

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Brown Building

and or common Ream Building

2. Location

street & number 295 High Street

___ not for publication

city, town Morgantown

___ vicinity of

state West Virginia

code 54

county Monongalia

code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
___ district	___ public	<u>X</u> occupied	___ agriculture
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	___ unoccupied	<u>X</u> commercial
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational
___ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment
___ object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<u>X</u> yes: restricted	___ government
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial
		___ no	___ military
			___ museum
			___ park
			<u>X</u> private residence
			___ religious
			___ scientific
			___ transportation
			___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Citizens Industrial Financing Corporation

street & number 265 High Street

city, town Morgantown

___ vicinity of

state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monongalia County Courthouse

street & number High and Walnut Streets

city, town Morgantown

state West Virginia

Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes X no

___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

survey records

state

7. Description

Condition		Check one		Check one	
☐ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site		
☒ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved	date	N/A
☐ fair	☐ unexposed				

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Brown Building, a four story commercial structure with late nineteenth century eclectic details, was designed in 1898 by Elmer F. Jacobs, Morgantown's leading architect. Sited on the old "Public Square" on the important corner of High and Walnut Streets, Jacobs obviously designed a building which would be attractive from at least three sides. (A photograph of the building before the seven-story building was constructed next door, shows less attention to detail on the south facade--almost as if Jacobs knew that eventually a building as tall as his would be built.) Fine polychromatic brick detailing, accentuated bays and a rhythmic repetition of triads of double-sash windows, soften the more severe appearance of the lower levels. The building has had some alterations, but they were minor and the owners plan to restore as much of the early fabric as possible.

The Brown Building is topped by a flat roof and deep projecting cornice which was originally topped by a masonry balustrade of intricate design with ball finials and a parapet centered over the front facade. It was on this parapet that the name "Brown" was formed by masonry letters. When this was removed, is unknown. The cornice is still enriched, however, by modillion-like brackets and dentils.

Probably the most striking aspect of Jacob's design for the building is the contrasting red and buff-yellow brick which forms a diamond pattern around the upper portion of the fourth floor. Interestingly, the Cox House/Ball and Dinsmore office building a block away which was designed by Jacobs the same year, has an arched pattern of contrasting colored shingles on the dormers. When the restoration architects discovered the original colors and design, few people in Morgantown believed they were authentic. The Brown Building is further evidence of Jacob's versatility and gives credibility to the Cox House colors and design. Both buildings are constructed of running bond brick, each brick narrow, $1\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ inches long.

Other decorative features on the third story of the Brown Building include two belt courses, one a three-dimensional band in red brick above the windows and the other, a flush, light buff brick band running precisely at the level of the top of the upper sash of the arched windows. This band, when seen in the sunshine, forms a sparkling ribbon connecting all fifteen windows on the top story. These upper story windows, set in semi-circular arches, are double sash with transom and grouped in threes forming a strong rhythmic harmony around the building. The buff brick arches with pronounced moldings are themselves handsome and decorative.

Separating the fourth from the third story is a belt course which includes a small cornice and dental moldings, reflecting its counterpart farther up the wall.

The second and third storys are alike. The original double sash windows are rectangular with stone sills and brick lintels with keystone-shaped arches. The grouping of all the windows on the Brown Building into five bays is topped by three fourth story windows per bay. The central bay on the north (Walnut Street) wall and that on the west (back), are the same. On the east (High Street) facade, the grouping of the nine windows of the top three floors, forms a modified Palladian design. This is the case with all the groupings on the building except for those on the northeast corner; they are symmetrical. The bays are given more definition by the brick (grey, but could be buff under dirt) quoining which divides them on the lower levels.

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Although the facade of the first story of the Brown Building has been muddled, there is much of the original fabric under the late 1950s-1960s materials. For instance, although the entrance has shifted a few inches to the north because of window replacements, and the storefront has lost its original character, the square columns are still intact in several places and it appears the siding was placed directly over those at the front. An excellent photograph of the building taken in the 1920s provides valuable information about the building, particularly the storefront. Of particular interest in the photograph, is a large storefront window (north facade, Walnut Street) which was enclosed. Another photograph, circa 1906, shows several windows along Walnut Street filled in with some material, although it could be from within, because J.U. Kellar and Company Dry Goods store was there then. Beyond the storefront area with its square columns, brick pilasters capped with simple capitals set on a stone water table are still intact. Six of the first floor arched windows on the north (Walnut Street) wall have been bricked in since the 1920 photograph. The owners plan to remove the bricks. Part of the original Farmers and Merchants Bank sign is exposed and the remainder hidden under the new siding. It also appears that there was not a heavy storefront cornice but that the decorative belt course, like that above, continues around the front of the building. The foundation is cut stone and appears in good condition. Steps lead down to the barber shop in the basement. An entry to the upper floors is located to the south of the storefront entry. The door is original.

