

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 28 1979
DATE ENTERED AUG 29 1979

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Wood County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square at 3rd and Market Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Parkersburg

VICINITY OF

First

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

West Virginia 26101

CODE

54

COUNTY

Wood

CODE

107

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Wood County

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square

CITY, TOWN

Parkersburg

VICINITY OF

STATE

West Virginia 26101

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Wood County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Court Square

CITY, TOWN

Parkersburg

STATE

West Virginia 26101

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

Although Parkersburg has changed physically and new buildings have been erected, the Wood County Courthouse remains an imposing structure. Typical of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, it is massive in scope, yet subtle in design, and has not lost its architectural integrity over the years. As seen in the following detailed description, this building was well planned, solidly constructed and has become a cherished landmark for the citizens of Wood County.

The Wood County Courthouse is a three and one-half story masonry structure faced in rock-face stone. This intricately decorated and carved building covers an area of 88 x 99 feet and has a magnificent 100 foot entrance tower. There are main recessed arched openings to both Market and Third Streets and secondary openings to the northeast and southwest. Each entrance arch is comprised of smooth stone vouissoirs and granite piers whose impost and capitals are richly carved foliate patterns and grotesques. The archivolt of the arch intrados at the Market and Third Street elevations is richly carved.

Over the southwest entrance, centered in the carved stone above the door, is the bust of a laughing woman, arms upraised, supporting what appears to be a basket or a crown. The central figure above the opposite, or Third Street entrance, is the bust of a man carved with a solemn expression, heavy moustache, and a long flowing beard. His upraised arms are so well executed that details of the hands are plainly discernible from the street. Above the head, there is carved a full, round face with lines streaming from it, perhaps signifying the rays of the sun.

The Courthouse contains several steeply-pitched wall dormers--the most elaborate one has three circles that form a triangle in its gable. They all have stone coping and coupled windows. The roof is hipped and with the exception of the domer and tower interruptions, the building is encompassed by a denticulated cornice.

The uniformity of the window placements, the massive Romanesque tower, and the intricate details of the sculptured figures are certainly rare treasures. For example, above the side (east) entrance is a tourelle which extends to the hipped roof. It is marked by several arched windows and rests upon a base of beautifully sculptured acanthus leaves. Two sun-burst faces and the face of a cherub decorate the field. In the center of the acanthus field is the crowned torso of a bearded god; his uplifted arms form a console and his acanthus covered midriff extends through the keystone of the doorway below.

Of course, the interior of the Courthouse has lost much of its original symmetry due to expedient additions and remodeling. For example, the original courtroom was two floors in height, and its outside lobby reached to the roof with a huge stained-glass dome. In time, a new floor was built dividing the courtroom and the lobby horizontally into two spaces and the dome was removed. Items in the interior that should receive special attention are one iron stairway, the stained glass window of the courtroom, the capitals of the structural piers, and portions of the mosaic floor.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

In summary, whether it is decided that the interior would be chiefly justified for museum use, private offices, or continued use as the center of county government, the building should remain as a community landmark. As stated by architect Perry E. Borchers of Ohio State University, "For its exterior quality alone, this building clearly deserves a place on the National Register of Historic Places."

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1899

Builder -- Caldwell & Drake, cont'rs., Ind.
 BUILDER/ARCHITECT
 Architect--L. W. Thomas of Canton, Ohio

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When Wood County was established by the Virginia Assembly in 1798, its official business was conducted in the home of Hugh Phelps, from which Wood County's first sheriff, Colonel William Lowther, carried out the obligations of his office. As the county grew with the commerce that flowed on the Ohio and Little Kanawha rivers, a new two-story building of hewn logs was built about 350 feet from the Ohio River, facing the Little Kanawha. It was there that the citizens adopted resolutions, informing the governor and president of the Burr-Blennerhassett conspiracy. This structure was in use from 1802 to 1817 and was probably the first public building in Parkersburg. Since the upper floor was used as the courthouse and the lower as the jail, the stocks, pillory, and whipping post were in evidence nearby.

The next courthouse, built in 1817, was moved from the rivers and located on what is known today as Court Square. This building stood on land donated to the county by William and Mary Robinson. They had purchased the property from Mary's father, Alexander Parker, in May 1811. In 1783, Parker acquired the land from Robert Thronton who, in turn, had received preemption claims to the land on which Parkersburg now stands by a "Tomahawk entry." Of course, this information lends much historic significance to this particular plot of public land, on which the present courthouse stands today.

Being the first substantial courthouse, this 1817 structure was considered an elegant building, with a fan-light over the door and a tall bell tower, topped with a weather vane. As the area grew and prospered, however, this building was soon outmoded. In 1860 a handsome two-story brick edifice in Greek style with white pillars and a tall spire was erected on or near the location of the previous one. It not only served the county but was also used by the city government until a city building was constructed in 1897. Costing \$25,000, this courthouse was considered one of the finest in western Virginia. One of Wood County's most famous circuit judges, Arthur I. Boreman, held court there from 1861 to 1863, resigning to become West Virginia's first governor. He returned for a second tenure on the bench, serving from 1889 to 1896.

Because of heavy lightning damage in 1885 and the continued prosperity resulting from river commerce and the oil and gas boom of the surrounding area, county officials decided the thirty-seven year old building was too small. The third courthouse constructed on what is Court Square is the one standing today, with its cornerstone laid October 5, 1899. As a symbol of continuity, the huge bell, cast in 1860, was salvaged from the previous courthouse and still rests in the elegant Romanesque tower of the present building.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Alvaro F. Gibbens, Century of Progress, published for the County Centennial, 1899.
 Borchers, Perry E., Report on the Architectural Character and Quality of the Wood County Courthouse, Parkersburg, West Virginia. (Historic Preservation Unit, WV Department of Culture & History) 1973, 14pp.
 "Court Square Filled by Roosevelt Crowd," The Parkersburg Sentinel, April 5, 1912.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1-1/3 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Parkersburg, W. Va. - Ohio

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 451440 4346090

B

ZONE EASTING

NORTHING

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property includes the courthouse and the square within which it stands. The square surrounds the building on all elevations at a radial distance of 60 feet and is entered from the northwest by Third Street and from the southeast

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

• Gary J. Tucker, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION

Wood County Taxpayers Action Group, Inc.

DATE

March 11, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1605 Dupont Road

TELEPHONE

485-9282

CITY OR TOWN

Parkersburg

STATE

West Virginia 26101

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL X

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

Carroll Moore 6-21-79

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Carroll Moore
 Keeper of the National Register

DATE

8-29-79

ATTEST:

Emma Jane Saye
 Chief of Registration
 Regional Coordinator

DATE

8-29-79

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The present Wood County Courthouse is an outstanding architectural example of American Romanesque, inspired by H. H. Richardson, architect, whose influence can be seen in many 19th century public buildings. The unusual vertical quality of the building is emphasized by a 100 foot entrance tower and by steeply pitched corner pavilions with pyramidal tile covered roofs and gabled wall dormers. The heavy and durable rock-faced walls are set upon a raised basement and pierced by arched window and door openings, including the major north-south recessed arched entrances embellished with enriched stone archivolts, smooth stone voussoirs, and carvings of foliage and grotesques. A fountain at the Market Street entrance features a bronze memorial bust of J. J. Jackson of Parkersburg by sculptor Massey Rhind. The preservation of these features of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture is a most desirable goal for our nation because it is probably the first style to be developed in the United States rather than Europe. It is even more urgent to retain the present courthouse because it has been deemed architecturally superior in style to the courthouses of adjacent counties. In addition, it would certainly not be feasible today to attempt to reproduce the skill and workmanship evident in the sturdy exterior walls of this building.

Architect Perry Borchers of Ohio State University stated in 1973 that "Four complete facades of stone, ornamented with carvings, represent considerable expenditure and display of civic pride in 1899." When Theodore Roosevelt visited Parkersburg on April 5, 1912, during the 1912 presidential campaign and delivered his address from the Market Street entrance of the courthouse, that same pride was evident. When a majority of the people of Wood County voted in favor of preserving the old courthouse on November 7, 1978, it was clear that they had not broken with their proud past.

In conclusion, in this time of great change, when attitudes and values are often tried and tested, it is important that a people retain their heritage. In an attempt to preserve their courthouse, the people of Wood County are acknowledging a debt to their forefathers on whose perseverance, dedication and sacrifice a successful community was built.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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CONTINUATION SHEET Bibliography

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"Five Separate Structures Have Served County Court," The Parkersburg News,
December 26, 1976.

"Parkersburg Voters Save Old Courthouse", Preservation News, The National Trust
for Historic Preservation, February 1979, p.2.

FHR-8-300A
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CONTINUATION SHEET Geographical Data ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

by Market Street. The northeast elevation boundary abuts a parking lot of the Parkersburg Urban Renewal Authority and the southwest elevation boundary is formed by the boundary of Court Square with property owned by the Bureau of Public Debt.