

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

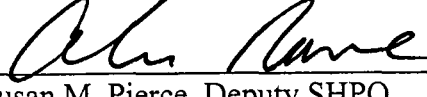
historic name: Ritchie County Courthouseother names/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: 115 East Main Streetnot for publication: N/Acity or town: Harrisvillevicinity: N/Astate: West Virginiacode: WVcounty: Ritchiecode: 085zip code: 26362

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

for 
Susan M. Pierce, Deputy SHPO

7/8/2004
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of Keeper	Date of Action
<div><div></div><div>entered in the National Register</div><div><div></div>See continuation sheet.</div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div><div></div><div>determined eligible for the</div><div>National Register</div><div><div></div>See continuation sheet.</div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div><div></div><div>determined not eligible for the</div><div>National Register</div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div><div></div><div>removed from the National Register</div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
<div><div></div><div>other (explain):</div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

X

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

X

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Non-contributing	
<div>1</div>		buildings
		sites
		structures
<div>1</div>		objects
<div>2</div>	<div>0</div>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing

County Courthouses of West Virginia

Ritchie County, WV
County and State

Historic Functions

Current Functions

GOVERNMENT=County Courthouse

Architectural Classification

Materials

other: wood

See Continuation sheet

Applicable National Register Criteria

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Ritchie County Courthouse
Name of Property

Ritchie County, WV
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Criteria Considerations

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Architecture
Politics and Government

Period of Significance

1923-1953

Significant Dates

1923

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Holmboe and Pogue, architects
Foreman and Putnam, builders

Narrative Statement of Significance

(See continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

See Continuation sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

USGS Quadrangle: Harrisville, W.Va.

UTM Coordinates

Zone	Easting	Northing
17	495535	4339870

Verbal Boundary Description
(See continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification
(See continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Alan Rowe and Erin Riebe (WV SHPO) with Barbara E. Rasmussen
organization: Historic Preservation and Research date: June 2003
street & number: 224 Wilson Avenue telephone: (304) 292-7652
city or town: Morgantown state: WV zip code: 26501

Property Owner

name: Ritchie County Commission
street & number: 115 East Main Street telephone: (304) 643-2164
city or town: Harrisville state: WV Zip code: 26362

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Location and Setting

The Ritchie County Courthouse is situated in Harrisville, West Virginia, located approximately five miles south of U.S. Route 50 on County Route 16. The Ohio River town of Parkersburg is approximately twenty-six miles to the west of Harrisville. North Bend State Park is located in Ritchie County. Ritchie County is very rural, with a population of approximately 10,200. Harrisville’s population is currently 1,839.

The courthouse square is bounded by North, Spring, Main, and Court Streets. There are several other buildings on the square that fall outside of the legal and National Register boundary including the public library and commercial buildings on the southwest and southeast corners. In addition to the contributing courthouse building, a war memorial located in front of the building is also contributing. A flag pole is situated directly in front of the building.

Description of Property

Courthouse	1923	contributing building
The Neo-Classical Revival courthouse is two stories with raised basement and is constructed of fine-grain ashlar sandstone. The building has a two story portico and a two story clock tower centered along the main (south) elevation of the flat roof the dominate the building.		
The pedimented portico is reached by a low set of steps adorned with two cast iron lamps. The portico is supported by four fluted, tapering, Corinthian columns. The frieze is engraved with “Pleasants County Courthouse” and the cornice is decorated with dentils. The pediment is decorated with dentil molding and a shield featuring a stylized “R” resting on acanthus leaves. The tower features an octagonal domed roof with a cupola, arched molding at the edge, and pilasters on each of four faces. Urn finials and louvers accent the lower tower walls.		
The main elevation, eleven bays wide, has five six-over-six, double-hung sash windows to each side of the main entrance on the first story. One exception is a four-over-four window immediately east of the entrance doors. The paneled recessed entrance is flanked by a hanging lantern on each side and topped by a small balcony supported by decorative brackets. The second-story balcony has a set of multi-light doors, sidelights, and transom. To each side of this balcony is a small, multi-light fixed window.		
The east elevations has two six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on each story. The west elevation has several similar windows including eight on the first floor and six openings on the		

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second floor. One window opening on the second floor is now a door leading on to a fire escape. The rear (north) elevation has ten window openings arranged symmetrically on the first and second floors an fixed windows in the basement window.

Interior
A center rotunda is accented by white plaster pilasters with Doric capitals, a terrazzo floor with a star and compass motif, and sandstone wainscoting. County offices are located around this rotunda. Several of them have original paneled woodwork. Stairs displaying original decorative railings lead to the second floor courtroom. The double door entry to the courtroom is from the side, and opens into an expansive room with a balcony that can accommodate approximately 350 persons. This double entry is topped by a diamond-pane transom and a broken pedimented arch above a wide wooden entablature. The woodwork is dark oak. The bench, also of oak, is framed by two pairs of massive fluted pilasters supporting a flat arch above. The conference room door directly behind the bench is trimmed with an ornate flat arch. Flanking doors to offices and the jury room are trimmed with curved arches. The jury box and voire dire seating are enclosed by bold oak spindle railing. The gallery is separated from the court by oak spindle railing also. Seating in the gallery and the balcony is provided by theater-style wooden chairs. The floors of the gallery and balcony slope gently to the court. A bold dark oak picture rail surrounds the room about twelve inches below the domed ceiling, which features a skylight. Twelve glass light fixtures were originally suspended from the ceiling by chains surrounded by ornate plaster trim. Some have been removed in the balcony, perhaps for repair, as the wiring remains exposed.

War monument	c.1925	contributing object
An undated monument to Ritchie County’s war dead is located on the lawn. The granite slab supports a bronze plaque.		

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Statement of Significance

The Ritchie County Courthouse is eligible under *Criterion A: Politics and Government* for its local significance with Ritchie County’s political history. The building is associated with the political tendency to form new counties in western Virginia as populations increased. This demonstrated a desire on the part of rural and remote citizens to bring the institutions of local government to their communities. The courthouse is a representative of that trend. Citizens desired close access to civil government and were hopeful of economic and political benefits that a county seat would bring to the area. The Ritchie County Courthouse is the material evidence of the county’s population growth and a symbol of the residents’ values.

The Ritchie County Courthouse is also eligible under *Criterion C: Architecture* for its significance its Neo-Classical Revival architecture in a rural setting. A project of courthouse architects Holmboe and Pogue, this may be their finest creation. The period of significance is 1923, the year the building was constructed, to 1954, corresponding to the National Register’s fifty-year cut-off date.

History

Settlement of the area that became Ritchie County began in 1800 when a few farmers settled in the area that became the town of Pennsboro. The first settlers were in the vicinity of Harrisville by 1803. The town of Harrisville, originally Solus, was established twenty years earlier in 1822 on property owned by Thomas Harris for the purpose of being the seat of a new county that was contemplated even then.

Growth was very slow until 1832 when the Virginia State Assembly adjusted the land laws of the state. This encouraged more settlement in remote jurisdictions, as delinquent and forfeited lands were sold to those wishing to settle elsewhere. Ritchie County became an attractive place to settle with the construction in 1830-40 of the Northwestern Turnpike between Winchester and Parkersburg. Ritchie County was formed in 1843 and named after a prominent Richmond journalist, Thomas Ritchie, editor of *The Richmond Enquirer* and *The Washington Record*. Territory for the county came from the adjacent counties of Lewis, Wood, and Harrison. It encompasses approximately 450 square miles.

The first meeting of the Ritchie County Court was held in the home of John Harris, Esq., on April 4, 1843, as prescribed by the Virginia legislation creating the county. At the first meeting of the court, the justices appointed Harris to the task of renting the Methodist Episcopal Church as a meeting place for the court. He and James Harris were also appointed to locate a site for a permanent courthouse. They worked quickly. By July 1, 1843 Henry Rexroad and his wife

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Katherine deeded town lot 75 for the purpose of building a courthouse. Among the first items of business was the construction of a jail for the county. The county contracted with Alexander Glover to construct the building. The court ordered that Glover be paid the first installment for the construction on July 4, 1844.

In 1845, the court moved its meeting place to the Baptist Church until the temporary courthouse was completed. It is unknown what happened to the first jail. A second jail was constructed in 1869. The first permanent courthouse was completed in 1874, and an annex was added in 1899. This annex housed the circuit clerk, county court room, and county clerk’s office.

This courthouse was apparently unacceptable or difficult to work in, because the county bar petitioned the county court for a courthouse that was more suitable for a seat of law. The court was responsive. On May 30, 1923, the present building’s cornerstone was laid “with an impressive ceremony,” according to writer Minnie Kendall Lowther. A time capsule was embedded in the stone. It contains a copy of the day’s local newspapers, a copy of the order authorizing the Courthouse construction, a list of the county officials, pictures of the old courthouse, and a copy of Lowther’s *History of Ritchie County*, autographed by the author. The dedicatory ceremonies were conducted by the local American Legion Post led by Commander Ralph D. Woods. The county court took custody of the old brass key to the first courthouse, and in the early years of the twentieth century it was a cherished historical artifact for the county.

Architecture
The architecture of the Ritchie County Courthouse is very elaborate and high style for such a rural setting. The building was designed by architects Holmboe and Pogue and was constructed in 1923. The courthouse, executed in the Neo-Classical Revival style, joins with many other small West Virginia communities whose courthouses also are executed in this style. Neo-Classical Revival architecture was popular during the later years of the second Industrial Revolution in America and was often chosen for courthouses and other public buildings constructed at during the same era. For Ritchie County, the style differs greatly from the vernacular buildings that otherwise characterize the county. This courthouse replaced two earlier courthouses.

Summary
The Ritchie County Courthouse is eligible under *Criteria A: Politics and Government* for its local significance in Ritchie County’s political history. Since the early twentieth century, this building as provided a place for lawmakers and county officials to gather and conduct business.

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The building is also eligible under *Criterion C: Architecture* as a locally significant example of the Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture. The period of significance dates from 1923, the year the courthouse was constructed, to 1954, the National Register’s fifty-year cut-off date.

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Bibliographic References

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North, E. Lee. *Fifty-five West Virginias.* Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1998.

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Six, Stephen D., comp. "History of Ritchie County read by Gen. T. M. Harris, July 4, 1876." *The Ritchie Gazette*, Harrisville, W.Va., 1975.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Ritchie County Courthouse occupies a portion of a one-half acre lot bounded by Main and Spring Streets in Harrisville, West Virginia, which is further described in Ritchie County Deed Book 1, Page 22.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the property associated with the Ritchie County Courthouse and lawn.

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Photo 1 of 12	Main (south) elevation of courthouse building View facing north
Photo 2 of 12	Courthouse portico View facing northwest
Photo 3 of 12	North and west elevations of courthouse building View facing southeast
Photo 4 of 12	View of courthouse cupola from roof View facing southwest
Photo 5 of 12	War memorial View facing west
Photo 6 of 12	First floor of courthouse
Photo 7 of 12	Detail of county clerk's office
Photo 8 of 12	Detail of tax assessor's office
Photo 9 of 12	Detail of stairs and railing
Photo 10 of 12	Judge's bench detail in courtroom
Photo 11 of 12	Courtroom
Photo 12 of 12	Original bell tower equipment

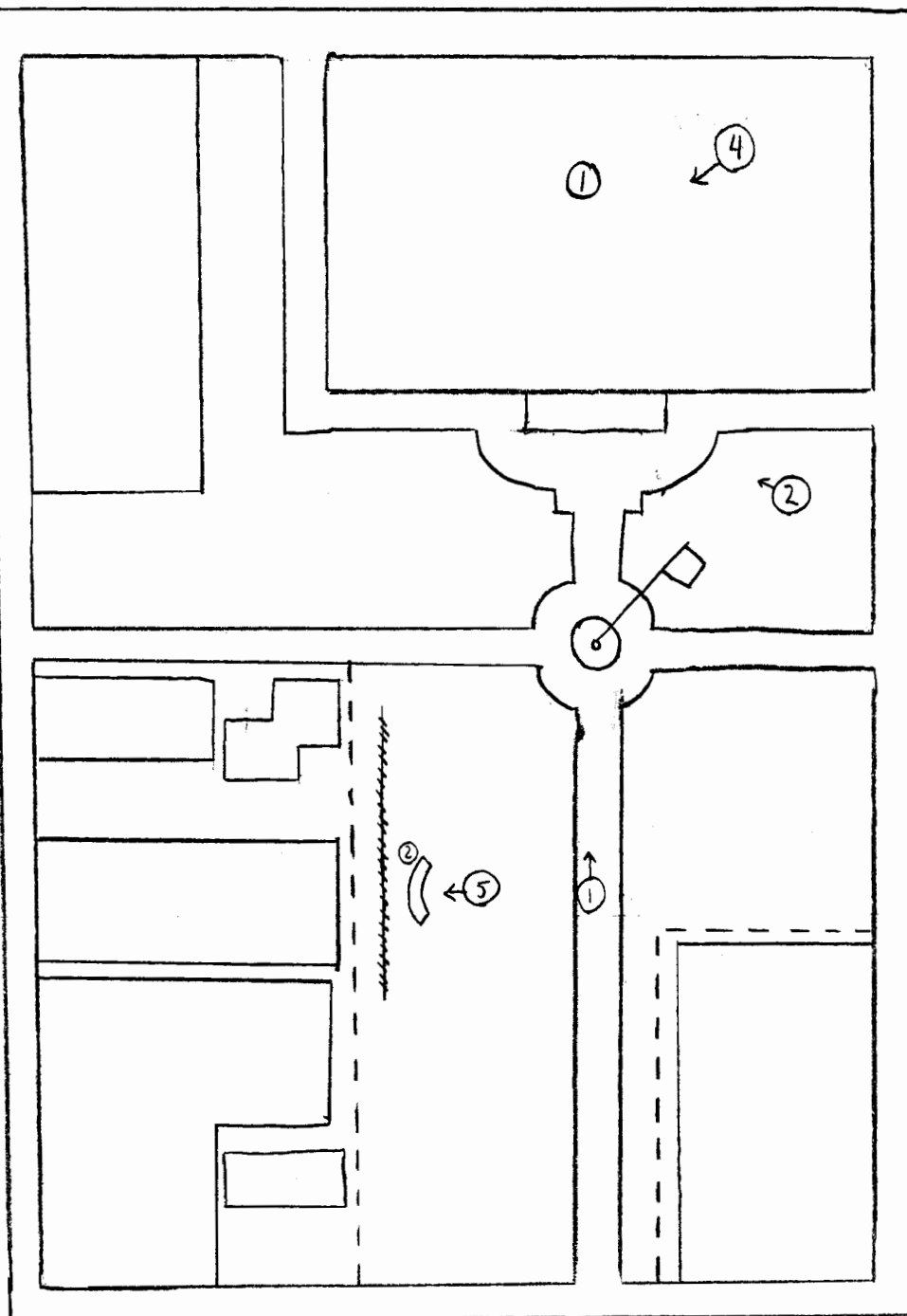
Ritchie County Courthouse, Ritchie County, WV



