

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Gibson County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Town Square

N/A not for publication

city, town Princeton N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Gibson code 051

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Gibson County Commissioners

street & number Gibson County Courthouse

city, town Princeton N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47670

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office

street & number Gibson County Courthouse

city, town Princeton state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date 1982 federal  state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
excellent	deteriorated	unaltered	X original site
X good	ruins	X altered	moved date
fair	unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

**EXTERIOR** Built from 1883 to 1886, the Gibson County Courthouse is a rectangular, three story brick and limestone structure which displays characteristics of Italianate architecture. It has four square corner towers which frame four main entries, forming a Greek cross in plan. A central clock tower rises monumentally above the center of the structure. The low pitched slate roof has copper flashing and pine gutters. The structure has concrete and steel composite floors, and steel and heavy timber framing.

Bordered by four streets, the courthouse sits in the Courthouse Square. The base of the courthouse is faced entirely with vermiculated, rusticated limestone and has double-hung sash windows with multiple lights. The windows have segmental arches and stone sills.

The courthouse has entrances to the main level on all four sides, all reached by massive limestone stairs. The stairs have eighteen risers and seventeen treads with a recently added steel pipe handrail in the center. Flared at the base, the stairs have massive curved stair buttresses of limestone.

The principal entrances to the courthouse are centered on the east and west sides, although they are presently not in use because of internal office layouts. The main level of the west facade contains nine bays which are divided into five areas. The entrance door has three glass panels with a three light transom; it is framed in aluminum and has new glazing. These doors have replaced the original wood doors. Blue granite columns with Corinthian capitals are located on either side of the door. Around the door, brick and limestone voussoirs form a Roman arch with a high relief, mascarón keystone. Two dressed, rusticated limestone piers, supporting a limestone cornice, flank the entryway.

Above the entry, the limestone cornice continues around the building and separates the main floor from the second floor, which also has nine bays. The second floor above the entry is framed by brick piers with limestone quoins and composite capitals. Coupled windows are located between the piers. The windows are horizontally divided by an entablature; the bottom part is a rectangular, double-hung sash and the upper half has three horizontal lights with a round-arched, limestone hood. Between the hoods is a terra cotta spandrel with a high relief mascarón. Surrounding the coupled windows, there is a flattened round arch, formed by brick and limestone voussoirs.

A heavy cornice, with a series of dentils and modillions above the fascia, bands the top of the entire building. A decorative limestone parapet, flanked by brick piers banded with limestone, is located above the cornice of the entrance bay. On the east side, a limestone tablet with "1884" applied to it is centered at the top of the parapet, and is flanked by lions' heads. Originally, statues topped this area on both the east and west sides.

The corners of the west facade feature towers; on the ground and main levels, these are entirely faced with limestone. They contain one bay on each facade with segmentally arched windows on the ground and main levels with a high relief keystone at the main level.

The second floor of the tower consists of brick with limestone quoins. A rectangular, double-hung sash window with multiple lights is located directly above the main level window. A limestone lintel separates the window from a Roman arch filled with decorative terra cotta. Terra cotta is used in the spandrels to form a squared-off area.

Above the second level cornice, the towers extend in brick to a modillioned cornice with a finial above it at each corner. Each tower has a semi-circular window with three vertical lights. Terra cotta is used again in the spandrels to form a squared-off area. The roofs of the towers form a pyramid and end in a copper pinnacle; copper covers the ridges of the roof.

On the main level, between the entry and the corner towers, there is a brick area containing three double-hung sash windows with multiple lights. The windows on the main level have segmental brick arches and a limestone keystone or ancon extending to the cornice. Directly above these windows, on the second level, there are three windows separated by brick piers with composite capitals; they have limestone lintels and Roman arches with terra cotta infills. The windows are double-hung sash with multiple lights. The east facade is nearly identical to the west.