The interior of the first floor is typical of a large commercial sales area. Although small dressing rooms are located in the rear of the store, partitions are removable. Upper floors have had few alterations since some of the suites were made into apartments. Woodwork, fancy iron radiators, windows, floors and most doors are original or date from the 1920s. The majority of the doors have their transoms. There are very early wash basins and at least one clawfoot bath tub. There is no elevator in the building. The suite which "Main Street Morgantown" occupies is strictly office space; there is no kitchen or bathroom, although an original sink, which was used by one of the physicians who rented the space, is still in a corner. The rooms are very bright because of the ample light from the large windows.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
— prehistoric	— archeology-prehistoric	— community planning	— landscape architecture	— religion
— 1400-1499	— archeology-historic	— conservation	— law	— science
— 1500-1599	— agriculture	— economics	— literature	— sculpture
— 1600-1699	X architecture	— education	— military	— social
— 1700-1799	— art	— engineering	— music	— humanitarian
X 1800-1899	X commerce	— exploration settlement	— philosophy	— theater
— 1900—	— communications	— industry	— politics government	— transportation
		— invention		— other (specify)

Specific dates 1898/1900-1925 Builder Architect Elmer F. Jacobs , Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Brown Building, built in 1898 in the Monongalia County "Public Square," was designed by Elmer F. Jacobs, one of Morgantown's foremost architects, and is significant architecturally as a unique example of his eclectic style and is enhanced by the fact that, despite revocable changes on the first story, the building retains almost all of its original character. The Brown Building is also significant because of its association with the commercial and financial development of the county during the boom years from 1900 to 1925, particularly 1900-1907, when the John James Brown family owned it and from 1907 until the Depression when it was closely associated with banking in Monongalia County. As the first four-story building (then the tallest) in the county, it symbolizes the emergence of Morgantown from a sleepy village into a thriving city. By its location on High Street and on the "Public Square" just thirty feet northeast of the Monongalia County Courthouse, it also graphically symbolizes the close alliance between commerce, banking and government during the boom period.

Elmer Jacobs was born in 1866 in Preston County, West Virginia. After a brief stint with firms in Pittsburgh, he set up an architectural office in Morgantown in 1894. He specialized in residential and certain industrial types of structures and was responsible for scores of buildings in the area including the old Post Office building, the Seneca Glass Company works, and an addition to Woodburn Hall on the nearby campus of West Virginia University. His contemporaries credited him with making Morgantown beautiful. His contributions to the area are only just becoming realized because of scholarly research by historians in the state. An interview with his daughter-in-law revealed that when he died in the 1940s, no one was interested in his archives and they were destroyed. In the case of the Brown Building, he chose it for the location of his offices for several years and one of the pre-1912 photographs of the building shows his office sign in one of the windows.

The Brown Building is also significant because of its association with the rapid commercial and financial development of Morgantown from 1898 until the middle 1920s. During that time, the city grew from a small town of 2,000 to a thriving city of 13,000. With the completion of the Fairmont, Morgantown and Pittsburgh Railroad in 1886, the town was linked with the mainline of the B & O system. Three years later, the completion of the lock and dam system on the Monongahela River brought year round navigation. With this transportation system intact and the area's vast mineral resources awaiting development, the town began a boom in the late 1890s that lasted until the late 1920s. Business and banking facilities were the result.

The building was intended for commercial use and it hosted some of Morgantown's most successful (and one not so successful) entrepreneurs. After S. A. Posten, the real estate developer who had a whole block named after him, hired Jacobs and had the building built in 1898, he sold it to William Whittington. For unknown reasons, Whittington went bankrupt in 1900, and the building was conveyed in a 'sheriff's sale' to Leana and John M.G. (Guy) Brown. The purchaser was really John James Brown who had bought the property for his two sons, Dr. Zalman (Zed) Brown and Guy. Zed died before the final transaction and the property was deeded to his young widow, Leanna, and to Guy. The Browns held the property until 1907; it was during these years that it became known as the Brown Building and received its name above the cornice where it remained for several decades.

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The Browns were one of the most prominent and wealthy families in northern West Virginia, having benefited financially from the coal and gas boom. John James Brown was born in Preston County in 1825 and was an elderly, but active man in 1900. Educated at Washington College in Washington, Pennsylvania, he was admitted to the bar in 1848. During the Civil War, he was a staunch loyalist. In 1864 he moved from Preston County to Morgantown. He served as the first state Senator from Preston, Monongalia and Taylor counties. He was a signer of the West Virginia State Constitution. After serving one term as Senator, he returned to Morgantown to pursue his business affairs.¹ His second wife, Guy's mother, was also prominent and wealthy in her own right and at the time of the purchase of the Brown Building, she and her son were developing a major portion of South Park and other newly developing areas of the county. (Today, Guy Brown's daughter still has extensive land and mineral holdings in Monongalia County.)

Guy Brown was well known, particularly in 1902 when he became the first person in the county to own an automobile. He drove his Searchmont "about the town and vicinity, exciting the people, scaring the horses, participating in parades and festivities in general."² He later helped organize the Morgantown Chamber of Commerce and was one of its early presidents.

A circa 1903 photograph of the Brown Building shows the word "Brown" spelled out in raised masonry letters above the cornice on the east (High Street) facade. The sign is now gone. While the Browns owned the building, the first floor was rented to a clothier and dry goods firm, Kellar and Company Dry Goods Store, while the upper floors were used as offices and apartments, which has been the case ever since. The Kellar firm sold a wide range of goods including apparel for women. During the first several years of the building's existence, its number on High Street, like others, changed often.

In 1907, the property was conveyed to the Farmers and Merchants Bank and the building received that name. (Part of the words "Farmers and Merchants" can be seen presently on the north (Walnut Street) side of the exterior of the first floor. The sign covering the rest of the lettering is only nailed into place and is removable. Early photographs show the lettering on the east side (High Street) as well. It is now completely hidden under the sign. Farmers and Merchants Bank used the first floor to house its banking facilities until 1922 when the building's ownership was transferred to the Bank of Morgantown. (During the 1920s, banking facilities moved up and down High Street.)

The Bank of Morgantown who built the seven story building next door in 1922, used the first floor of the Brown Building for a period of time for offices, but clothiers rented the space in the 1930s. Interestingly, the two second floor suites were rented to the same physician and dentist for more than two decades from circa 1920 until the 1940s. A popular pharmacy, Reams, was located on the first floor when Eleanor Ream owned the building in the early 1960s and the Citizens Industrial Financing Corporation officers still refer to the Brown Building as the Ream Building.

The building is highly visible on High Street which is one way for cars travelling south. A traffic light at the corner of High and Walnut Streets means that most people stop across from the building. Because of its visibility on a busy corner, its historic integrity will enhance the image of downtown Morgantown. The major banking institution, the First National Bank, recently purchased the historic building next to it on High Street for banking expansion and immediately bricked in the upper windows. The Brown Building deserves better treatment.

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Citizens Industrial Financing Corporation is presently negotiating with Tai and Lee, restoration architects in Pittsburgh, who designed the restoration for the former Cox House in Morgantown (National Register 1984). Tai and Lee are optimistic that proper restoration can be done on the Brown Building and that Citizens Industrial Financing Corporation can move one of their departments into it. The basement is under lease to "Bowers Barber Shop" and the first floor is presently leased to "Designer For You," a woman's clothing store. The second, third and fourth floors are presently apartments except for the suite at the front of the second floor. Citizens has donated the suite to "Main Street Morgantown," a tax exempt corporation whose purpose is to "economically revitalize and redevelop the downtown," using programs developed by the National Trust. Having "Main Street Morgantown" in an historic building will help the image of the organization as well as drawing attention to a fine historic resource on the cultural landscape of High Street.

1. Justin M. Kunkle, ed., Illustrated Industrial Edition: The New Dominion, Morgantown, W.V., 1903, p. 16.
2. Earl L. Core, "The Distinguished Ancestry of the Browns," Dominion Post Panorama, (Morgantown), March 6, 1983,, p. 4.

