

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Mineral County Courthouse
other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: 150 Armstrong Street not for publication: N/A
city/town: Keyser vicinity: N/A
state: West Virginia code: WV county: Mineral County code: 057 zip: 26726

3. 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.)

[Signature] _____ Date 7-21-05
Susan M. Pierce, Deputy SHPO

West Virginia Division of Culture and History
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 Certifying Official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of Keeper: Edouard H. Beall Date of Action: 9.7.05

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
	2	objects
1	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: County Courthouses of West Virginia

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Current Functions

GOVERNMENT=County Courthouse

GOVERNMENT=County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE VICTORIAN = Romanesque Revival

Materials

foundation: stone

roof: asphalt shingle, slate, copper

walls: brick, stone

other: wood

Narrative Description

See Continuation sheet

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 values, 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.

Name of Property

County and State

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Politics and Government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1868-1955

Significant Dates

1868; 1894; 1938

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Sims, C.G., architect

Walton, I.B., builder

Franzheim, Edward B. and Geisey, Millard F., architects

Fredlock, E. J., builder

Blundon, J. Paul, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(see continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_____ 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

_____ Other State agency

_____ Federal agency

_____ Local government

_____ University

_____ Other

Name of Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References

Quad Map Name: Keyser Quadrangle

17 465700 4323680

Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(See continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(See continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alan Rowe and Erin Riebe (WV SHPO) with Barbara E. Rasmussen
organization: Historic Preservation and Research **date:** June 2003
street & number: 224 Wilson Avenue **telephone:** (304) 292-7652
city or town: Morgantown **state:** WV **zip code:** 26501

Property Owner

name: Mineral County Commission
street & number: 150 Armstrong Street **telephone:** (304) 788-3924
city or town: Keyser **state:** WV **Zip code:** 26726

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Section number 7

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Location and Setting

The Mineral County Courthouse is located in Keyser, Mineral County, West Virginia. Keyser, the county seat, has a population of less than 10,000 residents and is located along the Potomac River at the junction of U.S. 220 and State Route 46. The courthouse is situated on a small lot along Armstrong Street with parking along the rear and two side elevations. To the front of the building is a grassy lawn with a few trees, a flag pole, and two noncontributing memorials.

Description

Courthouse **1868, 1894, 1938-41** **contributing**
Exterior

The Mineral County Courthouse, as it appears today, is the compilation of three eras of construction. The original section of the courthouse is a two-and-one-half story, brick building was completed in 1868. This original section once featured a front-gable roof with cornice returns and a centered entrance, raised above grade. The rear elevation gable end is still visible with a centered, exterior chimney raised above the roof line. The side elevations feature tall, arched window openings (now filled with glass block) as well as brick paneled pilasters and corner quoins.

A Romanesque-Revival addition on the main elevation of the courthouse was completed in 1894. This three-story section is constructed of brick and rusticated stone and has a low-pitched hipped roof with a brick chimney on each corner extending above the roof line. The symmetrical facade features a centered tower topped with a pyramidal roof. An arched entrance is centered on the tower. It has replacement double doors and transom. Above the entrance, on the second story, are three fixed windows, one of which is enclosed, separated by simple pilasters. The third story of the tower features a pair of one-over-one, double-hung sash replacement windows and an arched transom with stone surrounds and keystone. A large circular vent with decorative stone surround is located above the third story and is repeated on the side elevations of the tower.

In addition to the tower, the 1895 addition features a stone base and corner quoins. Each story has a pair of one-over-one, double-hung sash replacement windows. The third-story windows are arched with a keystone. This pattern is carried out to each side of the tower as well as each side elevation of the front addition. A cornice of decorative brickwork tops each elevation.

Small, two-story, brick additions were constructed to each side elevation of the original building as well as the rear elevation c.1955. These simple additions lack any decorative architectural characteristics. They have flat roofs and six-over-six, double-hung sash windows.

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Interior

The first floor of the Mineral County Courthouse is made up of several offices, storage spaces, and equipment rooms. A wide, centered set of stairs that lead up from the front entrance to the second floor. To each side of the staircase are offices with original paneled doors with transoms. Centered on the second floor is the original entrance with paneled side walls and a simple transom. A vault, records room, and small office spaces are located beyond the door. The courtroom, along with the judges chambers and law library, are situated to the rear of the second floor.

