

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 Monongalia County Courthouse

and or common

2. Location

street & number 243 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not for publication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	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☐ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ commercial
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment
☐ object	☒ N/A in process	☒ yes: restricted	☒ government
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial
		☐ no	☐ military
			☐ museum
			☐ park
			☐ private residence
			☐ religious
			☐ scientific
			☐ transportation
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Monongalia County Commission

street & number 243 High Street

city, town Morgantown

vicinity of

state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monongalia County Clerk's Office, Monongalia County Courthouse

street & number 243 High Street

city, town Morgantown

state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

WV Antiquities Commission and WV Historic
title Preservation Unit Historic Properties Inventories
has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no
date 1975 and 1984
federal ☐ state ☒ county ☐ local

depository for survey records West Virginia Department of Culture and History

city, town Charleston

state West Virginia

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Monongalia County Courthouse and Jail in downtown Morgantown serve as impressive focal points against further alterations and demolitions of the architectural treasures of the downtown area while offering fine examples of the Victorian Romanesque and Italianate architectural styles of the nineteenth century and demonstrating successes of efforts to preserve the relative integrity of buildings when making renovations. While the tall courthouse with its lofty towers and roofline gives an impression of the urban environment, the massive first story with its low windows and entrances and recessed foundation give the building a rural quality.

The Monongalia County Courthouse is a two-story building with a basement, five-story clock tower and three-story South tower. The building measures 99' x 83' x 99' x 76'. The first story is fifteen feet high and the second story is twenty-two feet high. A common-bond pattern of red brick covers the exterior with stone belt courses topping the basement and first story and dividing the turret and the second and third stories of the South tower and separating the belfry section of the clock tower.

The front or eastern facade is accented by the central clock tower which has a pyramidal roof, four doomed buttresses, stone hood-archivolts molds over the four operational clocks and tower windows, arcade belfry, and quatrefoil design with the building date. A gabled roof fronts the right facade which sports a palladian window and a center projection with a hipped roof. To the left of the clock tower, a parapet covers the arched main entrance which has the word "courthouse" carved in the voussoirs. The Romanesque turret on the left side has a conical roof with dentils under the eaves.

A three-story square tower is central to the South facade. In the tower, the arches entrance is topped by stone voussoirs.

The western facade is noteworthy for a central arched doorway with voussoirs which has been bricked-over and replaced by windows. A chimney is near the southern end. In 1922, an enclosed bridge was built between the second story and the jail. The original northern facade has been covered by the 1975 addition.

The peaks of the gables are topped by fleurs-des-lis. In 1962, the original tile roofs were replaced by aluminum. A chimney is at the northern gable. The windows are noteworthy for the stone lentils and sills and archivolt on the second story windows. Aluminum double-hung windows replaced the original wooden windows in 1975. The building foundation is native cut sandstone.

Inside there is an attic storage area. On the second floor, the rooms were panelled in 1962. In 1975, the ceilings were lowered. This floor can be entered by a stairway in the northern turret and a beautifully carved oak staircase at the southern end. At the southern end, three offices and a courtroom exit to the main corridor which divides the front and rear of the building and leads to another courtroom on the northeastern side of the corridor, the turret stairway, and the 1975 addition. The first story contains eight rooms. An 18' wide corridor runs the length of the building. A vestibule leads to the main entrance and turret. Renovations include lowered ceilings, panelled offices, and the transformation of a 20' x 29' office into a lounge area and handicapped entrance.

The basement is 7' 6" high, and built with broken ashlar. It contains two 20' x 11' vaults which are original to the building.

The two two-story Italianate style jailhouse has a gabled front or southern facade with a triangular peak and paired brackets under the eaves. The doors and windows are arched and have stone lentils and sills. A stone foundation supports the building. In 1922, the stone jail section was expanded and bricked to match the jailer's residence. A wooden porch on the southern end of the building was torn away in 1902. In 1975, the interior was entirely remodeled, the jail windows were covered with steel, and aluminum windows were placed in the residence.

