

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ALLEGHENY COUNTY COURT HOUSE AND JAIL

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Courthouse: Fifth, Grant, Ross and Diamond Streets
Jail: Fifth and Ross Avenue

CITY, TOWN Pittsburgh VICINITY OF 14th

STATE Pennsylvania CODE Allegheny

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Penal Inst.

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Allegheny County

STREET & NUMBER 436 Grant Street

CITY, TOWN Pittsburgh VICINITY OF Pennsylvania

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. County Office Building, Room 107

STREET & NUMBER 542 Forbes Avenue

CITY, TOWN Pittsburgh STATE Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1964 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS National Park Service OAHP

CITY, TOWN Washington, D.C. STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

The Court House consists of a large hollow rectangle 301 by 209 feet, having a basement and four stories on each side with an interior court 145 by 70 feet. The plan is essentially the same on all four floors of the building; the court rooms and offices are grouped around the outside of the structure connected by interior corridors which face the courtyard. All the exterior walls are constructed of pinkish-gray Milford granite, partly rock-face and partly cut, laid on in alternate wide and narrow bands of masonry, a treatment which is probably less effective than the single broad courses of the Jail walls. The roof, which is rather steeply pitched, is covered with square terracotta red tiles which must have at one time provided a handsome contrast to the pale tone of the walls. The building was cleaned during the early 1930's and again in 1957.

The building is five stories high with a large tower of another five stories rising over the main entrance. The frontage of the building features spacious Syrian arches for the two main entrances into the interior courtyard. These passageways also receive emphasis from the main tower over the Grant St. entrance and the great gable and attached turrets over the side entrance. Large square towers with dormered hipped roofs project several feet at each corner from the general line of the facade. Smaller towers also rise above the roof line from the corners of the interior courtyard. Ornamentation as a whole is very sparse-- capitals, mouldings, strings, and watertables are kept very flat in order not to provide convenient ledges and crevices for the accumulation of Pittsburgh soot.

The floor plan of the Court House is basically the same for the first three floors with large courtrooms, libraries and offices on each floor. Two great staircases lead to the large halls on the first and second floors. Other staircases and elevators are found in the towers at the angles of the courtyard. All rooms face the outside wall with the main hallways ringing the courtyard wall. The twenty-five foot height of the first and second stories is cut in half in the smaller rooms to admit half-stories or mezzanines. Upper floors contain a myriad of offices, while the main tower is used for document storage.

The rear of the Court House is connected to the Jail by an enclosed stone arch bridge reminiscent of the Bridge of Sighs in Venice. The Jail itself is constructed in the shape of an irregular cross, the center of which is occupied by an octagonal tower which houses the guard rooms. One short arm contains a reception area and officers' rooms while the other arms of the cross contain tiers of cells. Two L-shaped wings at the end of the cross contain kitchens and various service areas.

The entire complex with its adjacent courtyards is enclosed by an imposing stone wall studded with several hexagonal and circular watchtowers.

The best feature of the interior is the main staircase which rises from the basement to the second floor in short broad flights, not too elaborately interwoven, and supported and adorned by massive arches of cut Bedford limestone. Again, except for some carved capitals on the low pillars supporting the arches,

(continued)

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 type="checkbox"/> _1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> _EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> _TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> _1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> _COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> _INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> _POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> _OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> _INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1884-1888 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Henry ^Hobson Richardson (1838-1886)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Many critics and Richardson himself considered the Allegheny Court House and Jail and the Marshall Field Wholesale Store in Chicago (1885-1887) as the high points of his professional career. The architect, in his last years was in ill health and he wrote "Let me have time to finish Pittsburgh and I should be content without another day." With the demolition of the Field Store, the Court House and Jail are prime examples of the Richardson style now called "Richardsonian Romanesque."

A pivotal architect in the transition from 19th century revivalism, Richardson emerged with forceful personal architectural statements demonstrating his understanding and command of the fundamentals of his profession. The Romanesque idiom was an amplification of a style that had been developing slowly during the century and its robust rounded arches were particularly popular with Pittsburgh patrons (many of these proto-Romanesque structures there are now gone). The earlier vernacular-Romanesque was thin compared to Richardson's commission to replace the earlier Doric Court House which burned in 1882. Pittsburgh at this time was a great industrial center and Richardson was impressed by the "rough vigor and masculine vitality" of the city (Van Trump).

One of the five architects asked to submit designs for the new building, Richardson was notified of the competition in 1883 and awarded the commission in January 1884 (the others were John Ord of Philadelphia, E. E. Meyers of Detroit, W. W. Boyington of Chicago and Andrew Peebles of Pittsburgh). Construction drawings were delivered to the Commissioners in July, 1884 and in September the contract for construction was awarded to Norcross Brothers, of Worcester, Massachusetts, Richardson's contractor-builders. The Jail was completed in 1886 and the Court House in 1888 after Richardson's death by Shepley, Ruten and Collidge of the architects office.

Both structures were described in rather florid prose when they were complete:

(Architectural Record, 1891)

"The Pittsburgh buildings derive their individuality in great part from the conditions of the problem, a pile of intractable granite built in a smoky town in which the deposits of soot threaten to nullify all delicacy of detail and to encumber all projecting members. A personal inspection is required to obtain a full conception of its (Courthouse) massive grandeur, architectural beauty, and its admirable interior arrangements and finish. The history of

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 7	5 8 5 1 4 0	4 4 7 6 7 0 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

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

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

1/27/76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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

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Allegheny Court House and Jail

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the ornament is restrained and the simple voussoirs give a quality of clean simplicity to the design.

In 1928 the Alden and Harlow staircase on the west elevation was removed with the widening of Grant Street. The arched entrance doorways were extended downward, thereby creating an entirely new design problem. The new plans were prepared by Stanley Roush, providing for entrance at street level and access to the main lobby by small interior stairways. This scheme was carried out, thereby destroying much of the character of the original entrance.

Of the two Pittsburgh buildings, the Jail seems now to be in the greater aesthetic favor possibly because, aside from its generally Romantic outline and mass, it has almost no stylistic detailing and because it expresses so eminently its function. It is very abundantly and superlatively a jail. It is also probably the most masculine, rugged and solid of Richardson's designs. The massive walls of the jail yard with their great blocks of Milford granite recall Mycenaean masonry and they appeal strongly to that nostalgia for the gigantic and the primitive which is so much a part of the modern sensibility.

The Jail as designed by Richardson and finished in 1886, was much smaller than the present structure. The Pittsburgh architect F. J. Osterling designed certain additions to this building circa 1903-1905, but there were no extensive changes made in Richardson's work; the new work was merely an amplification of the original scheme.

The details of the building do not suffer by comparison with the ensemble. The ranges of granite along the principal facade are broken by few openings; chief among them are the main entrance, a low arch with huge eight-foot voussoirs (reminiscent of portals that Richardson had seen during his Spanish journey in 1882), and the windows of the warden's house. As Hitchcock suggests, the overall silhouette of the building recalls the fortified towns which Richardson had seen in southern France, especially the square tower near the main door which reminds one of those of the Valentré Bridge at Cahors. The octagonal dome over the crossing of the cell block wings seems to have been inspired not so much by the cupolas of southern France as by those of the Lombard or Rhenish Romanesque. One feature of the composition that is unmistakably 19th-century is the tall chimney in the jail yard, a splendidly proportioned column of granite with a suggestion of medieval corbelling at the top.

The plan of the interior of the Jail proper with its four wings (originally three) radiating from the central space under the octagonal dome has obviously been inspired by the plan of the Syrian church of St. Simeon Stylites (A.D. 450-470) which was illustrated in de Vogue's book La Syrie Centrale, a copy of which

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was in Richardson's library. One is also reminded of the Octagon of Ely Cathedral and the plan of James Wyatt's Fonthill Abbey, but it is very doubtful if these buildings influenced Richardson in any way. The interiors of the wings themselves are high gaunt halls which rise some sixty feet from floor to roof and which are lighted in dramatic fashion by tall round-arched windows. Five tiers of cell-blocks occupy the centre of each wing. The four wings converge like cathedral naves on the great echoing void under the dome.

