

PH 0669164

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAY 1 8 1978  
DATE ENTERED SEP 6 1978  
**DATA SHEET**

**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

Kanawha County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Virginia and Court Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charleston VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

West Virginia CODE 54

Third

COUNTY

CODE

Kanawha

039 ✓

**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

Kanawha County Commission

STREET & NUMBER

Virginia and Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Charleston VICINITY OF

STATE

West Virginia

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kanawha County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Virginia and Court Streets

CITY, TOWN

Charleston

STATE

West Virginia

**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 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 Kanawha County Courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia, is a block-long structure of rock-face masonry noteworthy for its picturesque massing and precise Richardsonian Romanesque design. The monumental scope of the building was a result of rapidly expanding county needs in the period following Charleston's emergence as the permanent state capital. The county courthouse is thus a complex of units tied together by a dominant architectural theme reflecting an overall harmony but yielding to the careful observer individual subtlety of design in each part.

Earliest of the segments of the Kanawha County Courthouse is the center or original unit, designed by the firm of Shieff and Highnam of Richmond, Virginia, and built in 1892 at the height of the Neo-Romanesque Revival in the United States made popular by the great American architect Henry Hobson Richardson. The courthouse of the 1890's was oriented to the southeast with major entrances opening onto Court Street (to the east) and Kanawha Street (to the south). Expansive, tree-shaded grounds flanked the building south of Kanawha Street while a brick jail stood north of the building adjacent to Virginia Street.

In 1917, a major addition extended the courthouse to Kanawha Street, and in 1924, the dominant segment of the building as viewed today (1978) was built facing Virginia Street. H. Rus Warne, a widely-known and popular architect in West Virginia during the first half of the 20th century, was responsible for the Kanawha Street (Blvd.) addition and was senior partner in the firm of Warne, Tucker and Patteson that designed the Virginia Street addition. The picturesque facade of the Kanawha County Courthouse thus rambles along a full block of Court Street wearing an evenly weathered face of locally quarried stone, and denying, except to a keen observer, the exact location of seams and other structural alterations.

The courthouse of Kanawha County is L-shaped (the ell is the jail of the 1924 addition), two stories in height, and covered with an irregular multi-gable hipped roof sheathed in red shed tiles. Three, three-story towers, two facing Virginia Street and the other facing Court Street, are capped with pyramidal roofs, a central element of Romanesque architecture. The facade is fenestrated with semicircular and flat-headed ribbon windows embellished with smooth stone sills, lintels, and transoms of limestone or granite. The contrasting stone detail is, for the most part, of grey limestone. The building is built on a north-south axis with the major entrance facing Virginia Street and a secondary entrance facing Kanawha Boulevard and the Great Kanawha River.

Architects Shieff and Highnam designed the 1892 building with a three-story tower facing Court Street. The arched openings of the belfry are outlined in smooth dressed stone mullions and transoms matching the window motif of the building's first floor. Medieval elements, such as the tiny round tower with conical stone roof, adorn the roof of the structure. Romantic stone visages project like gargoyles from each of the corners of the tower roof base. A statue representing an Indian or early republican figure crowned the tower for many years before disappearing in the 1930s.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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KANAWHA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CHARLESTON, KANAWHA COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

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Mr. Warne's 1917 addition reflects the Richardsonian ideal of weight and simple mass. The windows at the first floor are round-headed, while those of the second floor are flat-headed. (This is a reverse treatment of the 1892 unit and is also carried out in the 1924 addition.) The central detail of the facade is a magnificent portal featuring a round compound arch whose archivolt is plain grey limestone. Immediately above the entrance are ribbon windows with stone lintels and transoms framed with stone colonnettes. The off-center placement of these windows is an interesting and successful attempt by the architect to balance the facade with its portal and massive gable.

The twin-towered Virginia Street elevation is the glory of the Kanawha County Courthouse. Roofs of each tower are pyramidal with chamfered corners. The belfry openings are arched and flanked with smooth grey limestone masonry colonnettes. Metal grilles of intricate pattern fill the arched openings. Bands of sundry design outline the facade at various levels, among them modillion brackets of the tower, a limestone beltcourse, and between the towers an arcaded corbel table. Above the entrance at the second floor level, a 5-arched loggia with coupled Romanesque colonnettes connects the two towers. The enriched compound arch of the portal below features a receding stone archivolt emblazoned with medieval cresting, lozenge and chevron moldings. Additional facade enrichment includes checkered stone blind arches above two first floor windows.

Interior spaces have been altered over the years. The ornate castiron loggia of the original unit's first-floor hallway was enclosed during remodeling work in the 1920s. The outline and detailing, including the intricate capitals, are still visible, although the only remaining free-standing part of the loggia is seen in the stairhall, little changed since 1892. Castiron rails and newel posts have survived intact. The Virginia Street vestibule features an interesting cornice molding interrupted with stylized medieval paterae.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1892, 1917, 1924

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Shieff and Highnam; H. Rus  
Warne; Warne, Tucker & Patteson

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kanawha County Courthouse is the principal example of Romanesque architecture now existing in Charleston, West Virginia. The building has been the center of Kanawha County government since the date of its erection in 1892, and its site has been the location for all the county courthouses since the formation of Kanawha County in 1789. The expansion of Kanawha County after the permanent location of the West Virginia State Capital at Charleston in 1885 is reflected in the growth of the courthouse from 1892 when major additions were constructed in 1917 and 1924 that nearly tripled the original size of the building. The character of the courthouse is important to the government square environment that includes City Hall, a building of architectural significance at Virginia and Court Streets.

Kanawha County was formed by an act of the General Assembly of Virginia, effective October 1, 1789, from Greenbrier and Montgomery Counties. The new county covered an area of approximately 2,092 square miles, but did not have a courthouse in the county seat at Charlestown (Charleston). All necessary court proceedings were held in the home of William Clendenin at Fort Lee, site of the settlement of Charleston, until 1796. In that year the county acquired from George Alderson a lot where the first courthouse, a one-story log building, was erected. It served until 1817 when a brick, two-story ediface, 50 feet square, was built. This building was inadequate with the expansion of Charleston in the late 19th century and was torn down in two days time beginning on April 7, 1888.

County Commission President John S. Cunningham, and Commissioners W. S. Laidley and C. S. Young, selected the plans of the Richmond, Virginia, architectural firm of Shieff and Highnam for the new courthouse. The building was erected in 1892, at a cost of \$153,000, in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and stood unaltered until 1917 when the Kanawha Street (Blvd.) addition was erected.

H. Rus Warne, a prominent architect of Charleston, designed the 1917 addition and was senior partner in the firm of Warne, Tucker (Lewis G. Tucker) and Patteson (Randolph L. Patteson) that designed the 1924 addition. Contractor for the 1917 addition was the Central Engineering Company. Grant Copenhaver, president of the County Commission, and commissioners M. P. Malcolm and L. A. Christy, authorized the project.

S. E. Childress, president of the County Commission, and commissioners Grant Copenhaver and Omer Given chose the architectural firm headed by "Rus" Warne to do the 1924 addition. Their confidence in Warne was influenced by his successful design of the Charleston City Hall (1922) and other prominent downtown buildings. A young partner in the firm, Randolph L. Patteson, played a prominent role in the design of the Virginia

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Kanawha County Courthouse has an Interesting History." Charleston Gazette, Sept. 12, 1920.

"Kanawha County Once Covered Half of the State." Charleston Daily Mail, June 4, 1937.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 1/2 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Charleston West, W.Va.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 444130 4244740  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is bound by Kanawha Blvd. to the south, Virginia Street to the north, Court Street to the east, and Goshorn Street to the West.

## 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

Rodney S. Collins, Research Assistant

ORGANIZATION

West Virginia Dept. of Culture and History

DATE

April 17, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE

304-348-0244

CITY OR TOWN

Charleston

STATE

West Virginia

# 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

*Clarence Morrow*

TITLE West Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May 16, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Charles Adams*

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

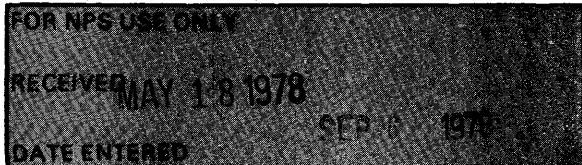
DATE

9/6/78

DATE

7-5-78

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Street facade of the courthouse. Mr. Patteson is the only surviving member of the firm. The Wallace Knight Construction Company built the 1924 addition.

The cornerstones of all three units of the Kanawha County Courthouse are inscribed under Masonic emblems.

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Records of the Kanawha County Court, May 2, 1790; May 3, 1790; Aug. 2, 1795;  
June 16, 1798.

Records of the Kanawha County Court, "History of the Construction of the Kanawha  
County Courthouse as it Stands as of the Year 1967." Book 8, pp. 129-134;  
Book 8, pp. 106-108.

Summers, George W. "First Kanawha County Sheriff Quits After One Day's Duty."  
Charleston Daily Mail, April 10, 1938, p. 2.

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Kanawha County Courthouse, Charleston, Kanawha County, WV

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Item #8, Builder/Architect

The architects who designed the 1892 section of the Kanawha County Courthouse were Reuben Shirreffs and Walter R. Higham.

Item #9, Bibliography

City Directories of Richmond, Va., 1880-99.

"Memoir" (obituary) of Reuben Shirreffs, Transactions.  
American Society of Civil Engineers, vol. 87, New York, 1924, p.1421.

Morrison, Andrew, ed. The City on the James  
Richmond, Virginia; George W. Engelhardt, 1893  
(information on Walter R. Higham)

Richmond Times-Dispatch. September 2, 1904, p. 1  
(obituary of Reuben Shirreffs).