

FINAL

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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 Wells County Courthouse  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 100 W. Market Street  
CITY, TOWN Bluffton VICINITY OF Tenth  
STATE Indiana CODE 018 COUNTY Wells CODE 179

**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	<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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Wells County Commissioners  
STREET & NUMBER Wells County Courthouse  
CITY, TOWN Bluffton VICINITY OF STATE Indiana

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Wells County Recorder's Office  
STREET & NUMBER Wells County Courthouse  
CITY, TOWN Bluffton STATE Indiana

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey  
DATE c. 1935  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress District of Columbia  
CITY, TOWN Washington STATE

## 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

Bluffton, the seat of Wells County, Indiana, is a town situated on a ridge above the south banks of the Wabash River. The Wells County Courthouse stands at the top of the bluff, on the southeast corner of the main street intersection. The building is a rugged sandstone mass whose sheer size makes it the dominant feature of the town, particularly when viewed from the north (photo 1).

The siting of the building on the rear (southwest) corner of its quarter-block serves well in relating the scale of the building to its surroundings. The setbacks on the north and east make less the severe transition from the adjacent two and three-story buildings to the four-story walls of the courthouse. The plaza thus provided is also the only open space in the downtown area, and is the natural locus for public events. This is especially true on the north, where the widest part of the plaza is directly adjacent to the main shopping area.

The form of the building also responds well to its surroundings. The main hip-roofed rectangular mass is aligned east and west, and is intersected on the west by a gabled wing which extends slightly beyond the main block on the north. This courtroom wing serves to terminate the form in a manner compatible with the alignment of the adjacent commercial buildings (photo 2). The relationship of the building to the street crossing is emphasized by the placement of the clock tower which projects slightly from the main wing on the northeast corner, and by the circular turret cantilevered from the north-east corner of the tower (photo 3). The recess thus formed on the north elevation defines the main entrance, which is approached by a broad flight of steps and sheltered by an arcade of Syrian arches. On the east elevation the clock tower is balanced by a slightly projecting tower at the southeast corner; the resulting three-part composition relates well to the bay dimensions of the adjacent storefronts. Ornament is used to emphasize the north and east facades; the south and west elevations are rusticated ashlar relieved only by the deep recesses of regular and well-proportioned fenestration (photo 4). The elevations thus respond to the site, and are elaborated according to how well they can be seen unobstructed by adjacent buildings. Although the overall form of the building is asymmetrical, elements are carefully balanced on each elevation. On the north facade this quality has symbolic overtones since the tower (whose base originally contained the sheriff's office) is matched by the gable of the courtroom: thus symbols of the executive and judiciary are held in balance by the offices which house the daily functions of government.

Material and ornament are also used in ways which articulate the form of the building. The plaza was originally an expanse of limestone paving, visually extended into the building by the use of limestone for the entrance stairways. The junction of the wall with the ground plane is further emphasized by the course of rock-faced white limestone at the base of the walls; above this the brick walls are faced entirely with a

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vener of buff-colored Michigan Stoney Point sandstone.

The courthouse has a feature common to public buildings in that the most important functions are housed one level above grade, so that the ground level may be occupied by other areas which are more frequently visited by the public. This arrangement is articulated by the use of rusticated ashlar for the walls of the ground floor, and alternating courses of smooth and rusticated ashlar for the walls above (with the exception of the south and west elevations, which are entirely rusticated). The levels within the building are further articulated by a deep rusticated course above the ground level, and stringcourses of running floriated ornament of various designs above the first, second, and third levels of the main block and above the fourth floor of the clock tower (photo 5). Higher levels of the clock tower are denoted by deep rusticated courses above the fifth floor, and stringcourses of mousetoothing above and below the level of the clock faces; both towers are crowned by deep machicolations and upturned corners.

Several features of the courthouse are characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque mode.

