

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Grant County Courthouse

and/or common Old Grant County Courthouse

2. Location

street & number Virginia Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Petersburg _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district Second

state West Virginia code 54 county Grant code 023

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Grant County Commission (Grant County Museum Commission)

street & number Grant County Courthouse, 5 Highland Avenue

city, town Petersburg _____ vicinity of _____ state West Virginia 26847

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grant County Courthouse

street & number 5 Highland Avenue

city, town Petersburg _____ state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? ____ yes ____ no

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		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Old Grant County Courthouse is a detached building that presently houses public health offices and is intended for future use as a museum-cultural center. This Neo-Colonial/Neo-Classical structure is composed of a massing of three brick rectangles (laid in a 6/1 common bond and scored): a large center section with lower and narrower wings that project beyond wall lines of the central facade. While each rectangle is two stories in height, the three-bay wide main unit is somewhat higher than wings of single-bay width, and the former features a gable-roofed, pedimented front portico, unlike subordinated hip roofs elsewhere.

This two-story projecting portico is the dominant design element, but it is pleasantly blended into the whole through use of proper proportioning, complementary cornices, and a variety of mellowed recesses and projections along the facade. Double window openings at front and side of 1909 wing additions combine with brick quoins on each corner of this elevation to somewhat subdue the massing of four high, Corinthian-capped fluted columns, drawing attention to walls midway between center-unit face and portico steps.

Regular fenestration introduced with construction in 1878-79 was continued in 1909 alterations. Windows added at the latter date are more decorative, however, having been changed from flat or slightly arched lintels to recessed panels and brick jackarches that are emphasized by cement corner blocks and keystones in an offsetting color. In addition, while the former front had doorways only in the wings, the extended facade was further distinguished with a double-door center entrance directly into the first-floor courtroom (the location of the courtroom is unusual in itself). Second-floor doors placed in the angles between units are approached by attractive wooden stairs along each wing with a connecting balcony across the entire front. Rooflines are broken symmetrically by rather high, corbel-capped chimneys in the outside walls of main section and wings and a central, louvered cupola that is a carryover from the earlier period.

Aside from previously noted elements, decorative exterior features include turned balusters in the stair, a cornice of modillions, and high, paneled pedestals supporting the wooden columns.

Compared to the outside, interior arrangement and design is simple if functional. On the first floor is a central courtroom with several former offices and vaults in the wings. The second floor includes offices and storage rooms. Distinction is provided only by winding stairs in the southeast corner, several paneled doors and jambs, original (1909 vintage) electric "chandeliers" in the courtroom, and a painting on a vault door (attributed to a local immigrant artist named J. Macewicz, who is said to have completed it some decades after building construction).

When finished in 1879, the Old Grant County Courthouse was a quite substantial and handsome structure, one of only a few brick buildings in the small town of Petersburg. At that time it consisted of a square center

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Old Grant County Courthouse, Petersburg, Grant County, West Virginia

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section with lower and narrower wings. A rather flat front was broken only by a slightly projecting center bay topped by a gable which punctuated the hip roof. Modillions in the cornice and a bell tower were the only decorative features.

Architect George F. Sansbury of Cumberland, Maryland, created present lines of the edifice during an extensive building program in 1909. While the dominant Neo-Classical pedimented portico defined the courthouse, it was good use of existing massing and proportions that established a theme. The center block with side units was merely extended forward and polished through more imaginative application of brickwork. Except for a single-story cinder block addition at the southwest corner dating from the 1960s, slight interior modifications over the years, and placing of a World War I memorial at the entrance, the building retains its 1909 appearance.

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 checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1879, 1895, 1909 Builder/Architect George F. Sansbury - 1909

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Grant County Courthouse at Petersburg, West Virginia, is significant for having played a role in introducing a measure of permanence and stability to county government location in this rural area where three communities had served as seat in six years and feelings still "ran high" for another change.¹ It eventually became associated with a court contest that ended in a West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals decision that declared a portion of a state statute to be unconstitutional.² Perhaps more importantly, this structure remains as a physical memorial to local architectural expression carried out in a planned and professional manner to produce a handsome and functional public building.³

Explanatory Notes

1. Grant County was formed from Hardy County in 1866, in part because of differences in sympathies between sections during the recent Civil War or War between the States. Initial meetings were held at the community of Laurelton in the central part of the county just east of New Creek Mountain and Allegheny Front. In October 1867, however, a new courthouse was completed at nearby Maysville, and government moved there until an election and act of the state legislature in 1872 named Petersburg as seat. In part because this small town in the county's eastern section, along the South Branch of the Potomac River, was removed from a significant segment of the population, a dissatisfaction and rivalry was fomented and left unsettled until 1895. A symbolic permanence and stability was achieved when a substantial brick courthouse was erected in 1878-79, but even after more than twenty years, sentiment overcame symbolism. On August 27, 1895, a special election concerning county seat location resulted in Maysville again being selected by a vote of 876 to 604.

2. Shortly after the state legislature had passed an act permitting removal of Grant County government from Maysville to Petersburg on February 13, 1872, a new constitution went into effect in West Virginia. One provision of the latter stated that "special laws" could not be considered at the state level; this item would eventually loom large in Grant County politics, at the same time adding to the body of important judicial determinations concerning state laws. On February 14, 1895, the West Virginia Legislature enacted a statute permitting counties to decide location of governmental seats by a majority of three-fifths of those voting in an election for that purpose. The law excepted counties (only Grant in this case) where location had been designated by legislative action since January 1, 1872, however, providing here that a simple majority could decide as to place of official meeting. Upon certification by the Grant County Court (administrative) of a simple majority in favor of re-

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Old Grant County Courthouse, Petersburg, Grant County, West Virginia

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location at Maysville as a result of the election of August 27, 1895, that body proceeded to order removal of records from the courthouse at Petersburg. A writ was filed to block this move, the plaintiff noting that a three-fifths majority had not approved (there were twelve votes less than three-fifths cast in favor of the move). Eventually, in a decision dated December 5, 1896, the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals declared that part of the act of February 14, 1895, which exempted counties (only Grant in this case) from the three-fifths majority provision to be a special law prohibited by the West Virginia Constitution. Not only had Petersburg been named county seat by an act of the state legislature, but it was confirmed through a decision of the state's highest court, and the 1879 brick courthouse continued as governmental center.

3. When constructed, the building was not imposing, although it was one of only a few brick structures in this small town and had assumed a notable character early on with its nicely proportioned elevations and bell tower bespeaking position. Need for more office space and state-mandated record vaults more impervious to hazards led the county court (administrative) to decide upon an enlargement program that would transform this courthouse into a locally-heralded architectural work destined to become a landmark as much for its grand entrance as for its being the house of county governmental activity. George F. Sansbury of Cumberland, Maryland, presented the community and county with an attractive and functional edifice, combining a plain interior with as simple and subtly decorated exterior featuring four tall, fluted, Corinthian-capped frontal columns supporting a pedimented portico. Good proportioning, detailing in brick and wood, and placement of an exterior stair with turned balusters and smooth lines under the portico added to a continuation of the old arrangement of center block with side wings, louvered cupola, and cornice of modillions to produce a picturesque Neo-Classical/Neo-Colonial building that is among the finer public structures (and one of a few in this style) in Petersburg, Grant County, and the South Branch Valley of West Virginia.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Old Grant County Courthouse, Petersburg, Grant County, West Virginia

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Petersburg, W.Va. Collection of Mr. John K. Reid. Pamphlet: "Brief of Couch, Flournoy & Price, for J.B. Groves and and (sic) Others, Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia."

Petersburg, W.Va. Grant County Courthouse. Deed and Minute Books.

Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia (West Virginia Reports). Vol. XLII. Charleston, W.Va.: Butler Printing Co., 1897.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

elevation faces and on the south (rear) by a walkway, parking lot and driveway approximately 15 feet from the face of the cinder-block addition.

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Court House to be Repaired," Grant County Press (Petersburg, W.Va.), Jan. 22, 1909.
"To Comply with the Law," Grant County Press, Feb. 5, 1909.
"County Court Proceedings," Grant County Press, Feb. 5, 1909.
"County Court Order," Grant County Press, Apr. 2, 1909.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ acre
Quadrangle name Petersburg East, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 17 662730 4317450
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The building (approximately 70 feet wide and 85 feet deep) is situated on a town lot and is bordered on the north (front) by Virginia Avenue approximately 20 feet from the portico columns. It is bounded on east and west by gravel covered driveways about 35 feet from

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Harding, Historian
Historic Preservation Unit
organization Dept. of Culture and History date July 23, 1979
The Cultural Center
street & number Capitol Complex telephone (304) 348-0240
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 ☒ local

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Charles Moran

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 7/19/79

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

51°02'11" SW
(MAYSVILLE)

OLD GRANT COUNTY
COURTHOUSE, PETERSBURG,
GRANT COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA
UTM REFERENCE:
17/662730/4317450

