NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

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 **Warren County Courthouse**

other names/site number 171-681-38002

2. Location

street & number 125 North Monroe Street N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Williamsport N/A ☐ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Warren code 171 zip code 47993

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 1/30/08

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:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
☐ 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:)		

Warren County Courthouse
Name of Property

Warren IN
County and State

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
0	5	objects
1	5	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)

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
STONE: Limestone
roof ASPHALT
other TERRA COTTA
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 contriibution 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

Period of Significance

1907-1957

SignificantDates

N/A

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Royer, Joseph W. (architect)
Jahr and Cope (builders)

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:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	475000	4459550
2			
3			
4			

☐ 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 Eliza Steelwater

organization _____ date 09-19-2007

street & number 4541 Stidd Lane telephone 812/ 334-1107

city or town Bloomington state IN zip code 47408

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 Warren County c/o Auditor

street & number 125 N. Monroe St. telephone 765/ 762-3275

city or town Williamsport state IN zip code 47993

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.

7. Narrative Description[1]

SUMMARY

The Warren County Courthouse (built 1907)) is located in the county seat of Williamsport (pop. 1,905 in 2006) in northwest-central Indiana. The formerly agricultural county is sparsely populated, with only four incorporated settlements. Williamsport is laid out along the main street, North Monroe, which retains some zero-lot-line attached business buildings. The Courthouse is sited within 0.6 acre of grounds at the intersection of North Monroe and S.R. 28. The three-story building was designed by architect Joseph W. Royer of Urbana, Illinois, in a rather piecemeal rendition of Italian Renaissance Revival. Its exterior walls are faced with buff brick extensively ornamented with limestone. The base story is rusticated. Each elevation is sectioned into three parts by projecting and receding planes, such that the largest dimensions are approximately 105 by 78 feet. Two principal entries facing the roadways are emphasized by projecting, ornamented heavy piers enclosing a complex glassed doorway. Windows are 1/1 double hung rectangles, placed singly or in joined groups of two or three. The roof line is surmounted by a balustrade, and centered on the flat roof is a hemispherical dome, approximately 40 feet in diameter and 21 feet in elevation, roofed in a prominent red-orange pantile. The exterior appears sound and has few alterations, but the limestone trim at roof level is heavily stained, either by rust or by soot and other air pollution.

Like the exterior, the interior retains a high degree of historical integrity resulting in a period atmosphere. The interior has no stylistic connection with the exterior, being a plain vernacular space organized around cruciform axes. These 15-foot-wide corridors serve as the building's public spaces, with the remainder of the building interior divided by structural masonry walls into offices and other business chambers and rest rooms. Functions of perhaps half these spaces have changed over time. Interior walls are white-painted, plastered structural brick with coved or cove-molded ceilings, except in the courtroom. Retrofitted electrical conduit is prevalent. Corridor walls have a pink marble wainscot, but the courtroom has only a chair rail. Floors in the corridors are tiled with one-inch squares, white with a carpet-like pattern. Floors in the courtroom and offices are mostly carpeted over oak strip flooring. In spite of the carpeting, dropped ceiling, and fluorescent panels, the courtroom—by far the building's largest interior space—is a handsome historical room with fitted furnishings and notable globed lighting fixtures on ceiling, walls, and judge's desktop. The interior as a whole is in good to excellent condition.

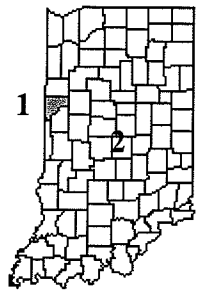
The boundaries of the nominated area contain five non-contributing objects. The exterior and interior of the Courthouse building, unique in the county, are historically and architecturally significant and contributing.

SETTING AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Warren County, 365 square miles in extent, is bounded on the west by the Indiana-Illinois border, on the north by Benton County, on the east by Tippecanoe County, on the south by Vermillion County and (across the Wabash River) Fountain County. Elevations above sea level in the county range from about 750 to 550 feet. Williamsport, 654 feet in elevation at the Courthouse, was formerly located in bottomland beside the Wabash, but moved to the top of a bluff or ridge after the railroad was located there. The Wabash and one of its tributaries running northwest to southeast create

[1] Portions of the Sec. 7 and Sec. 8 narratives are paraphrased or quoted without attribution in two other Courthouse nominations, Fountain and Warren counties, submitted at the same time by the present author.

areas of serrated topography. Most of the county's soil is loess over glacial till, with a band of alluvial and glacial outwash soils along the Wabash River.[2]



Relative locations in Indiana: 1. Warren County. 2. Indianapolis.

Warren County, one of 92 in Indiana, has a population of 8,701, making Warren's population the state's third-smallest. However, the population is expected to increase, probably because of the growth of towns and cities creating more jobs in neighboring counties. There are only four incorporated settlements in Warren County, containing approximately 35 percent of county population. Forty-five percent of job-holders work outside the county, commuting to the Lafayette area (Tippecanoe County) or to Fountain County, which has the larger towns of Attica and Covington, the county seat. In the historically agricultural county of Warren, today about one-third of the work force hold jobs in manufacturing or government, with another 8 percent in retail trade. The number of farm proprietors in 2005 was 402, compared to 1,207 at the start of the Great Depression in 1930.[3]

The county seat, Williamsport (platted 1828), lies just north of the Wabash River at the southeastern edge of the county. Williamsport is laid out along the main street, North Monroe. Near the Courthouse, scattered individual and grouped "main street" buildings, with alterations, continue south-southeast along North Monroe to the railway line, about one-tenth of a mile distant, and continue for a short way across the track. The Courthouse is sited off-center (and skewed slightly west of north) within its 0.6-acre grounds at the intersection of North Monroe and S.R. 28. The site boundaries include these two roadways on the west and north plus boundaries of 10 and 15 feet respectively on the east and south. East of the Courthouse is a recently-built jail and parking lot. On the south, a disused alley separates the Courthouse from the one remaining zero-lot line business building on the block. The three-story Courthouse has deep or shallow projecting planes on all sides, and its largest dimensions are approximately 105 east-west by 78 feet north-south in plan and 75 feet in elevation from ground level to top of dome.

ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Style and Structural Elements

Variations within the Beaux Arts tradition, drawing on both Greco-Roman and Renaissance features, were popular in Indiana from the 1880s to about 1940.[4] "Beaux Arts" also describes a style that was used for Indiana Courthouses and other public buildings simultaneously with its near relations, Classical Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival. Examples of these styles share such elements as domes, pediments, multi-storied columns in a Classical order, round-topped arches, rusticated stone finishes, and ornament copied from Classical models. The difference among the styles might better be described in terms of overall effect rather than design elements—Beaux Arts exuberance, with its multiplicity of features and ornament on any one building, versus Classical Revival restraint. Italian Renaissance

[2] Topographic detail is provided by the Williamsport Quadrangle, Indiana, 7.5 minute series topographic map included with this document. For soils, see Donald P. Franzmeier, "Cradle of Life: Soils," in Marion T. Jackson, *The Natural Heritage of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 45ff, map p 48.

[3] All population, employment, and agricultural counts derived from U. S. Bureau of the Census 2005 reports and the 1930 Census of Agriculture.

[4] Stylistic discussion from John C. Poppeliers et al, *What Style Is It?,* 66-71.

Revival may employ any of the Beaux Arts elements. But it has several features of its own, notably terra-cotta-tiled roofs and ornament copied from Renaissance rather than ancient Classical models.

The Warren County Courthouse was designed by architect Joseph W. Royer of Urbana, Illinois. Applied to an atypically non-symmetrical building mass, the Italian Renaissance Revival style is evoked by overscaled entries, Italian Renaissance ornament, and a tile-roofed dome. The previous Courthouse burned down, and the county stipulated that Royer rebuild using partial foundations and structural walls remaining from the fire. Royer altered the building's footprint only by adding the projecting plane of the raised entry that faces S.R. 28. The variety of stepped-back planes, extending to all four sides of the building, is suggested by the floor plans and site map included with this document. Photographs 1-8 illustrate the uniqueness of each elevation. The building foundation, floors, and roof are constructed of reinforced concrete incorporating a framework of steel beams. The roof is supported by steel trusses and also by the exterior and interior brick structural walls about one foot in depth on all three floors.[5]

Exterior Surfaces, Planes, and Elevations

Exterior facing is a speckled buff brick above the limestone-faced ground floor, rusticated with deeply raked horizontal courses. This rusticated facing does not extend all the way around the back or south side, which is the service area and lacks a public entry (photographs 5, 6). The brick facing on the first and second floors is extensively trimmed with limestone ornament in Beaux Arts motifs, concentrated on the two principal entries, the entablature, and the roof-line balustrade. The roof is topped by a half-sphere dome. The dome is raised on a circular concrete wall with spaced window openings, alternating glass with diamond patterned leading and single-batten steel ventilating shutters. The circular wall is elaborated with an entablature featuring two rows of cornice molding. The upper cornice is decorated with a band of anthemions above the cymatium, similar to the roof-line decoration of the Erechtheion. The circular wall sits on a broader, octagonal, concrete-walled base. Dome, circular wall, and base each occupy about one-third of the feature's height. The dome is roofed in orange-red terra cotta pantile that appears completely unweathered. The dome is centered over the interior cruciform axis aligned with entryways, as shown on plan drawings and discussed below under interiors. (This dome does not admit light to the building's interior and cannot be accessed without a ladder.) The roof line is surmounted by a limestone balustrade consisting of sections of openwork in a square starburst pattern. These patterned sections are stretched between paneled, cuboid sections of solid block aligned with the solid corner surfaces that occur on the floors below at each change of plane. Photographs 1 and 4 illustrate the balustrade and its relation to north and east elevations.

The effect of the limestone trim is not Classical, though an entablature is used. The limestone facing of the balustrade "cubes" and of the entablature is composed of squarish blocks. The roof line consists of a cornice composed of blocks and underlain by modillions. The plain entablature is nominally divided into frieze and architrave by a raised fillet, or single-course molding square in section. The top of the second-floor window surrounds abut the architrave. All first- and second- floor windows (except for the brick plane on the rear elevation; photograph 6) have a broad decorative limestone surround with architrave molding. On some windows, the surround widens slightly to emphasize the fixed-transom light of each window; on others, the widening is applied at lower corners as well. The similarity and large number of these windows, modeled by their surround, make them a dominant feature of the north elevation in

[5] Structural description derived from the work of a Ball State student in architecture, Terry Burnworth, who wrote a class exercise in HABS documentation (February 4, 1984) accompanied by slides including both the building exterior and building plans. Courtesy of the Drawings and Documents Archive, College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

particular. Second-floor windows above the principal entries and side entry are triple, in the same style and proportions as the principal doors, described below. Architect's drawings indicate that many of the windows were to be mullioned or leaded in a starburst pattern. However, this design is only to be seen on the roof-line balustrade. All window sash is replacement vinyl.

The two principal entries, on north and west elevations, are strongly emphasized (photographs 1, 2, 7, 8). Both main door assemblies are framed by heavy, projecting two-story piers supporting balconets. The balconets are organized as a square-cornered low balustrade surmounting a dentiled cornice. The piers are decorated with a complex relief ornament, Italian Renaissance in feeling, a half-round oval with a scrolled surround, acanthus leaf above, and rope of flowers trailing below. The two entries are centered on projecting planes, creating a three-part elevation on the north and west. The west entry formerly had a canopy, shown on the architect's second floor plan drawing. What was probably the attachment borings for a canopy support can be seen in photograph 7 below the ornament just described. Double doors to all three entries are fully glassed, having multiple divisions separated vertically by limestone-trimmed rails. The north entry door has sidelights and a three-part fixed transom above these, resulting in a 1:2:1 vertical proportion. A similar door on the west entry is differentiated above by a group of five tall, narrow, double-hung 1/1 windows, separated by heavy surrounds.

Windows on the rusticated base story are aligned with windows above. The base-story windows are simple rectangular cutouts with recessed 1/1 double hung sash and a flat arch consisting of three voussoir-like segments.

Pattern of Openings

The front elevation has two main planes of fenestration, as described earlier. The main entry is set partially above grade and is wider than other openings. Above it is a triple window opening of matching width. Single bays of doubled fenestration flank the entry. The basement has paired openings with heavy stone section between them. These align vertically with taller paired openings on the main floor, and finally, with even taller paired openings on the top floor. These last openings accommodate a transom unit over each. The wall sections on the sides of the projecting front plane have single openings on the main and second floor. The next wall plane defines the core of the building. There is a single basement window, and paired units centered over the basement opening on the main and second floors.

The east elevation has a secondary but formal entrance as described. The forward projecting wall plane houses the entry. The entrance opening is at grade, flanked by single basement windows. Above it, and centered on the wall, is a double window group, and centered once again on the top floor is a triple window group with transomed openings. The bays on the flanking, recessed plane walls repeat the formula in terms of opening size, from stout basement to tall second floor, but with single openings only.

The west elevation has an auxiliary entrance centered in a slightly projecting wall plane, closely flanked by single window openings. In vertical alignment above is a double window on each floor. The main wall plane on either side of the center bay has a single opening on each floor, again with an ascending arrangement from short to tall.

The rear or south elevation has formally detailed flanking sections with the same single opening, stout-to-tall openings centered on them. The plain brick wall recessed a foot or so behind has a single at-grade basement window in the

center. Above it on each floor are tripled openings. Flanking this center area, openings are arranged as single basement, single first floor, and paired-with-transom second floor.

Interior Spatial Organization, Surfaces, and Details

The exterior of the building gives no clue to the plain vernacular-commercial style of the interior, very typical of its decade but marked by high-quality features such as carefully detailed oak doors and the second-floor courtroom. From the exterior, however, the placement of axial entries and dome hint at the interior plan, which centers on the cruciform central corridor. Interior spaces, defined by structural partition walls, are shown on the original architect's drawings included on the site map. The plan drawings are also used to show the camera direction of interior photographs. Labeled functions of the office spaces are only partly valid given the 100-year service of the Courthouse as a seat of government. In general, ground-floor offices have experienced the greatest rearrangement of functions. First-floor rooms and suites occupied by elected "line officers" such as the auditor, recorder, treasurer, and clerk have generally remained within their original rooms or suites. Next to the clerk's office is a large chalkboard permanently marked with the names of townships and squares for names of offices and candidates and the tally vote for each by township (photograph 11). The second or top floor is devoted to the circuit court and its dependent chambers and is also relatively unchanged. Both axes of the corridor cross from exterior wall to exterior wall on the ground floor, but become progressively truncated by office spaces on the first and second floors. On the ground floor and first floor, the north-south corridor has two flights of dogleg stairs, each near an end of the axis. The second floor has only a south staircase.

The corridors, approximately 15 feet wide, serve as the building's public space. Corridor floors are laid in one-inch-square white ceramic tiles with a carpet-like design in red and green—a small repeating X motif and a wide border with a simple abstract motif and multiple narrow bands (photographs 9, 10, 13). The tile extends into the doorway setbacks created by the one-foot thick interior walls. Walls and original coved or cove-molded ceilings in both office spaces and the corridor are plaster over brick, painted white. A wainscot of pink-streaked marble, bordered by a lighter pink band, runs along the corridors. The staircases have ornately patterned, black-painted ironwork balusters topped by an oak hand rail. Black-painted iron newel posts are fashioned somewhat like square columns, divided into three sections and topped by a plain round boss that invites one to touch it while turning the staircase (photograph 12). Treads are white marble, not greatly worn, and landings are floored in the same tile as in corridors. A horizontal balustrade on the first floor at the top of the west staircase is decorated with differently patterned but equally ornate black-painted iron balusters (photograph 10). Narrow interior oak doors are tall and elegantly proportioned (photograph 13). The doors are paneled both on the inset and on the door batten. The door header is a heavy, deep crown molding above either a solid spacer or an openable transom. Many office spaces retain original walls and ceilings, but are mostly carpeted over original oak-strip flooring. Interior window surrounds are untrimmed, with slightly rounded plastered edges. Fluorescent light bars have been added throughout the building, and the prevalence of exposed electrical conduit and plumbing pipes attests to the solidity of the walls. Electrical connections were installed, but they probably reflected the minimal power needs of 100 years ago. Photograph 16 shows an evidently original brass wall fixture, surface wired, that may have been moved or rewired. This dainty fixture is located in the second-floor ladies' toilet, whose rough-cast wall surface may be modern, as the wallpaper border certainly is. Another apparent alteration is a partition at the west end of the second-floor corridor, where the wainscot and cove molding stop abruptly (photograph 13).

The courtroom on the second floor is the building's largest interior space at about 55 feet long by 38 feet wide (photographs 14, 15). The room has two single-batten entry doors for the judge and attorneys and a public entrance midway down the room. It is a double door with obscured glass upper panels. Walls are plaster with a wooden chair rail. The room has been altered by an acoustical drop ceiling with flush-mounted fluorescent panels. Otherwise the room is a model of period restraint and dignity, with original fixed furnishings in golden oak and notable original light fixtures, now illuminated by concealed fluorescent bulbs. The centered chandelier, one of at least two as shown in a 1908 photograph, was apparently reattached after the ceiling alteration. It consists of a rod ending in a disk to which are attached vertically paired clouded-glass globes. A larger globe hangs lower than the others, serving as the focal point. Brass wall lamps fashioned as torches topped by globes are placed at intervals around the room, including two behind the judge's bench. Another two torch-like fixtures are attached to his desktop. There is no backboard behind, rather the bare wall, presently adorned with framed photographs of past judges. Other such photographs line the wall along with freestanding glass-fronted bookcases. The front wall of the judge's bench has five vertical recessed panels between simple corner posts. Attorneys' tables, witness stand, raised jury box, and theater-style spectators' seats are fixed in place. The spectators' seats are contoured oak plywood with decorative black-painted iron supports. A railed balustrade with corner posts separates the public section from the trial space, which is carpeted. The spectators' section has oak strip flooring covered by a rubber mat down the aisles at center and sides. The judge has a leather-upholstered swivel chair, only slightly more comfortable looking than those of the jurors. Freestanding chairs in this room and a few other chairs and benches throughout the building were ordered at the time of construction.