The courtroom displays a low-pitched gable ceiling with exposed rafters, decorative brackets, new acoustical tiles, and suspended fluorescent lighting. The mahogany judges bench is situated to along the southeast wall of the room accented with large mahogany panels. Flanking the bench is a pair of pilasters topped with a decorative cornice. Jury seating is situated in the south corner of the room. A solid wood bannister separates the court area from the gallery which contains four rows of bench seating. In the 1940s a balcony overlooking the courtroom was closed off and made into office space.

The third floor, reached by a narrow stair case from the center of the second floor, is made up of additional office space. It covers only the third floor of the 1895 section and the front, or northwest, section of the original building.

Veteran's Memorial

c.1950

Noncontributing

A stone veteran's memorial situated on the front lawn commemorates local veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korea War, and Vietnam. The monument is approximately five feet wide and four feet tall. It was moved to the courthouse in 1967 from a park and is therefore noncontributing.

Memorial to Law Enforcement

2004

Noncontributing

A memorial dedicated to the memory of local law enforcement officials is also situated to the front of the courthouse building. The stone memorial is approximately five feet wide and four feet tall.

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Statement of Significance

The Mineral County courthouse is eligible for the National Register under *Criterion A: Politics and Government* for its local significance with Ritchie County's political history. The building is associated with the political tendency to form new counties in western Virginia as populations increased. This demonstrated a desire on the part of rural and remote citizens to bring the institutions of local government to their communities. The courthouse is a representative of that trend. Citizens desired close access to civil government and were hopeful of economic and political benefits that a county seat would bring to the area. The Mineral County Courthouse is the material evidence of the county's population growth and a symbol of the residents' values.

The courthouse is also eligible under *Criterion C: Architecture* for its Romanesque Revival style of architecture in a once rural setting. In particular, the courthouse is associated with the industrial career of U.S. Senator Henry Gassaway Davis, of West Virginia, who founded the town, pressed for the formation of Mineral County, and donated land for the courthouse square. The original architecture of the building quickly yielded to more sophisticated tastes as the career of Davis and his brother, Thomas B. Davis, guided the fortunes of Mineral County and much of the nation's coal and railroad industries. The period of significance is 1868, the date of construction, to 1955, corresponding to the National Register's fifty-year cut-off date.

Brief History

(see *County Courthouses of West Virginia MPS*, 2004 for full context)

New Creek, now Keyser, was an old village with a long and storied history tied to exploration, settlement and the Civil War. White settlement there dates from the middle of the French and Indian war, when it was called Paddytown, after settler Patrick McCarthy. The area was part of the vast Northern Neck estate of Lord Fairfax, who had it surveyed in 1848, to locate the source of the Potomac River, which was the western limit of his holdings. The site was found by a survey party which included sixteen-year-old George Washington.

The formation of Mineral County, originally part of Hampshire County, did not come until Maryland native and railroad brakeman Henry Gassaway Davis began his substantial industrial enterprises in the region. Davis had arrived in the community of New Creek with the B&O Railroad prior to the Civil War. After arriving in New Creek he left his position as a brakeman to begin a business selling railroad ties to the Union Army.

By 1865 Davis had acquired all of the land at the junction of New Creek and Patterson Creek. By sheer force of will he drove through state legislation forming a new county in the industrial section of Hampshire County. Far smaller than the requisite 400 square miles, Davis made his

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case for a new county by quietly encouraging those state lawmakers who desired “punishment” of the former slave-owners of Hampshire County by reducing its territory. Hampshire County had been rebellious during the late war, so the division was embraced as a way to quiet discontent there. Davis and his colleagues wanted Hampshire County to be divided so there would be a courthouse nearer to his business enterprises in New Creek and Piedmont.

The state legislature was willing to accommodate the railroad builder’s request. Although he had been apolitical during the Civil War, Davis soon represented the county in the West Virginia State Legislature, but after one term he won a U.S. Senate seat. Davis’s brother Thomas was one of the commissioners appointed to run the line between the new county of Mineral, and Hampshire County. Although formed in 1866, the final boundaries between the two counties were not completely established until 1872. County place names, local boundaries, and even West Virginia jurisdiction over the county remained in contention until 1910.

