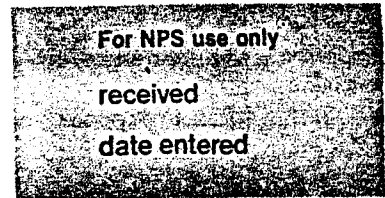


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National Park Service



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 Historic Resources of Downtown Parkersburg

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Various, downtown (see map; individual forms) N/A not for publication

city, town Parkersburg vicinity of ~~Congress~~

state West Virginia code 54 county Wood code 107

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Various (see individual survey forms)

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wood County Court House

street & number

city, town Parkersburg state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1. Heritage & Horizons Survey  
title 2. Survey of Downtown Parkersburg has this property been determined eligible? N/A yes  no

date 1972 / 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Unit, Department of Culture & History

city, town Charleston state West Virginia

# 7. Description

U.S.A

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in the west central portion of Wood County, Parkersburg commands an advantageous site at the confluence of the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers. The downtown area, on the flatlands at "the Point," boasts a collection of sites dating from the major eras of the town's development. The remainder of the City stretches out to the north, south, and east on gently rolling hills.

Thirty-six sites in the area bounded by Tenth Street, Jackson Avenue and Harris Street, and the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers, plus two additional sites outside that area, have been identified as being eligible for National Register listing for either architectural significance or historical associations. Three of these are already on the Register: the Wood County Court House (1899), the Neale House at 331 Juliana Street (1840), and St. Xavier Church (1869-70). Selected through review of the 1980 survey of the town by West Virginia University students and a subsequent windshield survey by LPI, the sites are diverse in nature. They include 13 houses dating from the 1820's to 1917, one apartment building, 12 commercial buildings, 6 churches dating from 1871 to 1894, and a number of other buildings and sites serving civic, cultural or social uses. This collection of significant structures serves as an added context for the Julia-Ann Square Historic District to the north.

The background for these outstanding sites consists of commercial rows of buildings dating from the 1870's to the present, as well as residential areas of freestanding houses, once quietly isolated but now surrounded by busy traffic arteries. Old post cards of Parkersburg show an architecturally cohesive environment of tree-lined streets framed by brick buildings and served by street car tracks.

The commercial district today, bounded by Tenth Street, Green Street and the rivers, is fairly homogeneous in its use of brick materials in buildings ranging in height generally between one and four stories, with an occasional anchor building of up to seven stories. The most complete commercial rows may be found on Third Street leading to the Court House, and on Market Street between Fourth and Ninth Streets. Unsympathetic alterations and demolition, however, have destroyed the integrity of these rows as 19th and early 20th century districts.

The residential areas, featuring slight set-backs and vernacular houses of brick or wood frame, have been given over somewhat to commercial uses as the downtown has expanded beyond its earlier boundaries.

The 38 sites to be nominated are best described in context through a brief chronological architectural history of Parkersburg, highlighting selected sites. The earliest period of the town's development, 1811-1860, saw limited construction of buildings in the common styles of the period. Four buildings, Federal and Greek Revival in style, date to this era. 402 Avery Street (1843) and the Neale House at 331 Juliana Street (1840) are Classic Greek Revival designs, featuring symmetrical five bay facades with transomed and sidelighted doors and sidelighted windows above. Another house at 520 Green Street (1855) harkens back to the 3-bay design of the Neale House. Finally, 559-561 Fifth Street represents an early 19th century vernacular form.

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Thirteen of the 38 sites date to Parkersburg's days as a railroad town, military depot, and oil industry transport center. They represent a growth in population and prosperity, when the more imaginative revival and eclectic styles of the mid-nineteenth century allowed property owners to express their prosperity with flamboyance. The houses of this period include 600 Juliana Street, the Gould House (1888) at 720 Juliana Street, the Women's Club at 323 Ninth Street, and the highly detailed but deteriorating Eastlake/Carpenter Gothic House at Tenth and Avery Streets. Also constructed during this period were Trinity Episcopal Church, (1879) and Rectory (1863) on Juliana Street, First Baptist Church (1871) at 813 Market Street, and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (1887) at 820 Clay Street.