8. Narrative Statement of Significance

SUMMARY

The Warren County Courthouse is significant at a local level under criteria A and C in the categories of Architecture and Politics / Government. The building, in Williamsport, Indiana, was built in 1907 on the foundations of the former courthouse, which burned the same year. The courthouse is unique within the county in its history and architecture and has served as the critical locus of county government since its construction. Its period of significance is continuous to 1958, the present 50-year mark.

Williamsport was platted in 1828 and became the county seat the following year. During the first decades of a county's existence, in a "homesteading" state like Indiana, the courthouse served as a symbol of permanence as well as the most effective governmental unit for citizens on a day-to-day basis. The present courthouse 89 years later was built during a time period when prosperous counties apparently perceived an advantage in building "show courthouses" whose cost during the 1900 decade could run to $347,000 (Huntington County, 1904). Williamsport, whatever its aspirations to commerce may have been, was located in thinly populated, agricultural Warren County. The county commissioners paid only $115,000, well below the $165,000 average for nine Indiana courthouses built 1903-1909. The Warren County Courthouse architect was Joseph W. Royer, a noted practitioner in his home region surrounding Urbana, Illinois. Royer gave the Warren Courthouse a touch of grandeur and the unique by means of an exterior whose two public faces were replete with Italian Renaissance stylistic references, while the rear elevation revealed cost-cutting methods such as a minimal use of limestone facing, and a showy tile-roofed dome that was inaccessible from the interior. Toward the goal of a fireproof building, Royer used steel framing to the extent he could within the constrain of structural brick wall fragments on an 1880s concrete foundation.

SELECTED HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, PREHISTORY TO 1907

Warren County was created by the Indiana legislature in 1827. A deciding factor in the county's early development was its location on the Wabash River, which formed some 20,000 years ago.[1] The county, and its seat at Williamsport, were proximate to the commerce created by the Erie and Wabash Canal as it ran along the Wabash. By about 1900, the county's tax base came from agriculture, built upon fertile soils that developed even earlier, through the grinding action of pre-Wisconsonian and Wisconsonian glaciers some 700,000 years ago. Outwash or meltwater from a later glacial lobe created drainways like the Wabash, and valleys of glacial till. Near these valleys, winds deposited thick layers of loess, or windblown particles of silt and clay. Though highly susceptible to erosion, loess is agriculturally fertile. The river itself, and some of its tributaries, were undoubtedly food sources and transportation routes from the beginning of human habitation.

A warming period around 5,000 B.C. brought migratory peoples into what is now central Indiana; later centuries, though cooler, saw settlement along major river valleys like that of the Wabash. Such settlement persisted after the

[1] Robert C. Howe, "Of Time, Rocks, and Ancient Life," 3-13; Wilton N. Melhorn, "Indiana on Ice," 16-21; and Donald P. Franzmeier, "Cradle of Life: Soils," 45ff, map p 48, in Marion T. Jackson, *The Natural Heritage of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

arrival of Europeans; however, the identity of tribal peoples in the area changed over the next two to three centuries. Indigenous eastern tribes were pushed westward by Euro-American settlement, and the grouping of peoples and their alliances shifted as Indians became involved with struggles for land sovereignty among the French, British, and Americans. The Miami peoples created a group of settlements along the Wabash. A documented and now reconstructed French fort dated 1717 is Fort Ouiatenon near West Lafayette, Indiana. The fort was established among existing Indian villages, in particular a large settlement of Wea, a subgroup of the Miami.

Both French and Indian settlement remained after the fort's disbanding when the French lost their land claim; however, conditions declined until ultimately, in 1791, all Indian villages along the Wabash saw their houses and crops destroyed at the order of President George Washington. The Indians ceded their lands in the area through greater or lesser degrees of coercion, notably the Treaty of St. Mary's in 1818. After the battle of Tippecanoe, two Miami "reserves" were established partly in Warren County—the Barnett and Longlois reserves—but around 1840 both Miami and the Potowatomi who lived among them were relocated far to the west under U. S. military escort..[2]

Williamsport became the county seat in 1829, after the original choice of Warrenton was abandoned as a settlement. The first courthouse was built of logs, then replaced in 1834 by a brick building of 40 by 40 feet farther south on Monroe Street than the present location. The two-story building had a tower making the total height 46 feet. County offices other than court functions were housed separately in two other brick buildings flanking the courthouse. This advance probably reflected prosperity from the Wabash and Erie Canal traffic. Williamsport was actually located on the opposite side of the river from the canal, but built its own cut-off canal in about 1852. The railroad's arrival in 1856 led Williamsport residents to relocate northward and eventually to move the courthouse with them. The 1834 brick courthouse was condemned in 1870. A new stone courthouse in Second Empire style, 155 feet with tower, was built on two donated lots. The courthouse was now at the top of a hill on Monroe Street but still in "old," or pre-railroad, Williamsport. A growing business district on North Monroe led to pressure to move the courthouse again. In 1886, the building was dismantled and relocated to the present courthouse site. Sheriff's living quarters and a jail were placed in the "basement" or ground floor. Judging from available dates provided by Sanborn maps, Williamsport enjoyed a population peak of about 1,800 lasting from 1899 or earlier until at least 1910. The Sanborn map of 1905 shows an expansion of roads, two bridges over the low-lying part of town, and industries including an excelsior plant, stone quarry, and grain elevator; by 1910, a "commercial hotel" appeared catercornered across the street from the courthouse. In agriculture, from 1900 to 1910 the county as a whole saw a doubling value for land per acre, a value 50 percent higher than the state average.

The county's presumably sound tax base and an ability to sell its bonds would have been fortunate circumstances the night of January 20, 1907, when the relocated courthouse burned down. The fire was noticed at 4:15 a.m. by a neighboring citizen but may have started hours earlier. Its outcome revealed the need for both fireproofing and improved firefighting. A spiral pine staircase ran up the full height of the building from the ground floor, where the building's corncob heating fuel was stored. Fire spread upward to the top floor and attic. The 155-foot tower collapsed onto the roof, sending roof and floors down to the ground floor. One supposedly fireproof vault was broken open,

[2] George R. Parker, "The Wave of Settlement," in Jackson, *Natural Heritage of Indiana*, 368ff; Tippecanoe County Historical Association, Fort Ouiatenon History, online at http://www.tcha.mus.in.us/forthistory.htm, accessed August 2007. Fort Ouiatenon site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

while the other did not even smell of smoke. Meanwhile, the alarm whistle had gotten wet and frozen and the church with a bell tower was locked. Citizens gathered through shouts of "Fire!" and someone managed to ring the bell of the burning courthouse. When the hose cart arrived, however, it was hooked up to the standpipe that proved to contain only five feet of water. The stream of water could not reach the building's second floor. The nearby Attica fire department was unable to assist because the bridge over the Wabash between Attica and Williamsport was, ironically, flooded.