Davis acquired the future town’s site from Col. Edward McCarty Armstrong. During the Civil War, the site had been an encampment for 40,000 Union troops sent there to protect the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. In building his town, Davis had the parcel surveyed into six hundred lots and quickly sold them for about \$300 each, netting a profit of \$200,000. The county court quickly accepted Davis’s offer of a site for the courthouse, as they had been meeting in an abandoned hospital near the Potomac River. That building had seen service as a church and town hall as well as a courthouse and hospital. Davis used the inducement to secure New Creek, later named Keyser, as the county seat. The court rented the building from Col. Thomas B. Davis, brother of Henry. They continued to meet in the hospital while the courthouse was being built.

The Davis enterprises that were centered in Mineral County completely changed the way of life there. Farms were uprooted, and traditional ways were stressed, as the area adjusted to the new industries of paper making, timbering, coal mining, and railroading. Davis became a fabulously wealthy entrepreneur and used his influence and power to protect the interests of the coal industry. Davis’s successes were not permanently beneficial to West Virginia or to his town – which he never called his home. He lived instead in nearby Piedmont for the required eleven days per year that were necessary to keep his Senate seat.

The name of the community was changed from New Creek to Keyser in 1874 after the B & O’s Vice President William Keyser, in hopes of luring more industry to their town. The plan worked. With a population of about 6,332 in 1870, the county grew slowly and steadily to contain more than 26,000 residents in 1990. In the industrial heyday of the early twentieth century, the population was even higher.

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Courthouse construction and architecture

In 1866 the County Board of Supervisors appointed Thomas R. Carskadon, H.D. Davis, and S.W. Downey to a committee to advertise a proposal to construct a courthouse and jail. The builder was to either construct the courthouse based on plans provided by architect E.G. Lind of Baltimore or provide new plans. Ultimately a new and modest design by C.G. Sims was chosen and the contract to build the courthouse was awarded to I.B. Walton (some sources suggest that Lind's plans were used).

The popularity of the Romanesque Revival architectural style led local leaders to adopt it for the courthouse's new 1894 front facade. The choice connected the town, emotionally at least, to the high style architecture of larger cities. The choice almost certainly also reflects the architectural preferences of the Davis brothers, who controlled nearly every aspect of life in Keyser. The courthouse facade is also important for its vernacular interpretations of high style architecture in the late Victorian era. Architects Edward B. Franzheim and Millard F. Geisey of Wheeling designed the new addition to include stone arches, a raised foundation, and a tower. The tower resembles that on the Fayette County Courthouse designed by the same architects as well as the Pocahontas County Courthouse designed by Geisey. All three courthouses were constructed in 1894.

Court records reveal that the Franzheim and Geisey were paid five percent of the cost of the improvements totaling almost \$500. They submitted their final plans and specifications to the county court on May 16, 1894. The \$9,836 contract was awarded on May 30 to builder E.J. Fredlock, and work began immediately. The architect reported to the commissioners on August 28 that the contractor "is making fair progress." On October 9, the court purchased three sections of roller shelving from the Allegany County, Maryland, county court for the price of \$40. The finish work was well in hand by early December, when the commission directed Fredlock to panel the hallway leading to the courtroom and under the gallery in the courtroom so that it would match the rest of the courthouse decor. The construction work was approved on December 14. The side and rear, two-story additions were designed by J. Paul Blundon and constructed in 1938 and 1941 to provide additional county office space.

The three-stage construction of the courthouse reflects the changing fortunes of the former agricultural area, as post-Civil War industrialization – driven by Davis -- increased local prosperity and sophistication.

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Summary

The Mineral County Courthouse is eligible under *Criteria A: Politics and Government* for its local significance in Mineral County's political history. Since the mid nineteenth century, this building as provided a place for lawmakers and county officials to gather and conduct business. The building is also eligible under *Criterion C: Architecture* as a locally significant example of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture. The period of significance dates from 1868, the year the courthouse was constructed, to 1955, the National Register's fifty-year cut-off date.

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Bibliographic References

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Mineral County Courthouse Square is encompassed by the streets of Armstrong, West, and East, and forms the boundaries of the original court square, as further described on Mineral County Assessor's Keyser Map 7, lot 152 and Davis Map, Courthouse, Lot 1, 1-A., and Mineral County Deed Book 1, Page 160. The parcel is 176' x 247' .

Boundary Justification

The footprint of the original Mineral County courthouse square is included in these boundaries.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Mineral County Courthouse
Address: 150 Armstrong Street
Town: Keyser
County: Mineral
Photographer: Erin Riebe and Alan Rowe
Date: March 2004
Negatives: WVSHPO, Charleston WV

- Photo 1 of 8 Mineral County Courthouse, main elevation. View facing south.
- Photo 2 of 8 Mineral County Courthouse, main (northeast) and side (southeast) elevations. View facing west.
- Photo 3 of 8 Mineral County Courthouse, side (northwest) and rear (southwest) elevations. View facing east.
- Photo 4 of 8 War memorial detail. View facing south.
- Photo 5 of 8 First floor interior detail of door.
- Photo 6 of 8 Detail of safe door.
- Photo 7 of 8 Courtroom detail showing judge's bench.
- Photo 8 of 8 Judge's bench detail in courtroom.

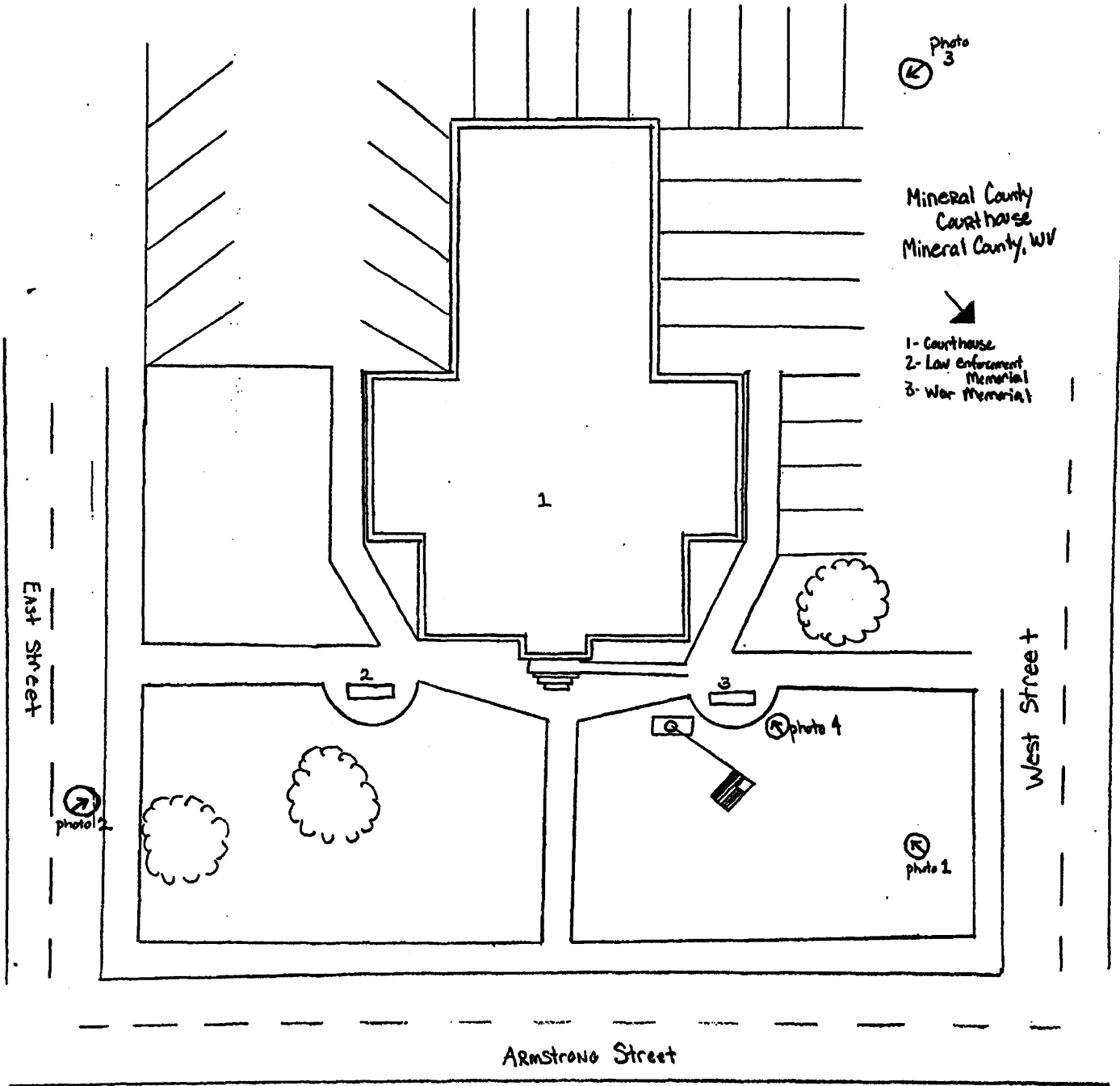


photo 3

Mineral County
 Courthouse
 Mineral County, WV

- 1- Courthouse
- 2- Law Enforcement Memorial
- 3- War Memorial

East Street

West Street

Armstrong Street

photo 2

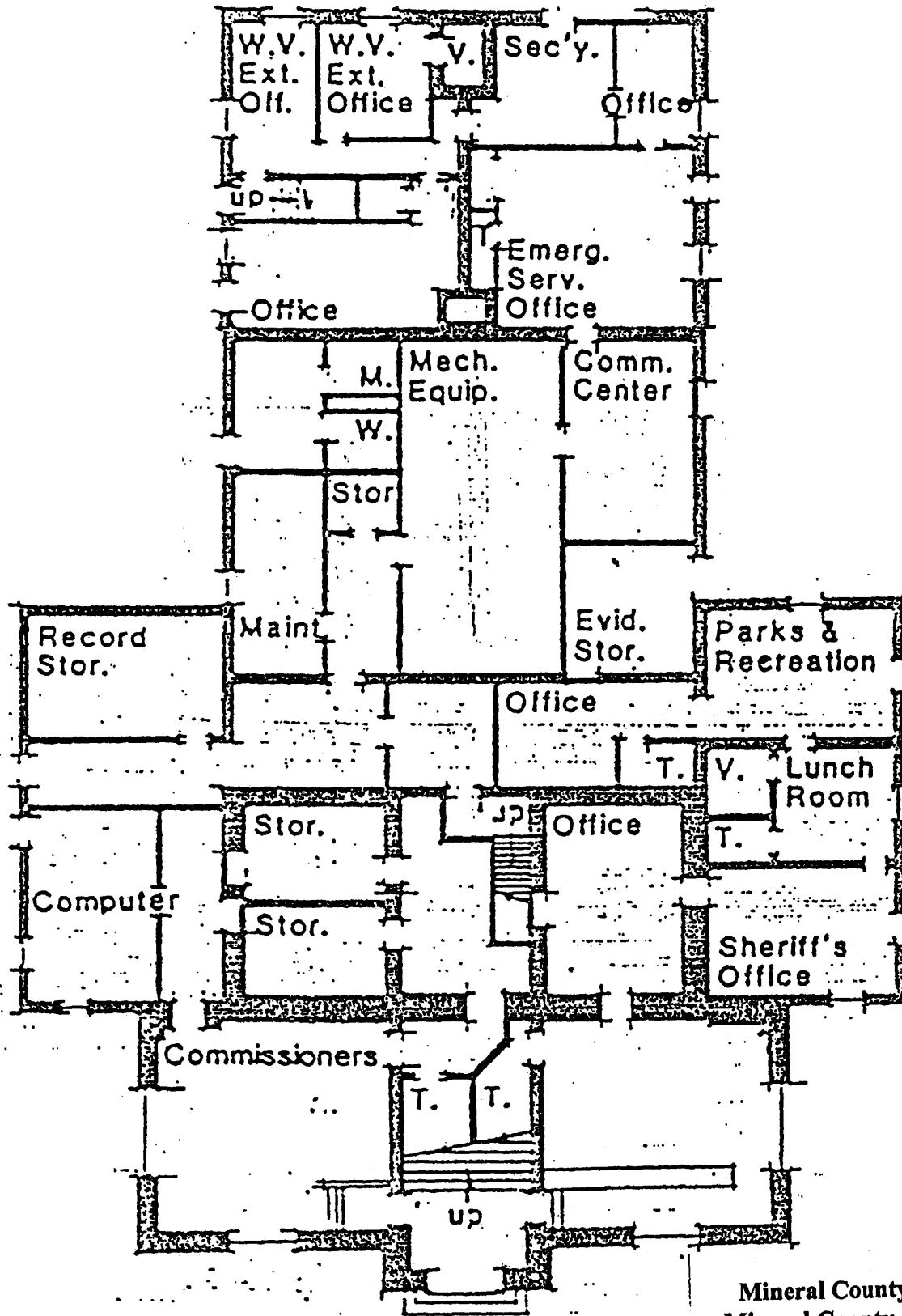
photo 4

photo 1

