

VLR-4/18/72 NRHP-6/19/72

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: VIRGINIA	
COUNTY: LYNCHBURG (in city)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
LYNCHBURG COURT HOUSE

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
LYNCHBURG COURT HOUSE

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Ninth Street between Court and Church Streets

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lynchburg (Richard H. Poff, Sixth District Congressman)

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51 COUNTY: (in city) CODE: 680

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	Comments
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4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
City of Lynchburg

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lynchburg

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Lynchburg Court House (in city)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Lynchburg

STATE:  
Virginia

CODE:  
51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY:  
1958

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
D.C.

CODE:  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on the summit of one of Lynchburg's numerous hills, the Lynchburg Court House occupies a prominent position overlooking the steeply descending steps of Monument Terrace. Executed in stucco-over-brick on a granite ashlar basement, this fine example of the Greek Revival style is capped by a shallow dome located over the intersection of the ridges. At the top of the dome, is a small open belfry consisting of a circle of small Ionic columns supporting a hemispherical dome.

Set on a granite ashlar podium the front of the court house displays a three-bay Doric portico which is echoed by an engaged portico with pilasters on each side and on the rear. The design of the portico includes a triglyph frieze surmounted by a pediment with ends that terminate in projecting boars heads. The pediment contains an historic clock whose weights were ingeniously installed to descend within the drums of the portico's two inside columns. The clock was shipped from Boston in 1833 and for sixteen years had been used in the first church building of Saint Paul's Episcopal Church in Lynchburg. Although the timepiece was rather weather-beaten after five years of exposure on a hillside near the church, the clock was installed on the new court house and has now worked for over one hundred years. The hour is struck by a brass bell cast in 1825 by John W. Bank of Philadelphia. The center bay of the porch is widened, making the crossette architrave and the three-panelled double door entrance clearly visible. Under the portico on the second floor, a three-unit central bay consisting of a four-over-four sash window is flanked by two recessed panels. This central window is further bound by two six-over-six sash windows.

The sides of the building are evenly divided into five bays by pilasters which rest on the ashlar foundation. In the center of each side wall the three-bay pedimented engaged portico projects slightly from the wall's surface and, like the front portico, features a three-part central window which hangs above an entrance elaborated with a crossette architrave. A double flight of stairs leads up to the landing in front of each entrance. The two stories of six-over-six sash windows along the sides and back are set into a single vertical recess divided by a molded panel.

A one-bay pentagonal addition with a flat roof is attached to the three-bay rear of the building. Suspended at the same level as the stone belt course of the main mass, the projecting course of the addition divides the full-basement from the first floor level. To the rear a segmental headed door gives access to the lower floor and a segmental headed window lights the second floor. Except for this addition the exterior remains essentially in its original form.

The regularity and simplicity of the exterior tends to hide the complexity of the building's interior plan. A transverse hall connecting the two side doors of the building serves as the public entranceway. From the rear corners of this hallway two exceptionally imposing stairs with massive walnut handrails curve in languid spirals to the hall on the second floor.

The old court room originally occupied the entire front portion of the building's first floor but the symmetry of this space has been altered by the addition of three offices along the west side which now occupy a third of the area. In the center of the court room's aisle are found four elongated cast iron Corinthian columns which rise to the ceiling providing a degree of support to the unusually wide span of the ceiling. Within the

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bounds of the columns, a large ceiling rosette gives the decorative effect of a canopy. The jury stand or bench is recessed into the room's back wall where two small doors at either end provide entrance from the hall. In front of the four Ionic columns which flank the jurors stand, the more recent addition of a straight stair with a turned balustrade leads down to the basement where the prisoners were kept to await trial. On the opposite side of the main hall, a central corridor bound by two rooms on each side leads to the rear of the building. Some of the interior architraves in the offices echo the crossette motif. Many of the offices maintain their original fireplace openings.

The plan of the second floor is similar to the reverse of the first floor arrangement. A central hall which leads to the front from the lateral landing is flanked by offices on both sides. To the rear a door with paneled reveals leads to the second floor court room which is lighted by floor length windows.

This court room was remodelled in the early twentieth century and features bands of interesting early twentieth century wall covering. The heavy paper is embossed with designs of garlands, fleur-de-lys, torches, palmettes and rosettes.

R.S.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1855

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | osophy  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lynchburg Court House stands as an outstanding example of Greek Revival public architecture. Built in 1855, it is the second court house building to occupy the summit of what was known in the nineteenth century as Court House Hill. In 1853 the Chancery and Law Order Book cites that the building committee appointed by the Common Council "entered into contract with Andrew Ellison, Jr., (to build) a new Court House." Little is known of this talented architect who in the execution of the building's design took full advantage of the remarkable site above the town's James River port and used the natural pedestal to emphasize the strong lines of the Greek Revival form. Constructed during an era when architectural symbolism was of primary importance, this exceptional interpretation of the Greek Revival style quickly became a landmark for the town of Lynchburg.

Lynchburg's first courthouse was completed only eight years after the town's incorporation in 1805, on land which was given by John Lynch for this specific local necessity. Lynch, who had helped to found the town in 1786, recognized the need for a court house in order to affirm the legality of the town's proceedings. Upon completion of the original two story brick court structure, the area was officially annexed by the town.

At the beginning of the second half of the century, Lynchburg experienced a period of increased economic and industrial development. The growth of the town is proven by town records which show that it had been augmented by six annexations, and that the town's area had actually quadrupled in size. In 1851 a public referendum was held to decide on the question of building a new courthouse, one more capable of accomodating the needs of the enlarged city. Two years later a building committee was appointed and Ellison was chosen to design the new structure on the site of the old court house. By 1855 the work was completed by the firm of Hallet and Mace for a total of \$22,000.

