

FINAL

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 Fulton County Courthouse  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ 049-544-21036

2. Location

street & number 815 Main Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Rochester N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code \_\_\_\_\_ county Fulton code 049 zip code 46975

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 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	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
4	4	objects
5	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

0

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)

Romanesque

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

STONE

walls

STONE

roof

TERRA COTTA

other

METAL: steel

Narrative Description

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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

- building, district, site, structure, object

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values range from 0 to 5.

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

foundation STONE

walls STONE

roof TERRA COTTA

other METAL: steel

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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL HISTORY \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1895-1950 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1895-1896 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

A.W. Rush & Son, Architect \_\_\_\_\_

I.P. Gibson, Builder \_\_\_\_\_

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Fulton County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Fulton  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property**    less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1    

1	6
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5	6	5	1	2	0
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4	5	4	6	9	6	0
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Zone

Easting

Northing

3    

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Zone

Easting

Northing

2    

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4    

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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    Judy K. Cowling, historic preservation specialist

organization    Preservations by Cowling for Schmidt Associates, Inc.    date    4/24/00

street & number    504 S. Main St.    telephone    765-661-6189

city or town    Fairmount    state    Indiana    zip code    46928

## 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    Fulton County Commissioners

street & number    \_\_\_\_\_    telephone    \_\_\_\_\_

city or town    \_\_\_\_\_    state    \_\_\_\_\_    zip code    \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

### Narrative Description:

The rusticated stone Romanesque Revival style four story Fulton County Courthouse was constructed in 1895–1896 of buff Bedford limestone.<sup>1</sup> The site occupies an entire block in Rochester's central downtown business district. (See photos 1 and 2.) The building sits atop a slight rise; stone coping with regularly placed short, caped piers separates the lawn from the sidewalk. The approach to the Courthouse is via very broad walks, transcending the rise on the lower series of steps to a second sidewalk surrounding the Courthouse. (See photos 1, 2, 4, 9.) The lower level steps are flanked by low curved stone walls and short capped piers. (See photos 1, 2, 3, 4, 9.) The above grade entry on the west, north and south elevations is reached by climbing an upper series of broad steps. The entry on the east elevation is slightly below grade. A large carved stone lion, sitting on a pedestal, is centered on the lower level steps on all four elevations. (See photos 3 and 4.)

The building's cross-hall plan, surmounted by a central bell and clocktower appears to have a central projecting entry on each elevation except the east. A stone cornice surrounds the building at the level of each floor. The very decorative pressed cornice at the roofline incorporates a gutter system. (See photo 5.) It is finished in the manner specified by Rush: "Exposed metalwork, such as cornices, copings, belts, etc., will be painted and finished to correspond with the color of the stone used and must be sanded. Downspouts must be built into the walls."<sup>2</sup> The original roof specification was for Bangor Pennsylvania slate. The slate was removed during the rehabilitation work in the 1960s and replaced with asphalt shingles. Subsequently the current tile roof replaced the asphalt. Darkly colored aluminum frame, sash and insulated glass units, installed in the 1970s replaced the original windows. The exterior transom openings were filled with metal panels. (See photo 8.)

Each elevation of the building is different, and based on variations of a cross gable containing a small arched window in the peak. The east and west large, Romanesque-arched stone entries are unique, and the north and south rough-faced stone Romanesque-arched entries are identical.

The clock tower, with pyramidal roof and colonettes at the corners, presents an identical design on each elevation. (See photo 5.) Small through-the-cornice cross-gables each have one central window above a bank of four windows and a heavy horizontal stone course below. Nestled behind the windows is the original courthouse bell that still tolls every 15 minutes, more or less. Also original to the courthouse is the Seth Thomas clock and works. (See photo 6.) An identical clock face is centered on each elevation of the tower between two engaged columns. A little face stares out on the courthouse lawn from the base of each column. The tower terminates in a bank of three windows and heavy belt course.

The west elevation is the primary entrance. The upper level steps, leading to the massive arched entrance of the projecting central pavilion, span the space between two flanking conical towers. Four set backs (in order from the furthest projecting point: towers, entry pavilion, main block and side walls of the north and south pavilions), give this a more three dimensional appearance than the other three elevations that have three set backs. (See photo 7.) The graduated, dressed stone arch, edged with dentils, surmounts replacement entry doors and transoms. Somewhat Sullivanesque stone acanthus carving ornaments the arch surround and cartouches flank the arch. A band of lacy shell-like ornamentation is the impost. Stone banding, beginning at the imposts, continues all the way around to the walls of the north and south pavilions and is the sill for all the second story windows. A similar continuous band is beneath the third story windows. At grade, the two tower windows and the two windows of the main block are rectangular. Tall rough-faced stone lintels form a continuous band above the windows. The second story windows, three on each tower and two on the main block, are rectangular. The transom openings are closed with a solid aluminum panel, as are all the exterior window transom openings. The third story windows are rectangular with double transoms

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

in the tower and single transoms in the main block. The three windows in the gable pavilion have rectangular transoms while the upper transoms of the three windows in each tower and two in each side of the main block have linked stone arches. The towers have a pressed metal cornice, embossed with a water leaf motif and the each tower roof is capped with a finial. (See photo 8.)

Rush designed the east elevation as the service entrance, including the hard-surface coal delivery drive. (See photo 1.) It was this drive that was adapted to provide the Courthouse with ADA accessibility. This asymmetrical elevation flourishes with multiple rooflines, two rectangular "towers" of different heights, and a polygonal stone chimney. (See photo 3.) The weight of the nearly single-plane, massive projecting central pavilion, unembellished stone and the smallest arched entry on the building carries through Richardson's philosophy that ornamentation supports use. The east was the primary entry for prisoners and delivery of supplies. The lower level steps connect an adjacent hard-surface parking lot with the grade-level entry under the massive, unadorned, rough-faced stone arch. Six rectangular windows punctate the walls at grade: two are on each side of the door of the pavilion and one window is on the each side of the main block. A band under the second floor windows forms the sill of the central triple windows, single lateral windows and single main block windows; all have rectangular transoms. The variable height of the third register gives the east elevation its primary visual interest. Centered on the east elevation, but in the lower left corner of the off-center gable, a segmental arched triple window has a rough-faced stone surround. Its stone sill is slightly lower than the stone sill and banding on the remainder of the east elevation. Four arched-transomed rectangular windows complete the third story: one on the right of the pavilion, one on the north end of the main block, and a pair of windows on the south end of the main block. The upper register windows of the gable are identical to the ones on the other elevations, and were described above. A polygonal chimney sits atop a square base, just lateral to the south terminus of the gable. It is the vertical alignment of the lateral windows and the hipped roofs that suggests the end towers of the pavilion.

The south elevation presents with a central-projecting, gabled, entry pavilion with the mass of the main block behind. (See photos 1, 2, 9.) Small, carved stone lions flank the final flight of exterior steps, and scroll buttresses gracefully connect the lions' plinth walls to the exterior walls. (See photo 11.) The entrance itself is recessed into the main arch, and has replacement doors and transoms. The massive entry arch is linked to two smaller, lower crowned arches, holding windows. At grade rectangular windows are below each flanking window. Belt courses of decorative, somewhat Sullivanesque acanthus ornament run across at the impost level. (See photo 11.) Each corner of the first floor has a buttress set parallel to the front wall. The second floor of the entry pavilion begins with a dressed stone belt forming continuous window sills. The outside corners are decorated with little stone carved stone lion heads. (See photo 10.) A triple window arcade of dressed voussoirs is centered in the wall, flanked by single, dressed stone arched windows. Tourelles with conical stone caps mark the corners at this stage. Windows of the third level of the gable sit upon a continuous dressed stone sill. A rectangular window is centered in the upper gable end, flanked by narrow rectangular windows. A single arched window is centered on the highest point of the gable. The parapet coping of the gable is of dressed limestone.

