

PH0663808

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 27 1978  
DATE ENTERED JUN 9 1978

# 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

Bennett, Jonathan M., House; Bennett, Louis, House

AND/OR COMMON

Louis Bennett Public Library

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Court Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Weston

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Lewis

CODE

041

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

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

Library

NAME

County Court of Lewis County

STREET & NUMBER

Lewis County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Weston

VICINITY OF

STATE

West Virginia

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Lewis County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Center Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Weston

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 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    |   |   |

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Louis Bennett Library personifies the ideal in High Victorian Italianate architecture, an eclectic composition geared to the tastes of the privileged capitalist of the post Civil War years. The building was commissioned as a residence for Jonathan M. Bennett and erected in 1874-75 from the designs of a Parkersburg, West Virginia, architect whose identity is presently unknown.

The seventeen room mansion retains its nineteenth century integrity as a result of a preservation clause in the 1922 deed which stipulates that any alterations or changes to the building be undertaken in such a manner "as to preserve in its present form...the exterior of the front part of said residence." The use of the building as a library has not compromised the interior architectural flow of space, ceiling height, or detail, thereby saving the building as a veritable showplace of nineteenth century design and building technology.

The mansard roof of the building's tower was recently resheathed in gray painted wooden shakes to simulate the original slate courses that had deteriorated. Gabled dormers on the north, south and east elevations of the tower roof were not replaced. The original entrance walkway was altered from a single to double approach at the time the building became a library. Another slight alteration occurred when a remodeling of the kitchen and service wing of the house was undertaken to provide office space for the library.

The mansarded, four and one half story entrance tower stands as a dominant unit between the main block of the building running north to south and the ell running east to west. The high-pitched roof of the gabled ell and bulk of the tower form a picturesque mass neatly framed by two subtle vertical elements, a gabled dormer to the north and a tall, corbel capped brick chimney to the south. The whole of the composition is intricately detailed with elaborate millwork and finely appointed pressed tin ornamentation.

Italianate details on the Bennett Library of special note are the heavy wooden brackets of the tower and veranda, a balustraded tower balcony, and an elaborate bargeboard with wooden loops which culminates in the apex of the front gable in an intricate wooden lattice with pendant. A windowhood and segmental and rounded window heads of pressed tin are other noteworthy architectural features.

The parlor and billard rooms of the library - the stack areas - contain original plaster ceiling moldings. Windows bay transverse arches, woodwork, and interior paneled and louvered window shutters are intact throughout. Mid-century arched fireplaces - with a single exception - are metal types simulating marble.

The stairway at the rear of the foyer is of open well, open string design with four principal flights. The rails and balusters are finely molded hardwood resembling in coloration and texture the mahogany shelves of the mansion's mantles. The rails rise continuously from bottom to top floors, rounding each landing.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY                       | <input checked="" 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 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      1874-75      BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Louis Bennett Public Library and War Memorial at Weston, Lewis County, West Virginia, is the former residence of the Bennett family whose lineal history figures prominently in the business, legal, land, and political affairs of both Virginia and West Virginia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mansion is a meticulous example of High Victorian Italianate architecture and corresponds figuratively in stature to the man who commissioned it in 1874-75, Jonathan M. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett's son, Louis Bennett, and grandson, Louis Bennett, Jr., were memorialized by the brick residence when it was left in 1922 to the citizens of Lewis County by Mrs. Louis Bennett, Sr., as a public library and community center. Her philanthropy was precipitated by the death of both her husband and only surviving son in August, 1918, the latter the result of an heroic military action in the First World War.

Jonathan M. Bennett(1816-1887) is regarded among the most significant personages of Lewis County history. He was born in the Collins settlement of the county, studied locally, and was married to Margaret Elizabeth Jackson, a cousin of Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, with whom Mr. Bennett was a lifelong friend and protege.

From 1836 to 1865 Jonathan M. Bennett vigorously participated in the political and social affairs of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He won most of the local offices including the office of Mayor of Weston in 1846. Following an 1852-53 term in the Virginia General Assembly, Jonathan Bennett served as president of the Exchange Bank of Virginia at Weston.

Governor Henry A. Wise appointed Bennett, a Democrat, First Auditor of Virginia in 1857, a position he held at Richmond until the end of the Civil War in 1865.

One of the greatest single events in the history of Weston was the location of the Trans-Alleghany Lunatic Asylum (Weston State Hospital) at Weston in 1859. Jonathan Bennett used his influence as Auditor of Virginia to promote this transaction. The Parkersburg- Staunton Turnpike and first narrow-gauge railroad between Weston and Clarksburg were other projects Bennett promoted, as much for his own gain as for the benefit of his native town.

Because of Jonathan Bennett's loyalty to Virginia during the Civil War, he was thus one of the few important men of his day to have served both Virginia and the newly emergent West Virginia, and to have thereby gained unique political and social perspectives. Bennett's undiminished stature in West Virginia following

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ambler, Charles Henry. A History of West Virginia. New York; Prentice Hall, 1933.

A Reminiscent History of Northern West Virginia. Chicago: Goodspeed Brothers, Publishers, 1895.

Atkinson, Geo. W. and Gibbens, Alvaro J. Prominent Men of West Virginia. Wheeling, W.Va.: W. L. Callin, 1890.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Weston, West Virginia

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 546270 4320750

B         

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Bennett Public Library is located on the eastern side of Court Avenue between a hillside, stepped sidewalk on the north and an open lot facing Bank Street on the south. The rear lot lines of the library face the west side of High Avenue on the east.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

|       |      |        |      |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Rodney S. Collins, Research Assistant

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Unit, W.Va. Dept. of Culture and History November 16, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

Science and Culture Center, 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 February 23, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST: *Walker Cole*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 6/9  
DATE 6-5/78

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Louis Bennett Public Library, Lewis County, West Virginia

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the war is reflected in his election to the State Senate, 1872-76, where he served as finance committee chairman, the Senate's most powerful post. Regarding the famous Virginia Debt question, Bennett's committee found that Virginia actually owed West Virginia \$525,000.

The Bennett home during the residency of both Jonathan and Louis was the ranking center of social activity in central West Virginia. On many occasions "governors, senators, bishops, and lesser public officials as well as relatives and friends from Walkersville, Glenville, near-by farms, or distant points knew that there was always a welcome for them...."

Following the death of Jonathan Bennett in 1887, the family home became the property of the fourth child, Louis Bennett, by decree of the Lewis County Circuit Court in 1891. Louis Bennett (1848-1918) was successful at the bar, established himself politically, and gained the social notoriety his father commanded.

Before he was 30 years old, Louis Bennett won an appointment as principal (president) of Glenville Normal School for three sessions ending in 1875, the result of his clerical service in West Virginia state government. A building on the college campus is named in his honor.

Elected to the House of Delegates in 1891, Louis Bennett was made Speaker in his first term. In 1908 he was Democratic candidate for Governor, losing to William E. Glasscock by a plurality of about 12,000 votes.

The Louis Bennett's frequently traveled abroad. The children were educated in Eastern schools and in Europe. Daughter Agra, was presented at the first court of King George V.

Louis Bennett, Jr., (1894-1918) left Yale in 1917 to organize the West Virginia Flying Corps. He was commissioned Captain by the Governor, and authorized head of the Corp by the State Board of Defense. When the U.S. Government refused to accept state units, Bennett enlisted in the British Royal Flying Forces, attaining the rank of First Lieutenant. Upon his own request Bennett was sent to France ahead of his own unit. Between August 15 and August 24, 1918, he shot down three German planes and nine observation balloons. He was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery. On August 24 Bennett was shot down by the Germans and died of injuries at Wavrin, France.

Seven memorials in the United States and Europe, including a church at Wavrin, France, were established in Louis Bennett's memory, largely through the efforts of

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Mrs. Louis Bennett, Sr. American Ambassador to the Court of St. James, West Virginian and family friend, John W. Davis, was instrumental in securing for Mrs. Bennett permission to give a memorial window in Westminster Abbey to the memory of "those members of the British Flying Services who fell in the Great War, 1914-18."

The first memorial to an aviator in the United States was dedicated in 1924 at Linsly Institute, Wheeling, West Virginia, in honor of Louis Bennett, Jr. The statue is entitled "The Aviator" and was executed by noted sculptor Henry Augustus Lukeman.

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Bennett, Joseph and Bennett, Louis Papers. West Virginia Collection, West Virginia University, Morgantown, W. Va.

Early, Margaret Abigail Holt. Holt-Bennett Family History. Parsons, W. Va.: McClain Printing Company, 1974.

Miller, Thomas Condit and Maxwell, Hu. West Virginia and its People. Vol. 2. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1913.

New York Herald Tribune, Sun., June 1, 1924.

Rice, Harvey Mitchell. The Life of Jonathan M. Bennett. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1943.

Smith, Edward Conrad. A History of Lewis County. Weston, West Virginia, 1920.

Wheeling Register, Sunday, January 8, 1922.