

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Brown County Courthouse Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Includes the Courthouse, Old Log Jail, and the
Historical Society Museum Building N/A not for publication

city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Indiana code 018 county Brown code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Brown County Commissioners

street & number Brown County Courthouse

city, town Nashville N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47448

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Auditor's Office

street & number Brown County Courthouse

city, town Nashville state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date 1936-37 (Museum)
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Brown County Courthouse Historic District consists of three buildings important to the governmental and social structure of Nashville and Brown County, Indiana. Included in the district are the Brown County Courthouse, the Old Log Jail, and the town's former Community Building, now a museum. All of these structures are located near the center of town on what could be considered the town square. These buildings, by nature of their scale and method of construction, convey the rural aspect of this small Indiana farming community.

The square on which these structures are located has been the social and political nucleus of the county since the construction of the first courthouse and jail on this lot in 1837. Although these original buildings are no longer standing, their successors remain on this lot and carry on the function of government. Other buildings have been constructed or moved onto this square over the last century, making these three buildings part of a complex of governmental, cultural, and retail buildings that form the focal point of the community. These structures are also among those most often visited by the many tourists who are attracted to the area's well-known artists' colony.

The physical relationship of these buildings can be seen on the attached sketch map.

COURTHOUSE

The Brown County Courthouse is a two story brick structure with a gable roof located at the intersection of Main and Van Buren Streets in Nashville, Indiana. Constructed in 1875-74, the building features Greek Revival design elements and is thought to have been patterned after the county's 1853 courthouse, which was destroyed by fire. With its symmetrical facade and its flat-roofed tower, the building is one of the pre-eminent structures in this small rural community.

The building's main (south) facade, a gable end, is three bays wide. The main entry, located in the ground floor center bay, consists of paired panel doors surmounted by a multi-light transom. Flanking bays contain large four-over-four, double-hung windows with sandstone sills and lintels. Identical windows appear in the end bays on the second floor, while the second floor center bay contains a single panel door with a transom. Access to this second floor entry is provided by exterior iron staircases rising from the east and west corners of the facade and converging at the small landing just in front of the doorway. Inset brickwork is used to create the effect of pilasters at the corners and between the bays on this facade, and also suggests a frieze just below the gable area. The gable area, itself, is plain except for a round louvered ventilator enframed with inset brickwork. Roof trim consists of plain box cornice with returns.

A two-tiered frame tower is situated on the ridge of the roof approximately ten feet north of the south gable. The lower tier of this tower is covered with clapboard siding and features no openings or decorative elements. Each facade of the upper tier contains a large rectangular louvered panel. The tower is currently covered by a flat roof with a modest cornice.

The east and west facades of the building are each divided into five equal bays by brick pilasters similar to those on the main facade. The three center bays of each of these facades feature rectangular double-hung windows; similar rectangular windows appear on the ground floor levels of the northernmost bay of each facade.

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input 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 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 1873–1937 **Builder Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (~~insert paragraph~~)

The Brown County Courthouse Historic District is significant for its architecture and for its role in the political and social development of Nashville and Brown County. The district consists of two buildings of log construction, and the brick, Greek Revival-style County Courthouse. Located along with more recent buildings on a large wooded lot near the center of Nashville, these buildings, both individually and collectively, have played a major role in the history of the area.

The largest of the three structures in the district is the County Courthouse. Constructed in 1873–74, this building is thought to be a copy of its predecessor, an 1853 structure which was destroyed by fire in 1872. Architecturally, the building is significant as an example, albeit anachronistic, of the Greek Revival style as employed in early 19th century public buildings in rural areas. Much smaller and less ornate than other Indiana courthouses of the era, the building does feature the pilasters and cornice returns characteristic of the Greek Revival style. As the only civic meeting hall in the county for over 50 years, the Courthouse saw frequent use as the location of a variety of public gatherings, while also providing office and courtroom space for the transaction of normal county business. The building continues to serve as the seat of county government while also acting as a local landmark and gathering place.

The Old Log Jail is significant as an example of log construction, and features hewn timbers and half-dovetailed corner joints. Constructed in 1879, this building, which replaced a similar, slightly smaller structure which had deteriorated, continued in use until the 1920's. Probably one of the last log-style public buildings to be constructed in the state, it is the only building of its kind known to remain anywhere in the state. The use of log construction in Brown County at the end of the 19th century indicates the rural nature of the area at the time. The jail is now part of the museum complex operated by the Brown County Historical Society.

Nashville's Community Building is significant as an example of the efforts of the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression. The building is also important for its role as a community center from 1936 until the mid-1960's. A log structure of undetermined age, it was being used as a barn in Jackson County until it was acquired by Nashville's Community Club in the mid-1930's. The Community Club, a ladies' group organized to establish a community center in Nashville, had the building disassembled and transported to its current location. Reconstruction and remodeling of the building was accomplished by the WPA. The Community Club made the building available to local groups without charge until 1960, when the property was deeded to the county. Now part of the County Historical Society's museum complex, the building's ground floor rooms contain a gift shop and an antique loom display, while the second floor remains empty pending the restoration of the building's deteriorated exterior stairway.

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JAIL

The Old Log Jail in Nashville, Indiana, is a small, two story log structure situated just north and east of the County Courthouse. Measuring just 12' x 20', the jail has one room on each level, with the second floor accessible by means of an exterior staircase. Constructed in 1879, this building continued in use until 1922.

The jail building is constructed of logs hewn to approximately 12" square, joined at the corners by half-dovetail joints. On the ground floor, the building features double-wall construction with a 12" cavity; loose logs placed vertically in the cavity were intended to fall and trap anyone attempting to cut through the jail walls. The ground floor level features three small windows, each covered by an iron grating on the inside and an outer shutter of solid iron. The entry way is barred by three separate doors; the inner two are of iron bars riveted in a grating, while the outer door is of solid iron fastened with a large padlock.

The second floor level is constructed of a single thickness of logs, and has a single barred window. The entrance to this floor features an inner door of riveted iron bars and an outer door of solid iron. This floor was primarily used to house female prisoners. The building is covered with a simple gable roof covered with wooden shingles.

MUSEUM

The Brown County Community Building is a two-story rectangular building of log construction located north of the Old Log Jail in Nashville's main square. Of undetermined age, the building was being used as a barn on a Jackson County farm until 1936-37, when it was purchased and relocated to its present site on Nashville's main square. Remodeled, it served as a community meeting hall for the next three decades. Currently, it is part of the County Historical Society's museum complex.

The building follows the traditional English housebuilding pattern referred to as a "dog-trot cabin." The ground floor consists of two rooms separated by an open center hallway referred to as a dogtrot. The second floor contains a single large room stretching the entire length of the building and spanning the dog trot. Window and door openings were modified when the structure was rebuilt during the 1936-37 relocation. Each room on the ground floor has a single entry door on the south facade, while access to the second floor is provided by an exterior staircase on the north facade. First floor window openings contain double-hung sash while the second floor features casement windows. Large exterior chimneys of native stone, also dating from 1937, appear at each gable end. The simple gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

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Collectively, the buildings in this district are significant for their role in establishing the center of Nashville's business district. As the location of both the county's governmental buildings and the town's community meetinghouse, the wooded lot on which these buildings are located has long been the most heavily trafficked area in the community. The grounds surrounding the buildings have traditionally acted as the town square and remain a popular meeting spot. Early in this century, a long, wooden bench located on the grounds, known locally as the Liars' Bench, was a popular spot for the men of the community to congregate and pass the time; destroyed in a 1929 Halloween prank, the Liars' Bench is still a part of Brown County folklore.

Shortly after the turn of the century, a sizable artists' colony was established near Nashville. The area has remained a mecca for artists and craftsmen ever since. Their presence, along with the natural beauty of the area, has made the town of Nashville one of the most popular vacation spots in the state. The Courthouse and the other buildings in the district are visited by tourists from throughout the Midwest.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. one acre

Quadrangle name Nashville Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Hazel Davis, Amelia DeWees

organization Brown County Historical Society date 6-1-76

street & number P.O. Box 668 telephone 812/988-7257 or 2526

city or town Nashville state Indiana 47448

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *W. K. ...*

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 6-4-83

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

date

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Commerce, 1972.

Sturm, Peter K. Happenings in Brown County, Old Times and New. Nashville, Indiana:
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Beginning at the intersection of the north curblineline of Main Street and the east edge of the alley east of the Brown County Courthouse; then proceeding west to the east curblineline of Van Buren Street; then north along this curblineline to a point ten feet north of the north wall of the Courthouse; then east to the west edge of the alley east of the Courthouse; then north along the west edge of the alley to a point five feet north of the Brown County Historical Museum; then east to the west edge of the alley east of the Museum; then south along the west edge of the alley to a point three feet south of the south wall of the Old Log Jail; then west to the east edge of the alley east of the Courthouse; then south to the point of beginning.