Set back perhaps 10 feet from the front gabled entry pavilion are the flanking corners of the main block. Each corner has two openings on each level: rectangular basement windows, transomed first story windows, and round arched third story windows, with linked, dressed stone arches. Dressed stone banding below the second and third floor windows also forms the window sills. The main block has a pressed metal cornice, embossed with a water leaf motif.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Also visible on the south elevation are the south walls of the east and west projecting entry pavilions. The second and third story stone banding continues from the south entry pavilion, except on the east, where the cornice under the hipped roof continues the line. The east wall has a rectangular window at grade and a transomed first story window. On the west wall, the flat wall with a grade level rectangular window and an arched double transomed third story window with dressed stone arch, curves into the west elevation conical tower.

The buttressed north central-projecting gable entry is a mass of rusticated stone arched openings with the mass of the main block behind. The largest change in grade is transcended by five lower level steps and eight upper level steps. Small, carved stone lions flank the upper flight of the exterior steps, and scroll buttresses gracefully connect the lions' plinth walls to the exterior walls, just as on the south elevation. In fact the north elevation is a mirror image of the south elevation except for three elements. First, a small, stone gabled entry porch takes the place of the grade-level window just left of the main entrance. It has one rectangular double-hung window on the north elevation, and a steel door on the east elevation. Second, the three-story "tower" on the east elevation has three vertically placed windows rather than the two visible on the south elevation. All the windows are rectangular. The the second story window has a rectangular transom, and the third story window has an arched transom. Thirdly, the pedimented 1895 corner stone is located at the northeast corner of the main block, just above the first floor stone banding.

### *Interior:*

The cross-hall plan has three public levels (lower, middle and upper), an attic, and a tower. (See photo 12 and illustrations 2, 3 4 and 5.) A partial basement and a partial crawl space comprise the lowest level. Offices of the Assessor and Surveyor occupy the lower floor, and the remaining spaces are for voting rooms, storage, toilets and mechanical equipment. The middle floor has offices of the Treasurer, Auditor, Clerk, Recorder, and County Commissioners. The upper floor contains the courts and associated offices.

Each of the four elevations has an entrance to the courthouse. Exterior concrete steps lead to a vestibule that opens to a landing on the north, south and west elevations. Steps then go down to the lower level or up to the mid level. Vestibules are finished with Champlain marble. The east ADA compliant entrance leads directly through a vestibule to the lower level. There are no associated stairs leading to the middle floor.

All the main corridor stairways are publicly accessible. Double-wide stairs rise from the west entrance to the middle level, and then from the crossing to a landing where the stairs split to the upper level. (See photo 13.) The stairs consist of Italian marble treads and decorative cast iron ornamental risers and ends. (See photo 14.) Ornamental wrought iron balusters and square newels with peaked caps, and quarter sawn white wood handrails complete the original stair. The center aluminum handrail was added for ADA compliance. The underside of the stair from second to third floor is finished with pressed metal panels. (See photo 15.)

Plaster embellishes the vaulting that defines and supports the corridors' crossing on the middle and third floors. Edges of vaults are beaded. Acanthus leaf plaster capitals decorate the massive pillars. (See photos 12 and 16.) Recent paint testing revealed that originally, rather than the ubiquitous off white paint, the corridor walls and ceilings had multicolor stenciling and the cove molding was wood grained. Several demonstration samples have been replicated based on the original colors and patterns. (See photos 17 and 18.) Finishing out the main corridor walls is "No. 1 Tennessee Veined Imperial marble 3'-8" high wainscoting and Tennessee marble bases 8 inches wide."<sup>3</sup> The lower level crossing has structural pillars, but there is no indication of vaulted ceilings nor wainscot. (See photo 19.) The bases are vinyl.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

The floors in the main corridor and middle level offices are terrazzo tiles with Greek key pattern edging. (See photo 20.) In the offices that do not retain the original layout, the Greek key edging is covered by furniture or carpet. Lower level floor is vinyl tile. In the main corridor it is laid in a checkerboard pattern. (See photo 19.) Indicative of general lighting throughout the courthouse, florescent lights are ceiling mounted.

The principal office doors are the original white pine core doors with oak veneer, and a single obscured glass panel above lock rail. Other all-wood doors have six horizontal wood panels. Quarter sawn white oak door and window trim on upper two levels is a series of stepped bands with a frieze and cornice spanning the top of the opening. (See photo 21.) All the middle and upper level woodwork is stained and clear finished, except for the woodwork in the upper level towers (west side of the building), which is painted. (See photo 22.)

When the exterior transoms were filled with darkly colored aluminum panels, the interior transom openings were covered with plaster. (See photo 21.) The window cornice trim was lowered to sit directly on the door trim. When the exterior transoms were filled with darkly colored aluminum panels, the interior transom openings were covered with plaster. (See photo 21.) The trim on the lower lever is a simpler design. The treatment of the interior upper level tower windows are the exception. Painted panels define the original openings. (See photo 22.)

The contract for the wood furniture was let to the Grand Rapids School Furniture Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Among the wood pieces still being used in the Fulton County Courthouse are the decorative customer counters. Each office counter is a different design. In general, the counters are composed of decorated and undecorated panels with embellished engaged "columns/pilasters". Some of the counters have been relocated and reconfigured. Pictured here are the counters in the Recorder's office (photo 20), and the Auditors office (photo 23), the writing bench in the Treasurers office (photo 24), and the rail in the County Commissioners room (photo 25). The Office Specialty Manufacturing Company of Rochester, New York constructed the vaults and metal furniture. (See photo 26)

Fireplaces are extant in the middle floor offices of the Recorder (northwest corner, photo 27), The Auditor (south) and Treasurer (north), the lower floor Assessor office (northwest corner), and the upper floor Circuit Court Judge's Chambers (southeast corner). Their appearance has changed little from Rush's description: "wood mantels, sides and backs of fire places to be lined with fire brick laid up in fire clay mortar. The facing and hearth to be of red unglazed tile."<sup>4</sup>

The 1895 specifications called for chair boards to be placed on all room walls where there is no wainscoting and two-inch picture moldings in all rooms throughout. When the ceilings were lowered in the 1970s, the picture moldings were removed. None of the chair boards were retained. The Circuit Court room does have the original wood flat panel oak wainscoting. (See photo 28.)

Rush's original plans specified one courtroom, the Circuit Court. Since 1896, the Fulton county courthouse has required nonstructural adaptations to cope continuously increasing demands on county services. But, the first adaptation was made before the courthouse was completed. "Short" acoustics in the Circuit Courtroom, required \$1225 in revisions.<sup>5</sup> In 105 years, according to the sitting Circuit Court Judge, Doug Morton, the bench has been placed on three of the four walls of the room in an effort to improve acoustics. Originally, Rush designed the cavernous room with the bench placed between the two towers on the west wall. (See photo 22.) Continuing poor acoustics lead to the present arrangement. The large space was reduced in size by installing partition walls and lowering the ceiling. (See photo 29.) Only parts of two walls (north and east) are original. None of the furnishings are original, however some of the original court office furniture is still used in the building. For example, the bench used in the creation of Superior Court in June 1993 was originally in the Circuit

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7, 8 Page 5

Court Room. (See photo 30.) The Circuit Court Office, a part of the south corridor adapted for this use, contains a desk identical to the one used by Judge Rosemary Higgins Burke in Superior Court. (See photo 31.) Note the arch and door wall at the end of the room. This alteration in the original design is a sympathetic approach to the adaptation of the building. Photo 16 shows the original door (on the right) and the adaptation (on the left) of the corridor for Circuit Court Offices. Public access to the Men's toilet room required a small corridor to the left.

Over the past 105 years, the needs of the county have changed, but very few alterations have been made to the building. The stone was cleaned in 1959. New furniture and carpet were installed in 1965 and 1966. In 1970 the clock was repaired as a result of a lighting strike. The energy crisis of mid 1970s motivated a change in the windows. Aluminum, insulated windows were installed, the transom units removed and the opening closed. Most of the ceilings in the courthouse were lowered. The present red clay tile roof was installed.

<sup>1</sup> References to original materials are based on specifications for the Fulton County Court House dated 1895. The drawings no longer exist. A.W. Rush and Son, J.P. Gibson. Specifications and Contract Fulton county Court House. (Rochester: Rochester Sentinel, 1895).

<sup>2</sup> Rush.....29.

<sup>3</sup>September 1894 - September 1896. Fulton County Commissioner Records, Book N. (Fulton County, Indiana. 21st April, 1896). 470.

<sup>4</sup> Rush.....27.

<sup>5</sup>September 1894 - September 1896. Fulton County Commissioner Records, Book N. (Fulton County, Indiana. 31st January 1896). 470.

**Statement of Significance:**

The Romanesque Revival architecture of the 1896 Fulton County Courthouse and the historical and contemporary role the Courthouse played in the development of government, politics and social history in Rochester and Fulton County, Indiana make it eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in categories A and C. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the second Fulton County Courthouse, built in 1846, was deemed inadequate for the county's needs. The Fulton County commissioners were anxious to promote Fulton County's advantages and assets over those of surrounding counties. Fulton County turned the need for a new courthouse into an opportunity by hiring Architect A. W. Rush and Sons, Grand Rapids, Michigan, to design and builder J.P. Gibson, Logansport, Indiana, to construct the present Fulton County Courthouse. The building has been the center of county government and politics and a landmark in the social development in Fulton County for the last 105 years.

*Historical background and significance:*

The Treaty of 1826, authorizing a road from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River, stimulated white settlement in what is now Fulton County. Within one year of the treaty, folk moved near Manitou Lake facilitating trade with and providing services to the Potawatomi tribe of Native Americans, fulfilling the terms of Article 3 of the Treaty of 1826 for "a blacksmith and mill to be provided at some convenient point"<sup>1</sup>. William Polke was one of three people commissioned to survey and oversee the construction of the Michigan Road. Before moving to northern Indiana, he worked on the southern and central sections of the road. Polke, the first white settler in the area, moved to the south bank of the Tippecanoe River where it crosses the Michigan Road. There he built the first frame house on the Michigan Road north of the Wabash River and settled with his family. Others came to the vicinity, and the settlement grew to twenty residents over the next four years. A bridge built on the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

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Michigan Road over the Tippecanoe River, facilitating travel, influenced Rochester's development in 1835.

Alexander Chamberlin and Lot Bozarth initiated steps to establish a town.<sup>2</sup> 1835 brought the first survey and plat of Rochester. This act motivated others to plat areas nearby, all land was adjacent to the Michigan Road. Fulton County was recognized by the Indiana State Legislature on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1836. Within three months, Rochester, the geographical heart of the county, became the county seat and early county government organized. Unfortunately, by early 1836, funding for the development of the northern Michigan Road fell precipitously; Indiana's priority for infrastructure development shifted from roads to railroads, focusing on area to the south of Indianapolis. Consequently, on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1837, that stretch of the Michigan road now in Fulton County was transferred to local control, thus absolving the state of Indiana of any further responsibility. At that time, the road was "almost impassable". Obviously, the condition of the Michigan Road had not improved since Polke's description of the northern third of the road in 1834, "heavy use and transport injured the road before it became sufficiently settled for carriages to pass with ease and facility."<sup>3</sup> The road was divided into districts, and supervisors appointed to guide further development of the road. This and other county political and legal business lead to the need for the first Fulton County Courthouse in 1837. Although the Michigan Road was incomplete, its location divided Native American lands and thus their sense of community. This facilitated the removal of Native Americans on the Trail of Death in 1838.<sup>4</sup>

County development continued with the organization of townships in 1838. Need for a larger Fulton County courthouse was recognized in 1844 resulting in the two story brick and stone Federal style courthouse completed 1846. County politics and government developed simultaneously with the growth of the county's population and commerce. The county has grown by nearly 2,000 residents since the courthouse was constructed in 1896, placing increasing demands on Fulton County's resources. For example, the 1836 jail was replaced with a brick sheriff's residence and jail in 1893, and in 1983 a modern County Law Enforcement Center was constructed adjacent to the Courthouse Square.

The economic and social need to transport people and goods required travel via the Michigan road to Michigan City or Logansport. Such demanding travel stimulated the location of four rail-lines through Rochester linking the city with Indianapolis, Cincinnati and Chicago. The Fulton County Commissioners actively sought a railroad in December 1864, setting county funds aside for the project. Over the next 38 years, the Indianapolis, Rochester and Chicago Rail Road Company, the Chicago and Atlantic, the Terre Haute & Logansport Railroad Company and the Cincinnati, Richmond & Muncie Rail Roads were constructed to serve Rochester, Indiana. The railroad companies changed names and owners many times, but at the behest of the Fulton County government, the rail service facilitated the profitability of agricultural and industrial enterprises.

Fueling debate or supporting politicians in the local multi-party political system, rival Republican and Democratic newspapers leapt on the bandwagon to support their respective party's triumphs or blatantly berate the political opposition at every perceived opportunity. The *Rochester Weekly Republican* rented a room in the second courthouse, but was displaced when the courthouse was demolished in preparation for the third and present building. The population/residents were proud of the 1896 courthouse, its size, stature, and quality while deriding every subsequent decision made by the county Commissioners and every payment request by the builder. The running commentary on the present courthouse offers a unique view of the charged political atmosphere surrounding the construction. The points of distress are based largely on the cost overruns for the new courthouse: Seth Thomas clock, cutting down trees for a better view of the building, changes to the entrance because of a problem with the sewer, change in the design of the steps, grading of the site, lion stone carvings, and the stone coping around the yard. Even the purchase of reference law books was a source of

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 7

consternation. However, the laying of the cornerstone, September 1895 was covered by the Sentinel with great celebration. The ceremony was planned by the Masons and included regional dignitaries. Displeasure of the community continued when cannons, procured by GAR from Governor's Island New York Arsenal, and placed on the lawn in August 1897, were perceived to be out of scale with the building. They were donated for scrap iron during World War II.