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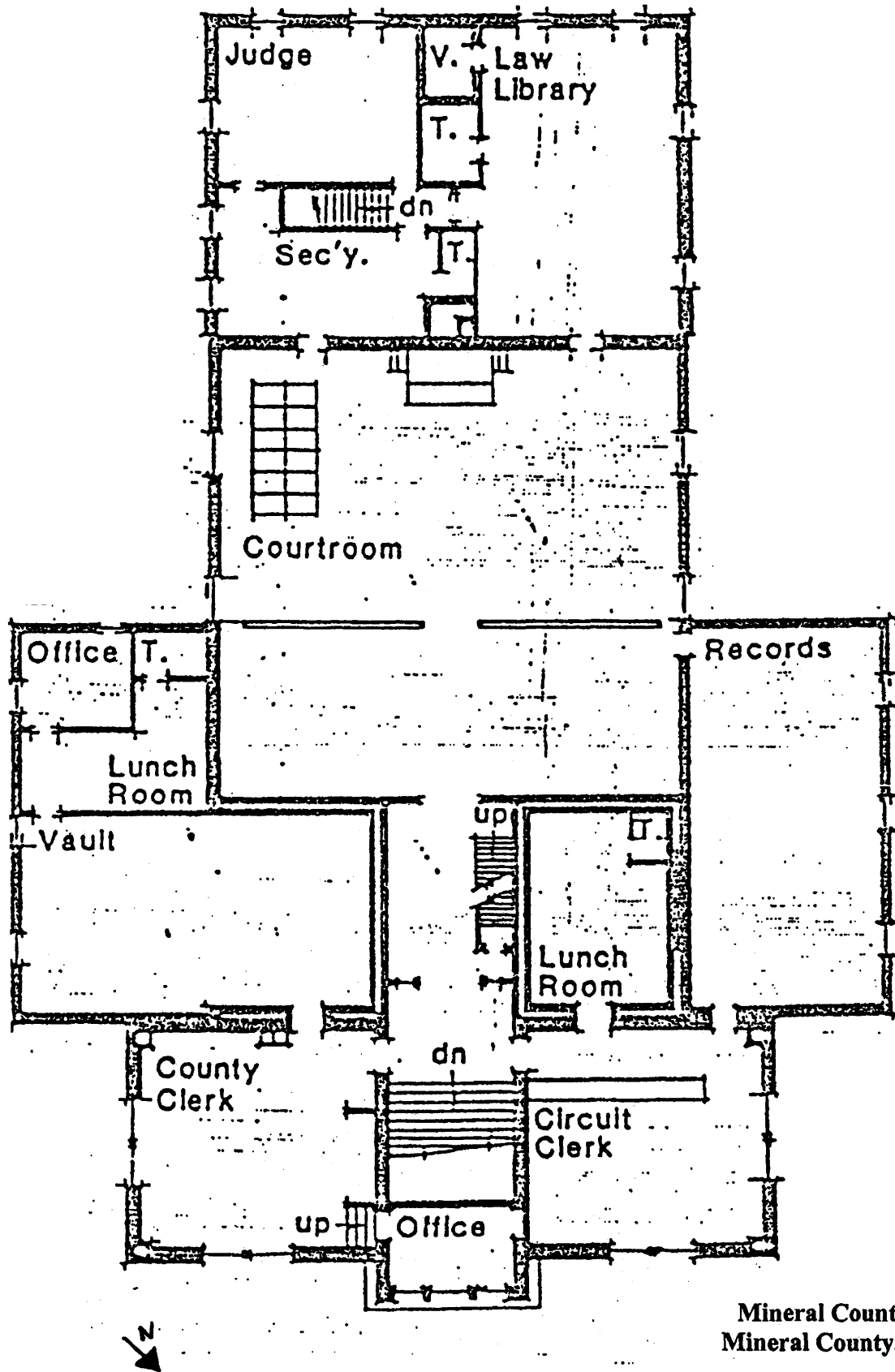
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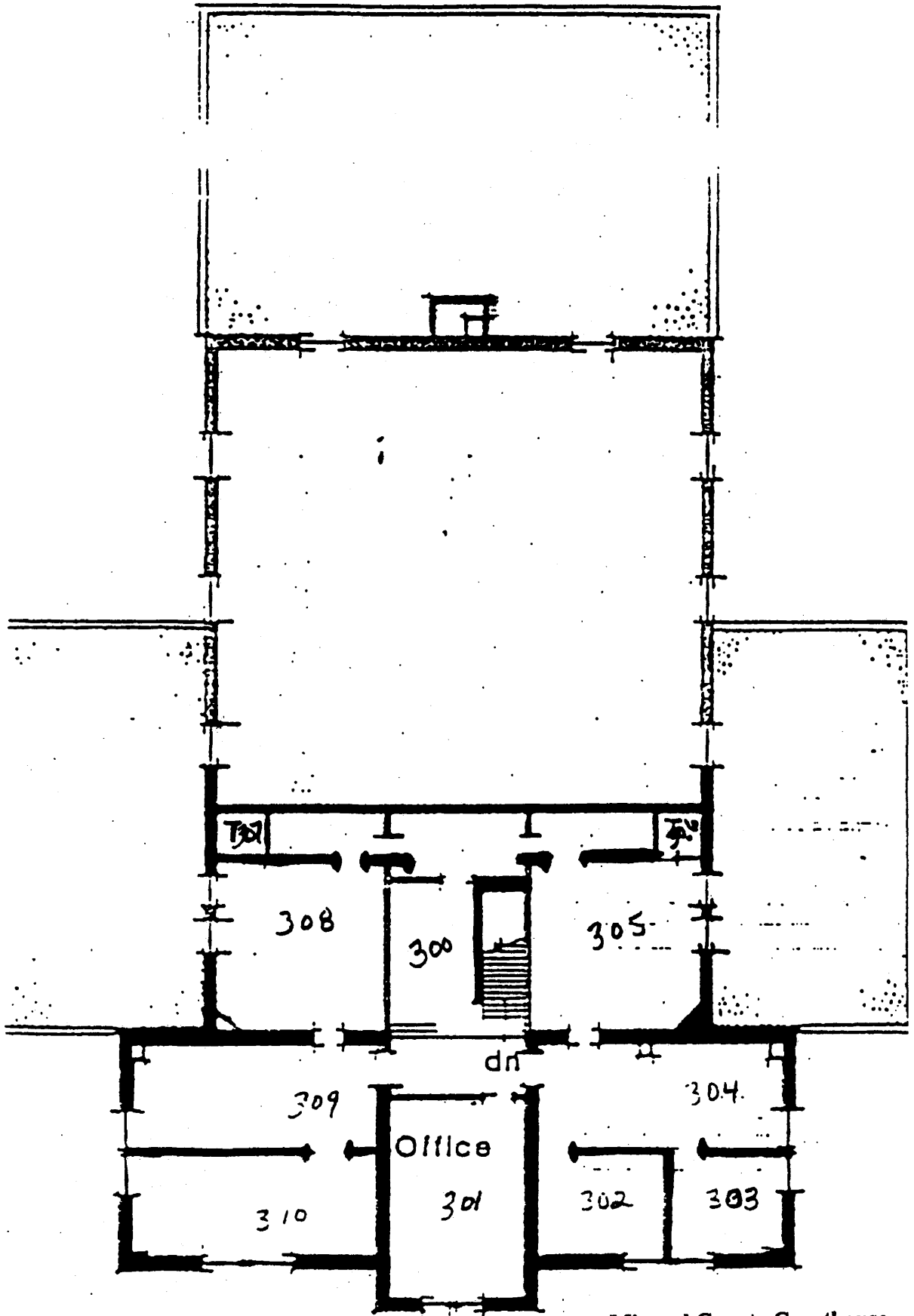
Mineral County Courthouse
 Mineral County, West Virginia

FIRST FLOOR



Mineral County Courthouse
 Mineral County, West Virginia

SECOND FLOOR



Mineral County Courthouse
Mineral County, West Virginia

THIRD