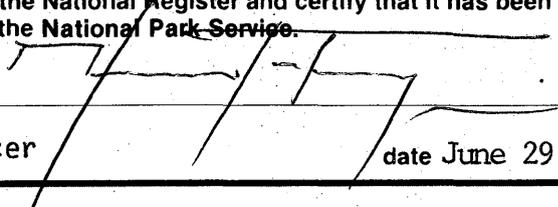
city or town Charleston state West Virginia 25305

# 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 State Historic Preservation Officer date June 29, 1984

For NPS use only

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

date 8/23/84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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date entered

Tucker County Courthouse, Parsons, Tucker County, West Virginia

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

The county seat at Parsons, Tucker County, was not always the established location of the county court. Its legitimacy as county seat was actually secured in a bizarre incident often referred to in local history as the "County Seat War." While intracounty rivalries are not rare in American history, the competitive interests of the county communities of St. George, which was selected as the county seat in 1856 when Tucker County was formed from part of the vast territory of Randolph County, and Parsons, a growing lumber town to the south, are worthy of note. The competitive "calm" in the county irrupted in 1893 with the "fly-by-night" seizure of the county records and the forced removal of the court by a gang of Parsons residents who simply rode into town and rode out with everything of official import. In the words of Vernon Shahan, a citizen of St. George, (as reported in the Parsons Advocate and later summarized by Ferrell Friend in the Charleston Gazette): "During the night of August 1, 1893, a group of prominent citizens and hoodlums from our neighboring town of Parsons zoomed into our thriving community with road wagons and on foot and literally stole our established county seat and moved it to Parsons."

The town of St. George, settled in 1776 (and the oldest community in the county), never regained its former prominence. With the construction of the magnificent brick courthouse at Parsons in the years 1898-1900, the flickering hope that the county seat might once again come to St. George was lost forever.