

# DATA SHEET

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <div style="text-align: center;">Washington</div>
COUNTY: <div style="text-align: center;">Columbia</div>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <div style="text-align: center;">FEB 10 1975</div>

### 1. NAME

COMMON:	Columbia County Courthouse
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

### 2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: <div style="text-align: center;">341 E. Main</div>			
CITY OR TOWN: <div style="text-align: center;">Dayton</div>		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: <div style="text-align: center;">#5 - Honorable Thomas Foley</div>	
STATE <div style="text-align: center;">Washington</div>	CODE <div style="text-align: center;">53</div>	COUNTY: <div style="text-align: center;">Columbia</div>	CODE <div style="text-align: center;">013</div>

### 3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY <small>(Check One)</small>	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public      Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>PRESENT USE</b> <small>(Check One or More as Appropriate)</small>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other <small>(Specify)</small>
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____

### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

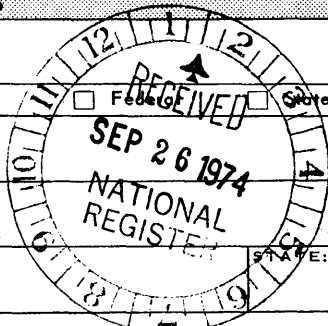
OWNER'S NAME: <div style="text-align: center;">Columbia County</div>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <div style="text-align: center;">341 E. Main</div>			
CITY OR TOWN: <div style="text-align: center;">Dayton</div>		STATE: <div style="text-align: center;">Washington</div>	CODE <div style="text-align: center;">53</div>

### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: <div style="text-align: center;">County Courthouse</div>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <div style="text-align: center;">341 E. Main</div>			
CITY OR TOWN: <div style="text-align: center;">Dayton</div>		STATE <div style="text-align: center;">Washington</div>	CODE <div style="text-align: center;">53</div>

### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: <div style="text-align: center;">None</div>			
DATE OF SURVEY: <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>			
STREET AND NUMBER: <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>			
CITY OR TOWN: <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>		STATE: <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>	CODE <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>



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STATE:	Washington
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ENTRY NUMBER:	FEB 10 1975
DATE:	

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed	
(Check One)			(Check One)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Columbia County Courthouse, built in 1886, is a two story structure with a ground level basement. Although the interior remains largely intact, the exterior has been greatly changed from its original Italianate appearance.

Built of kiln dried brick and covered with cement, masonry bearing walls rest on a concrete foundation which is nearly flush with the surrounding ground level. The building is basically rectangular in plan although short wings project from the east and west sides, making it appear an abbreviated cruciform in plan view. The symmetry of the plan was reflected in the nearly identical design of the four facades.

Major entrances were provided on the north and south sides; the south faced the main street and the north faced the rail line into town. Both front and rear have a 12 foot wide stairway, constructed of embossed cast iron and supported by a concrete foundation. Over each double-doored entry is a molded face. Each entry has a small porch; originally, from ground level to a plane even with the porch deck, the wall was finished with simulated linear jointing continuous around the entire structure. A portico covered each entrance and rose a full story in height to serve as a second floor balcony. The balcony was supported by both square and turned pillars with decorated capitals; a balustrade with decorated corner posts finished the balcony.

Quoins were continuous from ground level to the second floor where they were terminated by an intermediate cornice; pilasters on the second story continued the line established by the quoins and were themselves terminated by double brackets supporting the cornice proper. The frieze is decorated with panels and a row of dentils. The central pilasters of each facade support a pedimented gable with a sunburst detail.

Three major window openings occur in each elevation. All windows are double hung, very narrow and with a segmented arch head. Double windows appear on the central face and are flanked by single windows. On the original structure, first floor windows were finished with full molded trim while second story windows had a hood mold only. The head of the mold followed the arch of the window opening and a keystone was centered in the trim.

The roof is a very low pitched truncated hip with low gables on each side. Originally it was covered with metal and penetrated by numerous decorated chimnies and stacks. A bronze statue of justice was placed at the apex of the north and south gables and an American eagle at the apex of the east and west gables.

A bracketed platform with wrought iron balustrade located centrally on the roof served as a base for a story high mansard roof tower. The square tower was penetrated on each side with double fully arched windows separated by mullions. The pilaster and cornice detail duplicated that of the main structure. Hooded vent gables were placed on

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE		Washington
COUNTY		Columbia
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
	FEB 10 1975	

(Number all entries)

#7 - Description  
Columbia County Courthouse

each face of the tower roof. High metal cresting completed the tower detail.

Although the Columbia County Courthouse is structurally unaltered, virtually all of the Italianate detail has been removed or otherwise eliminated. Quoins, the distinctive linear jointing of the ground floor, the intermediate cornice separating the first and second floors, the decorated pilasters and the window moldings are all gone. The positions of the quoins, pilasters and cornice are all indicated now by vertical and horizontal bands. There is no window trim although the keystones remain. The windows, which originally were of three lights each, presently have the upper light blocked. The porches remain although without the turned posts, decorated capitals and balustrade. Only one chimney of modern design now extends above the roof and the metal roof itself has been covered with asphaltic material. The tower was removed in 1947 because of structural problems, although the decorative cresting is stored in the courthouse attic. The bronze statues of Justice and the eagles were removed about 1936 or 1937 and became a part of the scrap drives of World War II.

The building has recently been painted a beige color and trimmed at the cornice, windows and doors with a warm brown. The porticos are also warm brown and the keystones and the sunbursts on the gable ends are bright gold. The effect of the painting has been to emphasize the architectural unity of the building and to accent some of the finer detail.



**9. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1886

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1886, the Columbia County Courthouse is the oldest existing courthouse in the state of Washington. Although it has lost much of its fine architectural detail, it still represents the importance of county government, particularly in the early developing years of the state.

Originally, Walla Walla County comprised all the part of Washington Territory below the Snake River. Various attempts to make a smaller division succeeded in 1876 when Columbia County was formed. Columbia County comprised all that part of Walla Walla County from a point between Huntsville and Waitsburg to the mouth of the Grande Ronde River, or that which is now Columbia, Garfield and Asotin Counties.

Upon organization of the county in 1876, Jesse H. Day, proprietor of the town of Dayton, donated to the county eight lots on Main Street with the proviso that the lots should be used for county purposes only. Following a very heated campaign in 1878, the question of the definite location of the county seat was placed before the electorate. After the votes were counted, Dayton received 418 and its competitor, Marengo, received 300. As a side note, Marengo is now virtually a ghost town with only a few old buildings as a reminder of its past.

In November, 1881, Garfield County was created by the Territorial Legislature, giving Columbia County its present configuration.

By 1882, the movement to construct a courthouse in Dayton grew to such proportions that a vote was taken. The proposal lost, 447 to 255. Some say the proposition lost at the polls because the voters felt the plan, which called for a \$7,000 structure, was inadequate or "not much better than no building at all". In 1884, the voters returned to the polls and approved a \$40,000 bond issue to build the much needed courthouse. In 1886, the Territorial Council authorized Columbia County to build the courthouse and the House of Representatives ratified the Council's action that same year. The original document, signed by Secretary of State Thomas S. Bayard, is on file in the county records.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Columbia County Commissioners' Journal of Official Proceedings 1875-1974.

Official County Scrapbook - First compiled by Mrs. Louise Nilsson, Columbia County Clerk.

Newspaper Files, Dayton Chronicle & Walla Walla Union Bulletin.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

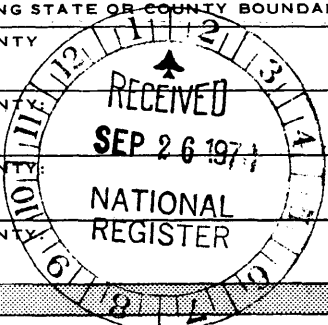
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		46 ° 19 ' 16 "	117 ° 58 ' 38 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

11/42473  
5129990

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than one**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Vernon Marll, Chairman**

ORGANIZATION: **Columbia County Commissioners**      DATE: **July 23, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**341 E. Main**

CITY OR TOWN: **Dayton**      STATE: **Washington**      CODE: **53**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION      NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National     State     Local

Name Charles H. Odegaard  
**Charles H. Odegaard**

Title Director - Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission

Date Sept. 23, 1974

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 7/10/75

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date 5-6-75

#8 - Significance  
Columbia County Courthouse

The construction contract for the building was awarded at a price of \$32,732. A. J. Dexter received \$10,745, for the stone, brick and concrete work. Kribs, Bishop and Arnold were paid \$21,987 for the carpentry work. W. H. Burrows, an architect, was employed as superintendent of construction for a salary of \$1,637. The four steel jail cells in use today cost an additional \$3,700. The bricks used in the courthouse were reportedly made of local clay in the local Dexter Kiln. The courthouse was completed and officially accepted on July 2, 1887, at the total cost of \$38,067.

On May 19, 1915, two Civil War cannons arrived from the United States War Department and were placed on display in the front courtyard on either side of the walkway. George Wick, a night watchman and Civil War Veteran, was instrumental in obtaining the cannons. The touchhole of one was worn considerably, indicating that it had been heavily used in battle. History recalls that shortly thereafter, three high school students decided one night they would fire one of the cannons. When the cannon was touched off, the roar was heard for miles around and the cannon reportedly leaped about twenty feet into the air. Nearly every window pane in the front of the courthouse was broken.

A faulty device used for burning sawdust caused a fire in the northerly portion of the building in 1939. While no permanent structural damage resulted, some of the then current courthouse records were destroyed. Total damage repair was slightly over \$4,000. No evidence of the fire is noticeable today.

The Columbia County Courthouse represents an earlier period of political activity when county government played a far greater role than it does today. In a period of rapid growth and limited opportunity for contact with the state capitol, it was to county government that persons turned as a source of authority and administration for the area. The needs most immediate to county citizens were located in the courthouse: land and tax records, the assessor, judges and commissioners. The Twentieth Century, with its hallmarks of rapid communication and mega-government, has eclipsed much of the utility of county functions and the great majority of county governments reflect but little their former strength and influence.

The selection of a community as county seat guaranteed it a place in the future of the state, not always a certain thing in periods of development. Community pride instilled a desire to establish a fitting structure and the courthouse in Dayton was no exception. Finished with much Italianate detail it was a most worthy edifice, well satisfying any urge to create a structure that also could serve as a monument to county authority. Now all but a trace of that detail is gone and it is difficult to discern hints of the flamboyant exterior.