Openings are placed with rigorous regularity, and the fenestration is deeply recessed within smooth-sided wells in order to strongly juxtapose the planes of the walls and windows. Within the recesses, pairs of windows and transoms are separated by stone mullions which are also smoothly finished; horizontal mullions are sculptured where they correspond to the stringcourses. Sash feature central lights surrounded by muntins to form narrow sidelights (photo 6). For the most part openings are capped with flat lintels; however, segmental arches top openings in the bases of the towers. In addition, on the elevations of the towers, the courtroom and the central bay of the east elevation, columns of windows are terminated by large round arches whose rusticated voussoirs are topped by foliated archivolt moldings which spring from serpentine forms (photo 7). Similar arches are used to form the arcade on the north and the large central arch on the east, but these entrance openings are differentiated by their smooth voussoirs.

The five bays of the north arcade are approached across the three center bays by a staircase which has rusticated sidewalls; the flanking bays have open balustrades. The arcade is supported by four colonnettes and two pilasters whose capitals have three foliated designs used symmetrically about the center bay; the square plinths of the central bay's colonnettes have chamfered corners. The columniation is expressed in the smooth dies which interrupt the running foliated patterns of the blind balustrade above, which is a continuation of the stringcourse above the second floor.

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On the clocktower, pilasters in the form of paired colonnettes separate the louvered belfry openings. Directly above, the iron and glass traceries of the clock faces are set in a checkerboard field of rosettes and smooth blocks. The original clock faces were of painted metal, with numerals and openwork hands picked out in a lighter color; the present faces were installed c. 1895 so that the clock could be internally illuminated by gaslights.

The highest points on the north and east facades are the domain of the building's symbolic protectors. A bold pentagram inscribed in a circle is mounted in a foliated surround above the five louvered vents of the courtroom gable. A lion-headed serpent is entwined about the base of the gable's east rake; the turreted buttress at the foot of the west rake is crowned by a votive plinth surrounded by palm fronds at its base. Buttresses of identical design flank the gabled dormer above the central bay of the east facade.

The dormer has three square windows which are separated by colonnettes and surmounted by a stringcourse of running floriated ornament. The gable above has a narrow central window set in a checkered field like that which surrounds the clock faces, and is surmounted by a pedestal which extends from the apex of the dormer. The pedestal was originally surmounted by a crouching figure of a winged lion whose left foreleg rested on a shield emblazoned with the letter "W" for Wells County; this free-standing figure was blown down by a storm in December, 1967.

Beneath the machicolations on the southeast corner of the small tower, a similar figure crouches with its head projecting downward. During re-roofing of the building in 1976, it was discovered that this was originally a genuine gargoyle which spurted from its mouth the water collected by the small tower's gutters. Apparently this function had ceased when the gutter linings were replaced c. 1895.

The clay revetments of the small tower's low pyramidal roof were originally crowned by a ceramic figure of an owl; this freestanding figure was removed approximately fifty years ago for fear that it might injure the children who frequented a popcorn wagon on the corner below. The owl now inhabits the barn of a descendant of the workman who dismantled it. The author of this essay himself collected the fragments of the chimera after its demise; the pieces have since been stored.

The courthouse's loftiest guardian of all crouches beneath the battlements on the turret of the clocktower. This winged lion is bent almost double beneath the weight of the flagpole which it originally held balanced on its head. Unfortunately the tapered wooden mast was removed to make way for a radio antenna, which has since been removed also.

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The profile of the building was also originally enhanced by stacks with corbelled tops on the south and west elevations. These "chimneys" of rusticated stone were actually the outlets for vent stacks meant to naturally exhaust stale air from the building; these were apparently removed to beneath the roofline in 1962. The original chimney is located on the rake of the courtroom gable on the south elevation, and is only a squat cube with a chamfered cap. This original flue was capped and replaced by a larger brick stack built on the opposite rake of the gable in 1938.

