

FINAL

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 Whitley County Courthouse
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Van Buren and Main Streets
CITY, TOWN Columbia City VICINITY OF 4th
STATE Indiana CODE 018 COUNTY Whitley CODE 183

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"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Whitley County Commissioners
STREET & NUMBER Whitley Courthouse
CITY, TOWN Columbia City VICINITY OF STATE Indiana 46725

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Whitley County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER Van Buren and Main Streets
CITY, TOWN Columbia City STATE Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory
DATE 1972
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Indiana Department of Natural Resources
CITY, TOWN Indianapolis STATE Indiana

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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Whitley County Courthouse stands on an open square and is the principal landmark of the city. The structure is a modified French Renaissance design executed in Indiana limestone with a slate roof and galvanized iron dome.

The building has a cruciform plan and central dome of the form used often for courthouses and capitols. All elevations are five-part compositions, symmetrical about central axes. Elements placed at the corners of the two intersecting masses form the outermost flanking elements of each elevation; on the east and west, round turkets are capped with bell-shaped chimneys; on the north and south elongated mansard cupolas with dormers are used. Additional emphasis is added to the north-south axis by paired chimneys which rise from the main roof between the cupolas. The hipped roof is truncated at the fourth floor level by the square base of the drum and dome, which are octagonal in plan. The drum consists of an open arched order of paired Corinthian columns and houses the clock bell. The entablature of the drum is surmounted by consoles above the columns, with the panels between them filled by clocks which face the cardinal directions, and oculi in the remaining panels. The dome (actually a comical vault) is vertically elongated, and is topped by a truncated lantern surmounted by a large finial in the form of a torch.

The play of advancing and receding planes accentuates the facades through the use of projecting central pavilions on the north, east, and west; placement of ground and first floor windows within deep reveals; and the use of paired Tuscan pilasters flanking the windows of the third floor. The paired columns of the pavilions are Corinthian, for added emphasis on the central bay. The composition is enriched further by the strong horizontals of a belt course and entablatures which correspond to the floor levels within; the top of the building gains prominence by the fact that floor-to-ceiling heights and windows are successively taller at each level. The ground level is a podium of alternately recessed ashlar courses; the wall surfaces above are smooth planes. The main (north) facade has a grand entrance composed of a central pavilion superimposed over a large round arch, which shelters a recessed entry into the ground level. External access directly onto the main level is provided by monumental stairways on the east and west facades. Ground level entrances are also located under the stairways and through a modest door enframed by Tuscan pilasters and pediment in the center of the south elevation.

The main features of the interior are the simplified classical enframements of wood around windows and doorways, and the treatment of the crossing of the central axes. Rather than an open well through the floors, the central area is filled by cast iron framing with Corinthian columns at its corners and quarter-turn stairways with landings along the north and south. The floor area between the stairways is a two-way grid of iron members, with six-inch square glass blocks mounted between them as the floor surface. This was an ingenious method of obtaining the benefit of central stairways and of also letting light from the skylight under the dome penetrate the interior of the building. Only on the ground level are there central hallways which divide the plan into quadrants; the main level is bisected by an east-west corridor, and the third floor has a large stair hall at the courtroom entrance, directly beneath the skylight. The courtroom is largely intact, with the original bench and seating, as well as mantles of porphyry marble on the corner fireplaces. Other areas within the building contain most of their original woodwork and cabinetry; modern intrusions typically consist of lowered ceilings and mechanical system.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1883-1890

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Brentwood S. Tolan

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Whitley County Courthouse is architecturally significant as an example of both the most prolific phase of courthouse construction in the Midwest, and as an illustration of the development of architectural sophistication by an especially productive firm, Thomas Tolan and Son (later Brentwood S. Tolan, Architect). In numerous designs of this era, namely the courthouses of LaGrange, Parke, Kosciusko, Delaware, Whitley, and Allen Counties, Indiana, the Tolans steadily elaborated the concept of the cruciform plan with central dome. In its studied attempts to emulate French classicism, the Whitley County example demonstrates the transition from the naive classical references of the Italianate LaGrange County design of 1878 to the Beaux-Arts vocabulary of the Allen County Courthouse of 1897 (listed on the National Register 5-28-76). Onto the continuous theme of axial symmetry are added not only the large areas of smooth wall surface and bandings of entablature typical of earlier designs, but also the new device of re-entrant corner massing and pictorial emphasis on the ascending elements of the roofline. The scheme thus uses familiar imagery while also providing enough scholarly detail and formal complexity to satisfy the resurgent desire for classical grandeur which typified the late nineteenth century.

The political significance of this structure derives from at least three considerations. First, located in the center of the county seat and towering above other contemporary structures, the Indiana courthouse symbolized the centrality of county government during the nineteenth century. Distances were commonly measured from the courthouse. Keen competition developed among towns that vied for designation as the county seat, and led every Indiana county seat to build at least two and sometimes as many as five courthouses during a ninety-year period.

Second, the circumstances surrounding the construction of this courthouse reflected the nature of political decisionmaking in the nineteenth century. This limestone building with its copper dome cost \$164,000 and replaced a frame structure erected in 1841 that cost \$411.50. By 1880 the frame structure was woefully inadequate to serve county officers; but local politicians, fearful of voters' reaction to talk of higher taxes, quashed repeated efforts to make improvements. Planned repairs were estimated to cost \$20,000 and county commissioners refused to undertake so expensive a project. February, 1881, defective chimneys forced the circuit court to adjourn. Eventually, the local elite overrode timid political leadership. Thirty of the county's wealthiest men agitated against repairs and instead insisted upon building a courthouse that offered greater fire protection for public records. Worries about the security of county records increased after an Illinois county had to pay \$25,000 to ransom deeds that were stolen from a courthouse. The old Whitley County Courthouse could not accommodate the dimensions of a safe stronger than one that burglars had previously blown open, in 1865. By 1888 the combination of pressures forced the county commissioners to build.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 2

Finally, Thomas R. Marshall, who became Governor of Indiana (1908-1912) and Vice-President of the United States (1912-1916) was a local lawyer at the time the courthouse was built and gave an address at the laying of the cornerstone. The structure has remained as the political center of the county since it was completed in 1890.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Deed Records
 Original drawings, Auditor's Office, Whitley County Courthouse.
 Columbia City Commercial, Spet. 27, 1888, October 4, 1888.
 Hermansen, David R. Indiana Courthouses of the Nineteenth Century. Muncie: Ball State University, 1968.
 (Con't)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Columbia City

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 626775 4957000
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary is a square consisting of the south curbline of Van Buren Street, the east curbline of Chauncy Street, the north curbline of Market Street, and the west curbline of Main Street.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Miss Bernice Carver, Whitley County Historian

ORGANIZATION

Whitley County Historical Society

DATE

December 28, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

314 North Wayne Street

TELEPHONE

(219) 244-6467

CITY OR TOWN

Columbia City

STATE

Indiana 46725

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

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

TITLE

Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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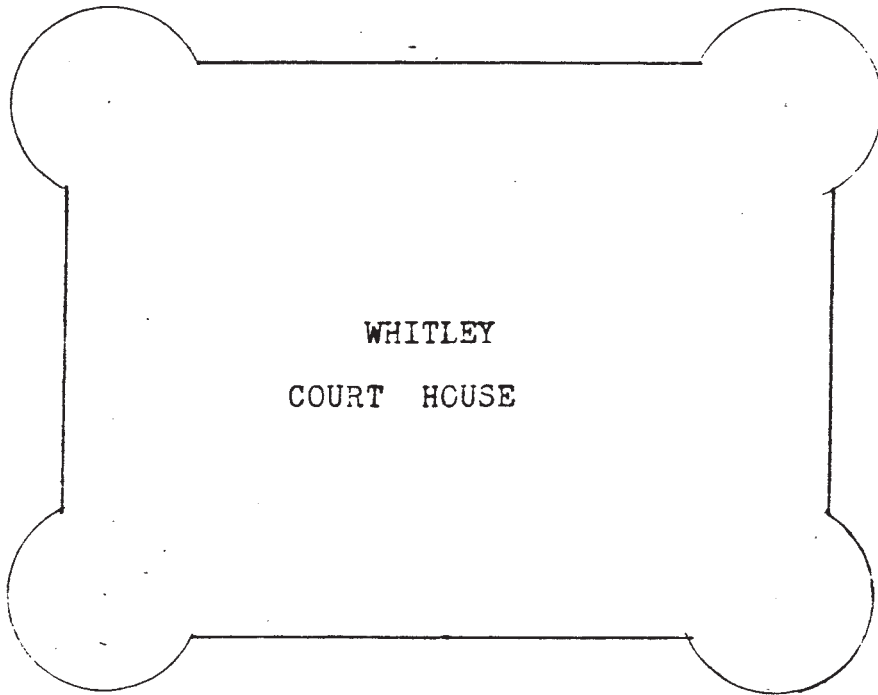
PAGE 2

Kaler, Samuel P. and R. H. Maring. History of Whitley County, Indiana. Indianapolis,
B. F. Bowen, 1907.

