

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Clay County Courthouse  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ 021-063-13147

**2. Location**

street & number Bounded by U.S. 40, Harrison, Jackson, and Alabama Streets N/A  not for publication  
city or town Brazil N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Clay code 021 zip code 47834

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ 7/26/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	4	objects
2	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls STONE: Limestone

roof SYNTHETICS: Rubber

other METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1914-1948

Significant Dates

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gaddis, John W.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Preservation Association of Clay County

Clay County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Clay IN  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.9

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6	4	8	9	6	5	0	4	3	7	4	8	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

3 

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

2 

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

4 

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

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glory-June Greiff, Consulting Historian

organization Preservation Association of Clay County date 7/24/98

street & number 1753 South Talbott telephone 317-637-6163

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Clay County Commissioners

street & number 609 East National Avenue telephone 812-448-9001

city or town Brazil state IN zip code 47834

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Clay County Courthouse  
Clay County, Indiana

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**Narrative Description**

The Clay County Courthouse stands on the south side of US 40 (National Avenue), east of downtown Brazil. The Classical Revival building dominates a rectangular block that also contains a number of small memorials and several large trees on the west side. Flanking the main (north) entrance walk are two Civil War era canons mounted on replicated wooden wheels. To the northwest of the entrance, opening onto the sidewalk along the highway, is a small octagonal building of blue glazed tile which serves as a World War II memorial (photo 1). To the northeast of the courthouse is a Korean War era F-86 fighter jet (tail visible in photo 2), and northwest of the plane is a granite bench that is a memorial to those who fought in the Vietnam War. The courthouse square lies along a mostly commercial strip on US 40. Behind it, to the south, is the police headquarters and a parking lot.

The limestone courthouse rises three stories over a raised basement (see photos 3 and 4). It has a flat roof with gables ending in broken pediments above entrances on all four sides. Each pediment has a bracketed, raking cornice and contains a round clock face within its tympanum. The tympanum contains a triangle of acanthus decoration surrounding each clock face. A multi-tiered parapet runs between the four pediments along the entire building. Centered on the roof is a two story dome, the drum of which consists of twelve windows to light the stained glass skylight below. The dome's roof is covered with copper sheeting and topped with a finial. The windows flanking the central bays on each facade differ in style from floor to floor. The third story windows are topped by triangular pediments and rest on projecting sills. Second story windows stand between projecting cornices and projecting sills, while windows on the bottom floor are simply framed by a shouldered trims and sills. While the window openings remain unchanged, the present wood fixed sashes with awning windows are not original. However, the county plans to restore the windows to their original appearance. (The originals were one-over-one double hung wooden sashes.)

Although the four elevations are quite similar to one another with distinctive pedimented central bays, the north facade is the most elaborate (photo 3). The three central bays, with double windows and a double door entrance in the middle, are recessed beneath the pediment and

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Clay County, Indiana

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separated by four fluted Corinthian columns standing three stories high. The columns support an entablature in whose frieze is inscribed "CLAY COUNTY COURT HOUSE". The south facade (see photo 4) is very similar to the north except that all the windows are single, the central bays are not recessed as deeply, and there is no entablature inscription. The entrance steps also do not extend across the entire central section as they do along the north facade.

The east and west facades (photos 4 and 2) are identical, save for the addition of a very long handicapped entrance ramp on the west. Over the entrance on each side stands a balustraded one story portico supported by double sets of columns with Greek key capitals. The four projecting central bays are separated above the portico by engaged Corinthian pilasters. The central portion is flanked by three bays on either side, like on the north and south facades. While the west facade is set off by an expansive, tree-filled lawn, the east facade crowds the edge of Harrison Street, which functions more as a driveway and boundary of the parking lot immediately east.

The interior boasts a rotunda topped by a colorful octahedral dome of stained glass (photo 5). The floors are mosaic tile in bright patterns. On the first floor beneath the dome the tiles form the words "CLAY COUNTY" within a rectangle. On the west side are two sets of curving marble stairs with decorative metal balustrades (see photo 6). Marble balustrades also surround the open spaces, which are flanked by Ionic columns, on the upper floors overlooking the atrium. The halls feature original brass light fixtures, marble wainscoting, and mahogany veneer trim surrounding the office entrances. Most of the original doors, with their transoms, remain in place.

The first floor, while dominated by the entrance areas, nonetheless contains several offices, most of which are still in their original spaces. The treasurer's office in the northwest corner retains its original marble counters with brass grilles and a large built-in vault with bronze workings. Also on the first floor are the offices of the commissioners, the auditor, and the recorder, as well as sizable rest room areas. The second floor contains a large "Convention Hall" (with its original platform and maple floors) on the west, plus the offices of the surveyor, the sheriff, the clerk, and the county co-op. The third floor contains the courtrooms, as well as offices for the prosecuting attorney and corrections. The Superior Court -- originally the Grand Jury Room -- on the west is

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relatively small and unimposing. The circuit court on the east boasts a lavish space -- restored in the 1980s -- featuring a recessed arch behind the judge's bench containing a mural depicting a Roman court scene. Above is a small stained glass skylight. The bench and attorneys' tables are separated from the observers by a divider of decorative grillwork. The furnishings in the room appear to be original. The hardwood floor is presently hidden by carpet. Overall, the public spaces of the courthouse remain largely intact, while the most altered areas tend to be those seen only by courthouse staff.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

The Clay County Courthouse is a fine example of the Classical Revival genre and among the most imposing buildings in Brazil. It is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a locally outstanding example of Neo-Classical design, and for its association with important Indiana architect John W. Gaddis. As the visual representation of the government of Clay County, it is also eligible under Criterion A in the area of politics and government.

Trained in engineering and architecture at the University of Illinois, John W. Gaddis (1856-1931) practiced out of Vincennes, Indiana. Prior to his designing the Clay County Courthouse, Gaddis had successfully completed several other courthouses. These include courthouses in Fairfield and Robinson, Illinois, Perryville, Missouri, and the Putman County Courthouse and Huntington County Courthouse in Greencastle and Huntington, Indiana, respectively.

Clay County (named for national statesman Henry Clay) was established in 1825, with the county seat in newly platted Bowling Green. The first courthouse, a two story log structure, was built about two years later. It soon proved inadequate, and was replaced by a larger two story brick building in 1839, which burned down twelve years later. Even though clamor had arisen to move the county seat to a more accessible location, a third courthouse, very similar to that which had burned, was built in Bowling Green. Meanwhile, the northern part of the county, which had

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ranking members of the Free and Accepted Order of Masons officiated at an ornate cornerstone laying ceremony on November 19, 1912. The lengthy program included a parade, several musical interludes, and numerous speeches.

Undoubtedly slowed by beginning in winter, construction of the monumental building nonetheless proceeded. Despite some delays in material deliveries and the death of the on-site architect's superintendent midway through the project, the work went on. Eighteen months to the day after the laying of the cornerstone, the commissioners accepted the completed courthouse on May 19, 1914, and county officials began moving their records into the new building. The buildings stood so close to each other that many of the records were simply handed over through the windows. The transfer was quickly accomplished, and demolition of the old courthouse began only a week later. (The eagle that once graced the cupola was spared and donated to the Brazil Eagles Aerie. Today it sits on a pedestal at the corner of US 40 and State Road 59.) Once the rubble of the past had been cleared, the county celebrated its new courthouse with a festive dedication on September 3, 1914. Like with the laying of the cornerstone, the day featured a parade, music, and oratory, including a congratulatory speech by Governor Samuel Ralston, who had spent part of his boyhood in Clay County.

The courthouse has served Clay County as its government center for over eighty years. In 1945, The Clay County American Legion Post 2 constructed a memorial to those from the county who served and died in World War II. The memorial created is an unusual octagonal building faced with locally produced glazed tile in shades of blue. Erected on the front lawn of the courthouse, it joined two pieces of Civil War field artillery that had been given to Clay County at the behest of Congressman Elias S. Holliday. Later, a F-86 fighter jet that had flown in the Korean War was placed on the west lawn as a memorial. Nearby, a granite bench has been placed by the American Legion and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars post to commemorate servicemen who died in Vietnam.

Despite changes to the windows -- on which restoration is planned -- the Clay County Courthouse maintains a high degree of integrity. In 1986, a grassroots fundraising effort resulted in the restoration of the stained glass skylight above the rotunda. That project led to the



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been growing rapidly since the opening of the National Road in the 1830s, began to boom with the coming of the railroad in the 1850s. Established in 1858, Brazil especially flourished through its advantageous service to both the road and the railroad.

The movement to relocate grew louder and more rancorous by the 1870s, finally resulting in the county seat's removal to Brazil. The county's fourth courthouse was constructed there in 1877. The Clay County records were carried from Bowling Green to the new courthouse by wagon. This substantial brick building was two stories above a raised basement and topped with a cupola surmounted by a bronze eagle.

After the turn of the century, the building soon came to be regarded as inadequate and even unsafe, the usual reasons, legitimate or not, given when a new public building is desired. In this case, the courthouse indeed lacked sufficient space for the expanding services offered by county offices and did not have secure storage facilities for county records. Therefore, in 1911, the county commissioners voted to erect a new courthouse building to replace the one that had served the county for less than thirty-five years.

The commissioners awarded the design contract to architect John W. Gaddis, who drew up plans for a courthouse in the Neo-Classical Revival style that had become virtually the norm for county courthouses in Indiana in the early twentieth century. Gaddis was already established as a highly reputable architect, having secured private, commercial, and public contracts throughout southern Illinois and Indiana. Among his notable designs are the American National Bank (1917) and Bernhard Kuhn residence in Vincennes, the Hanna-Prevo Block (1909) in Greencastle, and the Daviess County Orphanage and Hospital (1893), as well as the courthouses in Putnam (1905) and Huntington (1906) Counties. Although originally awarded to a different firm, ultimately the commissioners awarded the building contract to Bailey and Koerner of Louisville, Kentucky. The new courthouse was to stand at the far end east of the courthouse square immediately adjacent to the existing building, which would be demolished after the county offices were moved. (This helps explain why the present courthouse is "off center" and lies virtually on the edge of Harrison Street on the east with an expansive lawn on the west.) As was typical, high-

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installation of a clock in each of the four pediments, thus fulfilling, over seventy years later, the architect's original plan. The Clay County Courthouse is clearly eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places on the basis of its architecture and its role as the temple housing the county's government and, indeed, its identity.

## Bibliography

Brazil Times, 1912-1914.

"Clay County Courthouse" files, Preservation Association of Clay County.

Laying of the Cornerstone of Clay County Courthouse, Program, 19 November 1912.

Ratio Architects, "Comprehensive Preservation Study for Clay County Courthouse." [n.d.]

Travis, William, A History of Clay County, Volume 1, Chicago, 1909.

## Verbal Boundary Description

Bounded on the north by the southern edge of National Avenue (US 40); on the east by the western edge of Harrison Street; on the south by the northern edge of Jackson Street; on the west by the eastern edge of Alabama Street

## Boundary Justification

The boundary is the historic boundary of the present courthouse square.