

VLR-4/17/73 NRHP-5/17/73

Form 10-300  
(Rev. 6-72)

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: Nelson
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Nelson County Courthouse

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 56.  
East side of Route 29, .3 Miles North of Intersection with Route

CITY OR TOWN: Lovingsston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Seventh

J. Kenneth Robinson

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51

COUNTY: Nelson

CODE: 125

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"/> Buildings <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <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 <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Multiple ownership

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Lovingsston

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Nelson County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Lovingsston

STATE: Virginia

CODE: 51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1941

Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D. C.

CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia

COUNTY: Nelson

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6. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
1957 Federal  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C. Code: 11

7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Nelson County Courthouse, constructed in 1809, was completed under the supervision of George Varnum according to the plan submitted by Shelton Crostwait, one of the justices. The use of a returned arcaded porch on the facade is in the long tradition of town hall type Virginia courthouses. Other examples include King William, Hanover, Charles City, Fairfax and Caroline County Courthouses. A stylistic prototype of the form is the seventeenth century town hall at Blandford, Dorset, England.

The original portion of the courthouse survives in good condition. There are two additions: one of ten feet attached to the rear of the original structure. The other is a large lateral wing across the rear of the first addition, making the building "T" shaped. Both of these additions were constructed in 1940. The original structure was partially remodeled in 1968.

The earliest section of the courthouse is a rectangular, two-story stuccoed brick structure with its main entrance through the center bay of the five-bay arcaded gable-end wall. The overall dimensions of the original portion are forty-two by fifty feet. The low pitched galvanized tin roof is surmounted by a hexagonal cupola set on a rectangular raised pedestal. The cupola has louvered openings and is topped by a steeply pitched pointed roof from which projects a plain lightning rod. A classical modillioned cornice with somewhat small, closely spaced modillions can be found on both side elevations of the original courthouse. A blank lunette graces the gable end. Four windows with six-over-six sash are found on the second story of the facade, while a single window of six-over-six sash is found over the single bay of the arcade in each of the side elevations. The first floor court area has four tall windows of twelve-over-twelve sash. All of the windows are hung with louvered shutters.

The interior of the original portion is one large courtroom with a spectator gallery towards the rear. The balcony is reached by two small stairs constructed against the exterior walls. Two jury rooms located over the arcade lead off this balcony. The gallery is supported on four elongated Tuscan columns and is fronted by a balustrade with molded handrail and turned balusters. Four similar but larger columns are placed equidistant from the four corners of the room to help support the ceiling. The only other motifs in the room are the wainscoting, paneled window reveals and a later aedicule behind the judge's chair which is in the area incorporated into the 1940 ten foot addition. At one time, the entablature of the balcony carried the inscription, "Vitus-Keep God's Commandments-Veritas." The ceiling of the original courtroom was lowered approximately three feet during the 1968 renovation. The additions closely follow the scale and size of the original building.

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7.

There are two outbuildings on the courthouse grounds. To the west of the courthouse stands a small, one-story painted Flemish-bond brick structure with an exterior brick chimney stack. The structure has a tin roof, fine corbeled brick cornice, brick architrave and stone steps.

Immediately to the south of the courthouse is the old clerk's office. The building is a three-bay, one-story painted Flemish bond brick structure with a one-story frame wing. The roof is tin and there are two interior brick chimney stacks. Stone architraves grace the windows and door. The fenestration is of nine-over-six sash.

J.L.F.

8. 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)

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/Philosophy  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | <u>Government</u>                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   | _____   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nelson County Courthouse is an important example of the arcaded-front Virginia courthouse. The arcade is a characteristic feature of Virginia public buildings, and was first employed in the Capitol at Williamsburg. The precedent for this architectural feature is found in the early town halls of England. Like the Fairfax County Courthouse of 1799, the Nelson Courthouse is significant as a transition from the one-story arcaded-front colonial courthouse typified by those of Hanover and King William Counties, to the later, two-story Roman Revival examples such as the Madison and Page County Courthouses.

Erected in 1810, the courthouse was the first public building to be built after Nelson County's organization. The county was formed in 1807 from Amherst County, and was named for Thomas Nelson, Governor of Virginia in 1781. The county's act of establishment provided for the appointment of commissioners to select a permanent seat of justice. The commissioner's initial selection proved to be unacceptable and by an act of December 31, 1808, the permanent location of the courthouse was established at a place near James Loving's spring, on the south side of Loving's Gap. The erection of the necessary public building was begun soon afterward. Court was held in the old courthouse of the former Amherst County near Cabelsville (now Colleen) through the January term of 1810, and the first court was held in the new courthouse at what was to become Lovingson on February 26, 1810. The court has met continuously in this structure ever since.

In front of the courthouse stands the original County Clerk's Office which was erected soon after the courthouse. This building was abandoned as a clerk's office in 1838 and the second jail, the one-story building to the north of the courthouse and now occupied by the County Agent and the Public Welfare Board, was converted into the clerk's office. In June, 1844, the old clerk's office was leased in perpetuity to Serling Claiborne who in 1853 sold the same to Robert Whitehead, Sr. The frame addition on the west end of the original brick structure was erected in 1940.