The facades of the side entries, the north and south views, are very similar to the main facades, but they are not as elaborately decorated. The doors on the main level are surrounded entirely by limestone and have a high relief mascarons. There are two windows rather than three in the areas between the entrance and the corner towers. Above the roof cornice there is a decorative limestone parapet and brick piers banded with limestone.

The central bell tower consists of engaged, coupled, brick piers with limestone bands and composite capitals. Roman arches of brick and limestone sit between these corner piers. A deep cornice with modillions above the fascia tops the capitals. The pyramidal roof extends up to a level area with a wrought iron balustrade. The slate roof has flat corners with copper ridges, giving the roof four main surfaces and four flat corners. Four working clocks, with stilted Tudor arches over them, are positioned in the pyramidal roof.

The chimneys consist of a limestone base with brick stacks banded with three courses of limestone before reaching the chimney cap. They are no longer functional, having been sealed to prevent heat loss from the building.

INTERIOR Internally, the courthouse uses Black Walnut and plaster reliefs extensively. As the East and West entries have been blocked off to form office space, the North or South entries lead to a hallway which has at its center four large plaster arches. Flooring is mosaic tile. First floor offices have original oak flooring, plaster walls and "vaulted" plaster ceilings. Steel beams end at the walls with decorative wall brackets. Original counters are still being used. The Auditor's office has a steel column with a cast iron palm capital. Changes to this floor include HVAC ducts, electrical conduit runs, and an elevator installed next to the North entry during Judge A. Dale Eby's term (1933-1965).

Leading from the first floor to the second floor, the main stair is a straight run until the last few risers where it makes a quarter circle. The stair has cast iron treads, risers and stringers with 3" round brass railings on a walnut wainscot. A plaster ceiling is at the same height as the second floor ceiling.

The second floor hall has a walnut base and beaded vertical walnut wainscot with plaster walls. Doors and frames are high with transoms and are constructed from Black Walnut. Similar to the first floor hall, the flooring consists of a diamond pattern mosaic tile in reds and dark browns with a perimeter border in blue, white and beige. There are archways, matching those below on the first floor, just outside the courtroom. A stair to the west of the building leads to an intermediate level used as the Judge's office. This stair then continues to the third floor which is currently used for storage.

Off the hallway the Grand Jury room is all original including the oak flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, plaster crown mold, and bookcases.

Across from the Grand Jury room the small courtroom has vinyl asbestos tile and carpet floors. Ceiling is original plaster with two star-shaped reliefs located at third points. Seating is new. Original walnut wainscot and two fireplaces remain. HVAC has been installed through the door transom running through the hall to the HVAC unit located in the hall.

The main courtroom has been remodeled and air conditioned. Original wood flooring has been carpeted in the Jury-Judge area, and 8" x 8" vinyl asbestos tile has been installed in the court's seating area. New seating has been installed throughout. A 2' x 4' acoustical board ceiling covers the original plaster ceiling with its large plaster crown mold. Mechanical ducts and electrical conduit are located in this ceiling sandwich. Either new wood railings, Judge's woodwork (bench), and Jury's box have been constructed or the existing wood has been refinished. Existing plaster walls with Black Walnut wainscot are in good condition. The original pair of walnut panel doors at the entry with their semi-circular glass transom panel remain. Nine radiators are located in the courtroom (seven cylindrical fin tube type and two newer smooth type). A three section glazed window with a semicircular glazed transom panel has been modified to accept a large HVAC unit in the hall outside the courtroom. The HVAC almost completely blocks any view, and the transom has been filled in to accept a return grille.

Original walnut paneled doors and brass hardware lead from the courtroom to the Judge's chamber. Plaster crown mold, ceiling, and walls remain. Carpeting has been installed and an HVAC duct has been extended down through the ciling about six feet. Back-to-back fireplaces exist between the courtroom and Judge's chamber. Original bookcases are still in use.