Parkersburg's biggest building boom came after 1890, during the street railway era, when transportation within the city and to outside points was improved. During this time, the major commercial and club buildings were constructed, as well as a few grand residences. Eighteen of the nominated properties date to this era. The most repeatedly used style between 1890 and 1940 was the Classical, perhaps in reaction to the more ornate Beaux Arts movement concurrently adhered to in the major cities. The style appears in the Citizens National Bank (1898), Mather Building (1898), Carnegie Library (1904), Elks Club (1903), Union Trust National Bank (1903), Oeldorf Building (1906), Masonic Temple (1918), and Smoot Theatre (1926). These structures often act as strong cornerstones in streetscape rows of less distinguished buildings.

The more picturesque styles attributable to the 1890-1940 era are in the Queen Anne and Romanesque Revival modes. Queen Anne elements appear in the Mary Case residence (1901), West Central West Virginia Community Action Building, and Kimes Funeral Home (c.1900). The Romanesque Revival, most fully introduced to Parkersburg in the Wood County Court House, is seen also in the Robb Apartments (1887), the Guaranty Building (1901), and the Central Bank and Security Company (1898).

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**                      N/A                      **Builder/Architect**                      N/A

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

INTRODUCTION

Parkersburg, West Virginia in many respects epitomizes the river town of the American frontier. Possessing a strategic site at the confluence of two rivers and an abundance of natural resources, Parkersburg has grown from a gateway to the west to a major West Virginia city. From its earliest settlement to its growth in the 20th century, the course of Parkersburg's history has been largely dependent upon the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers. Parkersburg's multiple architectural resources - the tangible reflection of its rich history as a river town - have been selected for their architectural interest and/or historic associations. They should be collectively preserved for their distinctive contribution to the history of American architecture, exploration and settlement, industry, and military history. Parkersburg's significance in these areas can best be understood following a brief discussion of the town's background and figures.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND: 18th Century-1811: Earliest Settlement

The early history of Parkersburg was tumultuous, with land disputes involving both nations and individuals. Originally the territory of the Adena (Mound Builders) and later home to the Shawnee, Wyandotte, Mingo, and Delaware Indian tribes, the area became, in 1749, the focus of two expeditions by whites; one French and the other English. The French expedition, led by Celeron de Blainville, claimed the entire Ohio Valley watershed and, beginning north of Fort Duquesne, buried lead plates along the Ohio River as far south as the mouth of the Great Miami River. The English expedition was led by Christopher Gist, who explored the land at the behest of Virginia's Royal Governor Dinwiddie and King George II. Gist claimed 500,000 acres as the rightful territory of Great Britain and made plans to secure the claim by colonization. The Ohio Company of Virginia, managed by George Washington's brother Lawrence, was authorized to colonize at least one hundred families on the land rent-free. With the subsequent French and Indian War resolved (1763), the entire Ohio Valley fell to the English.

The earliest mechanism for settlement of the area was known as the tomahawk claim, whereby a settler selected a 400-acre area surrounding a prominent spot marked by a deadening of timber. Robert Thornton made such a claim on the land that is now Parkersburg in 1773. Ten years later he sold it to Alexander Parker for fifty dollars, who shortly thereafter had the land surveyed by Captain James Neal. A Pennsylvanian, Parker never occupied his land and died in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1791. In 1800, John Stokely, Wood County's first Clerk, received a patent for the land and had his own

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The Little Kanawha Railway opened in 1898, as well as the Parkersburg Gas, Electric Light, and Street Railway Company, with their electric streetcars. Transportation to Williamstown was provided in 1902, and to Marietta in 1903, with the opening of the Parkersburg Marietta & Interurban Railway Company. The expansion brought about by these improvements resulted in various neighborhoods springing up on the outskirts of downtown, their names apparent on the streetcars at the turn-of-the-century: Irish Town, Snakeville, Swamp Poodle, and Pottery Junction. Further evidence of Parkersburg's growth were its eleven hotels in 1898.

