

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

Literary Hall

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Main and High Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Romney

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Second

STATE

West Virginia

CODE
54

COUNTY
Hampshire

CODE
027

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

☒ EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Ralph W. Haines

STREET & NUMBER

29 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Romney

VICINITY OF

STATE
West Virginia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hampshire County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Romney

STATE
West Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

PERI

PREH

1400

1500

1600

1700

☒ 1800

1900

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Literary Hall, whose interior and exterior remain largely intact today, was constructed in 1869-70 for the Literary Society of Romney, in Hampshire County, West Virginia.

Literary Hall is tall in proportion and formal in appearance. Its elements of style feature both early American and Victorian themes commonly seen in academic buildings of the period. The label mouldings and brick corbeling are Victorian details that, in this example, combine nicely with the symmetry of the earlier Federal period of architecture.

This imposing building is a red brick structure, rectangular in shape, two stories high with gable roof. The four room first floor and large single ballroom of the second floor rest on a sandstone, ashlar block foundation. The gable roof is covered with standing seam tin sheeting.

The front and side elevations of Literary Hall are divided into three and five bays, respectively. The brick is laid in a five-coarse American bond. The double-hung windows, all of which are original, have 9/9 light sashes and are symmetrically placed within recessed brick panels that are defined at the first and second levels of the building with ribs, or pseudo-pilasters, that form the outer surface plane of the building's walls. The windows are protected with wooden louvered shutters.

The simple, wooden raking cornice of the front elevation gable surmounts an ornamental brick corbel table. The gable of Literary Hall is centered with a semi-circular fanlight.

White label mouldings adorn the front elevation, entrance, and first floor windows of the building. The double wooden entrance door (whose lock is also original) is tall and features four vertical panels. A rectangular transom light is filled with four vertical glass panes.

Literary Hall is entered from a spacious stoop that is approached from Romney's Main Street with recently re-worked brick steps.

Another interesting aspect of the building is its matching interior side chimneys, between the second and third bays of the facade, which rise above the roof on both sides of the building.

All of these unique features combine to make Literary Hall one of Romney's and Hampshire County's most notable landmarks, and one in which this community is justifiably proud.

SPEC

STAT

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__14 '499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__15 .599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	☒ LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☒ EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
☒ 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1869-70

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Literary Hall, located at Main and High Streets in Romney, County Seat of Hampshire County, West Virginia, is highly representative of the development of education and literature in the early United States.

Literary Hall was constructed in 1869-70 by the Literary Society of Romney, one of the oldest literary societies, as such, in the United States. Founded in Romney on February 4, 1819 by nine of the town's leading citizens, the society took as its objective "the advancement of Literature and Science, the purchase of a Library by and for the use of its members; and their further improvement by discussing before the Society such questions as shall be selected under its directors". The first charter named the society "The Polemic Society of Romney" and this remained the name until changed to the "Literary Society of Romney" in the 1830s. The Literary Society accumulated a splendid classical Library, which by 1830 numbered 3000 volumes; certainly the largest such library in Western Virginia at the time. Frequent debates were held by the society on topics of the day, and members of the Society early on launched a movement to establish an institution for the "higher education of the youth of the community". The establishment of classical studies at the Romney Academy in 1820 was a direct result of the society's campaign.

In 1845 the Literary Society contracted for "the erection of a building for the Literary Society of Romney" and, by an act of the Virginia Assembly, this was approved in the form of the establishment of the Romney Classical Institution in 1847, long a leading institution of higher education for this region. This building, a brick structure of two stories, surmounted by a cupola, and embellished with a handsome portico the entire width of the building, later became the central structure of the Romney School for the Deaf and Blind and remains as such today.

The coming of the Civil War brought hard times to much of the Eastern Panhandle, and Hampshire County, not least of all. Romney itself changed hands fifty times during the course of the conflict, and this Literary Society became one of the primary victims of this disruption of normal life. Many of the members of the Society went off to fight for the Southern Confederacy; and Union troops ransacked the Society's famed library, scattering the volumes far and wide.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

After the termination of hostilities in 1865, it seemed that the great Literary Society of Romney had been a victim of the war. Many of the members lie in soldier's graves, the library was all but destroyed (only some 400 volumes remained) and their building was in a state of disrepair. Discouraged, the remaining members waited until 1869 before attempting to revive the Society. It was at this time that the Society was revived and, after transferring their property to the Board of Regents of West Virginia in order to secure for Romney the West Virginia Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind, the Society took on new life with a public subscription that raised \$1,383.60. The original library was at last partially reassembled, and in 1870 Literary Hall was constructed to house the revitalized society. For the next decade, the intellectual life of the community centered around the reborn Literary Society and its Literary Hall. In the 1880s, however, as the older members died off, the Society waned in importance and meetings became less frequent. The last recorded meeting of the Society took place at Literary Hall on February 15, 1886.

After the death of the Literary Society of Romney, Literary Hall fell into disuse until assumed at a later date by the Masonic Lodge. Literary Hall continues to be used as the headquarters and meeting hall for Romney's Masons. Today, the records and minutes of the Literary Society of Romney, dating back to 1819, are on display for public view at Literary Hall.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Rice, Otis K. The Allegheny Frontier: West Virginia Beginnings, 1730-1830. University Press of Kentucky, 1970.