Several rooms lead off the Judge's chamber. They have been carpeted. The room currently used for conference has a "vaulted" ceiling (the same as the steel beam construction noted earlier). A back stairway in this area is of cast iron tread, stringers, risers, and baluster construction. Handrails and base are Black Walnut.

Directly under the main stair is a straight run cast iron tread, riser and stringer stair leading to the basement. Railings are brass, wainscot is walnut, and walls and ceiling are plaster. An archway is located at the bottom of the stair.

The basement has exposed concrete floors. Corrugated metal on beams ("vaulted") forms the ceilings and the walls are plaster. Paint covers the wood wainscot. Heating tunnels are located below the floor. The County Commissioners' office is original except for a wood paneled stud wall dividing the space. A ladies' lounge has been installed in the Northwest corner of the basement with a 2' x 4' acoustical ceiling, new toilet facilities, and new flooring. A wood handicap ramp has been installed leading to the South grade entry under the monumental South stair. This exit has new doors and sidelights with an arched transom.



# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social	
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	
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** 1883-1886

**Builder Architect**

McDonald Brothers

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

The Gibson County Courthouse is one of the most significant historical structures existing in Gibson County and one of the best examples of nineteenth century architecture in Southern Indiana. It is also significant as the center of Gibson County government since 1886.

The Gibson County Courthouse is a dominant presence in Princeton due to its style and size. Generally, its style is Italianate, and it displays such distinctive characteristics as rounded arches and square towers with pyramidal roofs. The exterior of the courthouse is almost entirely intact. Likewise, the interior is primarily original, and where renovation has occurred, the original construction has been merely covered up, which serves as protection for the original finishes.

The courthouse is located approximately in the center of Gibson County and replaced the second courthouse in 1886, because the older courthouse had "insufficient ventilation" and "inadequacy of size and appointments," as prescribed by Section 5748 of the Revised Statutes of 1881. The County Commissioners decided that a new courthouse should be built.

McDonald Brothers, leading architects in Louisville during the latter two decades of the nineteenth century, designed the courthouse. The McDonald Brothers were nationally acclaimed for their public buildings and churches. Their works include the Kansas State House, at least 20 other courthouses in Indiana, Kentucky and Illinois, the United States Post Office and Customs House in Louisville, the Kentucky Penitentiary at Eddyville, buildings for the Southern Exposition of 1883, and the Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. In addition, the firm designed the Tennessee asylum at Bolivar and about 100 jails in six states. After 1904, Kenneth McDonald was associated with Chicago-trained architect William J. Dodd. No less than five other courthouses which this firm designed have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After almost a century, the Gibson County Courthouse continues to perform its central role in County government.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. "Commissioners Record, Gibson County".
2. Marty Hedgepeth's MA thesis on the McDonald Bros. architects.
3. "History of Gibson County, Indiana", Edwardsville, Illinois: James T. Tartt & Co., 1884.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 2 ±

Quadrangle name Princeton

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

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1	6
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4	5	0	3	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** East curbline of Hart Street, West curbline of Main Street, North curbline of Broadway, and South curbline of State Street, which forms the Public Square of Princeton, Indiana.

### 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 Timothy A. Henning, Architect

organization N/A

date 2-15-84

street & number R. 1, Box 224

telephone 812/753-3977

city or town Fort Branch

state Indiana 47648

## 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

*John T. Costello*  
Deputy Director, Dept. of Natural Resources, for  
title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8-17-84