③

North Street

Court Street

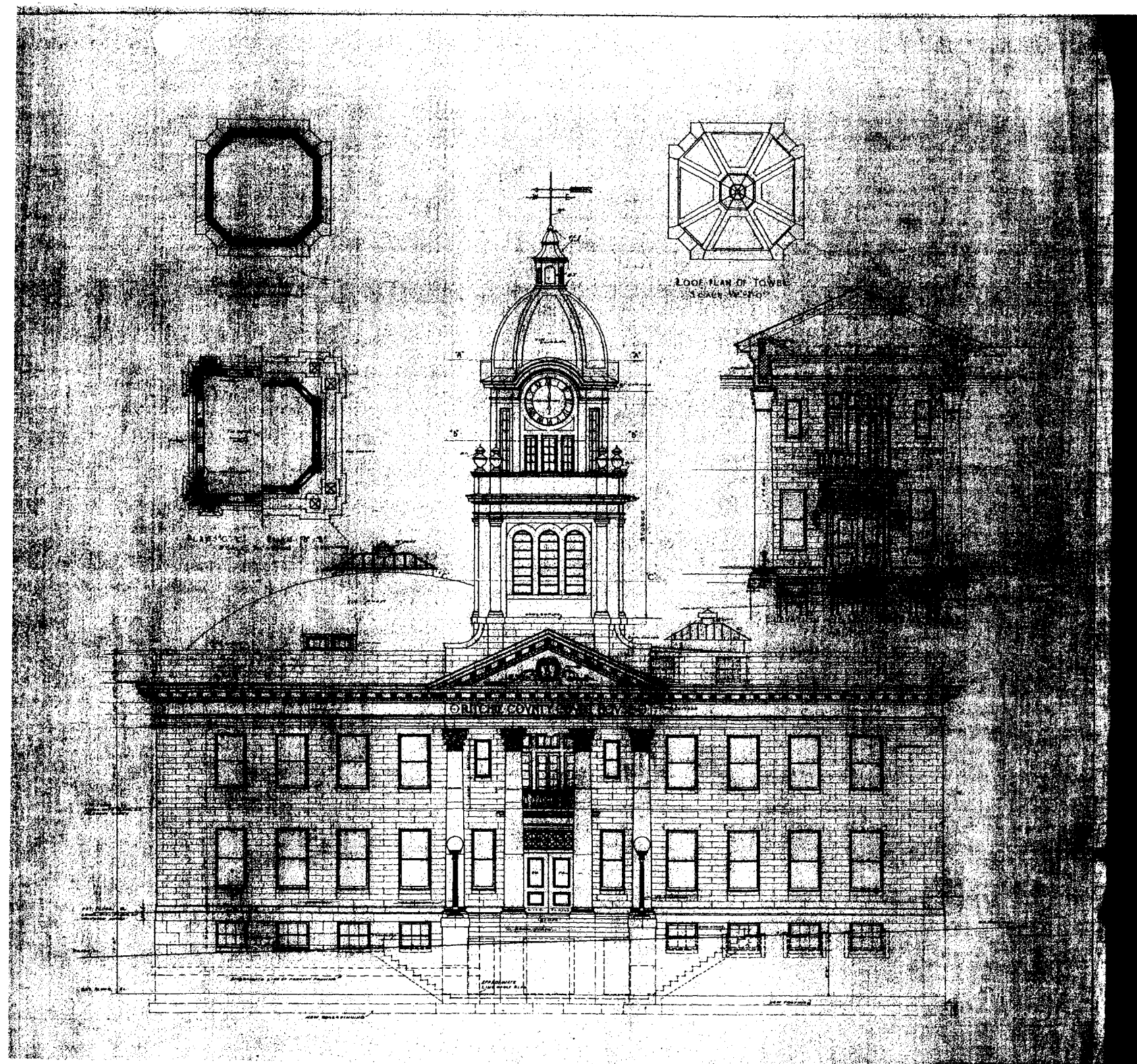


- ① Courthouse Contributing Building
- ② War memorial Cent. object