The architectural description has been excerpted from James D. Van Trump's article: "The Romanesque Revival in Pittsburgh." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Volume XXI, Number 3, October 1957.

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its building shows a business ability not usually displayed by public officers, and an effort not only to guard the public money from the inroad of corrupt schemes, but at the same time in a broad generous expenditure, give the County of Allegheny a public building commensurate with its wealth commercially, its manufacturing fame, its historical dignity and political importance."

(Pittsburgh and Allegheny Illustrated Review, 1889)
"The Jail now in use has certainly no superior either in architecture or in interior arrangements among any of the county jails in the country, and is fully worth the price paid for it, amounting to about \$400,000. At the core of America's mighty City of Steel stands a colossus of granite. Its great mass at once expresses the tense containment of pulsating noise, the foul body odor, and the dangerous unrest of wasted manpower confined within a brutal filigree of iron bars. But few, who scurry past to perform their various labors, are aware of the continual drama within this throbbing citadel, where are restrained up to six hundred souls daily. And yet for these seven decades, men from the world over have come to admire its sun-shaped form, its sky-line filling silhouettes, and its unending variety of composition."

Although much of the style and detail of these structures is generally Southern French and Spanish Romanesque, the interior court of the Court House is free of historicism and the stone work of the granite Jail walls are simple and monumental. The general form of the Court House is a reworking of the Albany State House scheme and is early French Renaissance. "It is as if a Romanesque skin had been pulled over the Renaissance body." (Van Trump). There are Syrian arches, French Gothic dormers, and Byzantine capitals, the tower, Spanish in derivation, seems to be an elongated version of Boston's Trinity Church, but is now less effective blocked by the Frick Building nearby.

The foreword in Harvard's Architectural Drawing exhibition catalogue (1974) states:

"Richardson, that 'colossal man' as Mumford termed him, remains unchallenged as the champion of nineteenth-century American architecture. Of the other contenders, Bulfinch before him was a child of the eighteenth century, while Sullivan after him was a prophet of the twentieth. Among his contemporary rivals, Richard Morris Hunt, who, like Richardson, served his apprenticeship at the Ecole

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des Beaux Arts, was essentially an eclectic; Charles McKim and Stanford White, soon to outspan Richardson in the brilliant effects of their own more scholarly eclecticism, were trained in the master's office. As Henry Russell Hitchcock has remarked, Richardson remains the timeless exponent of later High Victorian architecture, for the range of his work, the personalism of his style and the extraordinary productivity of his brief career."

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PAGE 1

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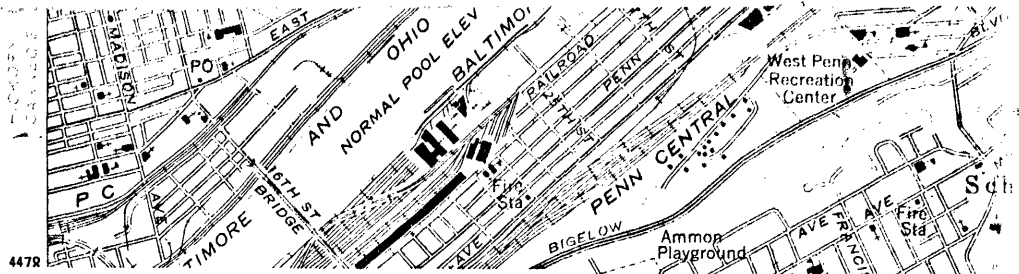
1

CONTINUATION SHEET

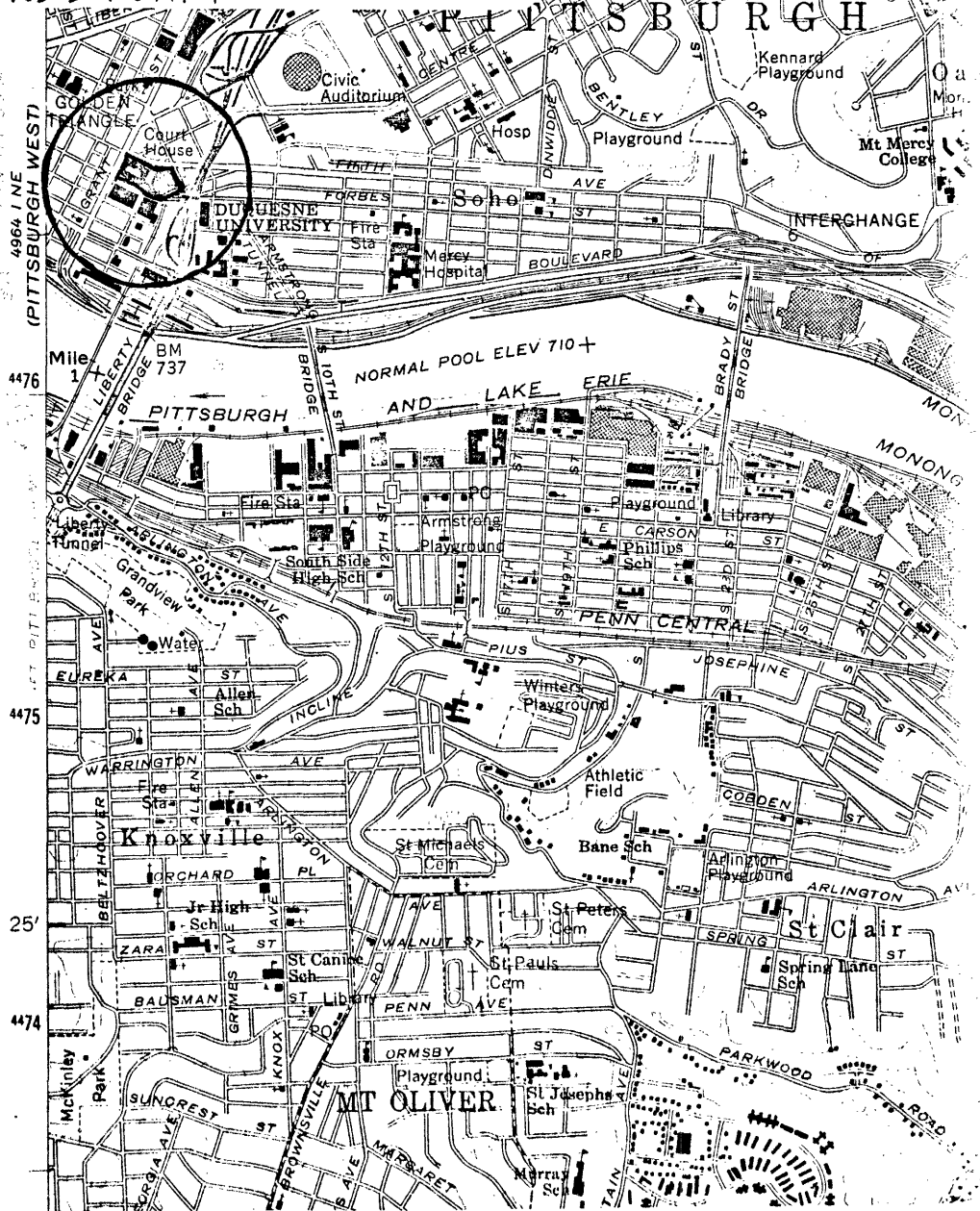
ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

