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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Old Clay County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Clay

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

West Virginia

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

54

COUNTY

Clay

CODE

015

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Clay County Commission

STREET & NUMBER

New Courthouse, Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Clay

STATE

West Virginia

\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New Clay County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Clay

STATE

West Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

## CHECK ONE

## CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Frank L. Packard, architect of the Clay County Courthouse at Clay, West Virginia, designed numerous public buildings in Ohio and West Virginia during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries. Packard had a partner, Joseph Yost, of Columbus, Ohio, for most of the decade of 1890s. The Clay County Courthouse, erected in 1902, was thus one of the early buildings planned by Packard in his career as an independent professional. Though its dimensions are modest in comparison with other known Packard designed buildings in West Virginia, such as the Marion County Courthouse at Fairmont and the Parkersburg High School, the Clay County Courthouse is significant nevertheless, as an example of early 20th century public architecture in a small town setting.

The courthouse stands on a hill overlooking much of the community of Clay. Its refined, subtle ornamentation, and highly symmetrical plan offer a visual complement to the community with its similarly utilitarian buildings. The local landmark quality of the courthouse is further evinced by an integrity that has not been compromised with significant exterior or interior alterations over the past three quarters of a century.

Eclecticism of the early 20th century is evident in the architect's choice of style elements. The classical theme is perhaps most clearly defined in the broken pediment and coupled Roman Doric columns that form a small portico-front-piece about the building's arched entrance. The domed cupola surmounting the hipped roof with deck duplicates the coupled column theme on each of its four sides. The Beaux Arts classicism is typical of this period. Other classical notes include the dentiled cornice with modillions beneath the broken pediment of the entrance, and the repetition of this theme in the cornices of the building and cupola. The deck balustrade and matching roof balustrade have disappeared.

The Clay County Courthouse is a square building whose three central bays on each elevation are flanked with shallow single-bay setbacks. A raised, rock-face limestone basement complements the rustication of the building's first story. The pressed blond brick facade is divided between the floors with a rock-face beltcourse. The flatheaded windows with ornamental flat brick arches at the first level are in contrast to the arched windows of the second. Especially fine brickwork is seen in the arches of the second floor windows that are set within shallow recessed panels.

The most interesting of the interior features are the three fireplaces at the rear of the courtroom whose separate flues rise in a spectacular composite chimney at the rear of the building. Two unobtrusive subsidiary brick buildings erected at the time of the courthouse construction are seen at the rear of the building.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1902 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank L. Packard, Architect

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Standing atop the highest hill in the County seat of Clay, West Virginia, the Old Clay County Courthouse easily dominates the view of the town's main street, as it has the affairs of the community since its erection (on the same spot as the original courthouse) in 1902.

Clay County was organized on March 29, 1858, from land taken from Braxton and Nicholas County and named in honor of the Kentucky statesman, Henry Clay. The County Seat went through a variety of changes, being first designated by the Virginia Assembly as the Town of Marshall, in honor of Virginia's great Chief Justice, John Marshall. In 1863, when the legislature of the newly created West Virginia changed the name to Henry (again, for Henry Clay), the town had its second name. Throughout this entire period, however, the town was generally referred to as Clay Courthouse and the United States Post Office was called Clay. Finally, in 1927, the name was officially changed to Clay, its third and present designation.

The County Court first met at the home of B.W. Byrne in what was then Marshall. The Court continued to meet at irregular places and in make-shift surroundings until 1865 when a large courthouse and a hewn-log building for the County Clerk were constructed. These structures continued to serve as the seat of county government until 1902, when the new courthouse was erected. An interesting anecdote is connected with the demolition of the old, and the building of the new courthouse. It seems the stones for the new courthouse were being quarried quite close to the old structure and during the quarrying, several large boulders broke loose and rolled through the old courthouse, partially demolishing the structure; thus the old made way for the new.

Aside from serving as the administrative center for Clay County since 1902, the courthouse has been the scene of several noteworthy events in the history of the County. Three very memorable trials in the county's history were held at the Courthouse; the Sarah Ann Legg trial in 1905, the Booger Hole trial of 1917, and the Roscoe Bail trial in 1953.

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

OLD CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CLAY, CLAY COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

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The first named trial was notable as the first trial of a woman for murder in Clay County history. Mrs. Legg, accused of murdering her husband, was acquitted in what was a widely publicized trial.

The Booger Hole trial of 1917 (so-named for the small community of Booger Hole nearby) is famous not so much for the principal participants, victims and murderers, but in the public's reaction to it. An angry mob of local citizens surrounded the courthouse and made an effort to lynch the father and son who were being held for the murder. Only the strenuous oratorical efforts of the County's prosecutor kept the courthouse from becoming the scene of an illegal hanging.

The famous 1953 Roscoe Bail trial was a direct result of the Great Widen Coal Strike, often referred to as the "last of the mine wars". Bail, a striker, was accused and convicted of killing a mine guard at a time when passions on both sides were running high. Bail's appeal for a new trial was granted, but he was killed before it took place.

The Clay County Courthouse has served as the focal point for the political, social and cultural life of Clay County for 76 years, and the location for 110 years.

Designed by the regionally prominent architect, Frank L. Packard, in 1902, it was one of the first of several fine public buildings that Packard designed after the beginning of his independent career, and stands as an excellent example of turn-of-the-century eclectic architecture placed in a small community environment. In recognition of its importance to the community, the County has designated that it continue to be maintained, and it now serves (since the opening of the new Courthouse across the street on September 23, 1978) as the offices for County magistrates and the county extension agent.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hickory and Ladyslipper, the Life and History of Clay County People, edited by J.D. Stover, 1977. Interview with Jerry D. Stover, Clay County Historian, October 20, 1978.

Johnson, Skip, "Old Courthouse Holds Big Spot in Clay County History" - The Charleston Gazette, September 16, 1978.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One Acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Clay

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 17 49,27,2,0 4,25,66,6,0

B               

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The Clay County Courthouse is located on tax lot #30 in the center of Clay on Main Street (WV Rt. 16) on a hill overlooking the community and new courthouse. The nominated property includes only the courthouse and land fronting upon the building extending to Main Street. (Clay Corporation Map #5, Office of the Assessor, Clay, Clay County, West

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES Virginia, 2-5-65)

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael J. Pauley, Historian; Rodney Collins, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Department of Culture and History

Historic Preservation Unit

STREET & NUMBER

The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex

CITY OR TOWN

Charelston

DATE

October 27, 1978

TELEPHONE

304 348-0244

STATE

West Virginia 25305

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE X

LOCAL X

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Clarence Morrow*

1-16-79

TITLE

DATE

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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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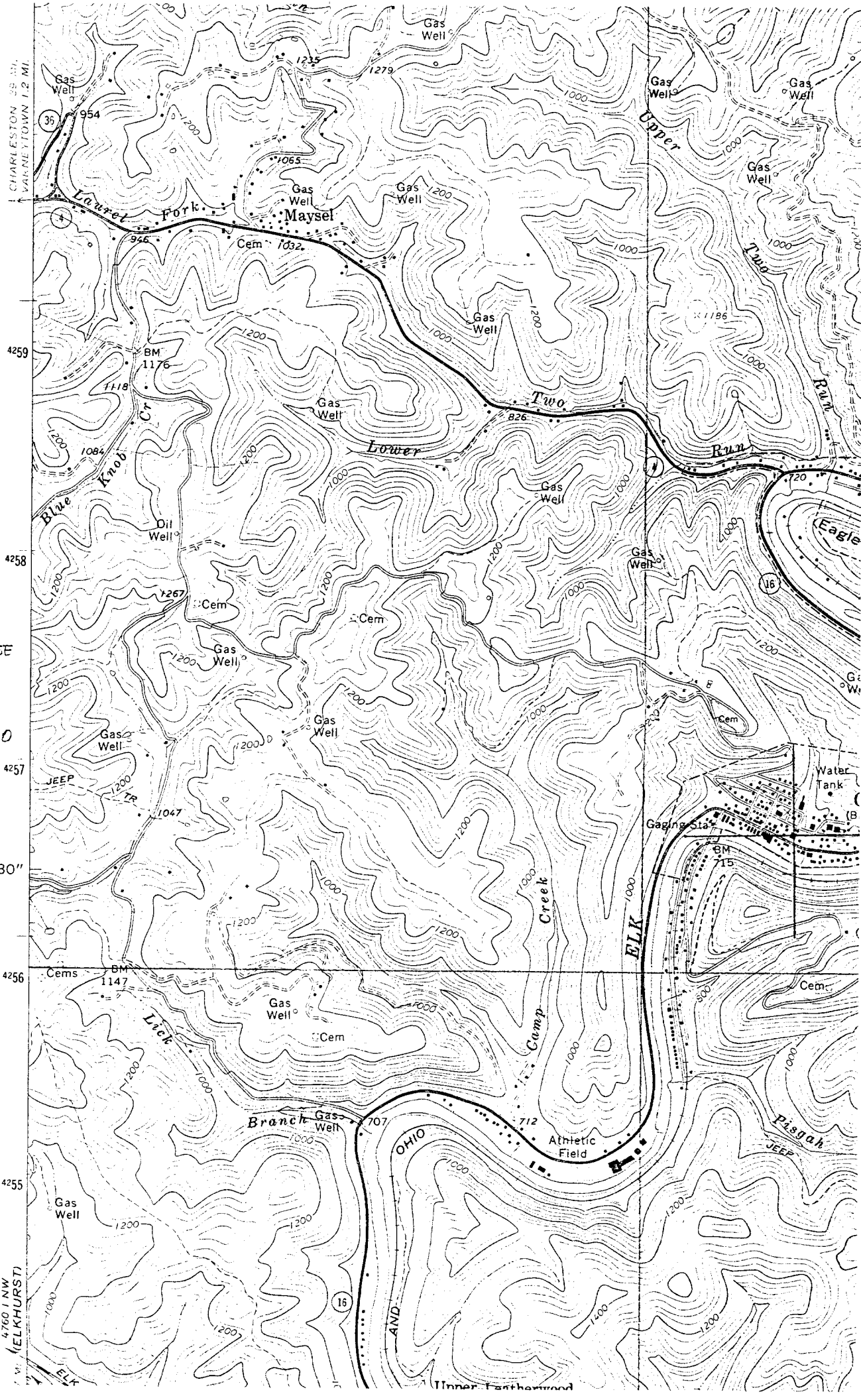
OLD CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE, CLAY, WEST VIRGINIA

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National Society of Colonial Dames, Historic Activities Committee,  
West Virginia Counties and Courthouses, 1972.

Williams, Chambers, "June 1 Target Date for Clay County's New  
Courthouse" - The Charleston Daily Mail, April 10, 1978.



OLD  
CLAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
CLAY, CLAY COUNTY,  
N VIRGINIA

17/492 720/4256 660

CLAY QUAD.  
7.5 MIN.

27°30"

4256

4255

CHARLESTON 29 34  
VIRGINIA TOWN 1.2 MI

4760 1 NW  
(ELKHURST)

16

16

Inner Eastwood