10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

state West Virginia

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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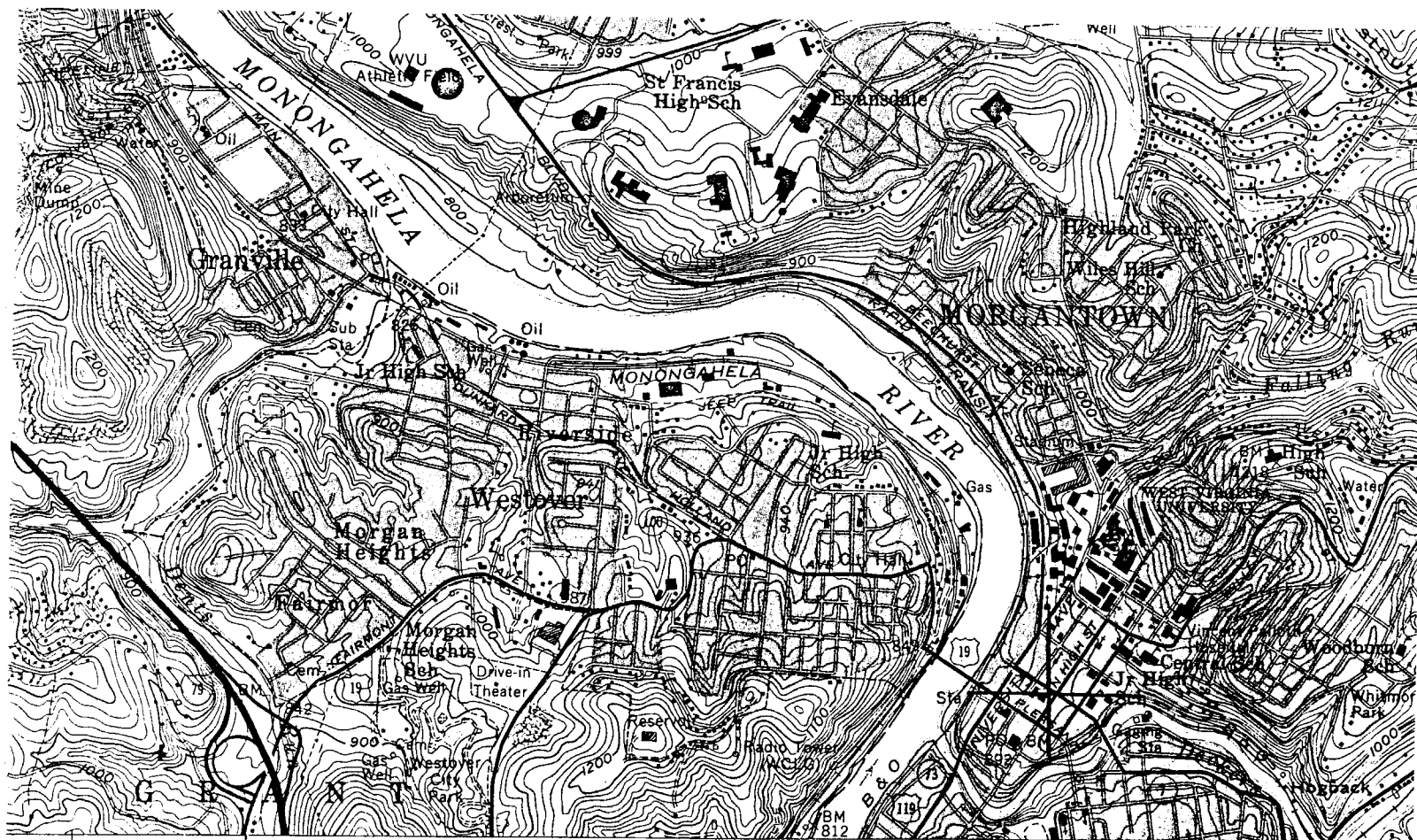
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Callahan, James Morton. History of the Making of Morgantown. Morgantown, W.V., 1926.
Core, Earl L. "The Distinguished Ancestry of the Browns." Dominion Post Panorama, Morgantown,
March 6, 1983.
Holmes, Charles J. ed. Illustrated Industrial Edition of the New Dominion.
Morgantown, W.V., May 10, 1906.
Kunkle, Justin M. ed. Illustrated Industrial Edition: The New Dominion. Morgantown,
W.V., February 1903.
Monongalia County Deed Books
Morgantown City Directories
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
Photographs from the West Virginia Regional and History Collection, West Virginia
University, Morgantown, W.V.
Interviews: Mrs. Esten Davis, January 3, 1985
Mrs. Oron Jacobs, March 1982
Ms. Mary Markey, West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia
University, Morgantown, W.V., December 10, 1984.



00' 1860 000 FEET (W. VA.) 587 FAIRMONT (JUNC. U.S. 250) 16 MI. 588 GRAFTON (JUNC. U.S. 50) 26 MI. 57'30" 590 (MO.)

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE

Topography from aerial photographs by Kelsh plotter

Aerial photographs taken 1955. Field check 1957

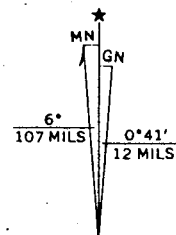
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on West Virginia coordinate system,
north zone, and Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 17, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines
visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

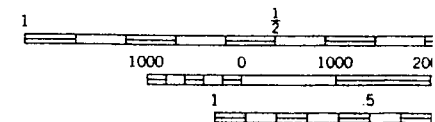
Contours in strip mine areas from 1955 photography

Red tint indicates areas in which only
landmark buildings are shown

Unchecked elevations are shown in brown
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



UTM GRID AND 1976 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONT
NATIONAL GEO

THIS MAP COMPLIES W
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEO
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAFI

BROWN-BEAM BLDG
MOREANTOWN, MON. CO.



EAST
7
↑

EAST
92
↑

NO PARKING
ANY TIME
FEB 6-7 PM

NO PARKING
ANY TIME
FEB 6-7 PM

PARKING
GARAGE

ONE WAY

DESIGNER
CLOTHES
AT
DISCOUNT
PRICES

7up
BOWEN'S
BOTTLE SHOP

NO - PARK
HARBOR