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	☒ architecture	 education	 military	 social
..... 1700-1799	 art	 engineering	 music	 humanitarian
☒ 1800-1899	 commerce	 exploration settlement	 philosophy	 theater
..... 1900-	 communications	 industry	☒ politics government	 transportation
		 invention		 other (specify)

Specific dates	1881 (jail)	Builder Architect	George W.L. Mayers, Fairmont, WV -- builder
	1891 (courthouse)		James P. Bailey, Pittsburgh, PA -- architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Monongalia County Courthouse, a Victorian Romanesque style building constructed in 1891, is the fourth courthouse on the same site and serves as the headquarters of county government; seat of the state circuit court; and center of legal, downtown commercial and social activity; with the 1881 Italianate-influence jailhouse, it is historical and architectural landmark for the county. Before the establishment of Morgantown in 1785, a courthouse stood on the present site and the early development of Morgantown directly resulted from the fact that businesses and residents saw advantages to locating near the center of county government activity. The courthouses, including the present one, have been popular places for public meetings. Likewise, the courtyard in front of the building has always been the site of street fairs, markets, political rallies and protests, and concerts.

This courthouse replaced a two-story brick structure which was completed in 1848. The first two were a frame structure built in 1784 and a brick building completed in 1802. In 1851, the county court placed a wooden statue of Patrick Henry, Virginia governor when Monongalia County was formed in 1776, on top of the 1848 courthouse. This statue stands in the turret of the present courthouse.

The county court ordered the two-story brick jail and jailer's residence erected behind the courthouse in 1850 to be demolished in 1881. A new two-story stone jail and two-story brick residence replaced the jail and residence that year. Other jailhouses on or very near the present site had been built in 1784, 1793, and 1825.

In 1884, the old courthouse was declared dangerous. However, the county court postponed plans for a new courthouse due to opposition from county residents. Still, the court hired James P. Bailey, a Pittsburgh architect, for \$25.00 to make plans for a new courthouse in 1887. County residents continued to opt for temporary repairs of the existing building.

Finally, the courthouse deteriorated beyond repair. On September 13, 1890, county officials, supported by circuit court official and local attorneys, took drastic action after voters defeated two proposed bond issues for building a new courthouse. At midnight, county officials removed the records from the courthouse and ordered demolition to begin. When the residents awoke the next morning, the building was well on its way to non-existence. Unable to stop the clandestine demolition before its start, citizens sought a court injunction to halt further work. However, during the night, circuit court officials had conveniently left town. Local lawyers refused to represent the opposition in later injunction proceedings.

Following Bailey's plans for an eclectic Victorian Romanesque style brick and stone structure, the George W.L. Mayers building contracting firm of Fairmont, West Virginia built the landmark structure for \$53,478. This firm also built the third courthouse of Harrison County, West Virginia. The builders laid the cornerstone on June 20, 1891, West Virginia Day, and the building was completed in that year. During construction, the county government and circuit court operated from the Methodist Protestant Church on Walnut Street.

Upon completion, the courthouse housed the main offices of the county government and state circuit court. County records were kept in the basement. On the west side of the first floor, the circuit clerk, sheriff and prosecuting attorney had offices. The east side of the first floor housed the county court offices and county clerk. On

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the second floor, jury rooms occupied the southern end of the building, and the circuit court offices and room were in the northern end. At various times, the agricultural agent, state police, federal relief agencies, and the county health department have had rooms in the courthouse. Besides the jail and jailer's residence, the assessor had office space in the jailhouse.

In 1975, the sheriff's tax office, county clerk, county commission, assessor and a portion of the circuit court moved to a new addition on the northern end of the existing structure. The other offices remained in the old courthouse and jailhouse.

Throughout history, the courtroom has been used for a wide variety of public meetings. The courthouse continues to contribute to the political and governmental heritage of the county.

Its courtyard, besides the aforementioned activities was the site of the public whipping post, stocks and pillories until 1818. Presently, it is the site of three monuments to the veterans and dead of America's various wars. It also serves as a rest area for downtown shoppers and stop for the Morgantown Transit System buses.

The Monongalia Courthouse present a fine example of an eclectic Victorian Romanesque architectural style. The polychromatic exterior of smooth red brick with cut stone arches and window frames exemplifies the style. The Romanesque turret with its conical roof modifies the striking, square clock tower and southern entranceway tower. A clock in each of the four faces of the front tower and bell still keep time for the downtown area. The complex roofline with its chimney and fleur-de-lis-topped gables and stone strong courses also are noteworthy.

The jailer's residence section of the jailhouse is an example of Italianate style architecture. Its gabled facade with a triangular peak and paired brackets under the eaves evidence the style. Also, the tall window and arched door and windows with ornamental lentils are handsome features.

Despite the existence of the 1975 addition to the courthouse and slight exterior alterations and more extensive interior renovations, the appearance of the courthouse has remained nearly the same since 1891. The addition does not detract from the architectural integrity and significance of the building. Alterations have effectively changed the interior and exterior appearance of the jail. The jailer's residence portion of the building, while suffering from interior remodeling, has been changed on the exterior to a lesser degree than the jail. Flanked and bricked by modern buildings and surrounded by a busy urban area, the Monongalia County Courthouse and Jailhouse in the historic downtown area preserve the architectural and historical heritage of the late nineteenth century, a period of transition from a rural farm culture to an urban industrial culture for Monongalia County and Morgantown.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(See Continuation Sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 160' x 170' irregular ; 1/2 Acre

Quadrangle name Morgantown North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 17 589500 4386960
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property boundary has no registered deeds from the time the county acquired it in 1783. Hence, the boundaries are approximated using legal descriptions of neighboring properties. The property boundary begins at a point on Chestnut St. at the northern corner of the jail and runs in an east-southeasterly direction

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Randall S. Gooden, Graduate Research Assistant

organization Department of History
West Virginia University

date January 17, 1985

street & number 202 Woodburn Hall

telephone (304) 293-2421

city or town Morgantown

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 2, 1985

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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

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Lough-Simpson Grocery Company

1. Callahan, James Morton. History of the Making of Morgantown. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia U., 1926.
2. Core, Earl L. The Monongalia Story. V. 4. Parsons, WV: McClain, 1982.
3. Monongalia County. County Clerk. Deed Books.
4. Morgantown. City Council. Minutes. vols. 7-8.
5. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Maps of Morgantown, 1906-1911-1927.

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Monongalia County
Courthouse

1. Anonymous. "County Court." (Morgantown) New Dominion, Dec. 17, 1887. XXII: 34, p. 3. "James P. Bailey, architect, was paid \$25 for his services in relation to plan and profile for court house for this county."
2. Anonymous. "Farewell Old Courthouse." (Morgantown) Weekly Post, Sept. 13, 1890, p. 3.
3. Callahan, James Morton, History of the Making of Morgantown. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia U., 1926.
4. Core, Earl L. The Monongalia Story. vols. 2-4. Parsons, WV: McClain, 1978-1982. Names Bailey as architect in vol. 4.
5. Monongalia County. County Clerk. Deeds Books.
6. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Maps of Morgantown, 1892-1921-1927.

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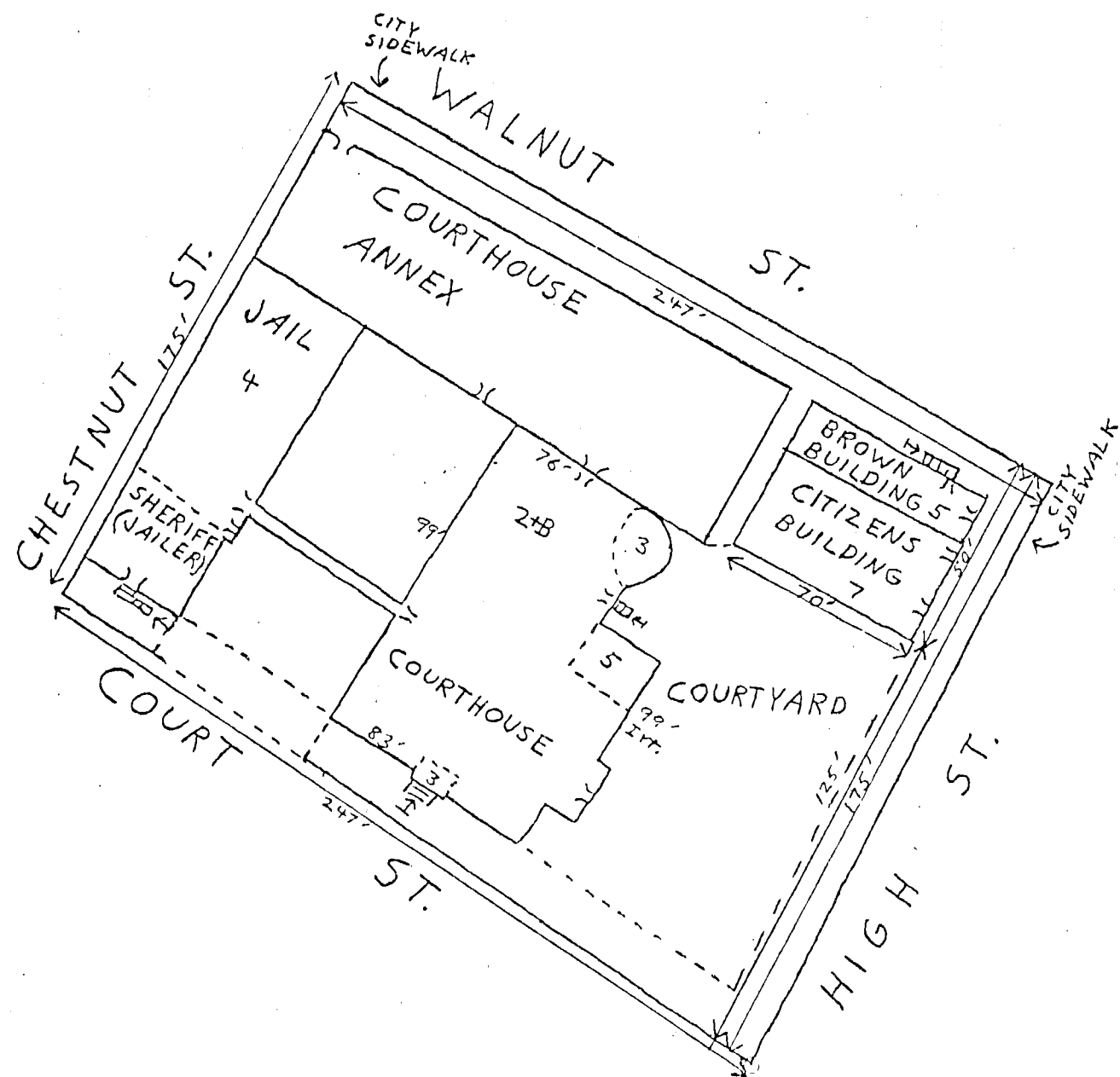
received

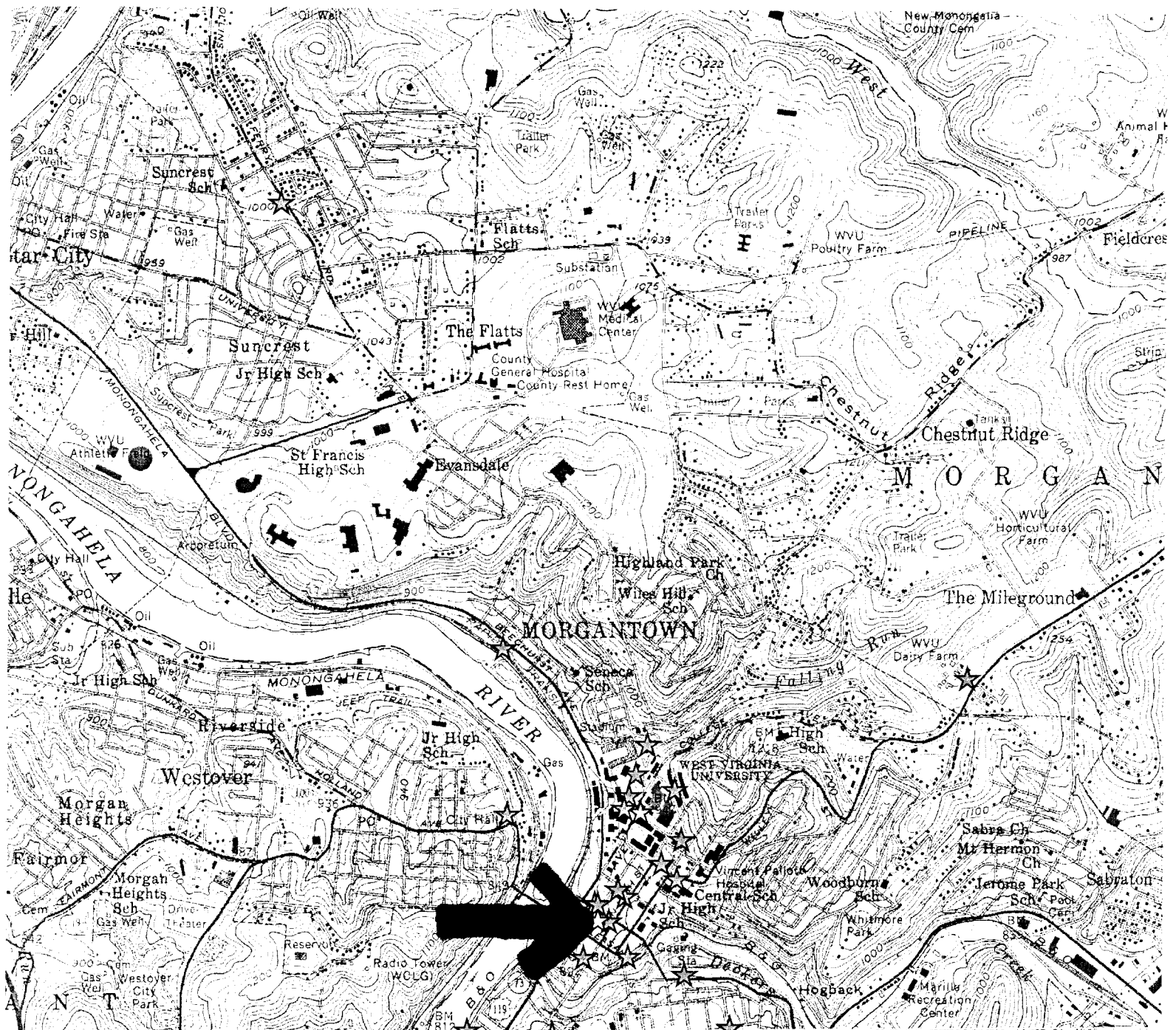
date entered

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for 167' along the line between the old courthouse and the courthouse annex, thence in an east-southeasterly direction for eighty feet along a line between the courtyard and Citizens Building to High Street, thence SSW along High St. for a distance of 125' to Court Street, thence along Court Street in a northwesterly direction to Chestnut Street in a north-northeasterly direction for 125' to the point of beginning (see attached plat's map).





A) AIRMONT (JUNE U.S. 250) 1:6 M.
 GRAITON (JUNE U.S. 501) 2:6 M.
 (MORGANTOWN SOUTH) 5063 III SW

shed by the Geological Survey
 and USCE

igraphs by Kelsh plotter
 55. Field check 1957

North American datum
 West Virginia coordinate system,
 coordinate system, south zone
 erse Mercator grid ticks.

6" 107 MILS 0'41" 12 MILS

UTM GRID AND 1976 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:24000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

e selected fence and field lines
 This information is unchecked
 from 1955 photography
 hich only
 n
 own in brown

MONONGALIA COUNTY COURT HOUSE

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE

