

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS 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 Tyler County Courthouse and Jail

and/or common

**2. Location**street & number Main and Dodd Streets

\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Middlebourne

\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

congressional district Firststate West Virginiacode 54county Tylercode 095**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**name Tyler County Commissionstreet & number Tyler County Courthousecity, town Middlebourne

\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state West Virginia 26149**5. Location of Legal Description**courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tyler County Courthousestreet & number Main and Dodd Streetscity, town Middlebournestate West Virginia**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**title \_\_\_\_\_ has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 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

The Tyler County Courthouse and Jail occupy a slightly elevated site at the southeastern corner of Main and Dodd Streets in Middlebourne, county seat of Tyler. The present county buildings are but the latest of a series of structures that have occupied this parcel. Following the permanent designation of Middlebourne as the County seat in 1816, a log jail was erected c.1818 to be followed by the construction of an adjacent courthouse about 1820. In 1854, a two-story brick building replaced the one of 1820; it is this structure, though radically altered and completely redesigned in 1922, that stands today. The County jail, built in 1874, retains the basic design qualities of the construction period. An elevated and enclosed passageway bridges a narrow space between the otherwise detached buildings to facilitate the movement of personnel.

The disparate architectural modes of the complex form an interesting physical reference to ideas of fashion spanning a time period of nearly half a century. The courthouse, despite hidden structural elements of the 1854 period, is a completely redesigned building following precedents of the 20th century classic revival. Symmetrical massing and generally broad, smooth wall treatments contrast with the picturesque, fortresslike character of the Victorian prison. The foreboding impression created by the latter structure well illustrates the 19th century idea of penal architecture.

Mr. E.C.S. Holmboe and Mr. Pogue of Clarksburg were employed by the Tyler County Court in 1922 to prepare drawings and specifications for the courthouse. Holmboe, an architect of some reputation in central West Virginia, had been practicing in Harrison County since 1901. Despite restrictions imposed by the existing structure the architects produced a modest but locally impressive piece of architecture befitting the tastes and needs of a small rural county.

The entrance elevation of the courthouse is centered with a pedimented two-story arcaded pavilion. The base section of this structure is finished entirely in gray smooth finished limestone, is appointed with a dentiled cornice and is centered with a cartouche. Pilasters and balusters of limestone detail the brick arcade of the pavilion's second level. Of special artistic interest is the frieze incised with the words "Tyler County Court House" and the triangular pediment centered with a sculpted ensemble consisting of the seated figure of justice ministering to suppliant male and female figures.

Elements of twentieth century classicism and Beaux Arts classicism combine in the entrance facade details of pavilion and clock tower. The tower is surmounted by a diminutive copper-covered saucer dome and is divided into three levels: a brick base with an arcaded rail appointed with stone urns, a louvered belfry, and a belvedere with clock faces.

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Tyler County Courthouse Item number 7

Page 2

The generally rectangular massing of the rear section of the building is subdued. The buff brickwork throughout is outstanding, particularly in the blind arches of first floor windows. Standing seam metal has been employed on all roofing surfaces. The structural system of the building employs brick over tile masonry with steel reinforcement. The exterior foundation is cement stucco finished to simulate ashlar.

An axial corridor evenly divides the first floor space between the offices of the county clerk (to the left of the entrance), assessor and tax office (to the right of entrance). A metal stair at the rear of the corridor rises two flights to the alcove of the courtroom. The courtroom, the major space of the second floor, is entered from the alcove through a transomed double door.

The ceiling of the courtroom is an expansive barrel vault appointed with five hanging lights suspended from molded plaster bases. Cornices of the room are richly molded plaster ornamented with modillions. Superimposed (double) Greek frets complement additional cornice moldings of egg-and-dart and bead-and-reel styles. The rear wall of the room is bowed and divided by plaster moldings into large panels. The center aisle slopes gradually to the front of the courtroom terminating at the dais with its massive hardwood bench. Matching wood (high finish) paneling to the rear of the bench is centered with a shallow classical niche flanked by fluted pilasters.

The century-old walls of the Tyler County jail have assumed a dark appearance due to weathering and the susceptibility of the porous stone to discoloration from air-borne pollutants. The generally rectangular building contains a residence, offices and the jail. A wing containing cells on the northeast elevation is attached by an elevated passageway to the neighboring courthouse.

Sandstone quarry-face blocks form the solid masonry walls whose openings are flat-headed at the first story and rounded at the second. The fortress-like features of the building are pronounced and comprise a three-sided, two-story bay at the northwest corner simulating a bastion, crenelated parapets, and a cornice simulating machicolation. Of special significance is the doorway of the jail wing (facing Main Street) which displays magnificent stonework and an elliptical transom replete with wrought iron grille.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
			State and local History	

Specific dates 1874; 1922

Builder Architect Holmboe and Pogue, architects

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Tyler County Courthouse and Jail are significant because they form a complex of locally distinguished architectural modes representing disparate interpretations and efforts of local officials and builders to edify the places of government in a rural environment. The buildings may be viewed as possessing additional significance as the loci of events resulting in the growth of Middlebourne and the establishment of a permanent county seat in Tyler County.

Tyler County was formed in 1814 from Ohio County and named in honor of John Tyler, governor of Virginia from 1808 to 1811, and father of John Tyler, tenth president of the United States. A spirited rivalry between the Ohio River community of Sistersville and the "inland" village of Middlebourne -- so-named because it was thought to be halfway between the Pennsylvania line and the salt wells of the Kanawha Valley -- ended when the Virginia legislature named Middlebourne the permanent county seat in 1816. The influencing factor in this choice rested in the settlement pattern of the population which was concentrated along Middle Island Creek in the vicinity of Middlebourne.

Robert Gorrill, land owner and founder of Middlebourne, contributed to the growth of the new county seat by selling house lots and initiating the first real growth of the town. Focal point of this activity was the site of the present courthouse where a log jail was constructed c.1818. This was followed by a courthouse in 1822 and then by the brick building of 1854. Construction of a stone prison in 1874 gave additional prominence to the site occupied by the adjacent courthouse, a structure that was rebuilt and completely redesigned in 1922.

Significance of the Tyler County Courthouse and Jail may be viewed then by their direct association with a site that became the focal point of public business and community growth from the date of settlement. Moreover, the two buildings possess distinctive design features that categorize them as products of differing periods. This physical contrast is significant; it represents a provincial or vernacular interpretation of what was then deemed fashionable in the United States.

Twentieth century classicism (incorporating references to Beaux-Arts classicism), incertain respects a reaction to the exuberantly eclectic movements of late 19th century America, was well received by design professionals who produced many official buildings of this style in West Virginia during the teens and 1920s.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Tyler County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Libraries, courthouses, clubs, city buildings and schools with combinations of porticos and pediments appeared on principal streets of towns and cities. One of the best preserved buildings representing the Neo Classical Revival in Tyler County is the courthouse designed by the firm of Holmboe and Pogue of Clarksburg which produced numerous buildings in central West Virginia during the early 1920s. The Ritchie County Courthouse (1922) at Harrisville is one of theirs.

Of special interest in the Tyler County building is the entrance elevation's two-story pavilion with its triple-arched openings and sculpture-filled pediment. This unit was lavished with attention, and to the point perhaps that it dominates (or appears to be "stuck on") other features of the structure. The interesting domed tower with its Baroque flourishes is dwarfed to a degree by the pavilion. It must be understood, however, that the architects were working against some limitations imposed by the parameters of the pre-existing structure. The product is nevertheless locally significant.

The jail is massive in appearance due to its heavy rock-faced masonry. The castellated parapet and corbeled cornice suggest the strength of a fortress and the corresponding determination of Victorian-era lawmen to keep the "criminal element" on the inside. The building, constructed in 1874, is really a Victorian comment--a stern warning--in stone. Hardesty, in his history of Tyler County, pointed to other reasons for the maintenance of law and order in Tyler County of the 1880s:

One of the remarkable features of the county is its freedom from crimes and misdemeanors in that respect taking the lead of any county in the State. Its records exhibit very few criminal prosecutions, and there have been periods of several successive years in which the cells of its prison have been without a tenant. This desirable state of affairs is directly traced to the fact that Tyler is pre-eminently a prohibition county--an indisputable witness to the fact that "prohibition does prohibit." In the interior of the county and away from the Ohio River, there is absolutely no drunkenness and consequently no drunkards, and an entire freedom from the many crimes and evils which are their natural outgrowth.

The Tyler County Courthouse and Jail form a significant link with events that have shaped the history of Tyler County; they also provide a significant reference to ideas in design spanning a period of nearly half a century.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Tyler County Courthouse Item number 10

Page2

to Dodd St. and thence northwest along Dodd St. to the corner (intersec-  
tion) at Main St.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

General Order Book 12, Tyler County Commission, Proceedings of February 1922, through April 1922, Middlebourne, West Virginia. Hardesty's West Virginia Counties. Richard W.Va. ; Jim Comstock, 1973, pp 184-89.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre

Quadrangle name Middlebourne, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	7
---	---

5	0	8	26	0
---	---	---	----	---

4	3	71	16	0
---	---	----	----	---

Zone Easting

Northing

B 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

Zone

Easting

Northing

C 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--

--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at the southeast point of intersection of Main St. with Dodd St. and proceeding southwest along Main St. to a point 10 ft. to the southwest of the southwest corner of the Jail, and thence southeast in a straight line to an alley, thence along the alley

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.V. Dept. of Culture and History date March 13, 1980

street & number Cultural Center, Capitol Complex telephone 304-348-0240

city or town Charleston,

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Clarence M. Moran*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 2, 1980

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

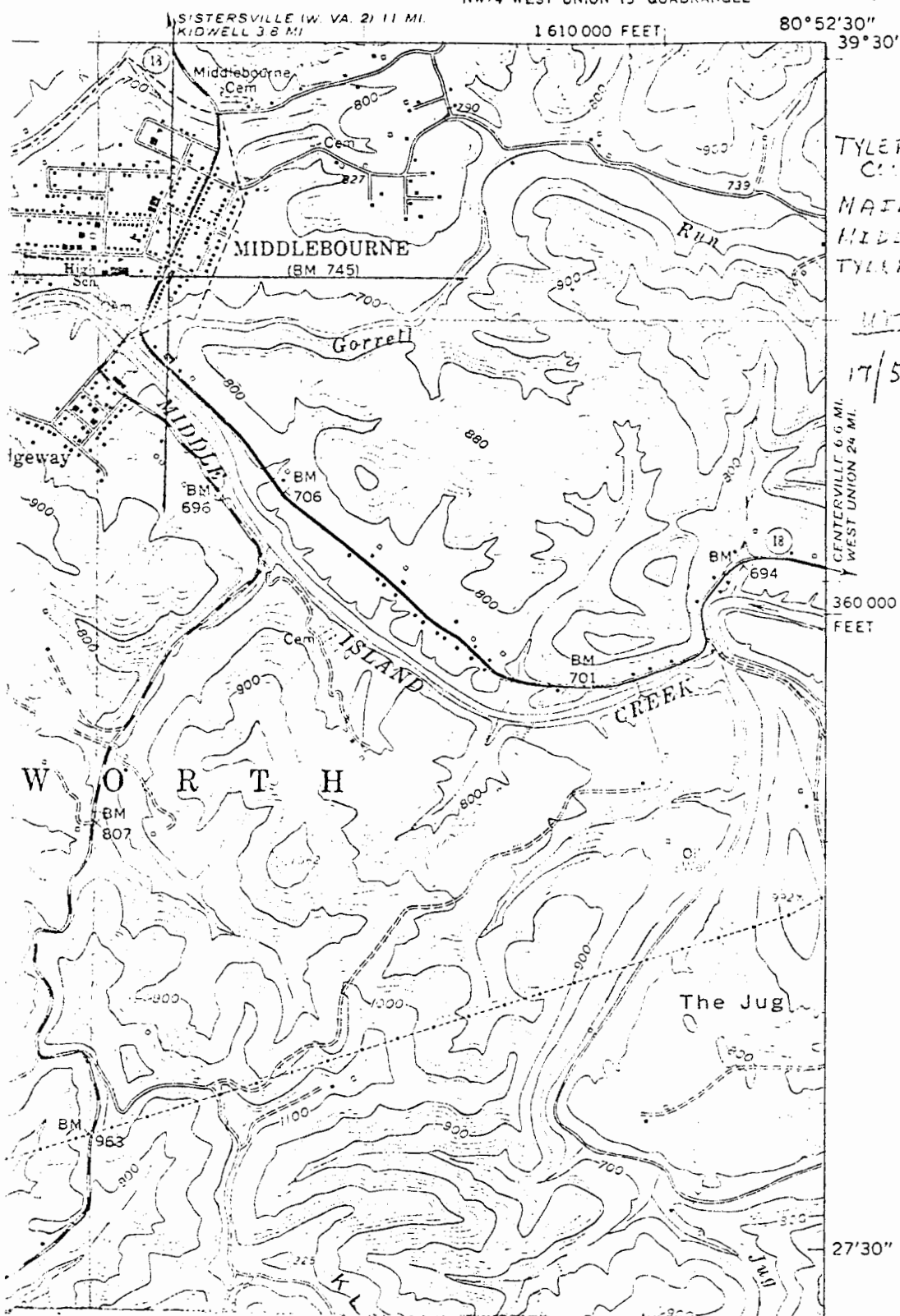
date

Chief of Registration

MIDDLEBOURNE QUADRANGLE  
WEST VIRGINIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 WEST UNION 15' QUADRANGLE

(PORTERS FALLS)



TYLER COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE AND JAIL  
MAIN STREET  
MIDDLEBOURNE  
TYLER COUNTY, W.V.

UTM  
17/508 260/4371160

CENTERSVILLE 6.6 MI.  
WEST UNION 24 MI.  
360 000  
FEET

27'30"



