

VLR-6/15/82 NRHP-10/26/82

**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 Augusta County Courthouse

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street & number 1 East Johnson Street  
(NE Corner South Augusta & East Johnson streets) N/A not for publication

city, town Staunton N/A vicinity of 6th congressional district M. Caldwell Butler

state Virginia code 51 county (City) code 790

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name County of Augusta; c/o Chairman, Board of Supervisors

street & number P.O. Box 448

city, town Staunton N/A vicinity of state Virginia 24401

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Staunton City Hall; Office of the Clerk of Circuit Court

street & number 109-113 East Beverley Street

city, town Staunton state Virginia 24401

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys** (2) & (3) (See Continuation Sheet #4)

(1) Historic Staunton Foundation  
title Architectural Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date April 1976 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Historic Staunton Foundation office

city, town Staunton state Virginia 24401

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Augusta County Courthouse in Staunton, Virginia, is located on the northeast corner of Augusta and Johnson streets, in the heart of the city's historic downtown. Built in 1901, the two-story, red brick structure is the fifth courthouse on this same site. It is dominated by a two-story pedimented central portico flanked by wings on either side. The handsome courthouse is further enhanced by profuse terra-cotta ornamentation on the pediments and column capitals, and the roof is topped by a domed cupola with a bronze statue of Justice. Elements of both the Beaux-Arts and Neo-Classical Revival styles are combined in the design by local architect T.J. Collins. In 1939 the courthouse underwent an alteration to the rear and some interior modernization, but the overall integrity of this historic structure remains undiminished.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The Augusta County Courthouse is built of red pressed brick laid in stretcher bond on a raised foundation of coursed limestone blocks. The symmetrical two-story facade consists of a four-bay central pavilion flanked by single-bay wings connected to the pavilion by single-bay hyphens. Dominating the facade is the pavilion's two-story pedimented portico which is supported by yellow pressed-brick columns with Composite capitals of terra cotta. Yellow brick Composite pilasters define the bays of the wings and hyphens. Both the columns and pilasters rest on square pedestals of yellow brick. A stone belt course surrounds the entire building just above the foundation. The two entrances are located not in the central pavilion but rather in the two hyphens, and a set of granolithic steps leads up to the entrances and portico.

The columns and pilasters support an enriched three-part entablature with a molded architrave, rinceau-patterned frieze, and a cornice with dentils. This entablature, made of galvanized iron,<sup>1</sup> surrounds the main building as well as the portico. Under the eaves, modillion blocks alternate with rosettes. The ceiling under the portico is of pressed-metal panels. There are eight pediments -- three on the facade (including the projecting one of the portico), one on each side wall, and three on the rear elevation. All are richly decorated with panels of terra cotta in deep relief. The large main tympanum of the portico features a central cartouche surrounded by cornucopias, animal heads, rosettes, and foliated scrolls, and it is similar to the main rear tympanum. The other six tympanums are smaller and have fruited urns surrounded by foliated scrolls.

The complex gable metal<sup>2</sup> roof is painted silver, and there is a corbeled chimney in each of the flanking wings. In the center of the roof, the domed cupola rises from a base of Composite pilasters that alternate with rectangular molded panels to support a rinceau frieze and a cornice with modillion blocks and dentils. The main dome has a ribbed metal roof, also painted silver, and is topped by a much smaller dome on Ionic columns. Atop this small dome is a bronze statue of Justice, draped in cloth and holding a set of scales and a sword. She is very similar to the statue of Collins's Rockingham County Courthouse.

The window openings throughout have double-hung sash with 1/1 lights that are set into slightly recessed two-story niches. The facade's first floor has six rectangular

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1900-1901

Builder/Architect T.J. Collins

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Augusta County Courthouse in Staunton, Virginia, is one of that community's most important structures. Its location is the site of all the county's courthouses since the first one was built in 1745. Its imposing architectural design represents the prominent local architect T.J. Collins's interpretation of the florid Classicism popular at the turn of the century. The building also functions as the symbol of local law and civil authority and as the center of social and political activity in the tradition of Virginia's county courthouses. Finally, the courthouse houses irreplaceable records of births, deaths, land transactions, and wills that date back to colonial times, a number of portraits of Virginia's men of law, and one of the original stones that marked the bounds of Sir William Beverley's 1736 land grant.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When Augusta County was created from Orange County in 1738 by an act of the General Assembly, its boundaries stretched from the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east to the Mississippi River on the west.<sup>1</sup> Seven years passed before the governor of Virginia granted full authority to the fledgling county, during which time records continued to be kept at Orange. In 1745 the first Augusta County Courthouse was erected on land given by Sir William Beverley. This crude log structure, built on the southwest corner of the present lot, was the first of five<sup>2</sup> courthouses to be built on the same site, giving the grounds of the present building great historical value.

By the turn of this century, the fourth courthouse, of Greek Revival design (1836), had been outgrown and was replaced by the present building.<sup>3</sup> Local architect T.J. Collins was commissioned to design the new structure and his 1900-01 design revealed a marked change from his earlier works: "By 1900 Collins was experiencing the growing influence of the Beaux-Arts movement, and his designs after this date show a definite break from the earlier imprint of H.H. Richardson."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the work represents a local interpretation of the revolutionary changes occurring in architectural styles and tastes throughout the country at this time. The design combines elements from the Beaux-Arts and the Neo-Classical Revival styles, both considered appropriate for public buildings. While the design is somewhat provincial, the final result is an impressive small-town courthouse that effectively conveys the strength of authority and the history of civil law in the community.

In the past, courthouses functioned as community centers for news and as general meeting places. Although, with today's improved communications, these needs have been met in other ways, the courthouse is still the focal point for the area's legal profession, and it is dominated by the large circuit courtroom in which the day-to-day

## 9. Major Bibliographical References (See Continuation Sheet #4)

Collins, T.J. & Son, Architects. Plans and drawings. 4 North Madison Street, Staunton, Va.  
Frazier, William T. "T.J. Collins: A Local Virginia Architect and his Practice at the Turn of the Century." M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1976.  
Mays, George M. "Courthouse records wide scope." The Staunton Leader (Area Bicentennial Edition), July 2, 1976.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1/2 acre

Quadrangle name Staunton, Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	6	6	8	9	0	0	4	2	2	3	8	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

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D 

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G 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Bounded on the N by Court Place, on the E by the alley to the E, on the S by E. Johnson Street, and on the W by S. Augusta Street (block/lot EE-24, Staunton Assessor's Map #375.) Justification: The bounds have been drawn to encompass only the courthouse building and its immediate grounds.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

## 11. Form Prepared By (1) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

(2) Elizabeth A. Bray, Associate Director 221 Governor Street, Richmond, VA 23219  
name/title (assisted by Ms. Dana M. Flanders, Mary Baldwin College) (804) 786-3144

organization Historic Staunton Foundation date May 1982

street & number P.O. Box 2534 telephone (703) 885-7676

city or town Staunton state Virginia 24401

## 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 *H. Bryan Mitchell*  
H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director  
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

date JUN 15 1982

### For HCERS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

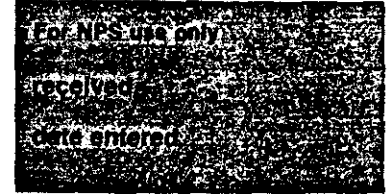
date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STAUNTON, VA



Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1

7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

window openings with smooth stone lintels: one window in each of the two end bays and two sets of paired windows under the portico. The two entrance doors in the connecting hyphen bays have stone lintels, rectangular transoms, and paneled double doors with glass panes. The unusual placement of the doors is due to the location of a large record room in the central pavilion of the courthouse. These entrances lead into hallways on either side of that large room. The eight windows on the second story have round-arched openings with stone hood molds; they are symmetrically placed directly over each of the openings on the first story.

The two side elevations have three bays each and are identical to one another except for a doorway to the basement in the south bay of the east wall. These side walls have the same basic motifs as the facade, including the window openings and ornamentation.

Local architect T.J. Collins was commissioned to design the courthouse for the county of Augusta at the turn of the century.<sup>3</sup> The result was a transitional work for the architect, whose previous designs tended to be influenced by the Richardsonian Romanesque of the late-Victorian era. Elements of the Beaux-Arts and Neo-Classical Revival styles are fused into a design that is simultaneously naive and impressive. The Beaux-Arts characteristics include the central mass dominating the wings, the terra-cotta decoration in deep relief, and the arched and linteled openings set between pilasters. The pedimented portico and individual columns are more characteristics of the Neo-Classical Revival style. In his M.A. thesis on T.J. Collins, William T. Frazier describes the courthouse: "The entire design is a collection of various distinct elements and forms...which reflect the difficulty of Collins working in a new architectural idiom of the period."<sup>4</sup>

In 1939 the rear portico of the courthouse, which was similar to that on the front, was replaced with a brick rear wing. The window framing and brick used in the addition differ slightly from the original portion of the courthouse, but the ornamentation in the pediments and the detailing in the cornices were carefully matched. The rear door is reached through a small covered porch with a round-arched entranceway.

Interior

The first floor has the large record room in the central pavilion and offices in the flanking wings, separated by hallways. The two hallways have floors of grey 12" terrazzo-type tiles bordered with a black-and-beige Greek key design. There are white tiles on the walls to a height of about five feet, above which the walls are painted. The identical staircases in the two halls feature turned balusters and elaborately carved newel posts, all of dark-stained oak. The paneled doors all have glass panes and the framing of all the openings is of the same dark oak. The record room has been altered extensively, and little original detailing remains. This room runs the full length of the courthouse's main block.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

EXP. 10/31/84

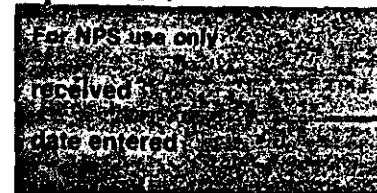
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STAUNTON, VA  
Continuation sheet #2

Item number 7

Page 2



## 7. DESCRIPTION -- Architectural Analysis

The plan of the second floor is similar to that of the first with the exception of a row of small offices along the rear (north) wall. This creates an H-shaped hall surrounded by offices on three sides with the Circuit Courtroom in the center front overlooking the main portico. Flooring throughout the second floor is black-and-brown asbestos tiles. Woodwork is like that on the first floor.

The Circuit Courtroom is decorated in the Georgian Revival style and features paneled wainscoting of natural oak, crown molding, and pediments supported by consoles over the paneled doors. On the rear wall are the four round-arched windows that originally overlooked the rear portico but which now face onto the hallway. Opposite, on the south wall, the four round-arched windows of the facade flank a fifth round-arched niche in the center of the wall, directly behind the oak judge's bench. This niche has an elaborate broken pediment with pineapple motif framing the courthouse's most valuable portrait, that of Chief Justice John Marshall by Robert Matthew Sully. A number of other portraits hang on the courtroom's walls, among them Henry Winston Holt, Alexander H.H. Stuart, A. Caperton Braxton, and Edward Echols, all residents of Staunton at one time. In addition, there are rows of fixed, wooden chairs for the gallery, a patterned acoustical tile ceiling (not original), and two chandeliers of brass and white glass. The dome is not visible from any part of the courthouse interior.

### Grounds

The corner lot of the Augusta County Courthouse fronts approximately 140 feet on East Johnson Street and 150 feet on South Augusta Street (see plat). The front grounds consist of two small patches of lawn separated by a concrete walkway, all slightly elevated from street level by concrete retaining walls. In the center of the walk is a flagpole beneath which used to rest one of the original marker stones of Sir William Beverley's 1736 land grant boundaries. The stone is now in the first-floor record room where it was moved some years ago to protect it from the effects of the weather.

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<sup>1</sup>Architect's records indicate that items for the main cornice and details for the cupola were ordered from an 1893 Mullins catalogue.

<sup>2</sup>Plan originally called for a slate roof. Whether this metal roof is a replacement or whether the original slate was never used is not known.

<sup>3</sup>Architect's drawings are dated February 1901.

<sup>4</sup>William T. Frazier, "T.J. Collins: A Local Virginia Architect and his Practice at the Turn of the Century" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1976), p. 52.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

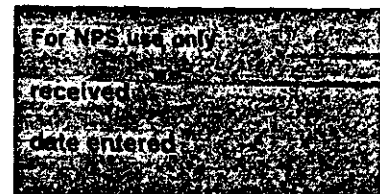
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STAUNTON, VA

Continuation sheet #3

Item number 8

Page 1



8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

judicial business of the county is conducted. Also, the courthouse is surrounded on two sides by buildings housing law offices; many of these have been located there for over a century.

As it contains complete records dating back to the colonial period, the Augusta County Courthouse is also a mecca for people researching family trees, old deeds, and historic buildings. Staunton was fortunate to escape the ravages of the Civil War which beset so many other Southern towns and the completeness of Augusta's records is remarkable. The county at one time encompassed a vast area and "...so many pioneers lived in some part of Augusta before moving westward that ancestors of a large proportion of old U.S. families are mentioned in the various documents kept in the courthouse."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the records, there are a number of portraits of well-known Virginia men of law. By far the most valuable is that of Chief Justice John Marshall by Robert Matthew Sully, commissioned in 1837 for the new courthouse completed the previous year.

Another artifact of note was for many years displayed in front of the courthouse, beneath the flagpole, but was recently brought indoors due to increasing weather damage. In 1908 a stone marker was discovered near the old Kerr home in Augusta County. It was found to be one of the original marker stones placed there 172 years before by a surveying party to mark the point of the first day's surveying of William Beverley's 1736 land grant. Members of that surveying party included Beverley, John and Richard Randolph, John Robinson, and county surveyor Thomas Lewis and his helpers.

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<sup>1</sup>Augusta and Frederick counties, established November 1, 1738, were named for Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his wife, the Princess Augusta. Frederick was the son of George II and father of George III.

<sup>2</sup>There is some debate over the actual number of courthouses that have existed. As final authority, we quote from Joseph A. Waddell's Annals of Augusta County, Appendix, page 534 of the 1902 edition. Waddell was an eyewitness to the building of the present courthouse, and this section of his appendix is quoted verbatim and in its entirety:

The dates inscribed on the corner stone of the present court-house (1745, 1835, and 1901), imply that there have been only three court-house buildings, whereas there have been five, as follows:

1st. A log house built by William Beverley, the patentee of the land in 1745. This was a rude structure, and stood till 1788, having been fitted up for a dwelling, in 1755.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

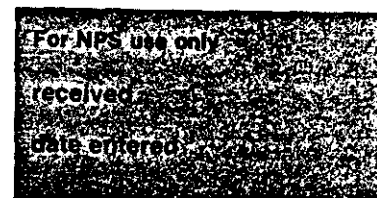
National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, STAUNTON, VA

Continuation sheet #4

Item number 8, 9, 6

Page 2, 1, 1



8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

(Footnotes continued)

2nd. Another log house, near the former, projected in 1752, but not finished till 1755. It is presumed that this house was more commodious than the first; at any rate it had a chimney and fire place.

3rd. A stone house two stories high, completed in the Fall of 1789, and used till 1836.

4th. A brick house with wings for clerks' offices, etc., and stately columns in front, but not architecturally correct; begun in January, 1835, and first occupied in June, 1836. Taken down in 1900 to make way for the present building.

5th. The present court-house, completed in the fall of 1901.

The dates are 1745, 1755, 1789, 1836, and 1901.

<sup>3</sup>Again, there is some debate whether the present courthouse is the 5th or merely a remodeling of the 4th. Refer to Waddell's description of the courthouses in footnote 2, item on the 4th courthouse where he maintains that the 4th was "Taken down in 1900 to make way for the present building." If, indeed it was a remodeling, it was extensive enough to warrant new building status, it appears.

<sup>4</sup>William T. Frazier, "T.J. Collins: A Local Virginia Architect and his Practice at the Turn of the Century" (M.A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1976), p. 51.

<sup>5</sup>George M. Mays, "Courthouse records wide scope," The Staunton Leader (Area Bicentennial Edition), July 2, 1976, p. 6.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Waddell, Joseph A. Annals of Augusta County, Virginia. 2nd ed. n.p.: C. Russell Caldwell, 1901: reprint ed., Harrisonburg, Virginia: C.J. Carrier Company, 1979.

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

(2) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey (132-1)  
1968 State  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
221 Governor Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

(3) Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
1957 Federal  
Library of Congress, Washington, DC





AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Staunton, Virginia

BARRISTER'S ROW  
(Law Offices)

COURT PLACE

Law Offices

ALLEY

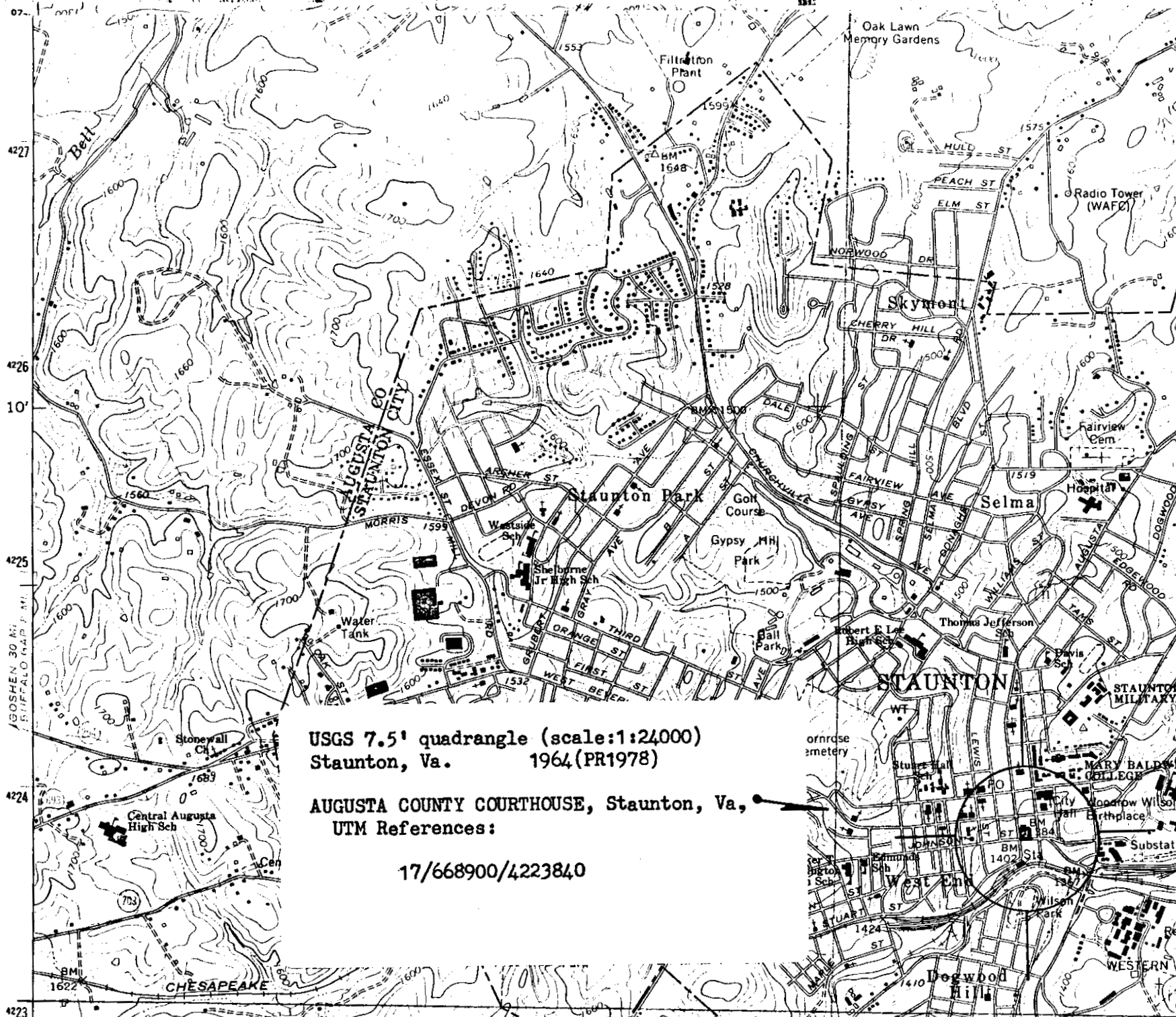
SOUTH AUGUSTA STREET

East Johnson Street

West Johnson Street

Courthouse is on block/lot  
EE-24, Assessor's Map # 375

NOT TO SCALE



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
 Staunton, Va. 1964 (PR1978)

AUGUSTA COUNTY COURTHOUSE, Staunton, Va.,  
 UTM References:

17/668900/4223840