The Court House was one of the first buildings in Lynchburg to be illuminated by modern lighting methods. In 1876 gas lights were installed over the front door and eight years later the building became the city pioneer in the use of electric lights.

In 1892 the old path which zigzagged up to the Court House was replaced by steps and in 1924 the Lynchburg firm of Hurd and Chesterman designed the grand stair of Monument Terrace. These granite steps flanked by a cast stone railing were installed over a period of two years by the construction company of D. F. Burnette. Dominated by a Confederat Monument and forming a backdrop for Charles W. Keck's Dough Boy statue at its base, the staircase serves as a local war memorial. As a visually integral unit, Monument Terrace and the Court House combine to form one of the most

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8.

impressive urban focal points in Virginia.

A third courthouse was built in 1955 by Lynchburg architect J. Everette Fauber, Jr., to provide additional working space and the Old Court House now houses the Juvenile and Domestic Courts.

R.S.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blunt, Ruth H., Lynchburg Court House, manuscript, May 1966.  
 Conrad, Annie Gilliam, The Street Above the Steps, the McClure Printing Company, Staunton, 1954.  
The Saga of a City, Lynchburg, Virginia 1786-1936, The Lynchburg Sesqui-Centennial Assc., Inc., Lynchburg, Virginia, 1936.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		37 ° 24 ' 49 "	79 ° 08 ' 40 "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than ten acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: April, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER: Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond, STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: James W. Moody, Jr.  
 Title: Director Va. Historic Landmarks Commission

Date: APR 18 1972

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

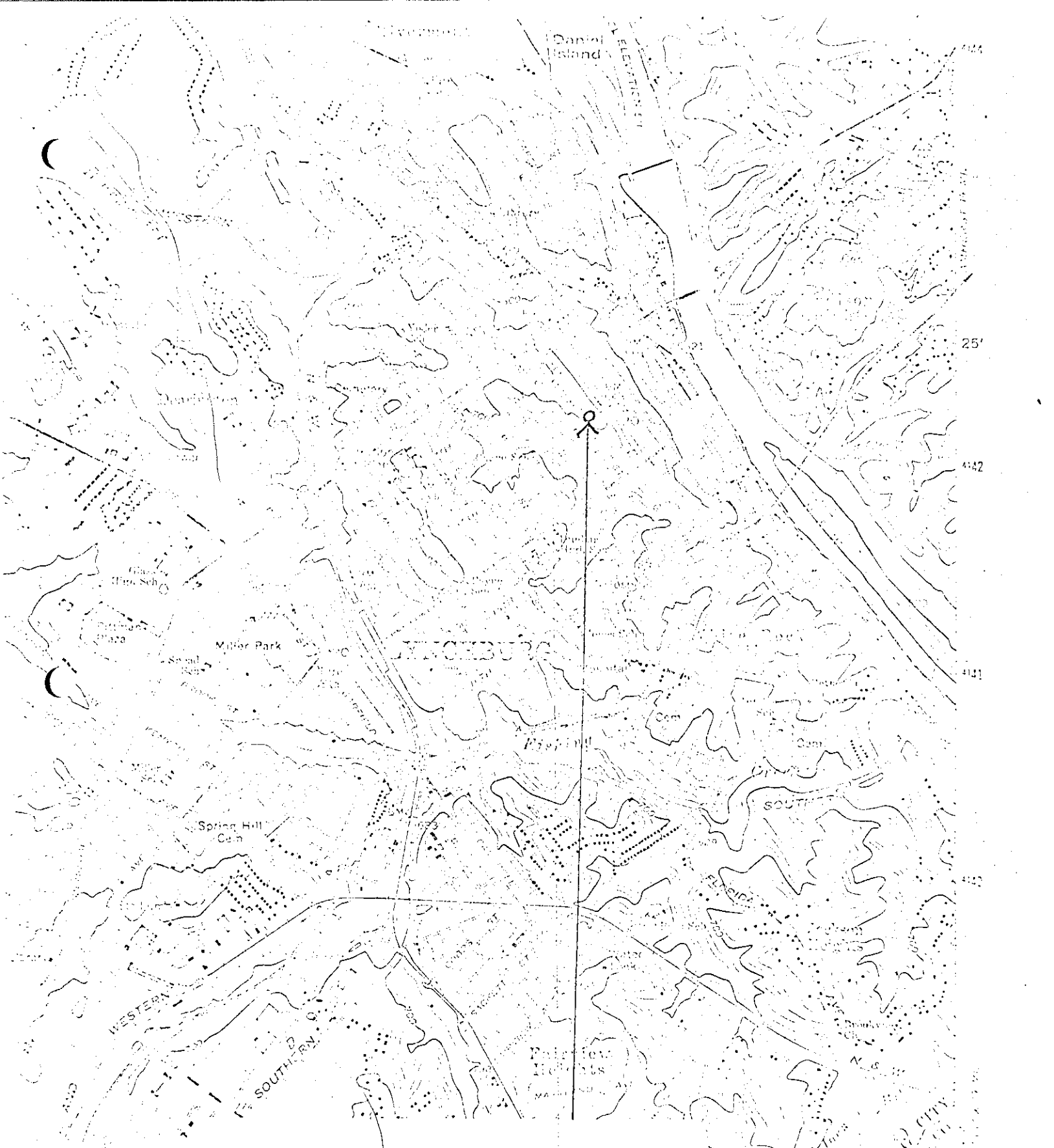
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
 Lynchburg, Va. 1963

LYNCHBURG COURT HOUSE  
 latitude                      longitude  
 37°24'49"                      79°08'40"

0 50 100

1:24,000

7