BUILDING THE WARREN COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 1907-1908

The commissioners chose Joseph W. Royer to repair and remodel on the existing foundations, adding a projecting plane and exterior staircase for a new north entry. Royer was also to design a separate jail and sheriff's residence—as he had done in Urbana two years before—therefore the total cost of the project at $115,000 is somewhat difficult to break down between courthouse rebuilding and jail-sheriff's residence. The contracting firm of Jahr and Cope, in Urbana's twin city of Champaign, was chosen to perform the rebuilding for $68,050, but other features such as the architect's fee ($4,500) and "furnishings" were not calculated separately for the two projects. The cornerstone for the new courthouse was laid on October 12, 1907, on the northwest corner of the new extension (Fig. 8-1). The completed building was dedicated on November 26, 1908.

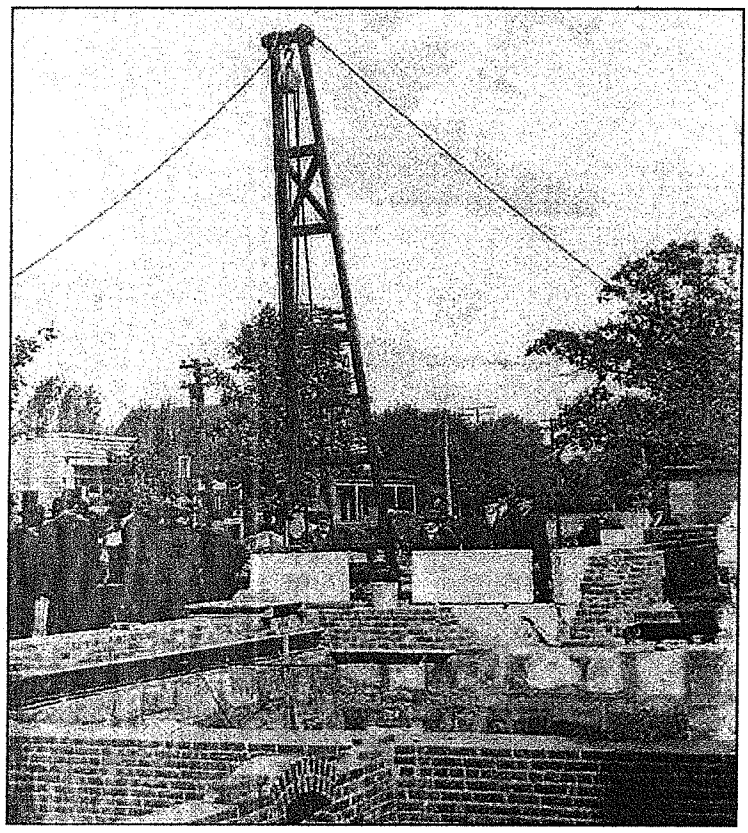


Fig. 8-1. Cornerstone ceremony with early stage of rebuilding in the foreground. Source: Collection of the New Lebanon, Indiana, Public Library, courtesy of Terri Wargo, Librarian.

Joseph W. Royer (1873-1954) was born in Urbana, Illinois, and practiced architecture in that city throughout his lifetime. He graduated from the University of Illinois College of Engineering in 1895, and came to be Urbana's most prominent architect. Working as Urbana's city engineer 1898-1906, he designed the Champaign County Courthouse (1901) and the Sheriff's Residence and County Jail (1905), the latter just two years before his design for the Warren County, Indiana, courthouse. Royer headed practices with several different partners during his career. Royer designed Urbana buildings including the high school, Urbana Free Library, Lincoln Hotel, several churches, and several fraternity houses. He also designed five Illinois courthouses. Among other of Royer's buildings, his home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

WARREN COUNTY'S COURTHOUSE IN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Early courthouses in homesteading states like Indiana both promised, and were symbolic of, a permanence that was by no means guaranteed. Settlements could fail economically, or a whole town could be lost to natural disaster or contagions, as was the town of Maysville in Fountain County when the 1840s cholera epidemic struck. Counties were the glue that held together otherwise disconnected hamlets and farmsteads on the frontier. Formation of counties, mandated by Indiana's first constitution (1816), conferred political and legal existence by recording land titles. County government had the power to settle disputes, keep a degree of public order, and collect revenues (however scanty) for public projects. The election of county-wide officials brought continuity where local settlements failed, at the same time underlining the dearly-held principle of self-governance. Indiana adopted a version of Pennsylvania's county system administered by county commissioners and divided into townships. Commissioners initially appointed a clerk, circuit court officers, sheriff, tax collector, recorder, and other officials, although most of these offices would soon be subject to election.[3]

Some 67 of Indiana's 92 courthouses now in use, or about 70 percent, were built between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War I. The years between the wars saw construction of some of the most elaborate courthouses in the state. The fact that the styles of courthouse building went so far beyond the utilitarian indicates the symbolic as well as practical importance of county in the lives of its citizens and in the collective face they presented to the world. If such an attitude existed, the Warren County commissioners of the late 1800s and early 1900s might be seen as an extremely fiscally conservative group even among county commissioners in general. They had opposed replacement of the 1834 building long after it was obviously outdated and did not issue bids for the third courthouse until 1871. The courthouse may only have been built even then because the lots were donated. In 1906, a year before this courthouse burned, the commissioners had reduced their insurance coverage to less than half of its former amount, resulting in an estimated loss of $10,000 from the burned courthouse's former worth of $30,000. Their 1907 courthouse was below average with a cost that included the jail and sheriff's quarters. However, when prices are considered per capita, Warren County's scarce population, resulting in inability to spread tax burdens among the many, may have played a role.

A comprehensive study of the financial history of county government in these years, and its decision-making processes, has yet to be made. But relative costs for courthouses over time can be estimated by the roundabout method of converting the price of construction to 2005 dollars (the latest available date), then dividing that amount by the population of the county at the time the courthouse was constructed.[4] This yields a per-capita cost for purposes of comparison only, since the method of financing all of the courthouses isn't known. When amounts are equalized as 2005 dollars, the median price per capita of the 10 courthouses constructed 1903-1909 was $1,090.33. Warren County's project is almost exactly on that median at $1,090.49, and is above the average price of $995.70.

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[3] National Association Of Counties, "The History of County Government, Part I." Online at http://www.naco.org/Content/NavigationMenu/About_Counties/History_of_County_Government/Default983.htm, accessed June 2007.

[4] "Six Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 – 2005," online at http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/index.php.

Architecturally, courthouses of the 1900s decade suggests that singularity of design was still prized. The county courthouses built 1903 to 1909 are those of Putnam, Huntington, Warrick, Newton, Warren, Monroe, Miami, Boone, Dubois, and Jasper. These buildings ran the per-capital cost range from less than $400 (2005 dollars) to more than $2100. In describing the Boone County courthouse of 1909, author Jon Dilts states that architect Joseph T. Hutton's design "was no simple, neo-classical courthouse nor simply an exercise in academic classicism. It was to be a building for the 20th century, a building with an enormous dome and magnificent limestone pillars"[5] (Fig. 8-2). The mullioned pediments are filled with bas-relief carving All ten courthouses drew in some way on the Beaux Arts tradition, but they seemed to be seeking both the "magnificence" of the tradition and some singular detail that would set their design apart—such as Warrick's open-air belvedere with clock or Miami's three-story rusticated facing or Dubois's full rustication *and* a raked-dentil pediment. Newton's budget did not allow for much magnificence, but its defiantly simple Italian Renaissance design with arched windows, hipped tile roof, and ornate faux-bois interior doors made of steel stands out for its combination of simplicity and dignity. Only after World War I would the vocabulary of Beaux Arts design begin to be applied almost as a formula, with bells and whistles applied according to budget on a nearly box-shaped building mass.[6]

THEMES OF SIGNIFICANCE IN INDIANA COURTHOUSES OF THE 1900 DECADE

The Warren County Courthouse as Statement, 1907-1916

The Warren County Courthouse was far from Joseph Royer's usual repertoire (favoring the Romanesque, Gothic, and later Mission Revival); he designed it early in his career; and he was working under the constraint of a pre-existing footprint. However, he clearly understood the potential of the Beaux Arts vocabulary and may even have sampled its range in nearby Chicago at the 1893 World's Fair. He belonged to the age of the Courthouse As Statement, a county's somewhat boastful, somewhat seductive face to the world. After all, the Beaux Arts tradition in its early decades, circa 1880 until the quelling of display as our first World War began, sprang in part from the arrogant palazzos of Renaissance city-states, and in part from the overawing temples of Greek city-states—governmental units somewhat akin to turn-of-century county governments in their localized focus and pride of independent authority.

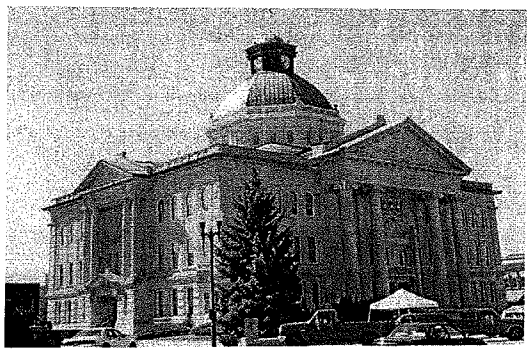

Fig. 8-2. Boone County Courthouse (1909), Lebanon, Indiana. *Source:* Cory Walker, The 92 Indiana Courthouses, online.

The Warren County Courthouse and the Quest for Fireproof Construction, 1907-1957

Warren County's 1871/1886 courthouse was an object lesson in how to burn down a courthouse. Royer used the most fireproof technology available to his time and project—steel within masonry on an existing, incompletely reinforced masonry base, incorporating as little wood as possible either structurally or decoratively. Even small innovations

[5] Jon Dilts, text, and Will Counts, photographs, *The Magnificent 92 Indiana Courthouses* (Bloomington IN: Rose Bud Press, 1991), 19.
[6] Eliza Steelwater, Nomination of the Vermillion County Courthouse (1924) to the National Register of Historic Places, currently under review, for a fuller exploration of this design shift. Summarizing, a "formulaic" designs between World Wars I and II reduced the average cost of building a courthouse by about one-third.

such as Newton County's faux-bois steel doors, at a time when wood was still prized, were reaching toward inflammability. The gradual post-World-War-I disappearance of domes, pediments, and detached columns—hard to fireproof as well as costly to create—and development of modular concrete, gypsum, and other synthetic masonry—reduced the odds of a disastrous fire. It remained for the post-World-War-II era to use steel, glass, and curtain walls to create buildings of so many stories that the major fire risk became escaping from a burning skyscraper.[7]

[7] Anna Milkovich McKee, "Stonewalling America: Simulated Stone Products," *CRM: Preserving the Recent Past* 1995 18-08.

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Terry Burnworth, Warren County Courthouse, State Road 28 and Monroe Street, Williamsport, IN. Manuscript and photographic slides prepared for ARCH 321: HABS 2, Ball State University, February 7, 1985. Collection of Drawings and Documents Archive, College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. Referenced by permission of the Archive.

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MAPS AND DRAWINGS

Terra Server, United States Geological Survey 7.5 minute series topographic map coverage and aerial photographic imagery for Fountain County. Online at http://terraserver.microsoft.com.

United States Geological Survey, Williamsport Quadrangle, Indiana, 7.5 minute series topographic map.

10. Geographical Data

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Warren County courthouse does not form the center of a courthouse square but is located at the intersection of North Monroe Street (ESE side) and State Route 28 (SSE side). At the courthouse corner, these two roadways intersect at about a 95 degree angle. From the outer edge of the sidewalk at the northwest intersection of North Monroe Street and State Route 28, measure 174 feet East North East parallel to the outer edge of the sidewalk and the foundation of the courthouse. Turn 90 degrees to the right and measure 134 feet South South East parallel to the foundation of the courthouse. Turn 90 degrees to the right and measure 181 feet West South West parallel to the foundation of the courthouse. This point intersects with the outer edge of the sidewalk on the ESE side of North Monroe Street. From this point, measure 137 feet parallel to the sidewalk, which completes the irregular parallelogram of the courthouse site boundary.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the courthouse building and its grounds. Formerly, the courthouse grounds included a larger lot; however, the original plat was split when a jail was built. (The present jail is non-historical.) The lot line ran along the SSE foundation of the courthouse. In establishing the present boundary, 10 feet of paved walkway have been added to the ESE side of the courthouse. On the SSE side, a disused alleyway about 30 feet wide is part of the courthouse lot and runs to the foundation of a neighboring building. The boundary on this side has been set at 15 feet.

National Association Of Counties, The History of County Government, Part I. Online at http://www.naco.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ About_Counties/History_of_County_Government/Default983.htm, accessed April-July 2007.

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Photographs

Photo Log_IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse

Sixteen photographic views are being submitted. Photos are in digital format and enclosed with the nomination document on a labeled compact disc (2 copies submitted). The numbered list below includes the digital TIF file for each photograph. The list also includes the date, camera direction, and description of view. List number is the one referred to on site map and in text portions of document.

Location for all photos:
Warren County Courthouse
Williamsport, Indiana
Photographer: Eliza Steelwater

1. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse1.tif
   4/20/07 exterior principal or NWN elevation, looking SE

2. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse2.tif
   5/22/07 exterior detail, entry of principal elevation, looking ESE

3. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse3.tif
   4/20/07 exterior detail looking upward to dome, looking SE

4. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse4.tif
   5/22/07 exterior, ENE or side elevation, looking SW

5. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse5.tif
   5/22/07 exterior detail, rear or SSE elevation, looking WNW

6. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse6.tif
   5/22/07 exterior detail, rear or SSE elevation, looking NE

7. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse7.tif
   5/22/07 exterior detail, ENE or secondary entrance elevation, looking NE

8. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse8.tif
   5/22/07 exterior, ENE or secondary entrance elevation, looking NE

9. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse9.tif
   4/21/07 interior, ground floor corridor, looking ENE

10. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse10.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 1st floor corridor, looking N

11. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse11.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 1st floor detail election results chalkboard, looking NNE

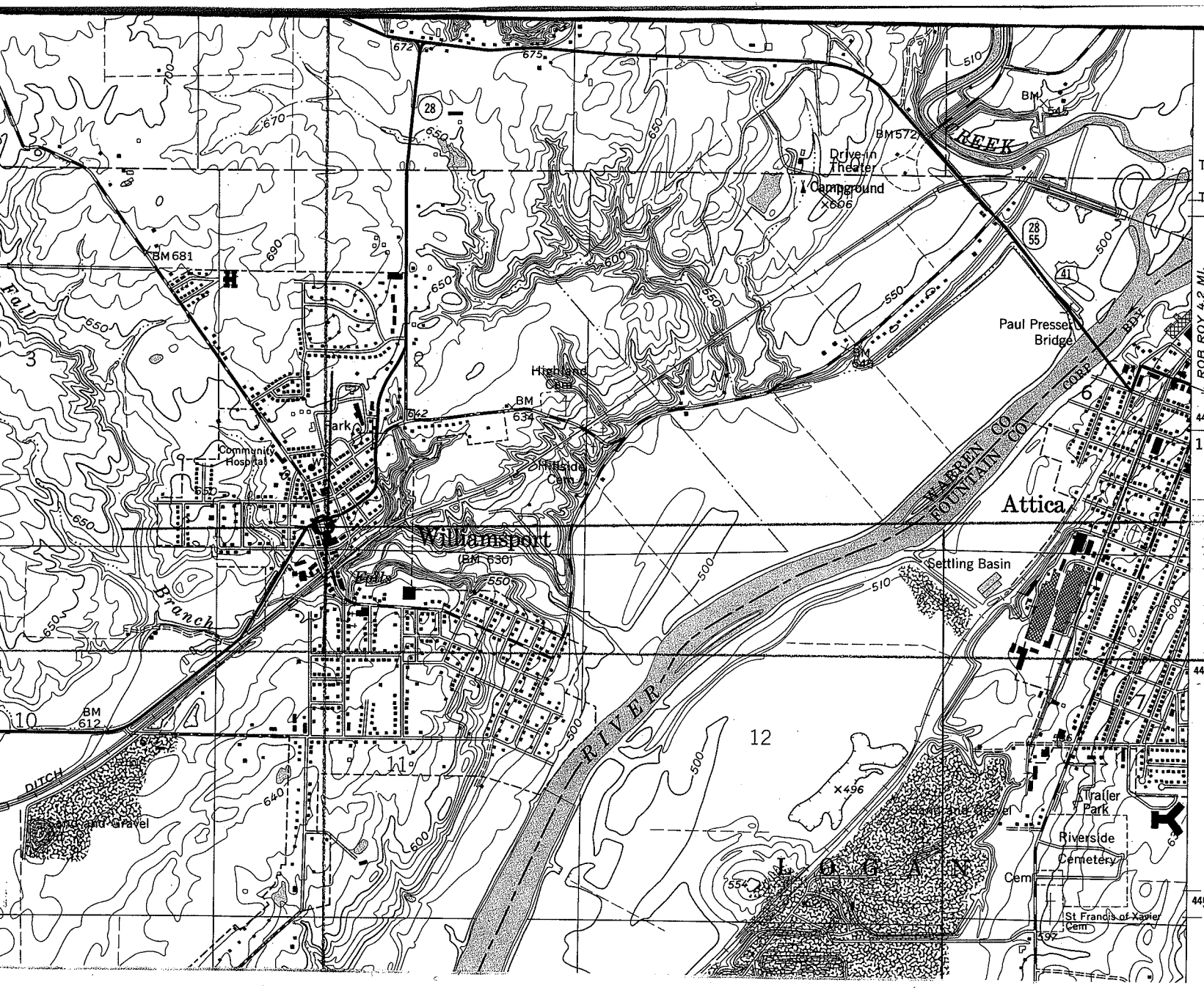
12. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse12.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 1st-2nd floor landing, looking ESE

13. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse13.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 2nd floor corridor, looking W

14. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse14.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 2nd floor, courtroom toward judge's bench, looking NW

15. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse15.tif
    5/23/07, interior, 2nd floor, courtroom from jury box toward spectator seating, looking SW

16. IN_WarrenCounty_Courthouse16.tif
    5/23/07 interior, 2nd floor detail, light fixture in ladies' room, looking SSE



WARREN COUNTY
COURTHOUSE
Williamsport (Warren
County), IN
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hairs added as an
aid to location.
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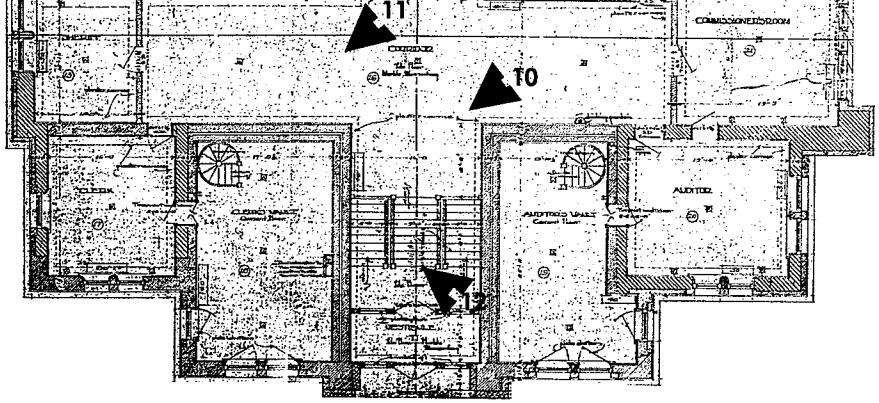
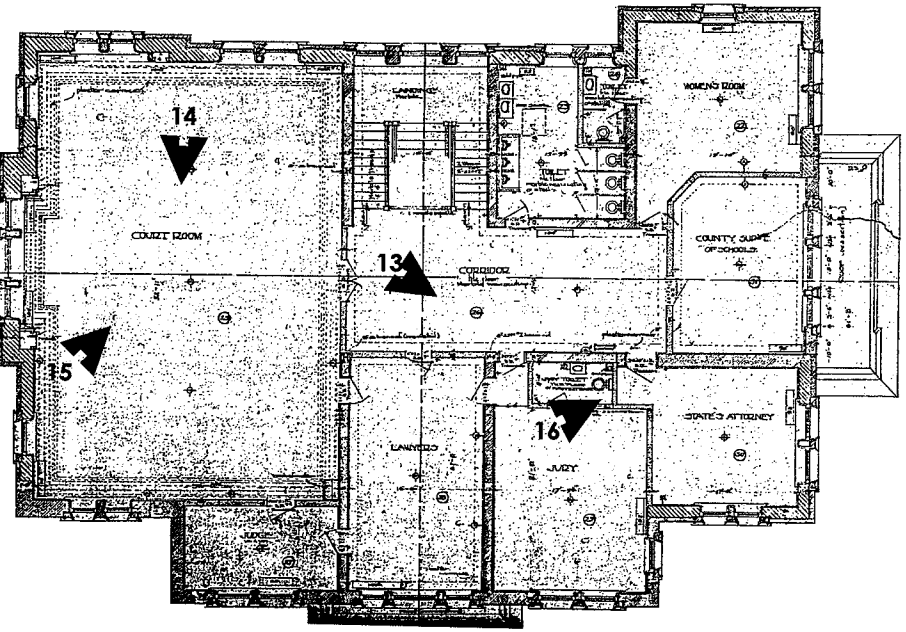
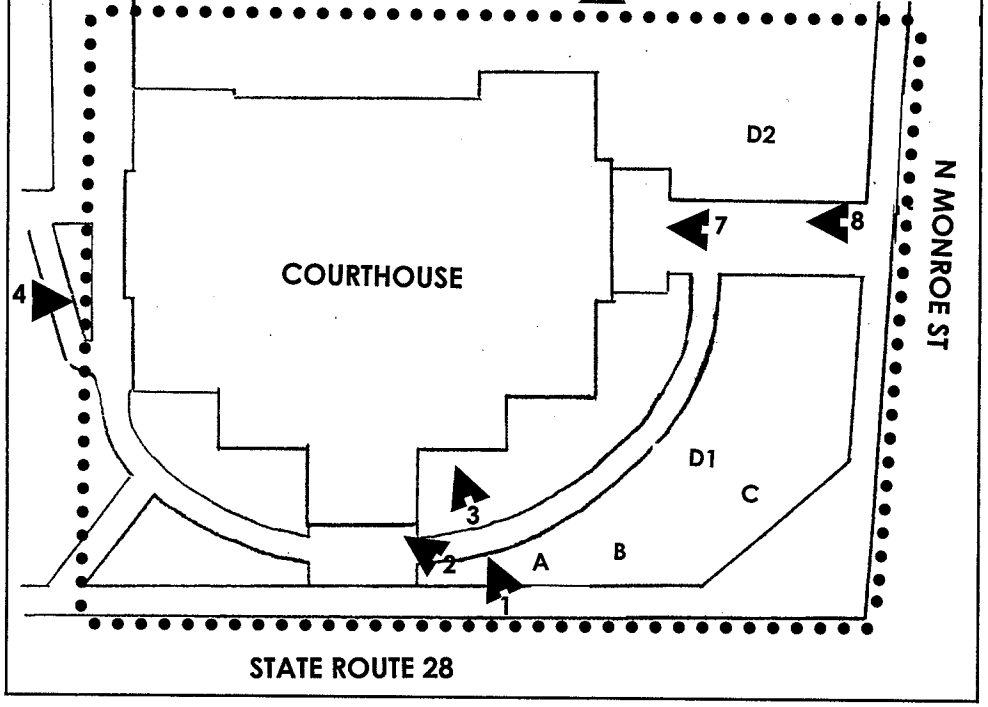


FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR