

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

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received

date entered

1. Name

historic University Library; Administration Building

and/or common Stewart Hall, West Virginia University (preferred)

2. Location

street & number University Avenue

not for publication

city, town Morgantown

vicinity of

congressional district Second

state West Virginia

code

54

county Monongalia

code 061

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☒ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture
☒ building(s)	☐ private	☐ unoccupied	☐ museum
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☒ commercial
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ educational
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ entertainment
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ government
		☐ no	☐ industrial
			☐ military
			☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name West Virginia Board of Regents

street & number 950 Kanawha Boulevard, East

city, town Charleston

vicinity of

state West Virginia 25301

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number High Street

city, town Morgantown

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

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Stewart Hall stands on a slight promontory overlooking University Avenue at the center of the town campus of West Virginia University in Morgantown, Monongalia County. The building was designed by the Wilson Brothers and Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a prestigious architectural and engineering firm, to provide the University with a capacious facility to house its expanding library and to meet the research needs of the growing student population at the turn-of-the-century. Construction of the University Library was undertaken in 1900 by the firm of Caldwell and Drake of Parkersburg, one of the best known companies of its type in the state. The building was completed in 1902 at a cost of slightly more than \$100,000 and officially dedicated on June 17, 1903. The University Library became the Administration Building in 1931 when a new library was erected for W.V.U. on the southeastern section of the campus. During the 1970's the Administration Building was renamed Stewart Hall in honor of Irvin Stewart, president of the University from 1946 to 1958.

Stewart Hall is the most significant example of Romanesque Revival architecture in West Virginia. Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-86) reintroduced and largely revolutionized the style in the United States during the decades of the 1870's and 1880's. The massive, horizontal, heavily rusticated features so favored by Richardson were admirably incorporated in the Wilson design of the Morgantown building. Especially impressive is the structure's lateral massing accommodating a limited, elevated site. Complementing, but subordinate to the great weight of the mass, is the careful placement of carved detail.

Coursed Amherst sandstone blocks with rock-faced tooling ensheath the walls of the entire building. With the exception of the two and one-half story entrance pavilion facing University Avenue all facades are filled with deep arcuated openings containing the first and second floor windows. Two-story, smooth colonnettes occupy the reveals and terminate beneath semicircular arches whose voussoirs are outlined with extradados molding.

Stewart Hall possesses three primary structural units: a gabled central block oriented in a general north-south direction; a gabled entrance pavilion; and a monumental octagonal tower. A minor wing with hipped roof is attached to the rear elevation. The building is 135 feet at its greatest length and 70 feet at its greatest width. Rising 60 feet above the ground is the tower which occupies the southwest corner of the building facing University Avenue and Prospect Street. Red shingle tiles, interrupted by a course of half-round tiles, cover the extremely broad roof planes of both the tower and main block. Such expansive roof planes, punctuated with occasional shallow and delicately proportioned shed dormers, characterize a major feature of Romanesque Revival architecture.

Solid rails and a flight of stairs ascend to the highest point of the building's raised basement to meet the colossal entrance portal. The opening is the center feature of a triple-arched door-window arrangement. The smooth, semicircular voussoir arches spring from enriched, clustered piers. It is this elevation of the building that occupies the attention of the student of sculpture and stone carving. Intrados and extradados moldings of the arches are incised with intricate geometric and floriate patterns. Hood moulds of the second floor arched windows terminate at the impost level in (label) stops of fanciful design. Especially intriguing are the human-form grotesques seen at the

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convergence of the extradoses (spandrel area) of adjoining arches upon the entrance facade and tower. Consoles supporting the stone balcony of the gable are also fashioned with visages, each with a different, glaring expression. Above the balcony at the apex of the gable is a relief of intertwining floral details. Among the outstanding masonry elements of Stewart Hall are the coupled arches and colonettes of the tower's belfry. The height of this open structure with unusually fine masonry features is an artistic and engineering achievement.

Interior space of Stewart Hall was reorganized following the departure of the library holdings and staff in 1931. Important architectural elements were conserved in the entrance vestibule and first floor rotunda, despite alterations and partitioning of space on the second floor. A general rehabilitation in 1979 was successful, however, in recovering certain of the open spaces adjacent to the central rotunda.

The principal feature of the interior is a two-story, arcaded rotunda. Four arches on the long side and two arches on the ends of the rectangular space are also seen at the second level, though these are shorter in height. Plaster acanthus-leaf moldings embellish the capitals of the piers at the four outer corners of the rotunda. The unmistakable features of a finely crafted mouse may be seen peering from the hollows of densely entwined acanthus leaves on each of these corner piers.

Originally designed to house the library's circulation desk and card catalog, the rotunda, despite its splendid character, was a natural conduit for noise which disturbed patrons in the reading and reference rooms adjoining the first floor circulation desk. The second floor contained only two rooms and a connecting gallery, while the third was occupied by three modest classrooms. It was evident early on that possibilities for expansion of library facilities was not possible. The University Library was subsequently adaptively reused for University administrative purposes in 1931.

Structural evaluation of Stewart Hall in 1979 revealed details of the building's reinforced concrete construction. Stewart Hall is one of the oldest reinforced concrete buildings in West Virginia. Several engineering features have been ascertained regarding its patented Steelcrete floor system. In this method a steelcrete mesh or expanded metal reinforcement was used in conjunction with cinder concrete to form the structural flooring system.

Addition of an enclosed fire escape at the rear elevation, and enclosure of the rotunda well with a temporary plywood ceiling, comprise major recent alterations.

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 1900-02

Builder/Architect Wilson Brothers and Company, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Stewart Hall, an important architectural landmark of high style in West Virginia, is the most significant example of Romanesque Revival architecture in the Mountain State. An associated feature of the building's significant structural character is a reinforced concrete system, one of the earliest of its type surviving in the state. Stewart Hall is also significant because of its prominent place in the academic and administrative history of West Virginia University, the state's comprehensive land-grant institution of higher learning. Erected in 1900-02, to serve as the University Library, Stewart Hall became the Administration Building of the University in 1931. It is the oldest building on the town campus of W.V.U. after Martin Hall (1870), Woodburn Hall (1876), and Chitwood Hall (1893), the three buildings forming the original quadrangle of the University called Woodburn Circle.

West Virginia University was founded as a result of the Congressional Land Grant (Morill) Act of July 2, 1862, a measure designed to endow colleges in the United States with resources to further the studies of agriculture and the mechanical arts. Benefits were extended to West Virginia by a specific Congressional amendment of the Act, passed on April 19, 1864. In order to insure that the proposed college should be located permanently or near Morgantown, the trustees of Monongalia Academy offered its Morgantown property and property of the Woodburn Female Seminary to the State on January 9, 1866. The State Legislature accepted the offer on February 7, 1867, and created the "Agricultural College of West Virginia". Acting upon the request of President Alexander Martin, the Legislature, during the following year, redesignated the institution "West Virginia University".

Construction of the University Library (Stewart Hall) at the turn-of-the-century was a result of changes and needs reflecting the growth of student enrollment and expansion of University programs. Following several decades of decentralization in which departments and schools exercised great independence, the "University Plan" was adopted whereby administrative authority was shared by Deans appointed by the University President. Other important changes and innovations at the University in the 1890's were seen in the full admission of women to all departments but the military, the revitalization of the Alumni Association, and the creation of student-supported institutions, publications, and activities. The Board of Regents formed in 1895, was organized to manage the affairs of the University along bipartisan lines.

The need for a professionally designed and separate library facility reached a critical level in the late 1890's when the second floor space of Martin Hall could no longer safely bear the weight of the collections and increased numbers of student users. President Jerome H. Raymond approached the Legislature in 1899 and successfully persuaded that body to appropriate funds for construction of a library and museum building. The \$40,000 allocations enabled the special building committee of the Board of Regents to immediately proceed with necessary vigor.

Competitive plans were invited by the committee; the total, including inquiries, for the proposed library and two other University buildings— the Armory and Mechanical

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Hall- numbered twenty. The 1899 competition captured the interest of a number of regionally noted architects including: Harrison Albright of Charleston; Yost & Packard of Columbus, Ohio; S.E. Chamberlain of Kansas City, Missouri; James W. McLaughlin and Samuel Hannaford of Cincinnati; and Frederick M. Mann of Philadelphia. The committee subsequently chose the plans of the Wilson Brothers and Company of Philadelphia and approved their contracts on September 30, 1899.

The building designed by the Wilson Brothers was immediately recognized as a significant work of architecture. The major elements of the Romanesque Revival style revolutionized by Henry H. Richardson (1838-86) are present in the building. Great weight and general simplicity are combined with a horizontal treatment of mass. Expansive roof planes present a significant visual feature. Appropriately, stone carving is subordinate. Quality of this ornamentation did not go unnoticed by local observers as reported in the Morgantown Evening Post of January 10, 1902: "... artistic workers in stone are carving attractive faces and figures on the splendid new Library building, one of the best college structures in the country."

Wilson Brothers and Company of Philadelphia was founded in 1876 by Joseph M. Wilson (1838-1902), in association with his brother John, and Henry Macomb. Joseph Wilson (later F.A.I.A.) was graduated in engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1858 and worked from 1865-68 as an architect and engineer with the Pennsylvania Railroad. The firm designed a number of prominent Philadelphia buildings including Machinery Hall and Exhibition Building at the Centennial Exposition, Susquehanna and Schuylers river bridges, Drexel Institute (1891) and the Drexel Office Building, the city's "first skyscraper." The Drexel Building (the firm's office address) was one of the earliest buildings in the country employing a series of iron frames as a structural system later perfected by the builders of the Chicago School in highrise design. The Wilson Brothers firm designed (concurrently) the W.V.U. Library, Mechanical Hall, and Armory; their construction, by the firm of Caldwell and Drake of Parkersburg¹, proceeded at the same time. The Armory and Mechanical Hall were later razed to provide space for the University's student center in the 1960's.

The Romanesque style building, Stewart Hall, designed by Joseph M. Wilson and his associates, Henry W. Wilson, John McArthur Harris, and Howard L. Richards, provided West Virginia University with its first professionally planned and capacious library building. It survives as a statement of their sensitivity (though unexplainably and erroneously attributed to Stanford White by several writers), and as a reminder of a turn-of-the-century era when West Virginia University was entering a significant phase of development.

¹The firm was headquartered at a central office in Indiana.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Ambler, Charles H. A History of Education in West Virginia. Huntington, W.Va.: Standard Printing and Publishing Co., 1951, pp. 327-28; 341.
Athenaeum. (W.V.U., Morgantown, W.Va.) Jan. 22, 1903, p.1.
Kemp, E.L. "An Introduction to the Structural Evaluation of Historic Reinforced Concrete

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Morgantown North, West Virginia

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification Stewart Hall is located at the northeast corner of University Ave. and Prospect St. on a parcel whose boundary, abutting the sidewalks on University Ave. and Prospect St., is 160' square.

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 Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian
Historic Preservation Unit
organization W.Va. Dept. of Culture & History date March 19, 1980
The Cultural Center
street & number Capitol Complex telephone 304/ 348-0244
city or town Charleston state West Virginia 25305

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

Clarence M. Moore

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 2, 1980

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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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- Munn, Robert F. West Virginia University Library, 1867-1917. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1962. (Thesis, University of Michigan, 1962.) pp. 176-81.
- Tatum. Penn's Great Town. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961, pp. 113-15.
- Wiggin, Pauline G. "The Library of West Virginia University." Library Journal, vol. 28, September 1903, pp. 667-68.
- Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects Deceased, 1956, p. 664.
- W.V.U. "Board of Regents and Executive Committee Minutes, 1872-1919." Archives and Manuscript Collection, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia.