In the 20th century Parkersburg has continued to diversify, from its highly successful showboat industry during the years 1901 to 1913, to its present role as a diversified industrial center. In all of its phases, the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers have played an important role.

#### Historic Figures

Parkersburg boasts several significant figures in its history. George Washington not only led an exploratory visit in 1770, but patented 34,000 acres west of the Alleghenies and pledged to settle in the Ohio River Valley should the Revolutionary War be unsuccessful. Alexander Parker, for whom Parkersburg is named, rose to captain during his eight years of service in the Revolutionary War, entitling him to a substantial amount of land in lieu of cash payment. He was a member of the elite Society of the Cincinnati, for Revolutionary War officers. Another military figure in Parkersburg's history was Captain James Neal, Parkersburg's first surveyor who later built Neal's Station on the Little Kanawha and served as Wood County's second clerk.

Harman Blennerhassett, who built a grand mansion in 1800 on the island 1½ miles west of Parkersburg now known as Blennerhassett Island, is yet another figure linked with Parkersburg's early history. A close friend of the errant vice president Aaron Burr, Blennerhassett collaborated in Burr's scheme to create a southwestern empire, and both were arrested, though only Burr was brought to trial.

Later significant figures in Parkersburg's history include Johnson N. Camden, United States Senator and oil magnate associated with the Standard Oil Company. Camden was also responsible for the construction of the Blennerhassett Hotel, for many years the social center of Parkersburg. Peter Van Winkle, a Parkersburg lawyer, was instrumental in the creation of the State of West Virginia, and then represented it during one term in the United States Senate 1863-1869. In addition, he was president of the Northwestern Virginia Railroad, which joined the B&O Railroad c.1870. Another local civic figure was Channing Smith, editor of the Parkersburg Index, who masterminded the construction of the Little Kanawha Railway in 1898. And, given Parkersburg's status as the Wood County seat, it is perhaps not surprising that four of West Virginia's governors are natives of Parkersburg: Arthur I. Boreman, William E. Stevenson, Jacob Beeson Jackson, and Albert Blakeslee White. Governor Jackson's two brothers, John Jay, Jr., and James Monroe, distinguished themselves as judges. John Jay, Jr.

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survey made. The colony of half a dozen houses was at that time called Newport. In 1809, Mary Parker Robinson, Alexander Parker's daughter, challenged Stokely's claim to the land in court and won. Her husband, William, and surveyor George Avery subsequently laid out the town much as it exists today, on land including and adjoining the Stokely settlement, naming it Parkersburg in honor of Mary's father. The central one and one-third acres given by the Robinsons to the town for a courthouse may have been their thanks, in part, for the favorable court settlement returning Parker's land to his descendants. The grid-iron street pattern, still extant, consisted of streets running parallel to the Ohio River named for Avery, Parker relatives, and others, and cross streets Kanawha, Neale, Court, Harriet, Littleton, and Washington, later renamed First through Sixth. (Sixth Street was the original border of the town).

**1811-1860: The River Era**

The 1811-1860 period of Parkersburg's history saw the colony take root firmly with an influx of pioneers engendered, in part, by the Louisiana Purchase. The Virginia legislature proclaimed Parkersburg a municipality in 1811 and it received its charter from the General Assembly in 1820. Also in 1811, the first steamboat, the "New Orleans," stopped at Parkersburg, a harbinger of the freight and showboat business which would later thrive there. Early institutions in Parkersburg at this time were its first school, organized in 1825, and a Whig newspaper, the "Republican," in operation in 1833. The completion of the Northwestern Turnpike in 1838 connecting Parkersburg to Winchester assured strengthened communications with other growing towns.