The South Branch Intelligencer, 1870 (3/18, 4/8, 4/18, 7/1)

Maxwell, Hu, and H.L. Swisher, History of Hampshire County, West Virginia. Morgantown, 1897.

Federal Writer's Project, W.P.A., Historic Romney, 1762-1937, Romney, 1937.

Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia, December 7, 1846 to March 23, 1847".

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 city lot

QUADRANGLE NAME Romney, W.V.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1-24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,7 6,9,3,3,2,0 4,3,5,6,9,5,0

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

B

ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

D

C

F

E

H

G

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Literary Hall stands at the northwest corner of Main and High Streets on a city lot in downtown Romney.

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

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael J. Pauley, Historian

ORGANIZATION Historic Preservation Unit

DATE

West Virginia Department of Culture & History

January 12, 1979

STREET & NUMBER Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE

Science & Cultural Center

348-0240

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Charleston

West Virginia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL X

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

Clarence M. Morrow

3/26/79

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

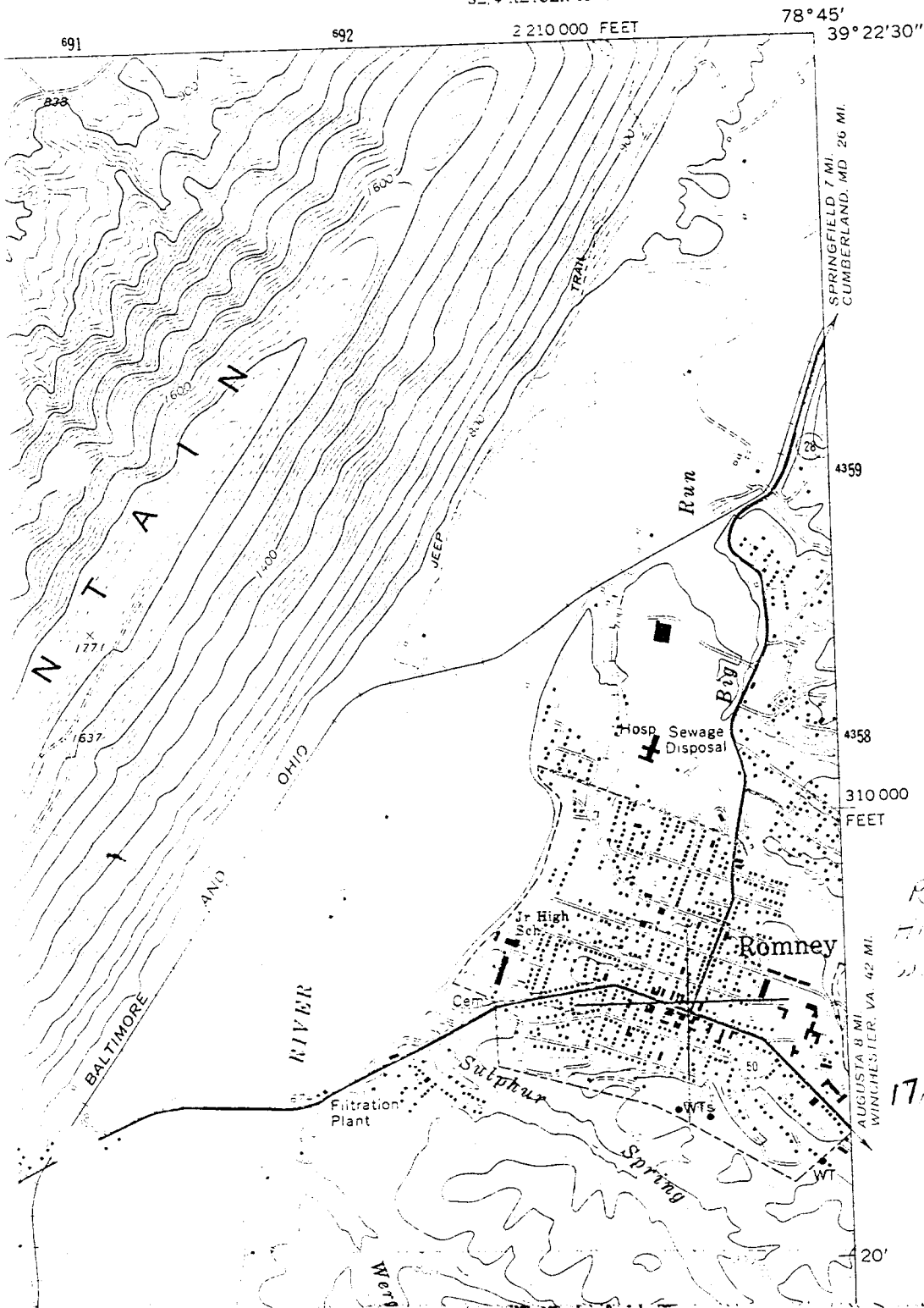
DATE

EST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

ROMNEY QUADRANGLE
WEST VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SE 1/4 KEYSER 15' QUADRANGLE

5282 / NW
(SPRINGFIELD)



LITERARY HALL
ROMNEY,
HARRISBURG COUNTY,
WEST VIRGINIA

17/693320/4356950