VAN BUREN St.



CHAUNCSY St.



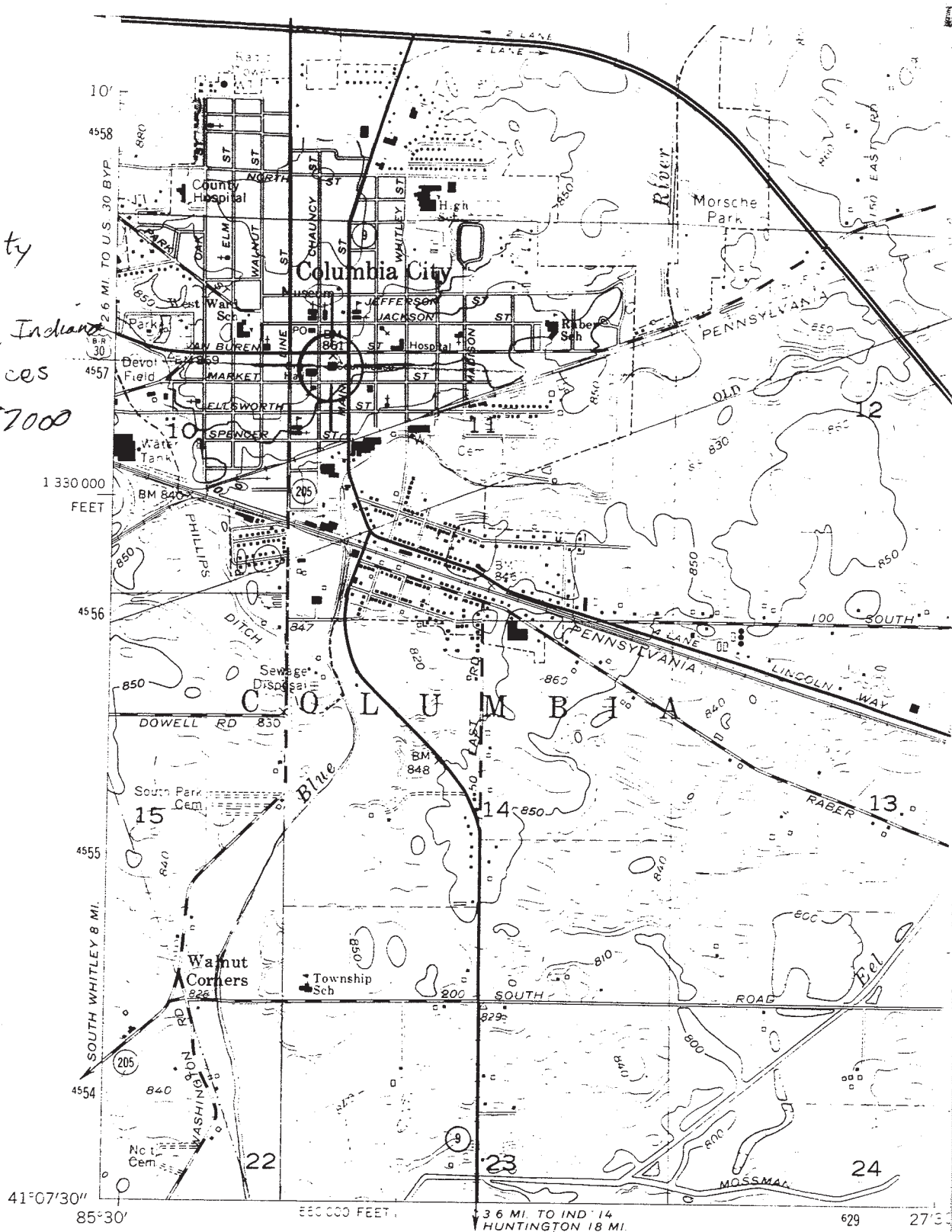
MAIN St.

MARKET St.

not to scale

12-27-1976

Whitley County
 Courthouse
 Columbia City, Indiana
 U.T.M. References
 14626775/4357000



(SOUTH WHITLEY EAST)
 3866 11 SE

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS
 Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1948. Topography by plane-table surveys 1955. Revised 1965
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on Indiana coordinate system, east zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 16, 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

★
 GN
 9" = 1"02"
 18 MILS
 UTM GRID AND 1955 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