The rugged outline of the courthouse was originally enhanced by the use of clay revetments to cover the ridges of the slate roof. Courses of bell-shaped tile extended up the rakes of the roofline, and combs of alternating heights punctuated the main ridge of the roof. These features were lost during replacement of the roof in 1976, after it was found that the tile was bedded in mortar and could not be removed intact or replaced in kind. Apparently the steeper rake of the clocktower roof had lost these features some time ago, since most period photographs of the courthouse show wide metal ridge covers in use. The subsequent use of such copper extrusions to replace the clay revetments was based upon this knowledge. The original copper finial of the clocktower was restored, and a duplicate was mounted on the small tower. The present ridge finials are copies of a period example found in the area.

The interior of the building consists of rooms arranged around a tee-shaped corridor whose major axis extends east and west (see attached plans). An open stair with quarter-turn landings is set in a rectangular alcove at the hall crossing; an elevator was installed in the open well of the stair c. 1950. On the ground and main levels, the west end of the main corridor terminates in a short tee in the courtroom wing.

The main and third levels of the courthouse contain the primary functions of government. The main level houses the commissioners court, as well as the offices of the county auditor, treasurer, recorder, assessor, and clerk. Half of the third floor level is devoted to the circuit court, its related offices, and a law library. Since these are the building's primary functions, the hallways on these two levels are more elaborate than those elsewhere (photo 8). The length of the halls is broken up into rectangular bays by segmental arches which spring from the foliated capitals of shallow pilasters. Within each bay a curved plaster cove flanked above and below by heavy moldings forms a simple cornice. The lower part of the walls is covered with a wainscote of blue-grey marble, with a darker tone of the same hue used in the smooth marble of the base and cap. The bays of the ceiling are reflected in the pattern of Minton encaustic tiles which cover the floor in a design of isolated diamond-set in a field and surrounded by a border of linked diamonds between parallel lines. The muted hues of the tiles are predominantly red and gray on the main level, while shades of brown and buff are used on the third floor. The pattern on the second

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is interrupted by a panel of more elaborate white and pink tiles set at the crossing of the hallways, near the base of the stair. This reputedly marks the location of a shallow crypt let into the floor: an oblique reference to the religious origins of the Romanesque style (photo 9).

Originally the hallways of the main and third levels were further decorated with stencilled designs on the walls and ceilings; these must have done much to relieve the present contrast between the ornamentation of the exterior and the appearance of the interior. The light levels also would have been much lower in the hallways, since the center of each ceiling bay was mounted with a brass gasolier fixture with only two frosted round globes to provide illumination. These features were lost to repainting and electric lighting in the 1920's.

The woodwork used in the halls and throughout the building is made of wide sections of golden oak. Window and door enframements are composed of facings with a central reed flanked by shallow cyma recta curves and smooth squared edges. Upper corners are punctuated by large smooth blocks with bevelled edges; in the hallways the centers of these blocks are carved with floral designs. Doorways have additional blocks of similar design set at the lines of the base, chair-rail, and transom mullion, with a triple-fluted facing used beneath the chair-rail line in the halls. Doors have three vertical panels with a bevelled surround and reeded moldings across the top and bottom; the jambs of the doorways are similarly panelled. The tops of the doors are glazed with a muntin pattern similar to that of the windows; transoms are glazed with single lights. The building's exterior doors were of this design also, though they had heavier moldings on their outer faces; these, as well as the doors of the hallway entry into the courtroom, were replaced with fully glazed aluminum doors, c. 1960. Virtually all other doors in the courthouse are original. Windows have simple sills and aprons which are extended as chair-rails in some offices. Baseboards have a slight bevel on their top edges.

The circuit court room occupies the west wing of the third floor, and is the most elaborate of the interior spaces (see attached drawing). The west and south sides of the room are punctuated by pairs of tall windows set within recesses which also accomodate cast-iron radiators. The window enframements are capped with foliated capitals carved in deep relief. The twenty-four foot height of the walls is visually reduced, by the use of a marble wainscote identical to that found in the halls, and a plaster cornice whose location ten feet beneath the ceiling separates the windows from the semi-circular lights directly above them. Unfortunately, a

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lower ceiling was constructed at this intermediate cornice line approximately fifty years ago, and today hides from view the original painted ceiling. The drop ceiling consists of a two-way grid of panelled wooden beams with an infill of square acoustical tiles. The original ceiling has a coved cornice whose design matches that seen in the hallways. The original color scheme used grey-green for the walls, and a lighter tone of the same color for the ceiling. The wall areas were divided into panels by simple grey stencilled borders; the panels below the intermediate cornice were reputedly filled with allegorical figures and historical tableaux. The original ceiling is outlined within the cornice by a border of parallel lines in shades of grey and buff, punctuated at intervals by square panels with large rosettes (photo 10). Within this border the ceiling is divided into a central lozenge and flanking corner panels formed by a second border of bundled laurel leaves with sunburst rosettes. Today, these designs can be viewed by standing in the space between the original and drop ceilings.

At the same time that the courtroom ceiling was lowered, the northern third of the room was partitioned off to accomodate the court reporter's office and expansion of the law library.

The bench is situated at the center of the south end of the room, with the area directly before the bench separated from the rows of spectator benches by a low oak rail with stout round spindles and massive square posts which are topped by round-globed gaslights. Within this area, the jury sits directly opposite the bench and is flanked on either side by tables for the parties. To the judge's right is a desk for the bailiff; immediately in front of the bench are the witness box and the court reporter's desk, which are both modern additions. With these last exceptions, all furniture in the courtroom is original, and is made of golden oak and upholstered in black leather.

The bench is supported by four squared colonettes with grillworks between them; the overhanging edges of the bench top are finished with large dentils beneath a deep crown mold. A pair of gaslights (later electrified) identical to those on the court rail sit atop the bench. Square fluted pilasters with foliated capitals flank a shallow alcove directly behind the bench. The wall of this alcove is adorned with a rectangular stained glass panel whose figure of seated Justice is enframed in a semi-circle of radiating lines flanked by laurel garlands and a continuous border of alternating squares of blue and bevelled clear glass. This panel was originally mounted in a corresponding location directly above at the level of the semi-circle

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lights with whose form the stained glass design is meant to harmonize. Since the offices behind the bench have ceilings at the level of the courtroom's intermediate cornice, the stained glass was naturally illuminated from behind by the semi-circular lights in the south gable of the courtroom wing. This ingenious method of indirect lighting has been succeeded by a florescent lamp mounted behind the panel in the bailiff's office.

In either end of the wall behind the bench are doors which open into a suite of offices. The west door gives access directly into a room now used as the judge's chamber; the east door gives access to the present bailiff's office via a rear vestibule from which both a dumbwaiter and a spiral rear stair connect to the county clerk's office on the level below. The shallow alcove in the bailiff's office seems appropriate for hanging robes; this as well as the vestibule arrangement suggest that the bailiff's office was originally used as the judge's chamber.

The smoothly plastered archway in the north end of the courtroom's west wall suggests another possible difference in the court's original scheme. The arch is presently filled with a non-original door surrounded by frosted glass lights; the adjacent room is used as part of the law library. That the archway is an original feature and was unobstructed is suggested by traces of painted wall stencilling found on one jamb of the opening. Perhaps the adjacent room was used as a vestibule or waiting room for the court.

With the exception of the public areas described above, the rooms within the courthouse are adorned only by the golden oak window and door enframements set against painted plaster walls and oak floors. The ceilings in the offices add some visual interest, since they display shallow segmental barrel vaults which spring between the webs of the steel joists.

The offices on the main level also possess their original built-in cabinets and counters (photo 11). These units vary in size and shape according to their locations, but have common construction and decorative details. The cabinets are divided into bays by slender round columns with floriated capitals which support carved architrave blocks set within a course of dentils. The heavy entablature above has a convex frieze carved in a low relief of running floriated ornament; the overhanging cornice above is faced with a quirked ovolo molding. The pairs of cabinet doors are fully glazed in a muntin pattern similar to that of the windows and doors.



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The faces of the counter units have panels of reeded diagonal siding set between bevelled stiles with stop-chamfered corners; reeded moldings run across the tops and bottoms of the panels. The plain overhangs of the counter tops are supported by massive brackets carved with oak leaves in low relief. In some cases the tops of the counters are mounted with additional shallow drawers. All original counters are intact, with the exception of the unit in the treasurer's office, which was "modernized" and expanded with plain panelling.

For the most part, the courthouse offices have been subject to little remodeling or alteration. Only fifteen of the forty-one rooms on its four levels have been subdivided by later partitions in any way; three of these instances were for the provision of restrooms above the ground floor. In only four instances have the ceiling heights been reduced from original levels. Aside from the provision of electric power and light, modern intrusions consist of office furnishings and equipment.

One key to the building's functional longevity is the plan's generous provision of connecting doors between rooms. Apparently mindful of the quickness with which preceding quarters had been outgrown, the county commissioners erected a building more than adequate for their needs. Since county offices originally required little more than the main level, the architect provided for the combination of the unassigned space in a variety of ways.

It is only within living memory that the courthouse has become occupied completely. The ground floor was once rented as commercial space: it variously housed a barber shop (now trustee's office), restaurant (now extension service offices), and a cigar factory (present license branch office), as well as the Bluffton public library, which occupied first the southeast and later northwest corner rooms until 1905. The circuit court and county superintendent once were sole users of the third floor. At one time a barricade on the stairway secured the completely vacant fourth floor.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 Built 1889-1891

BUILDER/ARCHITECT George W. Bunting, Architect

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The present courthouse is the third structure to house the government of Wells County.

The site of the present courthouse was designated as a quarter-block "public square" in the 1836 plat of Bluffton. For a time after a special act forming Wells County was passed February 22, 1837, governmental functions were carried out in the residence of Robert Bennett. Using funds from the sale of cemetery lots, a two story log structure 18 by 24 feet was erected by David Whitman on a site two blocks directly north of the square. The building was accepted by the commissioners in 1840 at a reported cost of \$193.40. This building and a log jail of similar size, erected 20 rods to the south, later burned.

In April 1843 the commissioners contracted Almon Case to build another courthouse. Case sold the \$5,000 contract to a Marion, Indiana builder, George W. Webster. Constructed of native brick on the northwest corner of the present site, this second courthouse was a rectangular two story Greek Revival structure whose Doric tetrastyle portico faced east and was crowned by an enclosed belfry with a low, rounded roof. Over the course of the succeeding forty years, smaller, gabled brick office annexes were built along the south and west sides of the quarter-block site.

By April, 1888, lack of space and apparent dissatisfaction with hygienic conditions led Judge Henry Saylor of the 28th Judicial Circuit to issue an order condemning the courthouse. This ended efforts by the commissioners to placate the judge with plans for repair of the building.

It is interesting to note that despite its deficiency for government use, the vacated courthouse was rented in the summer of 1888 by two different merchants, John W. Tribolet and F. Mosiman, who successively used the space while they remodelled their own stores.

The Bluffton Banner of December 13, 1888, notes that "the county commissioners will go to Frankfort this morning to examine the courthouse at that place." Apparently the county's leaders were impressed; one week later, on December 20, the same paper reported that, "The commissioners have ordered construction of a new courthouse. An architect has been employed to prepare plans for a building, not to exceed 90 feet by 118 feet, and to cost not more than \$125,000, and to be situated on the site of the old courthouse."

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The architect chosen was George W. Bunting of Indianapolis; on March 12, 1889, Christian Boeseker was awarded a construction contract for \$119,879. Before demolition began, the courthouse bell was sold to a local church, and serves yet another church, the First Baptist, yet today. Also, canes were fashioned from the walnut woodwork, and were presented to those who had been residents of the county for 50 years or more. Construction of the new building began in July, 1889, and the cornerstone was laid in Masonic ceremonies on August 29, 1889. The completed structure was accepted by the commissioners on January 15, 1891. Dedication of the courtroom by the Wells County bar was conducted with appropriate ceremonies on the evening of March 2, 1891.

Since that time, the courthouse has served as the focus of political activity and public events, including political rallies, the annual street fair, and numerous other happenings. Perhaps the most prominent visitor was Benjamin Harrison, who spoke on the plaza during the presidential campaign of 1891.

The building's architect, George W. Bunting of Indianapolis, had already designed several courthouses, and became one of the most prolific designers of such buildings. In addition to the Clinton County Courthouse at Frankfort (1882), Bunting had done an identical design in Anderson (Madison County, 1882) as well as the Johnson County Courthouse in Franklin (1879). All of these previous examples, however, had been done in an electric classical mode which combined elements of Renaissance, Mannerist, and then-current French Empire styles of architecture. Bunting had previously used non-classical modes for educational buildings, such as the Neo-Jacobean Owen and Wylie Halls at Indiana University in Bloomington (1884). The Wells County design apparently marked his first use of both asymmetrical form and the Richardsonian mode for a courthouse design. Although Bunting also combined these features in his plans for Maxwell Hall at Indiana University (1890), he returned to the creation of symmetrical forms in the Union County Courthouse at Liberty (1890). Perhaps the studied asymmetry of the Bluffton design was purely a response to the demands of the site, since all of Bunting's other known courthouses stand on open squares. In any case, the combination of overall asymmetry with the balanced placement of elements on each elevation resulted in a dynamic architectural expression not seen in Bunting's other works.

In addition to the designs named above, George Bunting is also credited with the Montgomery County Courthouse in Crawfordsville (1877). David Hermansen notes that:

"He designed a minimum of seven Hoosier examples and others in Kansas (Sedgewick County), Michigan (Washtenaw County), West Virginia (Harrison County), and Tennessee (Montgomery County). The latter group is a testament to his ability to seek out commissions at a great distance from the geographic area of his architectural practice."

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Little is known of this architect's personal life. Born in Pennsylvania in 1829, he attended Girard College, and was also once apprenticed to a shipwright. After serving in the First Mississippi Cavalry in the Civil War, Bunting practiced architecture in Bloomington, Illinois, before settling in Indianapolis. About 1886 he was joined in his practice by his son, George W. Bunting (the younger). It was during this partnership that commissions in the Richardsonian idiom were executed. Bunting lived until 1901.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Bluffton

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 6	6 5 4 3 6 0	4 5 1 1 2 5 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			
E			
G			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			
F			
H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The northeast quarter of the block bounded by Main, Market, Johnson, and Washington Streets in the original plat of the Town of Bluffton, Indiana.

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

Craig Leonard for Wells County Commissioners

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

123 East Wabash Street

TELEPHONE

(219) 824-3789

CITY OR TOWN

Bluffton

STATE

Indiana

## 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

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

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Bluffton Banner, December 13, 1888, p. 1

Bluffton Banner, December 20, 1888, p.3

"The New Courthouse," Bluffton Banner, January 15, 1891, p.3

\*The Dedication of the New Court Room," Bluffton Banner, March 15, 1891, p.3.

Samuel B. Harding, editor, Indiana University 1820-1904, Indiana University Press, 1904.

David R. Hermansen, "Indiana Courthouses of the Nineteenth Century," Faculty Lecture Series, College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, February 1968.

Fred F. Park, souvenir program for rededication of the Wells County Courthouse, Wells County Historical Society, 1976

Wilbur Peat, general note file, in Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis, Indiana

Dorothy Rose and Joyce Buckner, History of Wells County, Indiana 1776-1976, Wells County Bicentennial Committee, 1976

Floor plans and drawing of courtroom restoration prepared by Craig Leonard, 1977