**1860-1890: Railroads, Oil and the Civil War: The Beginnings of Urban and Industrial Development**

Parkersburg's major period of growth began with the Civil War era, when the railroad, industrial development, and the war itself all contributed substantially to the town's growth and economy. In 1857, Parkersburg was linked to the east by the railroad. In the same year, via a steamboat connection near Marietta, Ohio, another railroad opened furnishing a link with Cincinnati and the West. An oil boom in the 1860's and again in the 1880's infused the local economy with capital. In addition, the Civil War established Parkersburg as a major military depot. It was during this period that many of Parkersburg's institutions were established. Transportation improvements dramatically increased the town's capacity for growth and prosperity. River navigation was improved in the '60's with the help of the Little Kanawha Navigation Company. The Ohio River branch of the B&O Railroad opened in 1884, (though its bridge spanning the Ohio River was opened in 1871) and horse drawn streetcars appeared in 1889, with the Park City Railway. The city water works were constructed in 1884. Electricity was available to Parkersburg's homes in 1886.

**1890-1940: Transportation Improvements: Growth of a Commercial Center**

Beginning in the late 1880's and into the early 20th century, tremendous technological advances were made, contributing to Parkersburg's growth as a commercial center.

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(1824-1907) was the only Democratic judge to be appointed by President Lincoln, and served as United States Judge of the District of West Virginia. Judge James Monroe Jackson was a West Virginia circuit court judge.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE

Parkersburg's significant architectural resources reflect the various stages of its development as a town. Representing the town's earliest years is the town plan itself, laid out by William Robinson and George Avery in 1811. The earliest extant building within the boundaries of this nomination - the Neale House (1840) - recalls Parkersburg's River era. The majority of the downtown's architectural resources, dating to the late 19th century, express the commercial and industrial character of Parkersburg which developed in the late 19th century. They are distinguished not only because of their generally intact architectural integrity, but for the assortment of sizes and types of buildings, sited throughout the town, lending a 19th century influence to nearly every streetscape.

Consistent with Parkersburg's humble beginnings is the relative anonymity of its architects and builders. Among these were architect R.H. Adair, who designed the Central Banking and Securities Building and Lysander Dudley, who was the builder of St. Xavier and the First Baptist Churches. City directories show no architects listed in 1878, though eight carpenters and builders are listed, including the Ohio River Mill Company and the Parkersburg Mill Company. In 1898, seven contractors are listed as well as three "Building Associations". The 1912 directory lists R.H. Adair, James W. Robinson, and Theodore T. Sansbury, Jr., as architects, as well as over 30 contractors, who, by this time, are categorized by specialty, eg. "brick," "oil well," "grading and sewer," "sidewalk." Theodore Sansbury is listed again in 1919 (along with over 50 contractors) and in 1930. The individual buildings have been discussed in detail on the individual forms.

EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT

As has been mentioned, Parkersburg played a significant role in the exploration and settlement of the early frontier. On the route of the first white explorers, Blainville and Gist, Parkersburg's settlement reflects the early growth of America, more significantly due to Parkersburg's historic associations with George Washington, Harman Blennerhassett, and Aaron Burr. It was a disputed area with a dramatic past.

INDUSTRY

Parkersburg has an impressive record of industrial achievements, and nearly all are related to the town's riverfront location. Its earliest major industry - in fact, a boom industry - that put Parkersburg suddenly on the map - was oil, discovered at Burning Springs in nearby Wirt County in 1860, and later in the town of Volcano in Wood County. A decline in the 1870's was followed by a new boom in the 1880's when deep depth wells were drilled in Wood County. In addition, 1882 saw a gas well boom. Together, the

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wealth of resources transformed the economy of the region in general, and of Parkersburg in particular. By 1887, the city had three refineries producing over 300,000 barrels annually, and by 1890, it was a refining center of national significance. The gas glut lured new industries to the area. During the '90's, refining declined but the manufacture of oil equipment became important, with the establishment of the Rig and Reel Company in 1897. Lumbering also became a significant industry, particularly after 1870, when transportation improvements had been effected. The Parkersburg Mill, called perhaps the oldest industry on the Ohio River, had been in operation since c.1850, supplied by lumber from the counties drained by the Kanawha River and its tributaries. Its shipping area stretched from Chicago to the East Coast. The Little Kanawha Navigation Company, which had shaky beginnings from its formation in 1847 until the 1860's, was galvanized by the resource industries, overseeing the completion of four locks and dams on the river by 1874.

The area's wealth of resources fueled other major industries of Parkersburg, particularly the stone quarries and the Donaghho Pottery Factory. Local quarries had been producing grindstones prior to the Civil War, but in the later part of the century they produced the stone for some of Parkersburg's large stone buildings, among them the Wood County Court House. Large clay deposits supplied the pottery factory, which was established in 1870. By 1891, it was turning out 150,000 gallon jars annually. Also founded in the 1870's was the Logan Carriage Works, eventually one of the largest of its kind in the state. Later in the century, the United Woolen Mills opened in the area and became one of its largest employers. Lumber mills, a furniture factory, ice plants, and O. Ames, one of the world's largest manufacturers of shovels, added diversity to Parkersburg's industry climate. Parkersburg's most colorful industry was the production of river showboats, built at the Pope Dock Company. The speculative scheme of W.R. Markle, the showboats grew progressively larger after the first, "Swallow" and "Goldenrod" followed, until the operation failed in 1913, but not before Pope Dock Company had achieved a reputation as the greatest showboat builder in the United States. With the arrival of American Viscose in 1927, a textile plant, and the Dupont and Borg-Warner chemical companies in the mid-20th century, Parkersburg's industrial footing became even more diverse.

MILITARY

Finally, Parkersburg has been significant in American military history. Following the British victory over the French in the French and Indian War, which opened the Ohio Valley to English occupation, George Rogers Clark assembled troops at the mouth of the Little Kanawha on his way to Kentucky in 1774. In the Civil War, Parkersburg served as a military depot and place where troops re-entrained for the eastern theatre. Parkersburg's association with military figures goes back to George Washington, Alexander Parker, and Captain Neal.



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CONCLUSION

Today, many of Parkersburg's historic resources are conspicuous by their absence. One is reminded by the conspicuous vacant lots surrounding some of its largest 19th century structures that the city's center was nearly lost to insensitive urban renewal in recent years. That there are no pre-1820 buildings left in the downtown is an ominous note underscoring the need for preservation of representative buildings from later phases of Parkersburg's development. Nevertheless, its original layout remains intact, with notable buildings in all sections. The Courthouse and the Blennerhassett Hotel, two particularly significant structures evocative of Parkersburg's varied history, could serve as the dramatic focus of an improved downtown core. Greater awareness and protection of Parkersburg's historic resources should result in an enrichment of the area's self-image and, hopefully, its economy. With the existing adjacent National Register district, the multiple resources of downtown Parkersburg comprise a significant collection of building's recalling Parkersburg's past as a riverfront town on the American frontier and later, a burgeoning industrial town of the Ohio River Valley.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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Heritage and Horizons. Parkersburg Art Center, Parkersburg, 1972. (cont'd)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Parkersburg, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The Parkersburg Multiple Resource Area is bounded by Tenth Street, Jackson Avenue and Harris Street, and the Ohio and Little Kanawha Rivers.

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

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eliza F. Smith / Christina Mann

organization Landmarks Planning, Inc.

date 2/82; revisions, 5/82

street & number One Landmarks Square

telephone 412/322-1204

city or town Pittsburgh

state PA 15212

## 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date July 16, 1982

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Manuscripts:

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Swick, Dr. Ray, "Urban and Industrial Development in the Post Civil War Era (1865-1930)."

National Register nomination forms for:

Wood County Courthouse  
St. Francis Xavier Church  
George Neale House

Cook House  
Julia-Ann Square Historic District

Public Records"

Parkersburg City Directories - 1878, 1898, 1912, 1919, 1930

Deed and Death Notices in Wood County Courthouse

Maps:

Parkersburg, 1873

An Atlas of Wood County, (D.J. Lake & Co., Philadelphia, 1886).

Atlas of the City of Parkersburg (George F. Cran & Co., Chicago, 1901).

Post Office of Wood County, West Virginia

Interviews:

Miss Hazel Batten  
Miss Frances A. Inslee  
Mrs. Ralph W. Hedrick  
Mr. James P. Vaughan  
Dr. Ray Swick