The courthouse was a gathering place for public displays of patriotism, community spirit and unity, and to rally political support. Photographing uniformed servicemen on the courthouse lawn or steps before being sent off to war was a tradition. In 1907, the 87<sup>th</sup> Indiana Regiment commemorated the anniversary of Chickamauga at the Fulton County Courthouse. The Grand Army of the Republic held many reunions and ceremonies at the courthouse. That Williams Jennings Bryan drew a huge crowd on the lawn during a stump speech shortly after the courthouse was finished is documented in a photograph in the Rochester Sentinel.<sup>5</sup> The courthouse served as a place of public oration for Indiana Governor J. Frank Hanley in November 1906, and later for then Vice President Richard Nixon in October 1959. Non-political community events were also common occurrences at the courthouse. The lawn was the site of weekly band concerts and young boys gathered often for pick-up games of football on Saturdays. Gum burnings were a twenty year tradition, beginning in the 1880s, as a celebratory act by the winning party in presidential elections. This tradition carried over to the celebration of high school sports victories, particularly in basketball, until the late 1930s. The celebration of burning gum tree stumps, in this case along Main Street, accompanied by speeches and sometimes a parade, drinking, shouting, and on occasion fisticuffs is an old Indiana tradition.

The courthouse fulfills many of the same rolls now. The 1995 Courthouse centennial celebration focused on the time capsule placed in the cornerstone in 1895. The items in the metal box are on exhibited in the lower level of the courthouse. A new time capsule in a commemorative stone was placed on the courthouse lawn with great festivity. State Representative Mike Smith, up for re-election, held a Town meeting with his political constituency in the Commissioners' Room February 2000. Memorials dot the lawn: Rochester Normal University (1895 - 1912), Potawatomi Trail of Death (monument erected in 1995 by Fulton County Historical Society), Fulton County War Memorial, War Memorial to Civil war, WWI, WWII, Korea, Viet Nam (erected 29<sup>th</sup> May 1989 by American Legion and VFW) The courthouse has been the logo for the Rochester retail merchants association since 1994.

The county seat, in its position as a local government center, brought people from all over the county into town to pay taxes, attend court, petition the commissioners, many for the building of roads, and transact legal business. Many of the constituents lingered in town and spent money. In 1883, Rochester's population of 4,500 supported 16 attorneys, 19 dentists and physicians. Services were provided by 3 banks, 12 insurance agents, 3 title abstractors and 6 loan agents. Local business included specialties such as four tailors, three tin shops, and 25 sources of food, including 10 groceries, seven restaurants, seven meat markets and a wholesale grocer. Employment was available not only in retail, but also in an ice cream factory or hotels, or for grain elevators. Gibson employed mostly "home workmen" in the construction of the courthouse, which was a boost to the economy. Two bookstores, two photo galleries and an opera house with an Academy of Music and two bands fed the cultural needs of the community. Organized religious and community life included eight churches and 16 lodges. Education was a priority demonstrated by two public schools and Rochester Normal University.

In summary, among the factors that influenced Fulton County's growth and development, its proximity to various modes of transportation is the greatest. First, the Tippecanoe River was limited in terms of long distance travel, but it was important to territory northeast of Rochester and Manitou Lake. Soon the promise

United States Department of the Interior  
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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

of the Michigan Road, although it developed slowly, encouraged settlement and trade. The courthouse played a central role in government and politics as well as being a local landmark. County and township government took an active role in establishing the four rail lines servicing Rochester. Steady growth and development of Rochester placed demands on county resources and services that strongly influenced the replacement of each previous courthouse with one larger and grander.

### *Architecture*

Fulton County's three county courthouses followed popular trends in architecture with a 1837 log cabin, a 1846 Federal-style building, and the 1896 Romanesque Revival-style building. When the county government needs outgrew space of the second courthouse, the Commissioners looked at courthouses in the surrounding counties for inspiration. The Romanesque Revival style was very popular in Indiana. Between 1886 and 1897, fifteen Indiana county Romanesque Revival courthouses were constructed. Three of these are Rush designs: Pulaski County (1894-1895), Fulton County (1895-1896) and Rush County (1896-1898).

Fulton County commissioners traveled to Pulaski County to see the courthouse while under construction. The work of the designer, A. W. Rush of Grand Rapids, Michigan, was familiar to the Commissioners when he was chosen to design the Fulton County Courthouse. The builder of the Pulaski County Courthouse, J. P. Gibson of Logansport, Indiana, was chosen for the Fulton County Courthouse as well.

Rush's interpretation of H. H. Richardson's Romanesque Revival style is just what the Fulton County Commissioners wanted for a new courthouse. It is among one of the best examples of the Romanesque Revival style in Indiana. There were some similarities among Rush's three courthouses, but his designs demonstrated a progression in the interpretation of the Romanesque Revival Style popularized by H. H. Richardson. The Pulaski County design is the simplest and the Rush County design the largest and most complex. All three were built of rough-faced limestone and stone carved details. Pulaski and Fulton Counties exterior elevations are asymmetrical. Each elevation is a different design. Pulaski County has twin square towers, while the twin towers on the Fulton County are conical. Rush County's symmetrical design is interpreted in projecting corner towers as well as projecting central entries on all elevations. All three buildings have a tower over the crossing.

The master architect H.H. Richardson, probably the best known architect of his time, undoubtedly influenced A.W. Rush. Richardson's earliest public interpretation of Romanesque Revival style is the Trinity Church of Boston, Massachusetts (1870-1872). The tower over the central crossing is an element present in all Rush's Indiana Courthouse designs. The Allegheny County Courthouse (1884-1888) also had a tower with colonettes, but it was located on the outside face of the façade rather than being centrally located. Colonettes appear on all of the Rush courthouses, but their prominence increases with each subsequent design. Rush also repeated Richardson's technique of horizontally grouping windows. Quarry-faced stone produced a uniform and massive appearance. One hallmark of the Romanesque Revival style employed by Richardson and Rush were the massive arched entries. Richardson seemed to favor granite, sandstone and brownstone. Rush used stone indigenous to Indiana, limestone. Richardson's three part plan of base, midsection and terminating story was also employed by Rush. Richardson believed ornamentation should clarify the use of the building. The carved stone lions on the courthouse may symbolize Fulton County's strength and power.

Wing and Mahurin, architects from Fort Wayne, Indiana (close in proximity to Fulton County), used the Romanesque Revival style for the Fort Wayne City Hall in 1893. Wing and Mahurin's Hancock County Courthouse (1896) was also influenced by Richardson, but built two years after the Fulton County Courthouse, showing the sustaining popularity of the Romanesque Revival Style in northern Indiana. It, too, was built of rock-

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8.9 Page 9

faced stone with a central tower and twin towers flanking the central entry.

The exterior appearance of the building is virtually the same as it was in 1896, but interior has undergone several alterations. In 1975 a new boiler and a new roof were installed. Also, the windows were replaced with darkly colored aluminum sashes. Retaining the transom exterior opening by filling it with a metal panel, and closing the space on the interior and lowering the over-window molding were also done at this time. The original lower level main corridor floor was covered with vinyl tile. Alterations to the Circuit courtroom in the mid 1970s were unsympathetic to its historical design blocking the view of a decoratively painted dome in the center of the room with the lowered acoustic tile ceiling. The large public courtroom entry is hidden from interior view by a partition wall.

<sup>1</sup> General Prather, "The Struggle for the Michigan Road." Indiana History Magazine, (March 1943): 10.

<sup>2</sup> A.L. Kingman. New Historical Atlas of Fulton County, Illustrated. (Kingman Brothers, 1883). 18.

<sup>3</sup> General Prather, "The Construction of the Michigan Road: 1830 - 1840" Indiana History Magazine, (September 1943): 266.

<sup>4</sup> General Prather, "The Struggle for the Michigan Road." Indiana History Magazine, (March 1943): 4.

<sup>5</sup> September 1894 - September 1896. Fulton County Commissioner Records, Book N. (Fulton County, Indiana. 21st April, 1896). 470.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

9, 10, additional  
documentation

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 10

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Rochester Weekly Republican, 12 September 1895.

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The Sentinel. Rochester Indiana, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1975, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1994.

Shirley Willard. 1995 (?) Fulton County's Third Courthouse. Fulton County Historical Society, Fulton County, Indiana.

South Bend Tribune 13<sup>th</sup> May 1975 (alterations to courthouse)

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Bounded by the south curblineline of Main Street, the north curblineline of Madison Street, the east curblineline of 9th Street and the west curbeline of 8th Street.

**Boundary Justification**

The Fulton County Courthouse occupies the entire square block on which it sits. The boundary includes the courthouse, sculpture and county memorials.

**Photo data**

Fulton County Courthouse, Rochester, Indiana

**Negatives:**

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology  
402 West Washington Street, Room 274  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Photographer: Judy Cowling

1. Southeast elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
2. Southwest elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
3. East elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
4. West elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
5. Southeast elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
6. Tower, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
7. West elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
8. West aspect of south tower, west elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
9. South elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
10. Southwest corner, east elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.

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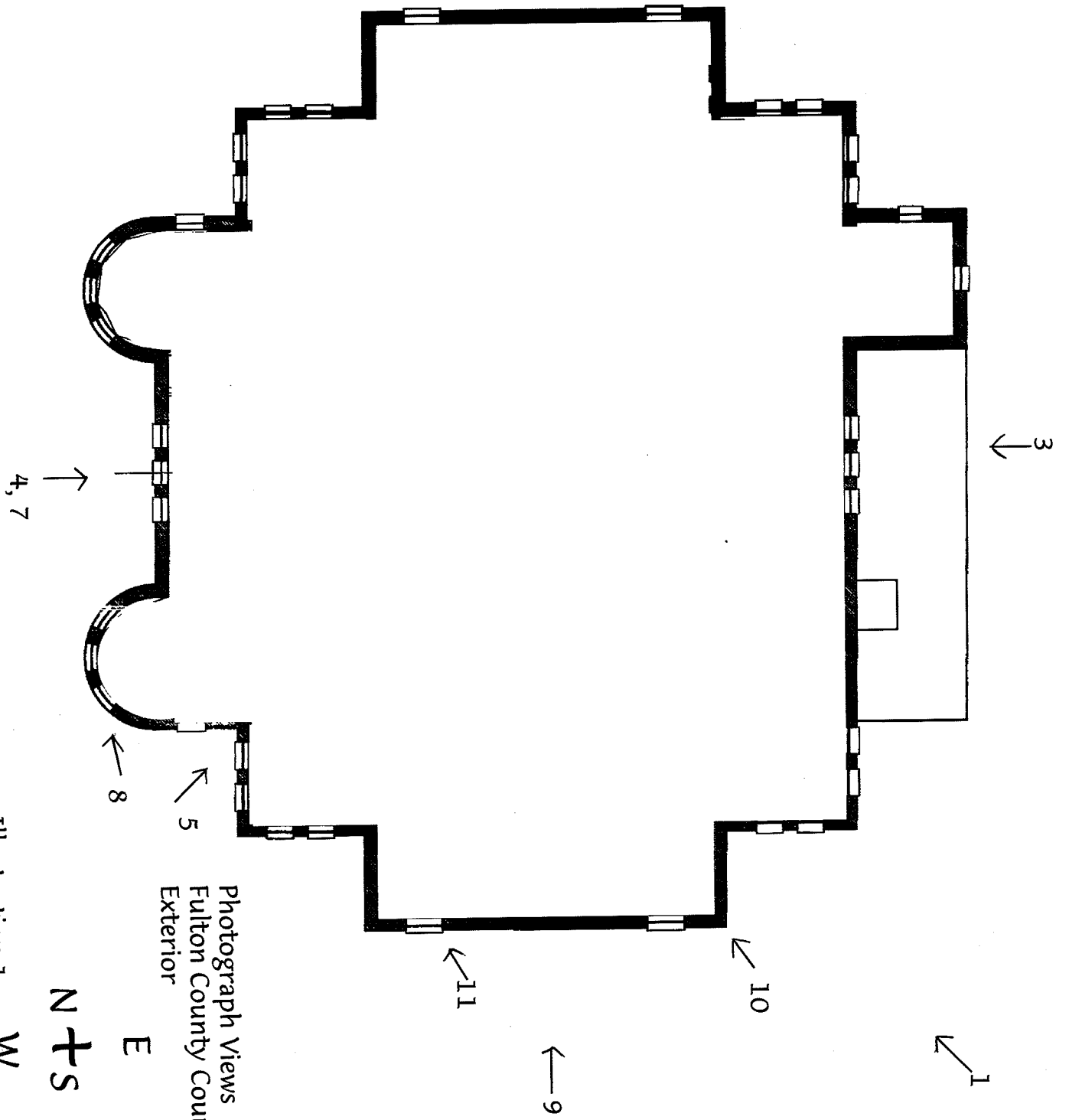
**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

additional  
documentation  
Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 11

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11. West side of entry, east elevation, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2000.
12. Looking northwest on middle level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
13. Looking east on upper level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
14. Looking west on lower level west stairway, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
15. Looking up on middle level east corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
16. Looking southwest on upper level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
17. Looking west on upper level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
18. Looking up on upper level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
19. Looking northeast on lower level main corridor, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
20. Looking northwest in middle level northwest office, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
21. Looking northeast in upper level northwest room, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
22. Looking southwest from southwest door of Circuit Court room, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
23. Looking northwest in lower level northwest office, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
24. Looking north in middle level northeast office, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
25. Looking north-northeast in middle level east office, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
26. Looking west in middle level southeast office vault, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
27. Looking west in middle level northwest office, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
28. Looking southeast in Circuit Court room, west room, upper level, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
29. Looking southwest in Circuit Court room, west room, upper level, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
30. Looking north in Superior Court room, northeast room, upper level, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.
31. Looking north in south corridor (altered for office space), upper level, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2000.



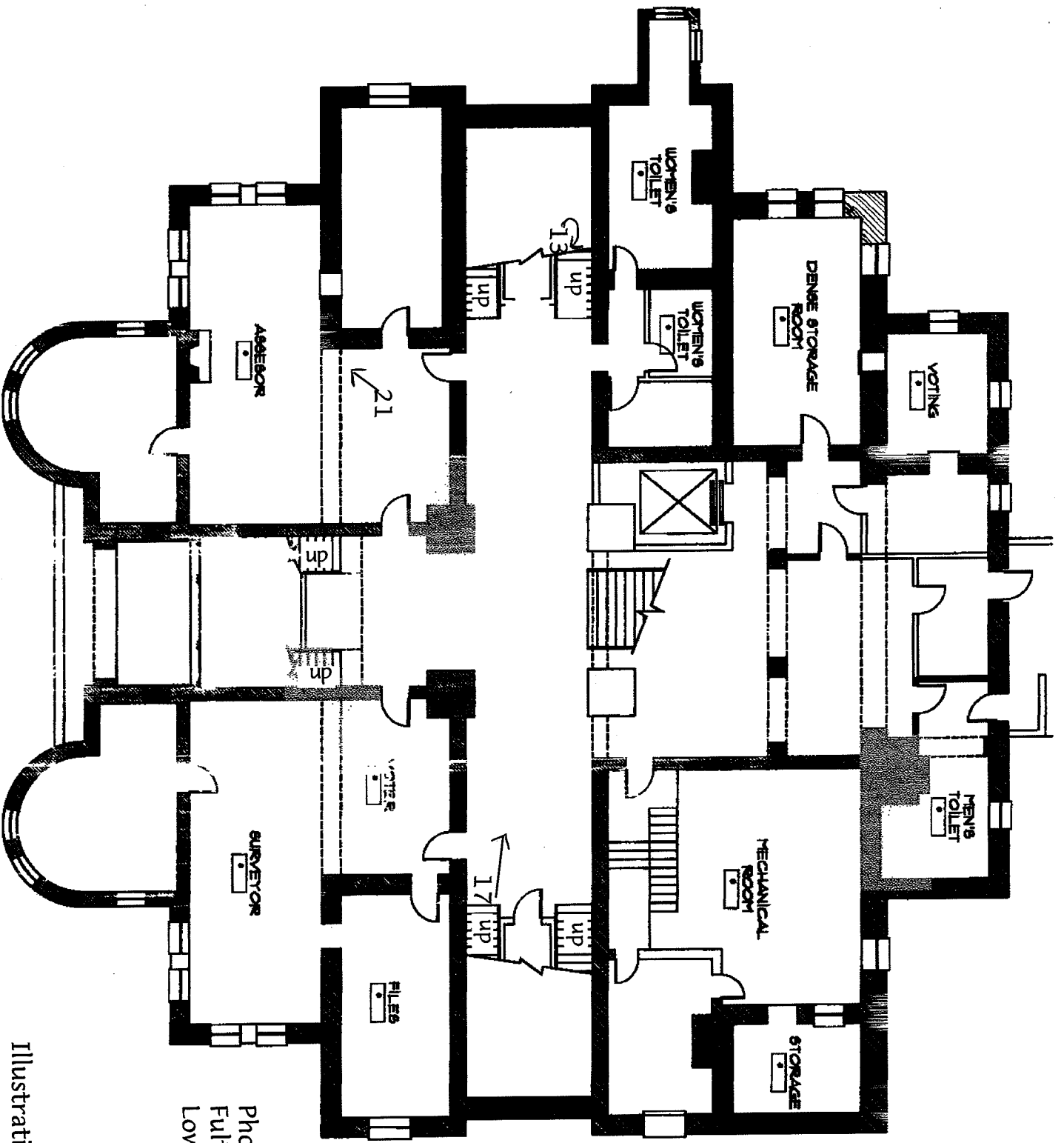


Photograph Views  
 Fulton County Courthouse  
 Exterior

N + S  
 W

Illustration 1

2



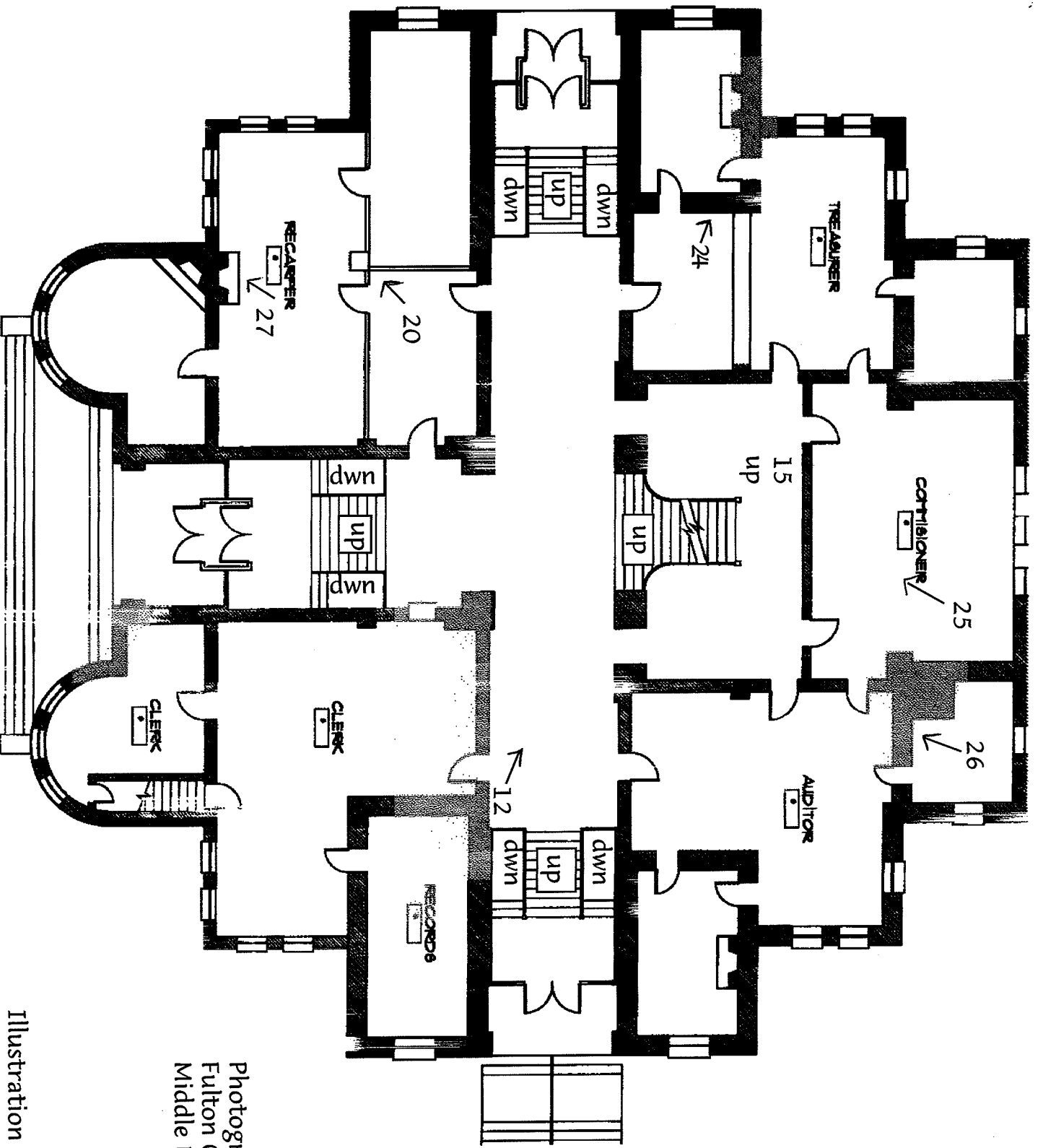
Photograph Views  
 Fulton County Courthouse  
 Lower Level

N + S

E

Illustration 2

W



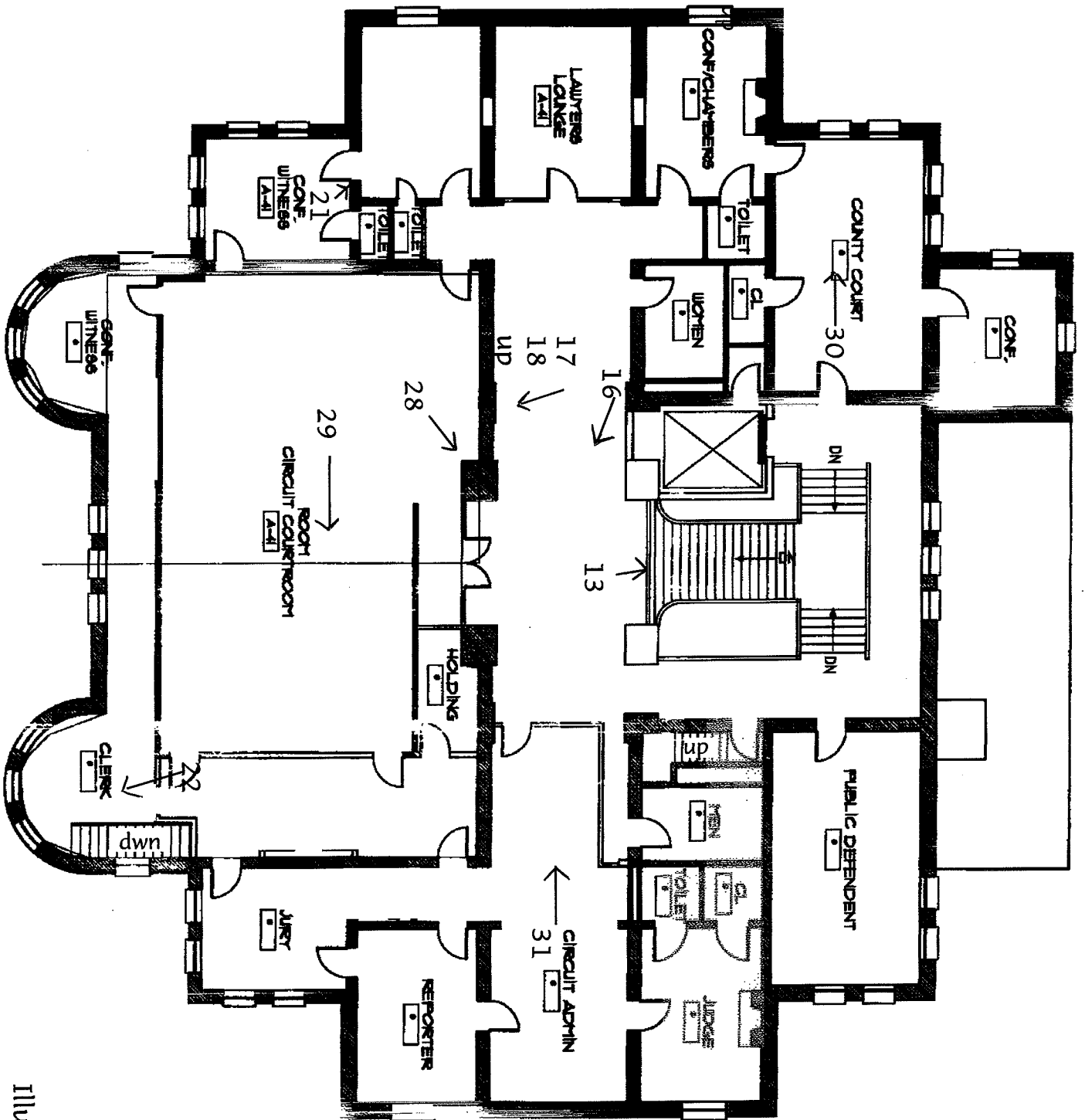
Photograph Views  
 Fulton County Courthouse  
 Middle Level

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N + S

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Illustration 3



Photograph Views  
 Fulton County Courthouse  
 Upper Level

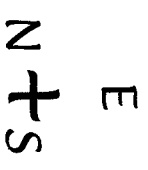
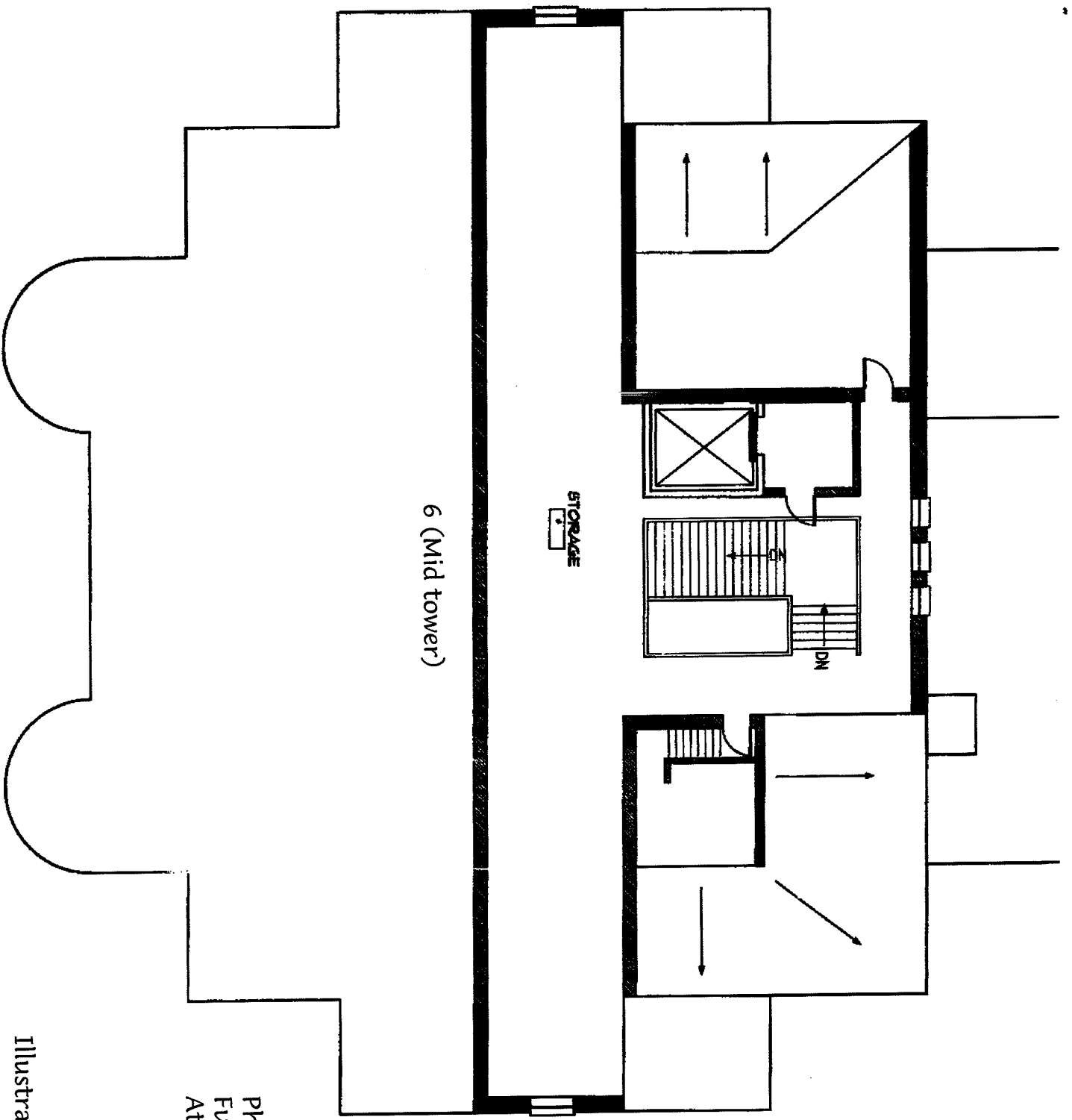


Illustration 4

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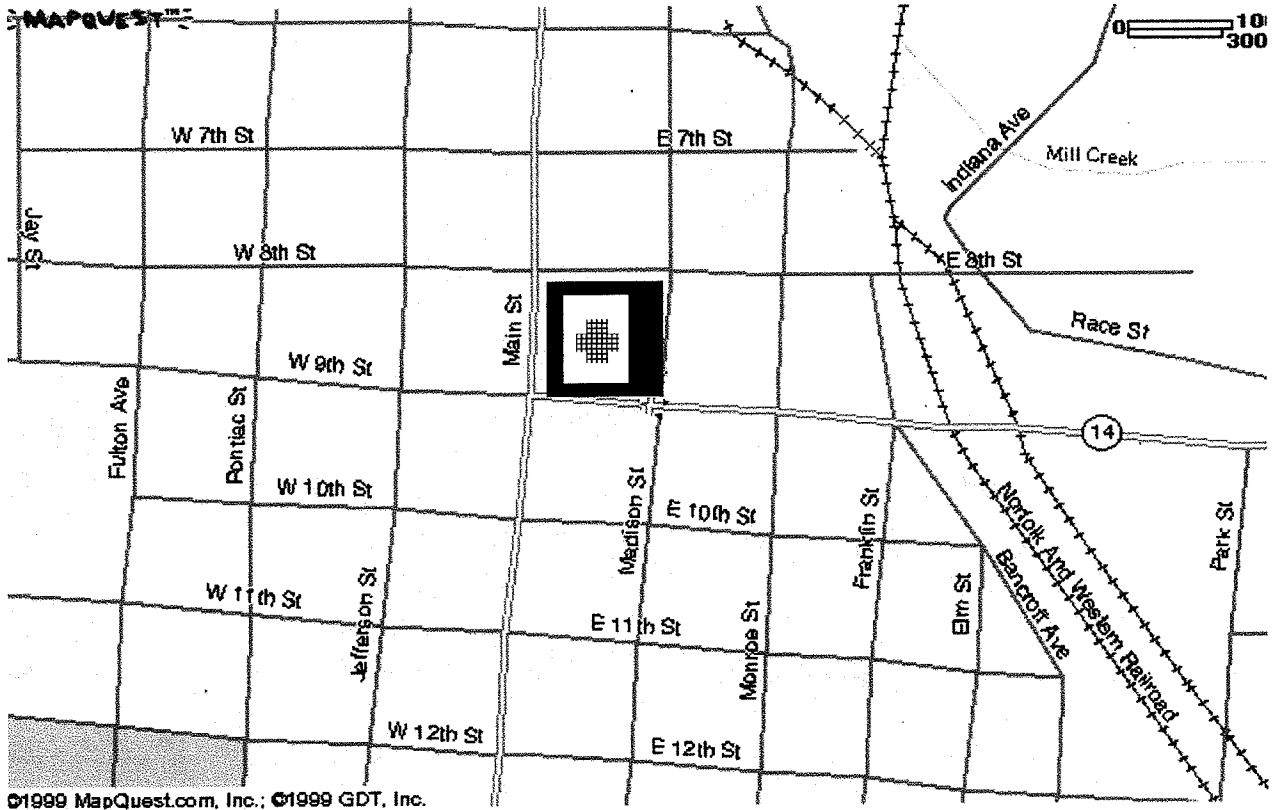
Photograph Views  
 Fulton County Courthouse  
 Attic

N + S




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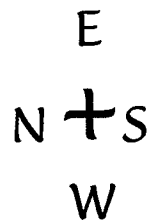
Illustration 5

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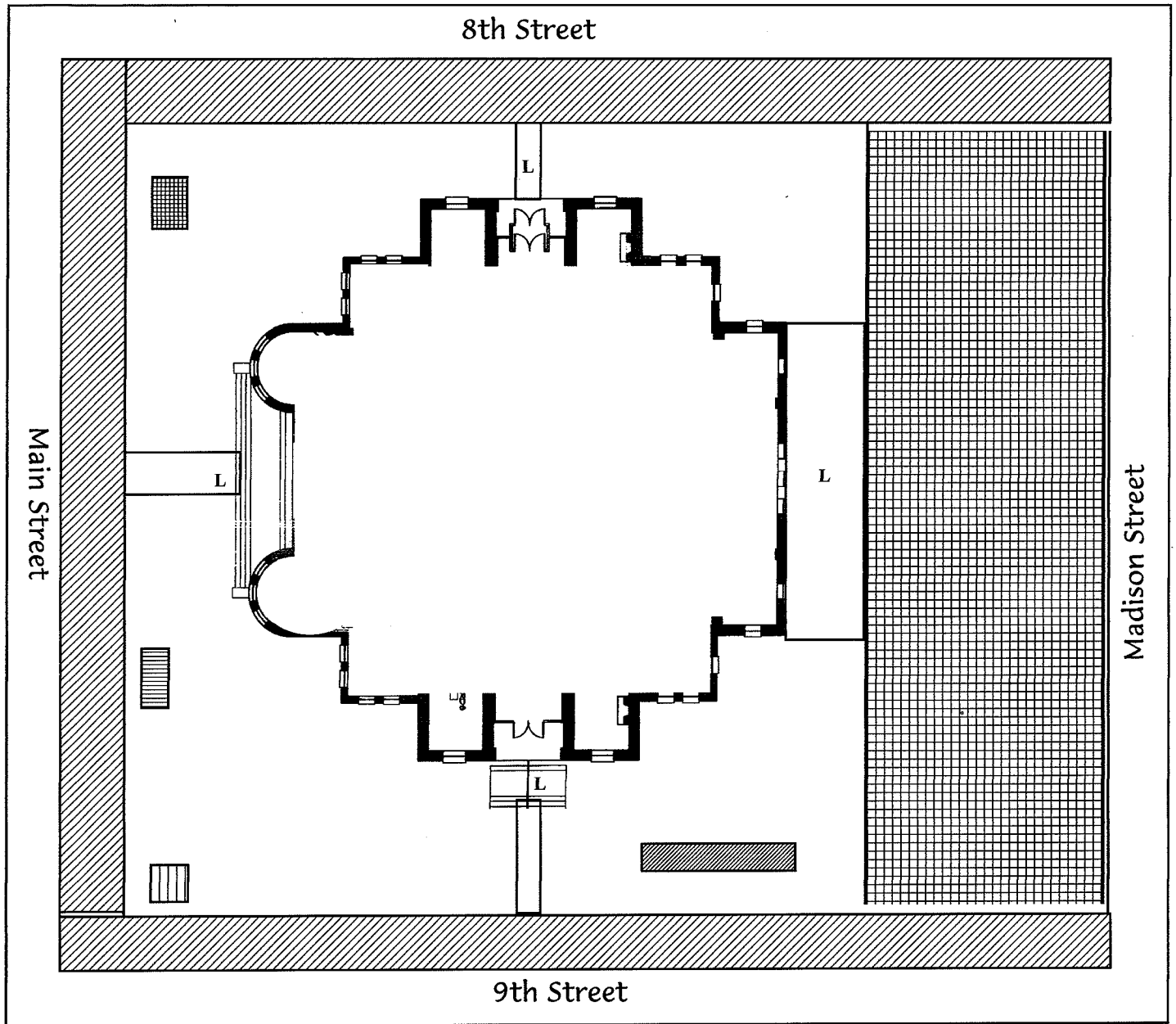


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
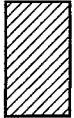
-  FULTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
-  LAWN
-  PARKING

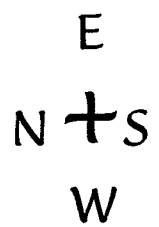


FULTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
 ROCHESTER, INDIANA  
 SITE MAP 1



-  Americal Legion & Veterans of Foreign War War Memorial
-  Rochester Normal University Memorial
-  Potawatomi Trail of Death Memorial
-  Fulton County War Memorial
- L** Stone Lions

-  Parking
-  Sidewalk



Fulton County Courthouse  
Site Map 2