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

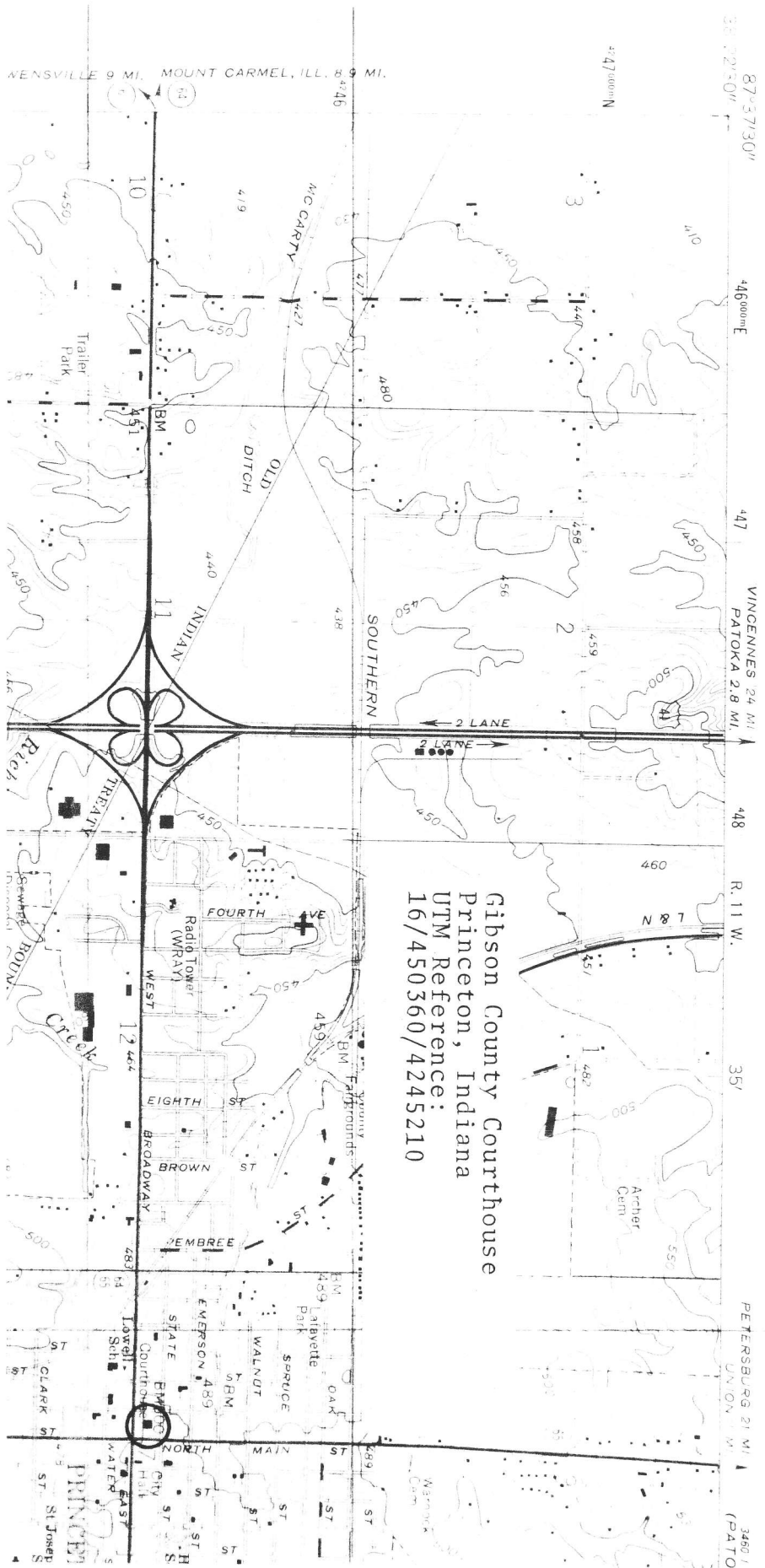
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

(LEAST MOUNT CARMEL)  
3485 1 NW  
36 12 30 04

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



Gibson County Courthouse  
Princeton, Indiana  
UTM Reference:  
16/450360/4245210

WENSVILLE 9 MI. MOUNT CARMEL, ILL. 8 47 46

87° 37' 30" W  
46 00 00 E  
47  
VINCENNES 24 MI  
PATOKA 2.8 MI  
48  
R. 11 W.  
35  
PETERSBURG 21 MI  
UNION W. MI  
3485 1 (PATO)