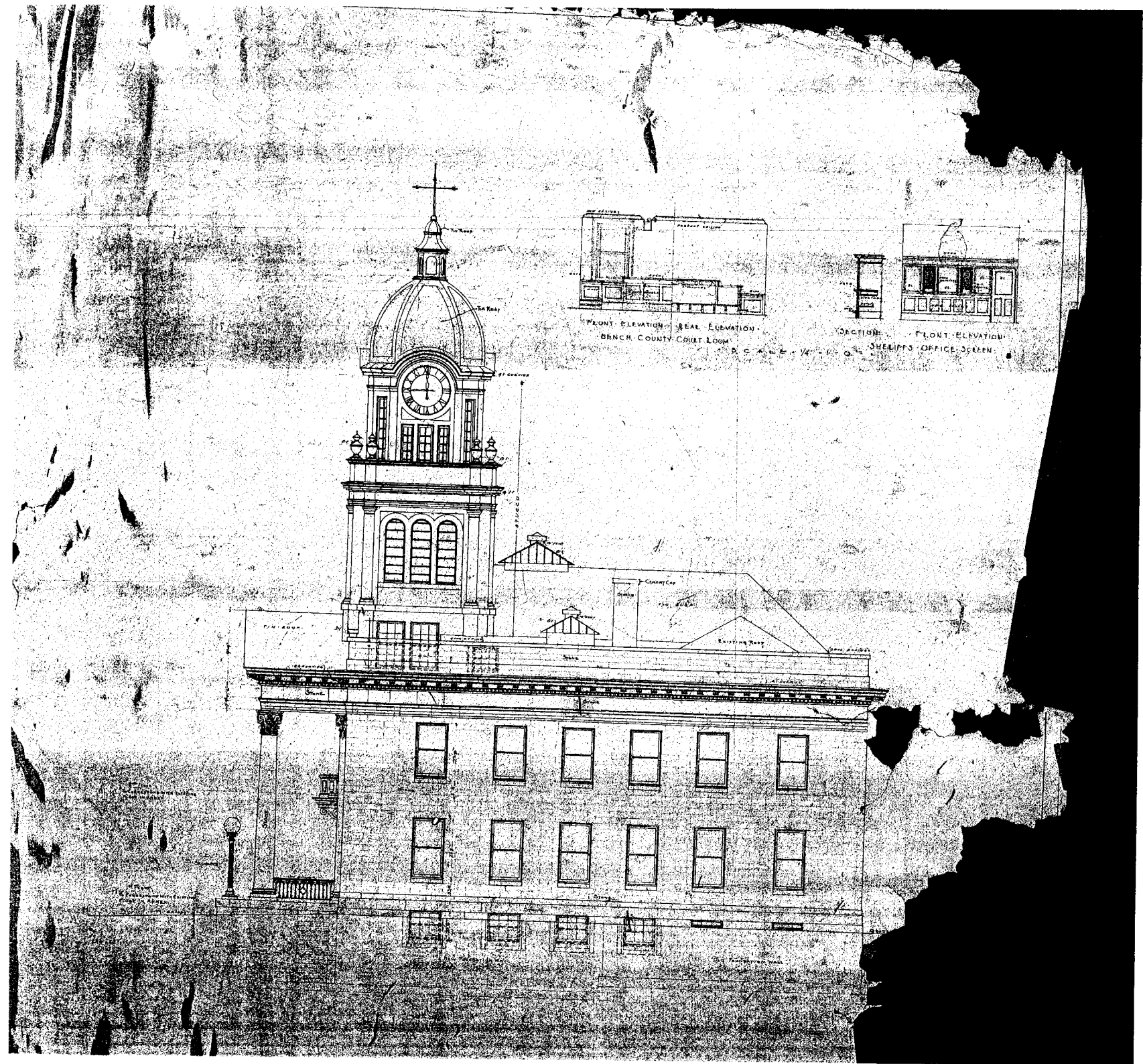
③ → photo views

Spring Street

Main Street

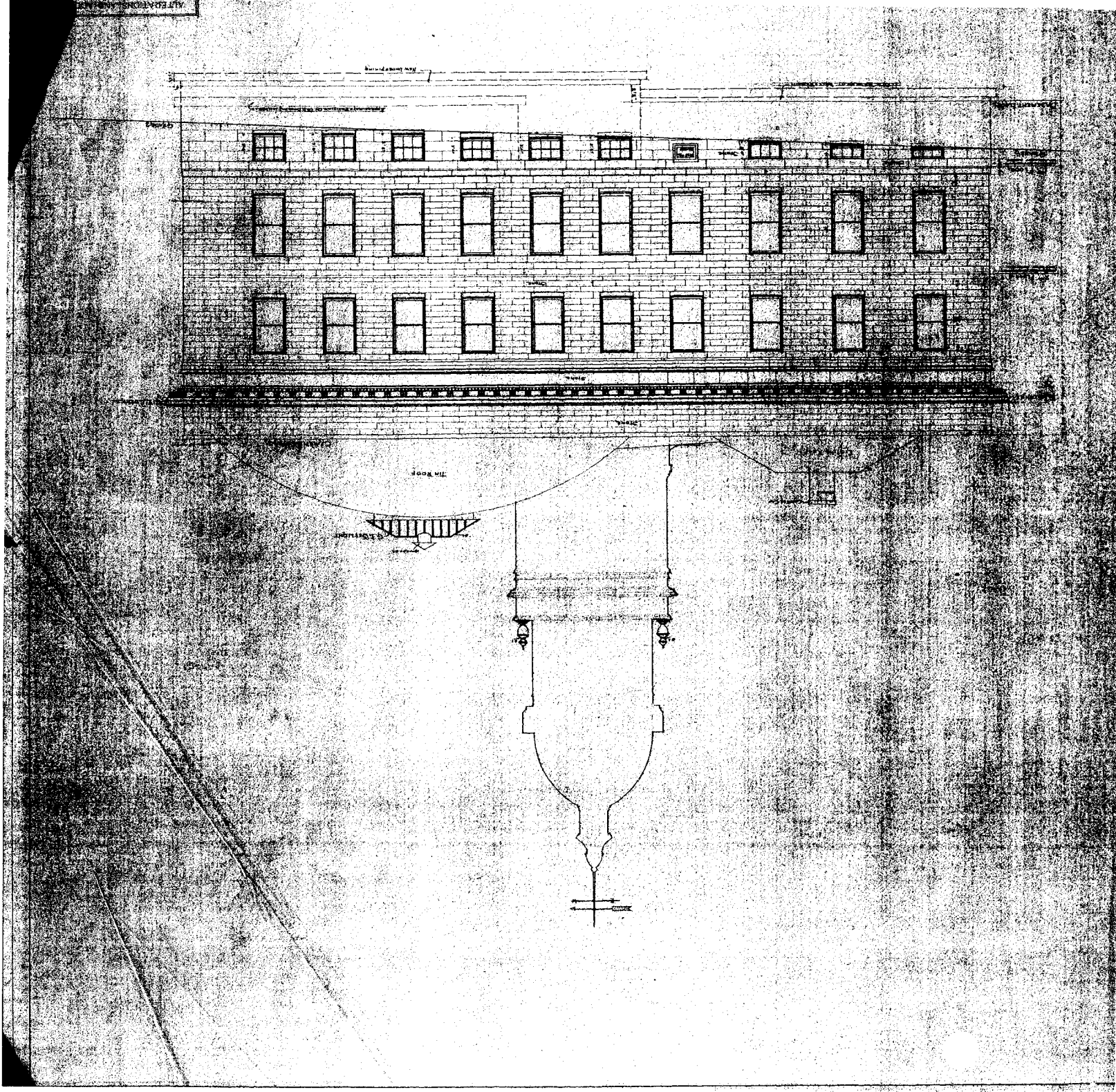


Ritchie County Courthouse, WV

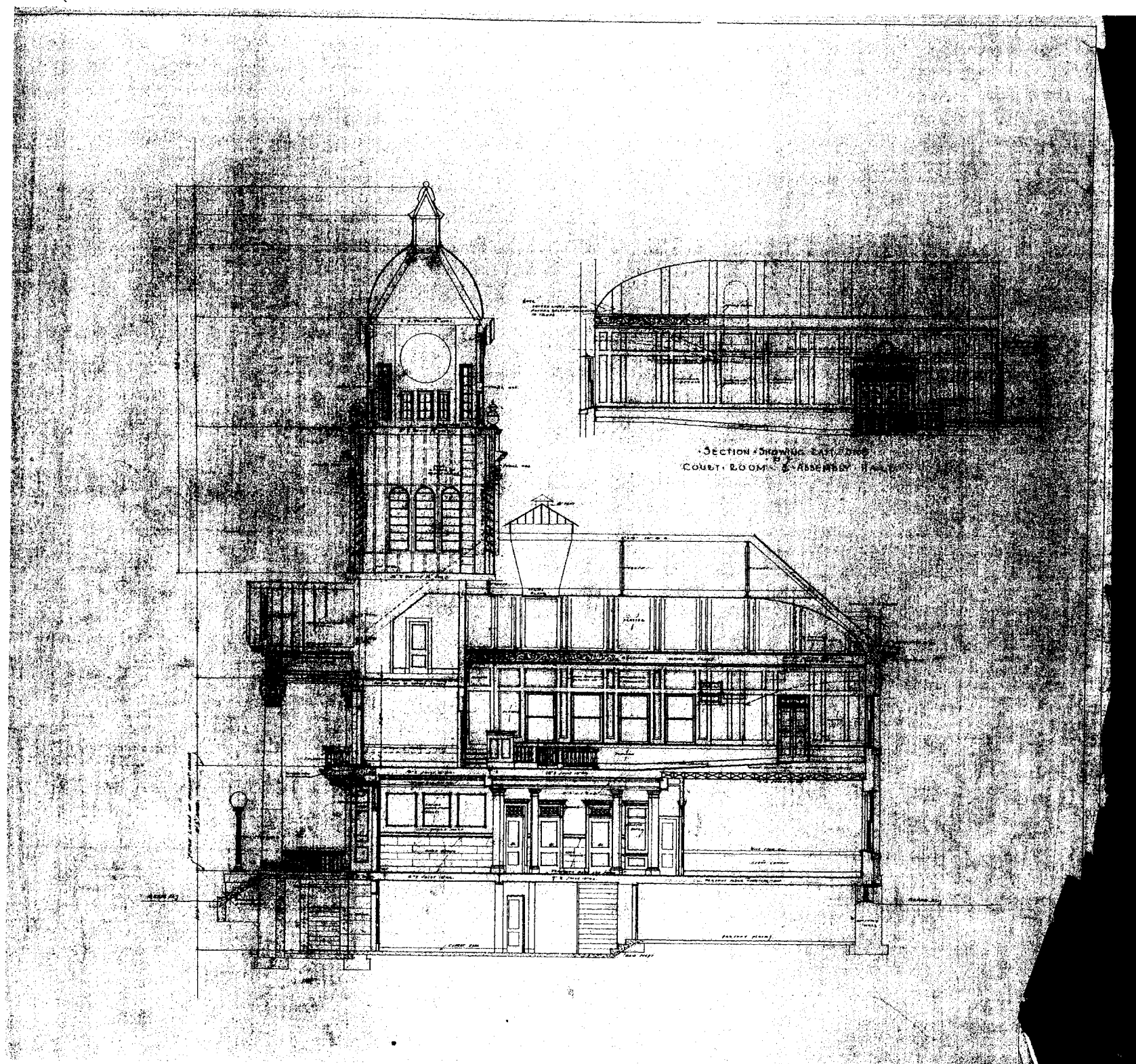


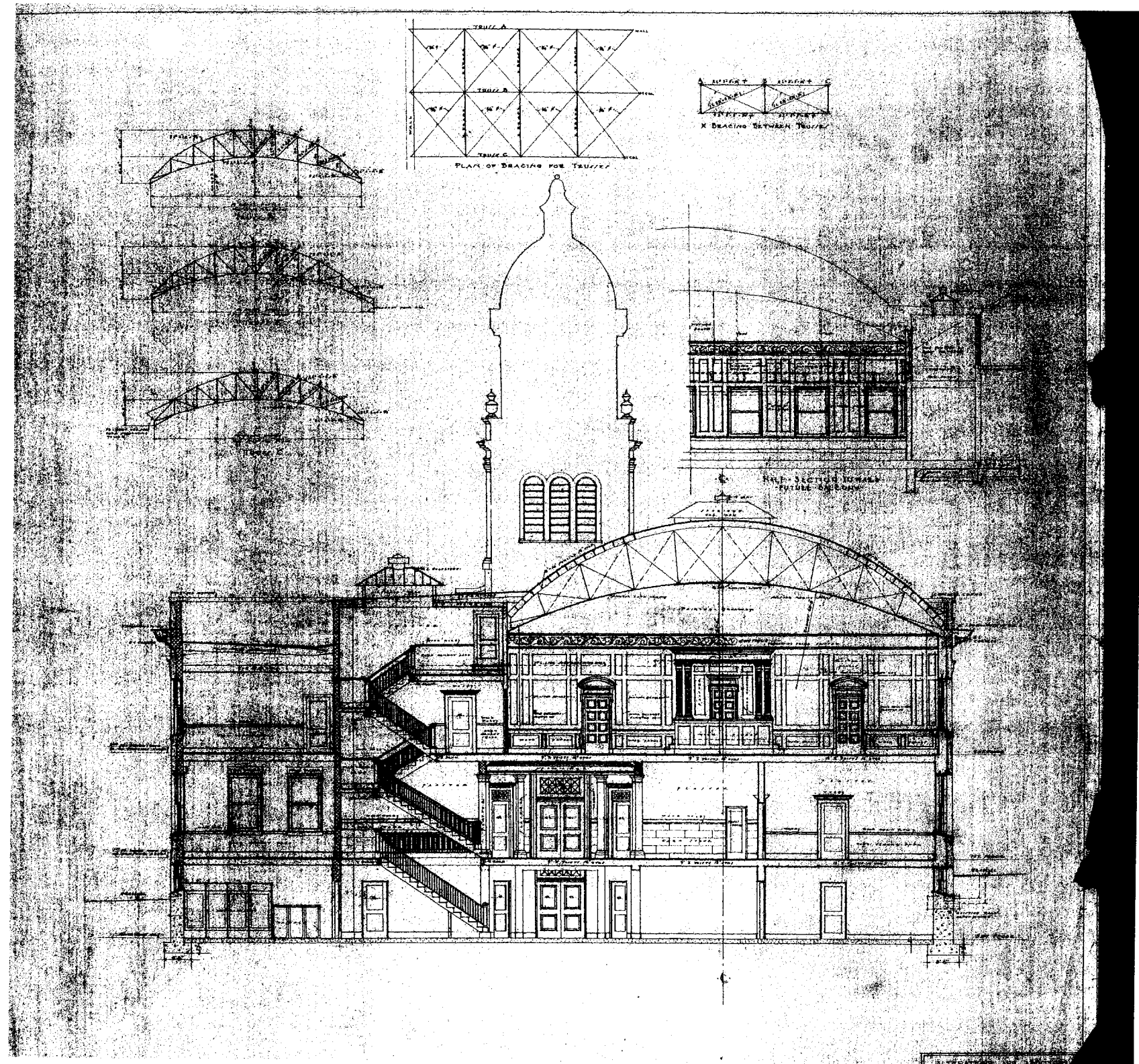
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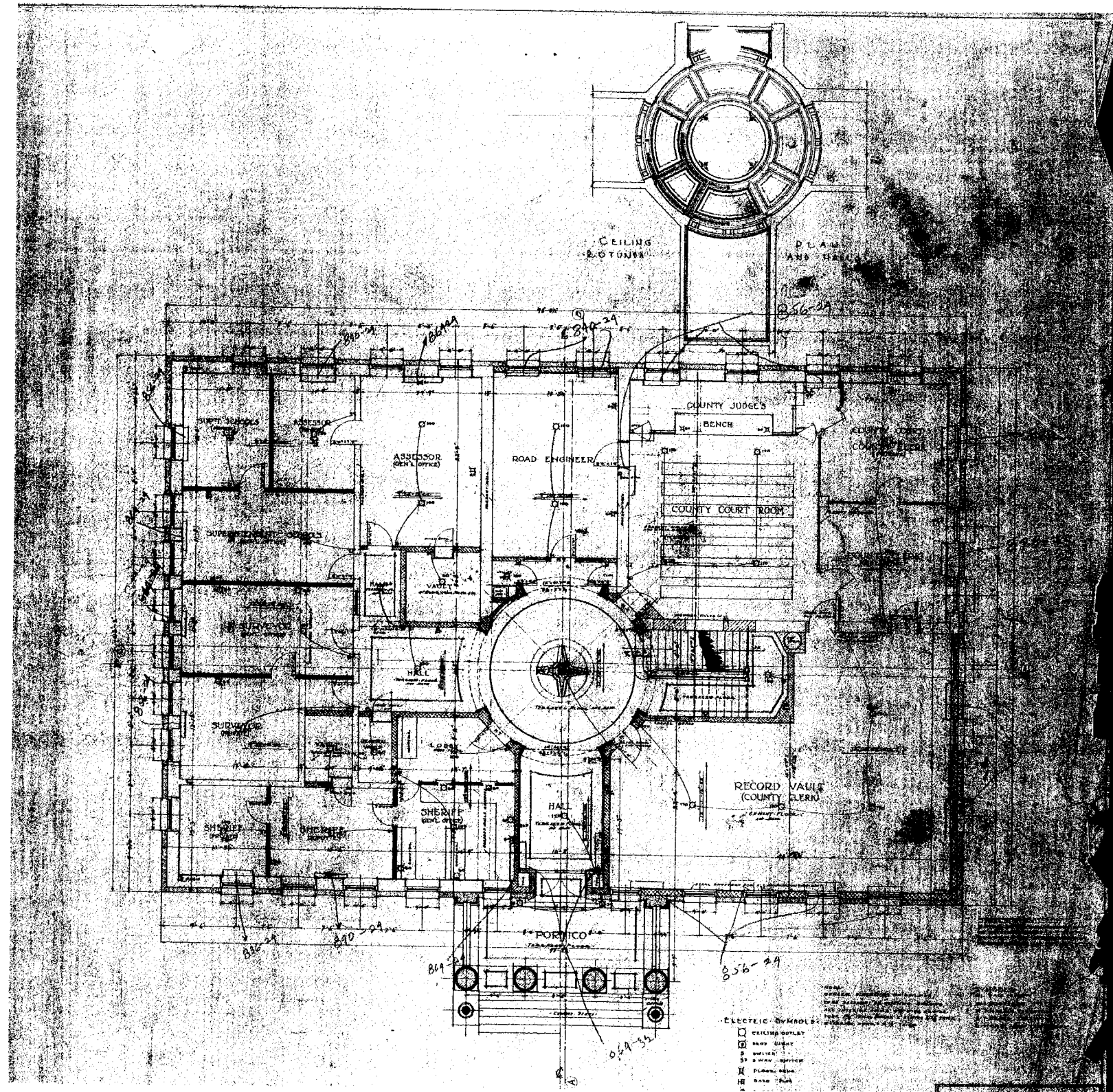


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Courthouse, WV



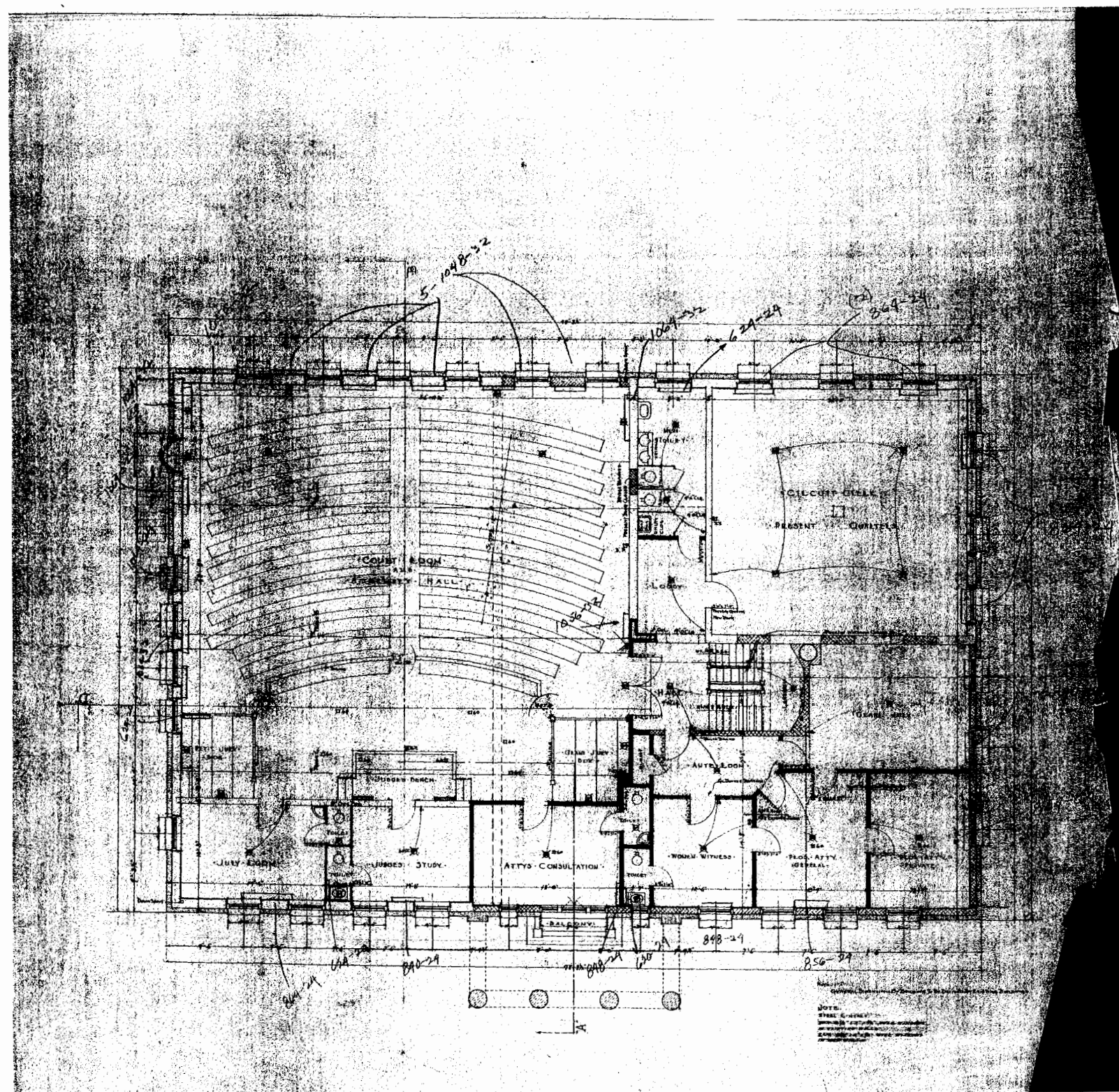


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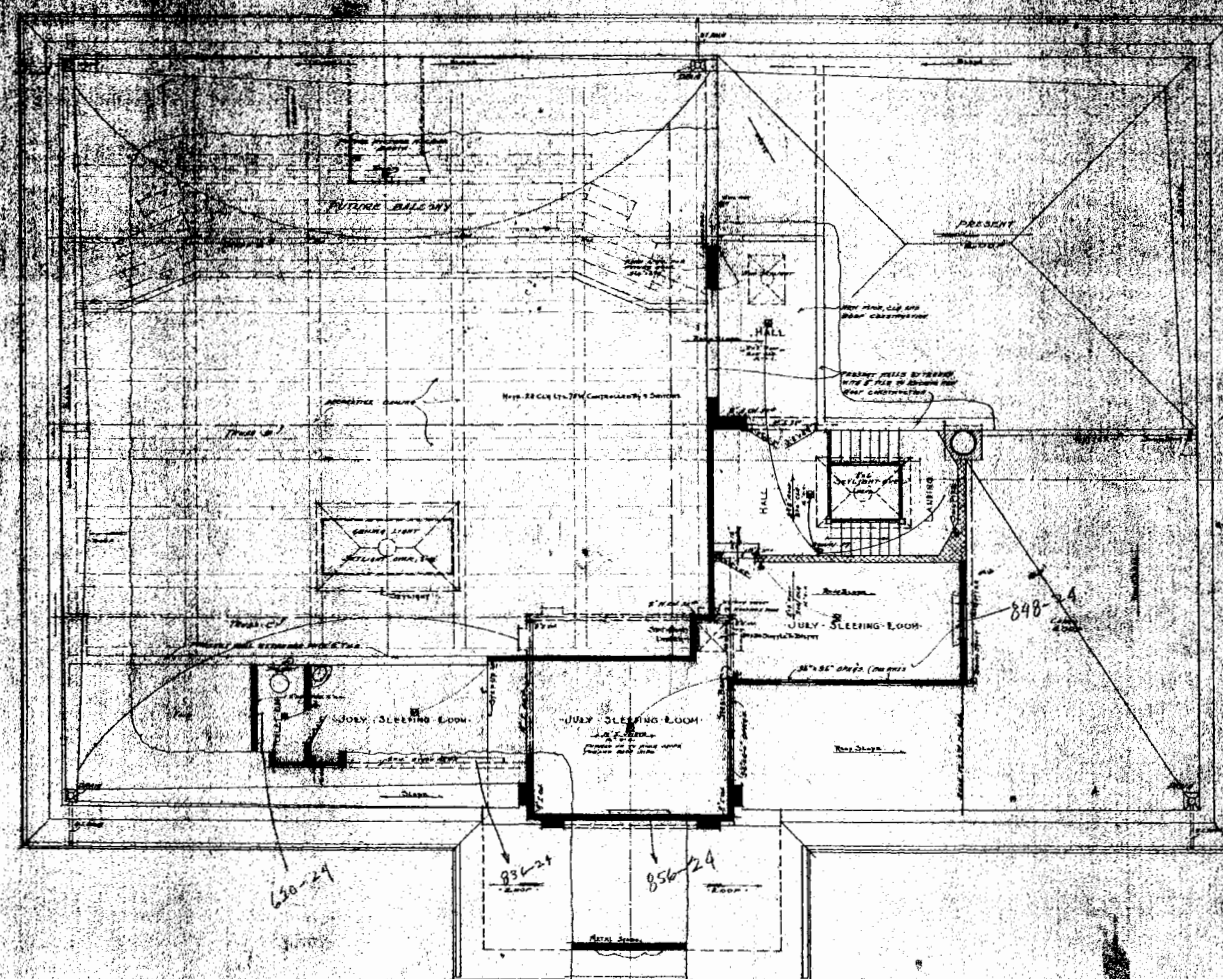
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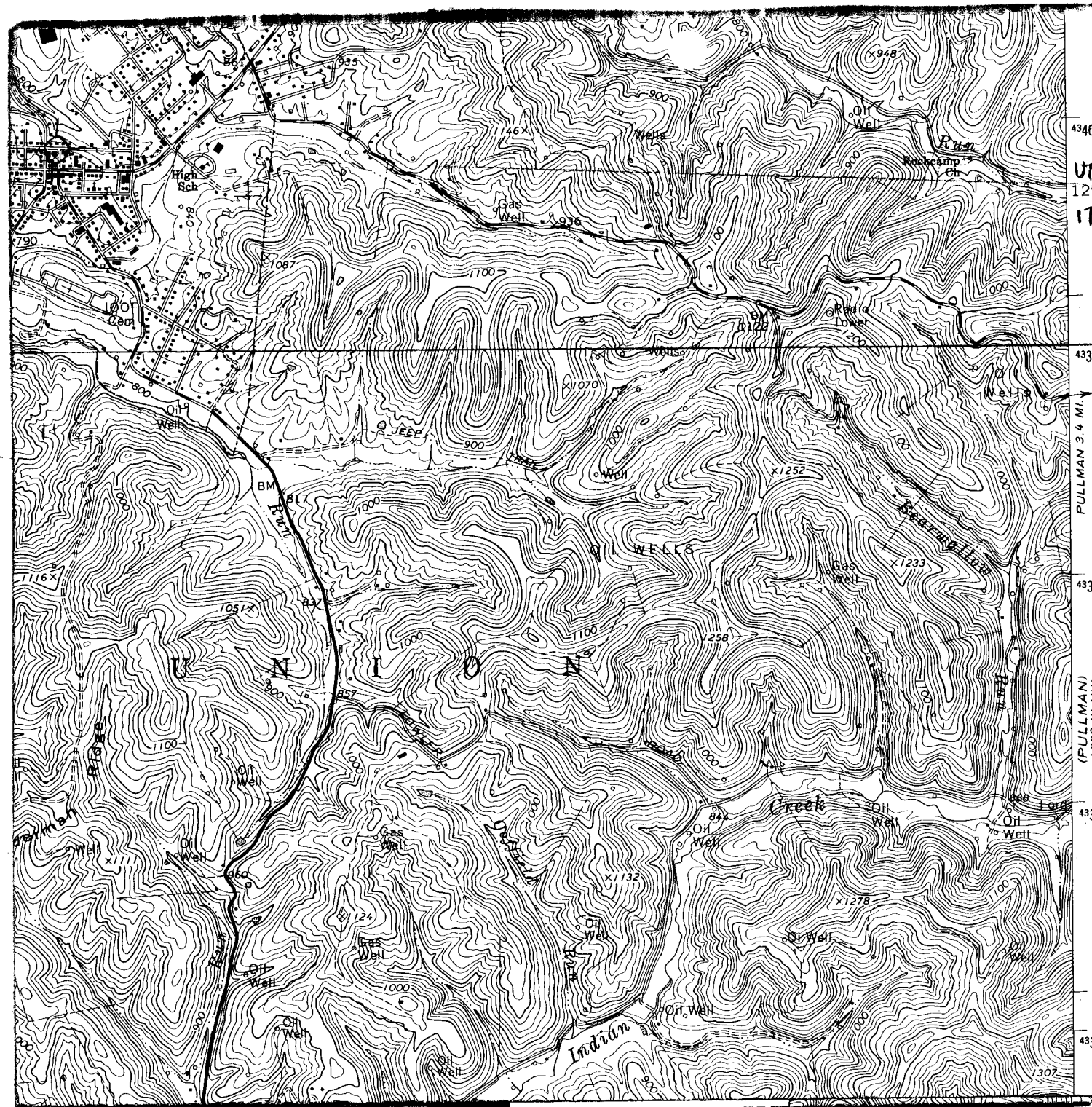
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Courthouse, WV



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Ritchie County
Courthouse, WV





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Ritchie County, W.Va.

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4338

(PULLMAN)
4862 III NW

4337

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