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DATA SHEET
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED
JUL 11 1975
DATE ENTERED SEP 11 1975

**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
* * Hickman County Courthouse
AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Court Square
CITY, TOWN
Clinton
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF
First
COUNTY
Hickman
CODE
021
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
105

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
County of Hickman, Kentucky
STREET & NUMBER
Court Square
CITY, TOWN
Clinton
STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
County Clerk's Office, Hickman County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
Court Square
CITY, TOWN
Clinton
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky (Supplement)
DATE
1973
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Kentucky Heritage Commission, 401 Wapping Street
CITY, TOWN
Frankfort
STATE
Kentucky

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

Like the Adair County Courthouse in Columbia, Kentucky (see National Register form approved August, 1974), the Hickman County Courthouse belongs to no clear stylistic realm, although bearing unmistakable signs of its late Victorian derivation. The latter was unmistakable when the composition was climaxed by a tall square tower diminishing through a pyramidal Mandsard roof to a tiny crested platform at the apex. The loss of the tower (which could be reconstructed by means of the surviving architectural drawings and analogy to similar examples) still leaves a rather complex composition whose High Victorian character is most apparent in the virtuous corbelled brickwork.

The courthouse square slopes upward from the main street on the north. The main block of the courthouse lies east-west, with the tall courtroom running through the building and rising boldly above the attached blocks to the north and south. A cross-axial effect is provided by the narrower entrance pavilions, three-stories facing the north and two facing south. These mark the ends of the central corridor on the first story (traditionally left open during most of the year and used as a public thoroughfare and lounging area in many Kentucky county seats). Stairs rise in the smaller corner blocks to the grandiose second-story courtroom, whose presence is exhibited on the ends not only by its greater height and brick pilasters, but also by tall round-arched windows.

The entrance pavilions have low gables over segmental-arched corbelled recesses framing simplified "Palladian" windows. The porches consist of Romanesquoid stone columns with handsomely carved capitals supporting balconies with delicately wrought iron railings. The use of brick corbelling provides the inspiration for both the pilasters of the courtroom walls and the strange square hoods of the other windows, which are also set in recessed panels leaving implied pilasters at the corners and between bays. The dentilled cornice is reinforced by additional corbelled brick courses. Stone is used rough for the foundations and ashlar in a band that continues around the building between the stories except on the entrance pavilions, where it is interrupted in order to permit a continuous vertical. Sills and lintels are also of stone.

The interior remains essentially intact. There is vertical tongue-in-groove wainscoting throughout (with false pine panelling above in some areas). One of the two fine staircases with handsome newel posts and delicate iron spindles (shown in the working drawings) has been closed off. There is vivid colored glass in the lunettes over the entrances. The courtroom has a raked floor and old cast-iron folding benches (a rare survival). A balcony across the rear of the courtroom was closed off when the ceiling was lowered recently, and there are the inevitable renovations to the individual offices.

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 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

1884-85

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hickman County was formed in 1821 out of Caldwell and Livingston Counties. It was named for Captain Paschal Hickman, one of those wounded men who were butchered at the Battle of River Raisin during the War of 1812. It was this battle--source of the famous rallying cry, "Remember the Raisin"--which formed a turning point in the War, definitively halting Indian claims and occupation of the then-Northwest Territory and opening it up for full migration of white settlers from the East. Hickman County is located in the Jackson Purchase Area, the farthest western portion of Kentucky, which lies along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers west of the Tennessee River. Tennessee itself lies to the south and shares with the Purchase its southern oriented culture and commerce.

The county seat of Hickman County was originally Columbus. Located strategically (and vulnerably) on the Mississippi, Columbus had been settled in 1804. It was later to become the site of a decisive Civil War Battle (the Columbus-Belmont Battlefield site was listed on the National Register in 1973). Although the battlefield has been preserved as a State Park, the town was later moved (largely because of frequent disastrous flooding) up onto the bluffs overlooking the River. The first courthouse was built in 1823 in Columbus. In 1829, however, the county seat was moved nine miles inland to Clinton, which was established in 1831.

An outline of the history of the courthouses in Clinton was given in 1885, just after the completion of the present structure, in the volume dealing with the Purchase counties in the valuable series Kentucky, A History of the State, by J. H. Battle, W. H. Perrin, and G. C. Kniffin: "The first court house in Clinton was a rude log structure erected on the public square the year after the county seat was relocated. It served its purpose until 1832, at which time an order for a new building more in keeping with the increasing wealth and dignity of the county was made, and work on the new house commenced at once. The commissioners appointed to superintend its erection were Owen Glatz, Stephen Ray, H. L. Edrington, Thomas L. Owsley and William Jordan. The building was of brick, forty-five feet square, two stories high, with the court room below and three jury rooms on the second floor. At the time of its completion, it was the only brick house in Kentucky west of the Tennessee River. It was used for court purposes until 1883, at which time it was condemned as unsafe, and a new one ordered built. At the August term, 1883, the following commissioners were appointed to examine plans and contract for the new building: N. P. Moss, John T. Moore and R. H. Nancy. The contract was awarded W. L. & T. J. Landrum of Mayfield, for \$20,845, and under the efficient management of John A. Scott, Superintendent, the work has been pushed rapidly forward. The building is brick, and when

(continued)

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Hickman County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

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completed will be one of the finest and most imposing temples of justice in the Purchase. It is 92 x 78 feet, contains four offices and a library room, two petit jury rooms, one grand jury room and a circuit court room 46 x 74 feet, with a seating capacity of 700 persons outside the bar. The building is finely finished, and with its beautiful tower, 112 feet high, is an object of which the citizens of both city and county may be justly proud."

Characteristically, this account omits the name of the architectural firm which designed the new building, while emphasizing the local officials and builders. Court records, surviving working drawings, and a cornerstone prominently placed as the pedestal of the main (north) entrance all credit the noted Louisville firm of McDonald Brothers.* This firm, in its various transformations from the late 1870s until well into the twentieth century, was one of the most prolific in Kentucky, and indeed in the South, specializing in courthouses and other public buildings. An incomplete count indicates that they were responsible for the design of well over a dozen courthouses in Kentucky alone, many of them following exactly the same pattern. The Hickman County Courthouse is almost identical to those in Columbia, Adair County, Williamsburg, Whitley County, and London, Laurel County. There were and may still be others of the same type, all with slight variations and some alterations. The Hickman County structure has unfortunately lost its tower, in two stages: the characteristic attenuated Mansard roof with clock-faces was removed after a cyclone in 1917; the square drum or pedestal, which had been retained with a truncated roof, was removed about 1938. Aside from an unobtrusive addition in the southwest corner, the building has otherwise remained intact and unspoiled and presently in good condition on a relatively large courthouse square. The prominent site at the intersection of two roads, the 19th-century scale of the surrounding commercial and residential blocks, and of the town as a whole, allow the courthouse to remain the focal point of the community architecturally as well as socially, politically, and historically.

*In Order Book H of the Hickman County Records, it is recorded in the Minutes for a meeting on August 13, 1883, that the "sense of the Court" was taken in regard to three plans the architects presented. Only two of the proposals are mentioned: McDonald Brothers (with nine votes) and "Boyd" (with three). The latter may be Thomas Boyd of Pittsburgh, architect of the flamboyant Second Empire Scott County Courthouse (1878) in Georgetown, Kentucky. After selecting McDonald's plan, the Court authorized the Building Committee to contract with the architect and "to the utmost extent provided the cost of said building including the estimated cost of the furniture for same and architects fees shall not exceed in cost the sum of \$25,000."