

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

30
For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic SOMERSET COUNTY COURTHOUSE

and/or common

2. Location

street & number East Union Street / North Center Avenue not for publication

city, town Somerset vicinity of congressional district 12

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Somerset code 111

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name County of Somerset

street & number Courthouse, East Union Street & North Center Avenue

city, town Somerset vicinity of state Pennsylvania 15501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Somerset County Courthouse

street & number East Union Street & North Center Avenue

city, town Somerset state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Somerset County
title Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 6-28-78 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historical & Genealogical Society of Somerset County

city, town Somerset state Pennsylvania

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 Somerset County Courthouse was constructed in 1904-06 by Caldwell and Drake of Columbus, Indiana, following plans prepared by J.C. Fulton, architect from Uniontown, Pa. The architectural style of the Courthouse is Classical Renaissance Revival; the exterior is constructed of Indiana limestone with a native sandstone foundation, and the interior is decorated with Italian and Georgian marble.

The exterior of the Courthouse is 135' high and approx. 146' by 112' at the base. The structure rises 2 stories and is topped with a balustrade, a terra cotta tile roof, and a copper dome, which is patterned after St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England. The dome rests on a central tower which is adorned with 4 clocks and with 4 pediments, each of which is supported by 4 unfluted columns; the dome is capped with copper cupola and a copper weathervane. A semicircular portico, supported by 4, unfluted Corinthian capital columns, dominates the south face of the building on East Union Street. This side of the building contains 15 rectangular windows, 2 circular windows (on the second floor), and 3 large doorways containing double doors with glass panels. The west face of the building on North Center Avenue has a rectangular portico with 6 columns (identical to the other 4 columns) supporting a pediment that interrupts the balustrade. This side of the building contains 27 rectangular windows, one circular window (in the pediment), and one large doorway containing double doors with glass panels. The north face of the building contains 33 windows, 11 on each level: basement, first, and second floors (5 windows on the second floor have arched tops); no entry exists on the north side. The east face of the building has 28 windows (basement: 8, first floor: 10, second floor: 10) and doorways on the basement and first floor levels. The north and east faces have no porticoes in consideration of future expansion; the south and west porticoes are fronted with steps leading to doorways at the first floor level.

The interior of the Courthouse contains a large, central, open staircase, which rises in 3 directions from the first floor to a mid-story landing and, thence, in two directions to the second floor. The staircase railings are walnut; the balusters and staircase posts are ornate, bronze-toned, cast steel. A candelabrum with 9 electric lights sits atop each of the 4 staircaseposts. Surrounding the staircase, 12 marble-paneled columns rising from the first floor level to an upper level balcony above the second floor, support arches upon which rests the stained-glass dome. The dome contains 12, leaded, stained-glass panels, which are protected outside by the main exterior copper dome. The columns separate the staircase from hallways leading to county government offices on the first floor and to two courtrooms on the 2nd floor. The courtroom repeat the exterior decor including columns, cornice, and pediment.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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

Builder/Architect

Caldwell & Drake/J. C. Fulton

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Somerset County Courthouse is a fine, ornate example of an ornate classical Renaissance Revival style public building.

Three Courthouses, completed in the years 1801, 1853, and 1907, have stood on the elevated site deeded to Somerset County by Adam Schneider in 1795. The present Courthouse, prominent in the skyline of the Borough of Somerset, stands at 2,190' above sea level—the greatest altitude among courthouses in Pennsylvania. Representing a peak of the mountains from which it rises, it is visible from all directions and serves as a point of reference, geographically and historically.

The elegant and permanent form of the Courthouse illustrates the vision of the architect and the craftsmanship of the builder. The heavy sandstone foundation bears a structure which rises through decorative marble, bronze, and walnut to a bright and spacious stained glass dome, surmounted with a weathervane in tune with the lightest breeze. The progression from solidarity to flexibility—from earth to sky—complements the location of the Courthouse atop the Alleghenies and preserves an appropriate atmosphere for judicial activity which rests in a firm Constitution and responds to the varying elements of human circumstance. The architectural features - the Grand Staircase, the quietly dignified courtrooms, the columned porticoes and balustrades, and the stately domed tower - distinguish the material of the Courthouse and combine elegance with permanence, bringing life to the form.

The Somerset County Courthouse rises nobly in the mountains of southwestern Pennsylvania; its topographical prominence highlights the grace of its design and the stature of its activity. Representing a unique integration of location, form, and function, the Courthouse signifies movement toward integrity and exemplifies this movement in its presence, its bearing, and its conduct of civil affairs.

SEARCHED INDEXED
SERIALIZED FILED

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Somerset, PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	7	6	6	4	0	4	0	4	4	3	1	0	3	9	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

B

Zone	Easting				Northing										

C

Zone	Easting				Northing										

D

Zone	Easting				Northing										

E

Zone	Easting				Northing										

F

Zone	Easting				Northing										

G

Zone	Easting				Northing										

H

Zone	Easting				Northing										

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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 William R. Gross and Herbert Berman

Historical and Genealogical

organization Society of Somerset County

date

street & number P. O. Box 533

telephone 814-445-6077

city or town Somerset

state Pennsylvania 15501

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

ED WEINTRAUB, Director

title Office of Historic Preservation

date 3/10/80

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

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

SOMERSET COUNTY COURTHOUSE

CONTINUATION SHEET

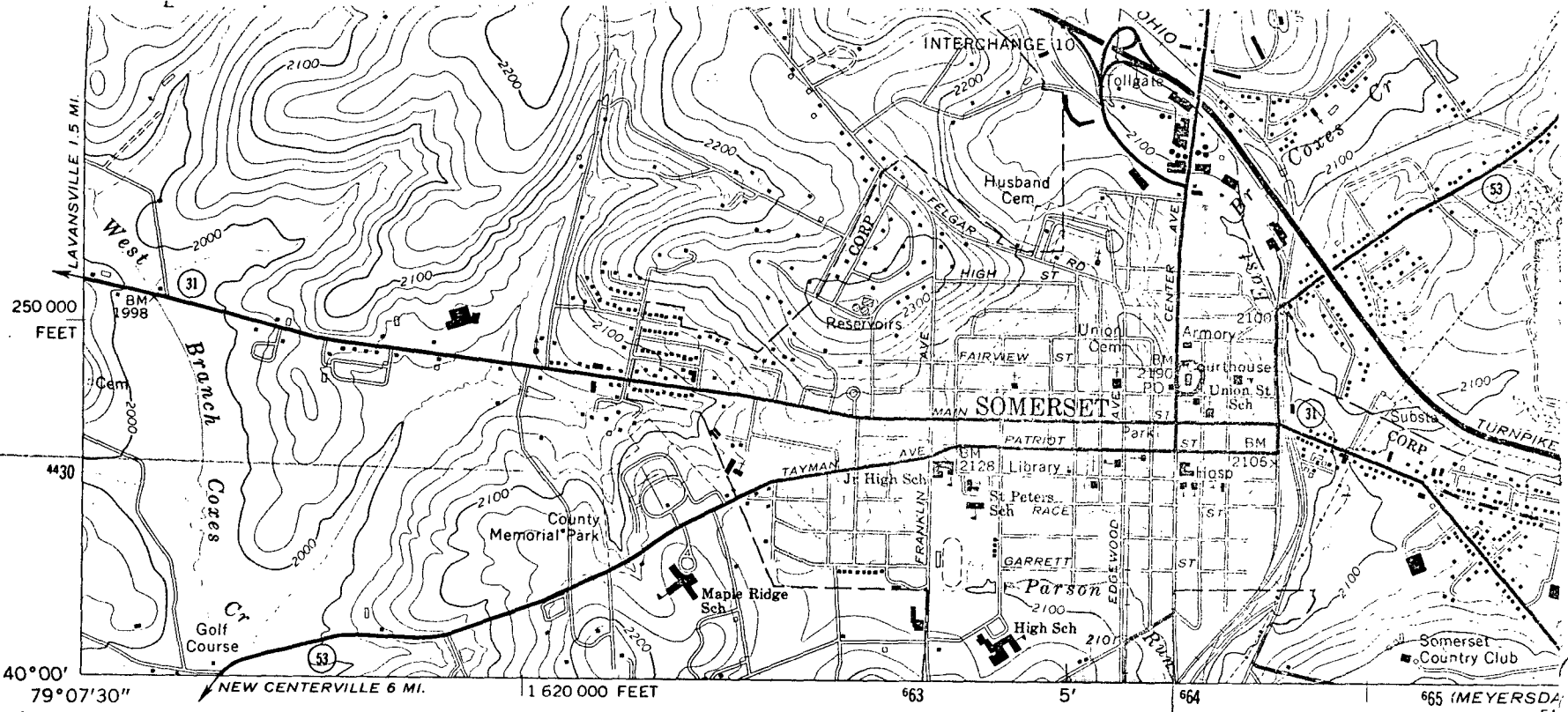
ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Archambault, A. Margareta (ed.). A Guidebook of Art, Architecture, and Historic Interests in Pa. Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1924.

Matthews, Archibald M. "The Somerset County Courthouse is Superior." Laurel Messenger, XIX, No. 1 (February 1978): 1-3.

Sanner, Robert G. Sketches of Somerset. Berlin, Pa.: Berlin Publishing Company, 1954.

Sesquicentennial Committee, The Somerset Sesquicentennial. Pittsburgh: W. C. Johnston Company, 1954.



1:62 500
(MEYERSDALE)
51631

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

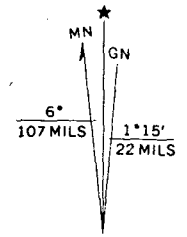
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1967. Field checked 1967

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone

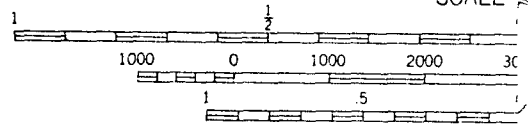
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown



UTM GRID AND 1967 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



SCALE

CONTOUR INTERVAL
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACT
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS