

VLR-10/21/80 NRHP-3/2/81

329-1

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

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wise County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Route 640 not for publication

city, town Wise vicinity of Ninth congressional district (William C. Wampler)

state Virginia code 51 county Wise code 195

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"/> working progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Wise County, C/o Chairman, Board of Supervisors

street & number P. O. Box 570

city, town Wise state Virginia Zip Code 24293

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wise County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Wise state Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys (2) (See Continuation Sheet #1)

title (1) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1958 federal state county local

depository for survey records Library of Congress

city, town Washington state D.C.

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Wise County Courthouse is located on the main street of Wise in the heart of the Commonwealth's coal mining country. The 2½-story Renaissance Revival-style building was built in 1896 by the local contractors Gilliam and Flanary after the designs of the Washington architect Frank P. Milburn. The building consists of a central pavilion flanked on the main (north) elevation by a clock tower to the east and a bell tower to the west. A two-story clerk's office, also in the Renaissance Revival style, was added to the west of the building in 1920. A modern wing was also added to the south of the structure in 1979-80.

The courthouse is distinguished by fine brickwork and stonework. The first story consists of rusticated brickwork on a rough-cut limestone foundation. A string course of corbeled brick separates the first and second stories. The second story has projecting brick pilasters, pressed-brick arched window heads and raised-brick quoining. A pressed-brick cornice ornaments the towers, while an entablature with dentils and modillions is used elsewhere. The east and west pavilions have elaborate pedimented parapets that contain Neo-Classical-style garlands and swags.

The main entrance is located within a projecting one-story central pavilion on the north elevation. The entrance consists of a semicircular, rough-cut limestone arch that frames the original double doors. The entry is sheltered by a limestone portico that consists of unfluted columns with Ionic capitals supporting a stone entablature with the date "1896" carved in the frieze. The portico is topped by a limestone balustrade. Similar entrances are found on the east elevation and main (north) elevation of the clerk's office. The east entrance on the main building lacks the portico.

Fenestration consists of 1/1 hung-sash windows with round-arch and limestone lintel-type heads. The second-story windows have fanlight transoms. A stone balustrade, broken by chimneys, adorns the roof line of the main elevation. Parapet walls are found on the remaining elevations. Both the main building and clerk's office are covered by hipped roofs.

The first-floor plan remains in a relatively unaltered state of preservation. The focal point of the first floor is an open-well stair in the central entrance hall. The stair is executed in cast iron and has a classicized newel in the form of a fluted column with an Ionic capital, an iron railing with fanciful scrolled decoration and applied anthemion ornamentation, and open-work treads also executed in cast iron. The hall retains its original pressed-tin ceiling. A wooden matchboard wainscot runs the perimeter of the hall. The remaining space on the first floor is divided into offices which retain their original pressed-tin ceilings. The second floor was substantially altered for the inclusion of a new courtroom.

The new addition to the rear (south) of the main building is scheduled to be completed this year. Although executed in a wholly undistinguished functional style, efforts have been made to echo some of the detailing of the courthouse by inserting corbeling in the brick panels.

The courthouse is set in a small square containing a few trees and shrubs and sections of lawn. The elaborate building contrasts with its plain neighbors in the modest community and is set off by the surrounding hills and mountains. The original stone wall still graces the front of the courthouse lot.

RCC

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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

Specific dates 1896 **Builder/Architect** Frank P. Milburn, Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Statement of Significance

The architecturally elaborate Wise County Courthouse, a prominent landmark in the center of Wise, is symbolic of the county's prosperity in the 1890s resulting from the expansion of the railroads and increased mining of coal in southwestern Virginia. A rare use of the Renaissance Revival style for a Virginia courthouse, the building was completed in 1896 after the plans of the Washington, D.C., architect Frank P. Milburn. It is the third courthouse to serve the county.

Historical Background

Wise County was formed from parts of Lee, Scott, and Russell counties in 1856. It was directed that the county seat be located on the land of Daniel Ramey with the town to be called "Gladeville." The first meeting place of the court was the little Primitive Baptist Church located 300 yards from the present courthouse. The building was so small that the jury was forced to retire to a nearby flat rock, called "jury rock." In 1857 an order was issued for a courthouse to be built of hewn logs, 30' square and two stories in height. Federal troops burned the new courthouse in 1864, and the court temporarily met in the Virginia Hotel on the site of the present Wise Inn. Fortunately, the county records escaped damage. The second courthouse was constructed of brick in 1876.

One of the most famous cases heard by the Wise County Court was that of the Pound Massacre. In 1892 Dr. M. B. Taylor, known as the "Red Fox of the Mountains," was tried for killing five members of the Mullins family because of a longstanding grudge. That Taylor was a preacher as well as a medical doctor heightened public interest in the trial.

The 1890s were a boom period for Wise County due to the increased production of coal and coke to feed the steel mills of the northeast. The railroad expanded accordingly, and the county's working population increased sharply. It was at the height of the boom period that the county erected the present courthouse and changed the name of the town from "Gladeville" to "Wise." Frank P. Milburn of Washington served as the architect, while the local firm of Gilliam and Flanary were the contractors, completing construction in 1896. Milburn designed a number of other Virginia landmarks including the Grayson County Courthouse and the Danville Railroad Station. The Wise County Courthouse is his most imposing work in the Renaissance Revival style.

The Renaissance Revival style had proved popular in public building in the northeast in the 1880s and 1890s. Very much a part of 19th-century eclecticism, the style began as a reaction to the more florid High Victorian Italianate and Gothic styles as they had become manifest by the third quarter of the century. The Wise County Courthouse incorporates a number of features that have become identified with the style, most notably the rusticated first story, imposing bell and clock towers, and Renaissance architectural detailing on the facade.

There were several concerted efforts to change the location of the courthouse from Wise to other sites in the county. The most vociferous advocates of change---the Norton Land

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
			<input type="checkbox"/> science
			<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
			humanitarian
			<input type="checkbox"/> theater
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1890 **Builder/Architect** Clinch Valley Coal & Iron/Unknown

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

With its construction in 1890 tied to the founding of Richlands, the Williams House is this Southwest Virginia town's most historically important house. The building was one of the first to be built in Richlands and served as the main office of the investment group that planned and founded the town. The building's architecture is testimony to the grand dreams of that group; its oversized windows and other architectural features were commensurate with their intention to make Richlands the Pittsburgh of the South. The building was later used as the first hospital in Richlands and was associated with one of the more prominent people in Richlands's history, Dr. W.R. Williams.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the area known as Richlands contained only a few farms and a small village. In the 1880s, however, the nearby coalfields of Pocahontas, Virginia were opened up, and soon the coal lands surrounding Richlands began to attract attention. A group of Philadelphia businessmen, led by banker Evans R. Dick, descended on the region in the late 1880s and began the development of a new coke and iron-manufacturing town. The Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company was organized in 1887 by these businessmen to act as their principal operating agency. Plats for the new town were recorded in the Tazewell County Courthouse in May of 1890 and construction began immediately.

One of the first buildings to be erected in Richlands in 1890, the present Williams House was originally a three-story office building for the Clinch Valley Coal and Iron Company that reportedly cost \$7,500 to construct. In fact, the small oval window next to the front door of the Williams House once served as the pay window for the company.

Richlands was incorporated in 1892, but the town's boom days did not last long. A financial depression in 1893-1894 forced the northern financial backers of the town

9. Major Bibliographical References

Addington, Luther F. The Story of Wise County. 1956.
 Johnson, Charles A. A Narrative History of Wise County, Virginia. Norton, Va. 1938.
 Wise County Order Books 1, p.3; 2, pp. 210-11.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1 acre
 Quadrangle name Wise Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>7</u>	<u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>0</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification Bounded on the NE by State Route 640, on the SE by Route T711, on the SW by Route T1416, and on the NW by Route T1404, thus encompassing the block containing the courthouse and adjacent clerk's office.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff
 organization Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date October 1980
 street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144
 city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

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 [Signature]
 Tucker Hill, Executive Director
 title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date OCT 21 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

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Wise County Courthouse, Wise County, Virginia

CONTINUATION SHEET

#1

ITEM NUMBER 6, 7, 8 PAGE 1

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

- (2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey
1967, 1975, 1980 State
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

7. DESCRIPTION - BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property consists of one acre, which includes the courthouse and the adjacent clerk's office and is defined by the block on which the buildings sit.

8. SIGNIFICANCE:

and Improvement Company joined by the railroad companies and citizens of Norton--- complained that Wise was not situated on a railroad. The passage of a large highway bond issue in 1911 assured easier access to the town so that efforts to move the county seat were finally abandoned. The clerk's office was added to the original courthouse in 1920, and a modern wing was added to the rear in 1979-80.

MTP/RCC

4458 II SW
(FLAT GAP 186-SW)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES
TENNESSEE VI
MAPPING SE
44
(POU)