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8.

The location of the first jail is unknown. The third jail, erected in 1836 or 1837, was torn down in the year 1936, and the present jail was constructed in that year.

J.L.F.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Courthouses of Amherst & Nelson Counties," Virginia Cavalcade, Autumn 1968.  
 Nelson County 150th Anniversary, Board of Supervisors, 1957.  
 Whiffen, Marcus, "The Early County Courthouses of Virginia," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, March 1959.  
 Whitehead, Sallie Carter, "Nelson County," Virginia and the Virginia County, July 1951.  
 Files of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

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 ° 45' 35"	78 ° 52' 10"	
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
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

March, 1973

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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Director  
 Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

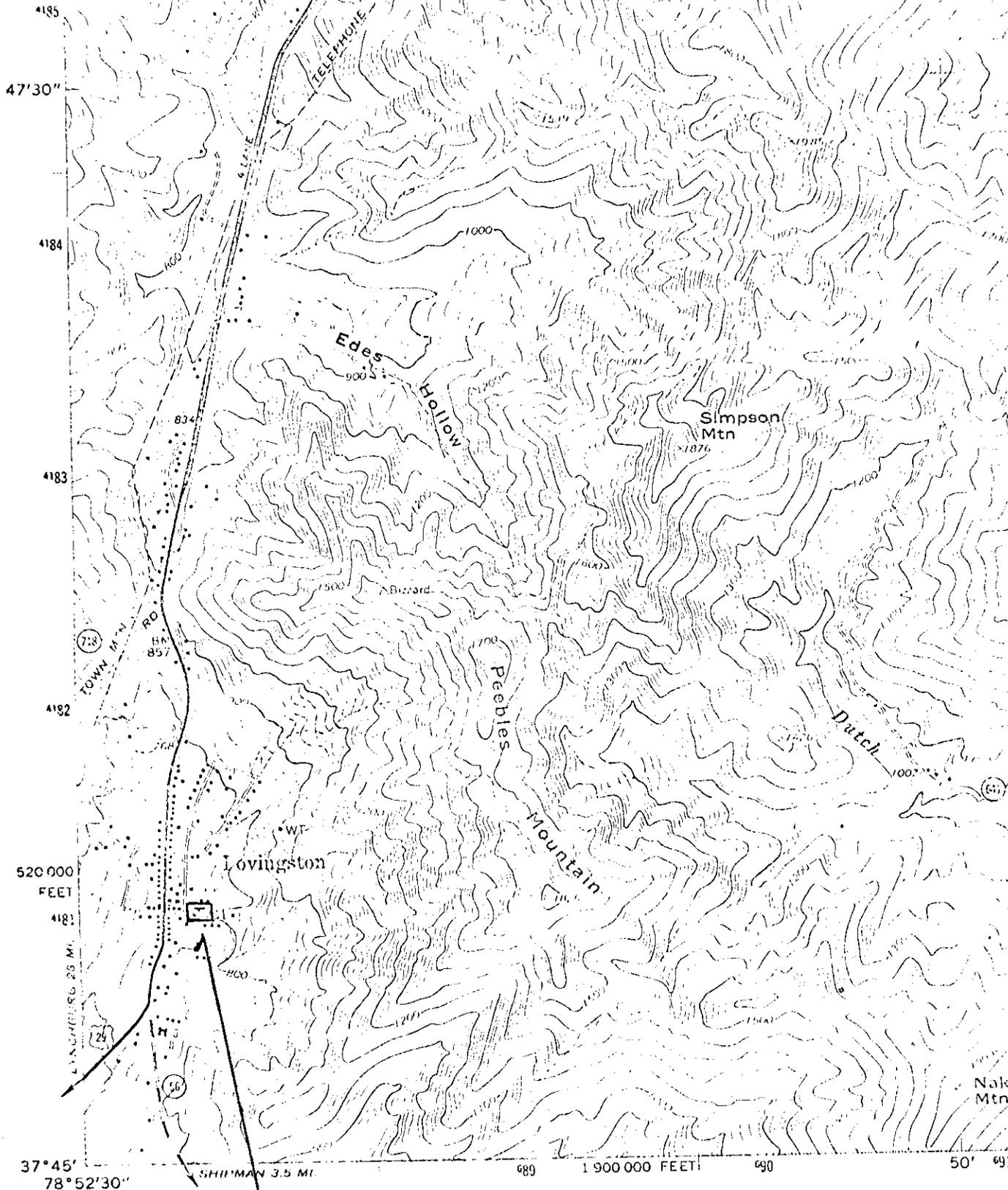
Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

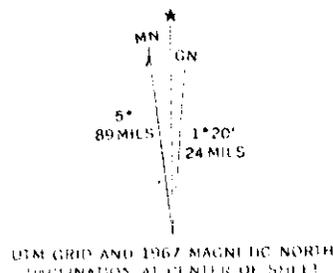
Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
 Lovington, Va. 1967

Nelson County Courthouse  
 latitude 37°45'35"  
 longitude 78°52'10"



UTM GRID AND 1967 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

P/MA/ 1:62,500  
 5259 III