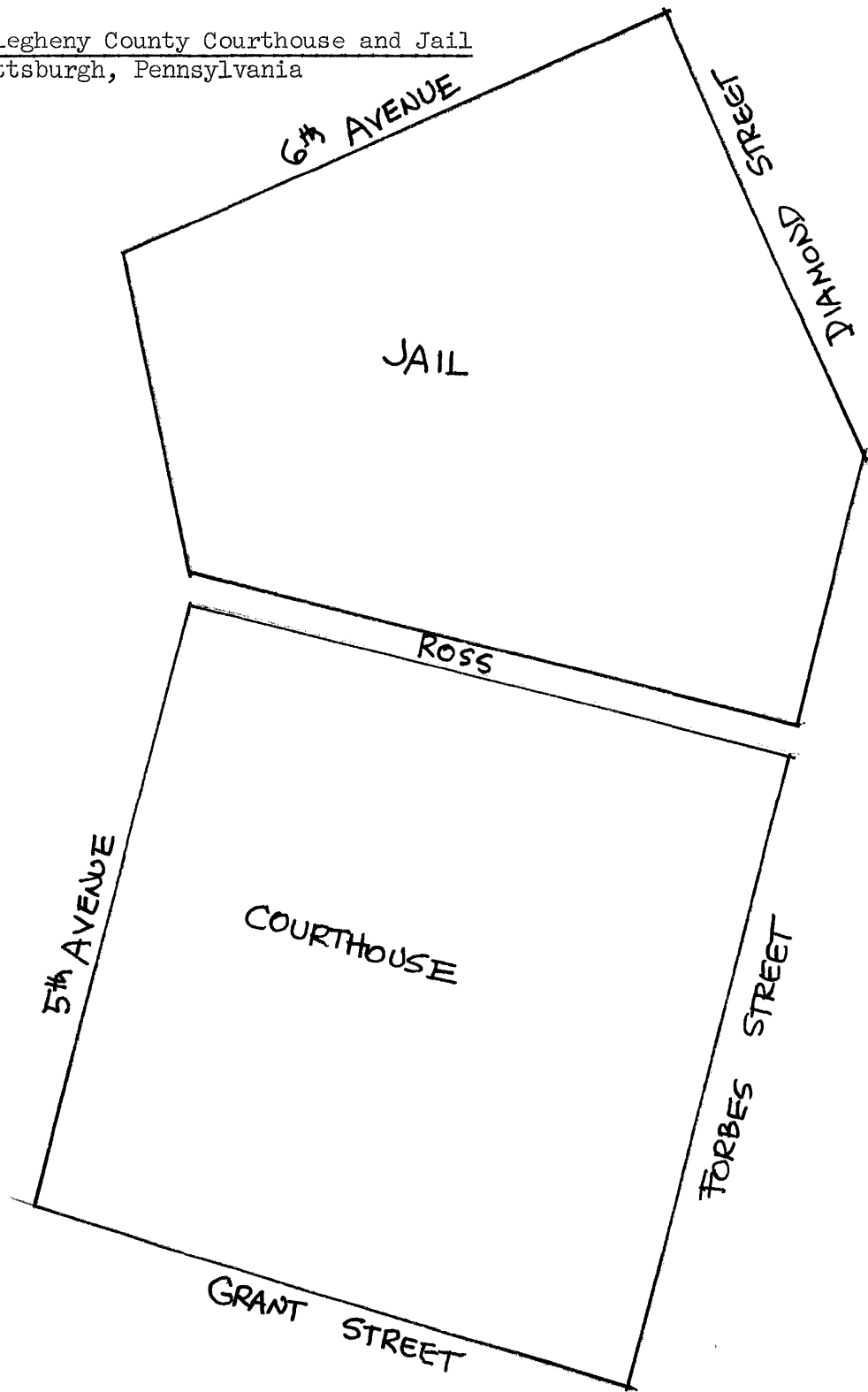
Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of Grant Street with 5th Avenue, the boundary proceeds in a generally eastern direction along the southerly curb of 5th Avenue to its intersection with the westerly curb of 6th Avenue, then in a generally southeastern direction along the westerly curb of 6th Avenue to its intersection with the northerly curb of Diamond Street, then in a generally southwestern direction along the northerly curb of Diamond Street to its intersection with the northerly curb of Forbes Street, then in a generally northwestern direction along the northerly curb of Forbes Street to its intersection with the easterly curb of Grant Street, and then along the easterly curb of Grant Street in a generally northeastern direction to the point of beginning.



Allegheny County Courthouse & Jail
 Courthouse: 5th, Grant, Ross & Dimond Sts.
 Jail: 5th & Ross Avenue
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Allegheny County
 USGS 7.5' series Pittsburgh East Quad.
 UTM 17.585140.4476700

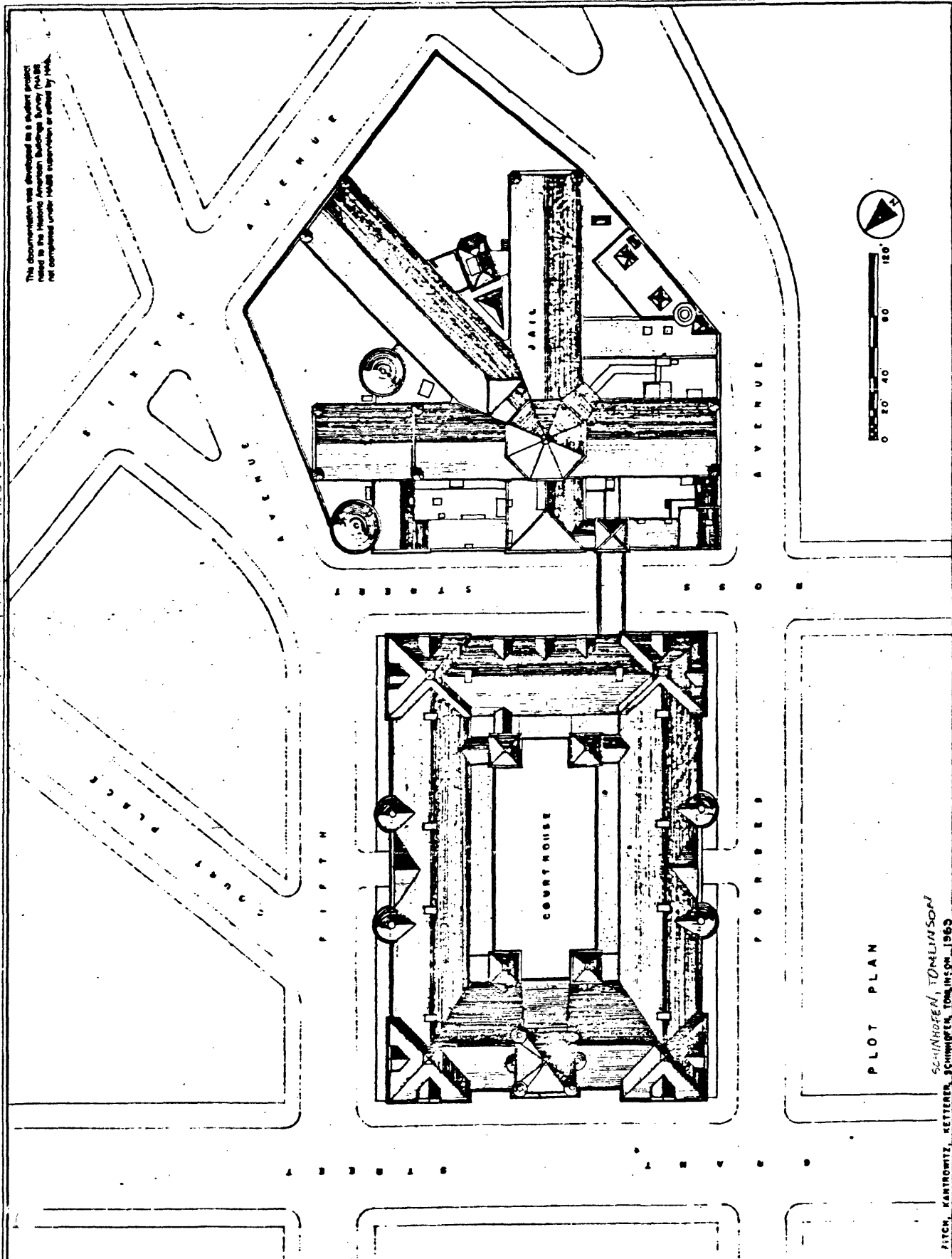


Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania



VIA SHIP PROTECTOR MY-11

This documentation was developed as a subject project related to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and is not completed under HABS supervision or edited by HABS.



PLOT PLAN

FITCH, KARTWITZ, KETTERER, SCHINDLER, TOMLINSON, 1962
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
CARNEGIE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY DIRECTOR OF UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, BRANCH OF PLANS AND DESIGN

NAME OF STRUCTURE
ALLEGHENY COUNTY COURTHOUSE AND JAIL
COUNTY
ALLEGHENY
PENNSYLVANIA
SURVEY NO.
PA-640
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
SHEET 1 OF 85 SHEETS

From Prints & Photographs Div., Library of Congress

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