

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 13 1987

date entered **JL** 21 1987

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

**1. Name**

historic Union County Courthouse

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Courthouse Square N/A not for publication

city, town Liberty N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Union code 161

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Union County Commissioners

street & number Union County Courthouse

city, town Liberty N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47353

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Union County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Liberty state Indiana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Union County Courthouse is a two-story Richardsonian Romanesque building set on a raised basement (photos 1, 2). The building is essentially rectilinear in plan with a four story clock tower centered on the north facade, and has a hipped roof. It is basically symmetrical along a north-south axis. The building is constructed of rock faced ashlar stone. A foliated molding encircles the building at the cornice level while at the second level window sill line there is a band of dressed stone, with a second band of foliated molding below (photo 3). At the level of the first floor there is a band of dressed stone, below which the walls are slightly flared out to the ground (photos 8, 9). The double-hung windows in the building are distinctive with a central pane of glass surrounded by narrower lights on the top, sides, and bottom, with small lights in each of the corners in each sash. Broad arches are featured at the entrances and second story windows.

The main (north) facade of the building is symmetrical and is three bays wide. The outside bays are topped with parapeted gable wall dormers while the central bay contains the entry arch and the four story clock tower. The side bays are adorned with circular motifs in the gables, and tourelles which extend from the midpoint of the second story windows to above the roofline. Within the dormer gables are three small, two light, fixed sash windows. The second story windows feature paired, double-hung windows topped by a single fixed, round-arch window. The extrados is ornamented with a foliated archivolt, while the voussoirs are of dressed stone. First floor windows feature fixed, two-light upper windows placed above paired, double-hung windows, with dressed stone mullions between the windows. On the basement level, there are paired two-over-two, double-hung windows with a doorway located to the inside of these windows.

The clock tower is identical on all four faces and is topped by a pyramidal-shaped slate roof with a metal finial. At each corner are foliated buttresses connected by a foliated band at the cornice (photo 4). Identical bands are located at the top and bottom of the clock face. The area surrounding the clock itself is decorated with a checkerboard pattern of alternating rock-faced blocks and carved rosettes. Beneath the clock are four vertical, louvered openings. At the top of the tower's fourth level is a flared ovolo moulding with a corbel table below. On the fourth level of the tower there are paired, double-hung windows. The base of the fourth level flares out and there is a band of foliated molding separating the fourth level from the third level. On the north face of the third level of the tower, there are two small, double-hung windows. The other three faces of the tower are blank due to the intersection of the roofline. On the second level is a paired window with small, square, fixed sash windows above and large, rectangular, double-hung windows below.

The first floor contains the large arched entry which is reached by a flight of 20 stone steps. The entry arch has a foliated archivolt and is dressed stone on the voussoirs. There are foliated motifs at the impostes and at the keystone. The doorway itself is of painted wood (photo 10). Within the central part of the doorways are paired wooden doors with large single lights and four recessed panels below. The trim surrounding the door lights is Eastlake in design. The doors are surrounded by five windows, separated by wood framing. The rectangular sidelights rest on wood panels. The two windows above the sidelights, and the light above the doors, are shaped to fit the round arch of the recessed entryway. Each of the windows surrounding the doors features a large central light, surrounded by several smaller lights in the Queen Anne style.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1890-91

**Builder/Architect** G. W. Bunting and Son

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

The Union County Courthouse is significant because of its importance as the seat of county government in Union County, and because, architecturally, the building is a richly detailed, essentially unaltered example of Richardsonian Romanesque style architecture designed by a prominent Indiana architectural firm, G. W. Bunting and Son.

The first Union County Courthouse was erected in 1823 in Liberty and was a square, two-story brick building, roughly 50 feet by 50 feet in size. By the year 1854 the county had grown to such a size that the old building was no longer adequate for the needs of the county. Noted Indiana architect, Edwin May, was hired to design the second Union County Courthouse at a total cost of \$14,000. May's courthouse was a two-story brick building with a large bell tower on the north facade; and the building was sited on the area that is now the courthouse square.

By December, 1889, just 35 years after the completion of the second courthouse, the Commissioners of Union County passed a resolution stating that the building was "unequal for the demands of said County, being entirely too small and old and out of repair. . . and unfit and unsafe for the purposes of holding and keeping securely and safely the records of said County." The decision was made to erect a new courthouse. A number of prominent architectural firms were invited to submit proposals for the new building, including McDonald Brothers of Louisville, Kentucky; F. S. Allen of Joliet, Illinois; and John G. Hancoster of Richmond, Indiana; Wing and Mahurin of Fort Wayne, Indiana; J. N. Stern, and G. W. Bunting and Son, both of Indianapolis, Indiana. Bunting's proposal was accepted and William McKay was hired as contractor for the building, having submitted a construction bid of \$88,000. Despite opposition from many landowners, who questioned the need for a new courthouse and who felt that the existing building could be remodeled to serve the needs of the county, construction began in the summer of 1890 with the razing of May's building. By July, 1891, the new building was completed at a cost of roughly \$140,000, ten times the cost of the second courthouse building.

Every attempt had been made by the Commissioners to provide a first rate, up-to-date building. The building was of fireproof construction with cast iron joists, stairs, and metal decking, and brick on the floors. The interior of the building was richly decorated with encaustic floor tiles, glazed ceramic wainscoting, and oak trim on the woodwork. The building also boasted a Smead's central heating system. Given the small size of the county, both geographically and from a population standpoint, the building of a courthouse of this size and scale represented a tremendous investment of the county's resources and is tangible expression of the hopes and aspirations of the county. It clearly was and is the most lavish and richly detailed building in Union County. The building, which is essentially unaltered, continues to serve the same functions it has for nearly 100 years, as the political seat of county government in Union County.

Architecturally, the building is a richly detailed expression of Richardsonian Romanesque style architecture. The rock faced ashlar construction, the use of foliated moldings and motifs, the extensive use of the round arch form, as well as the vigorous overall massing,

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approx. one acre

Quadrangle name Liberty

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UTM References**

A 

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

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 Zone Easting Northing

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Nominated property includes the entire courthouse square from the southeast corner of the junction of Main and Union Streets; eastward to the southwest corner of Union and South Market Streets; southward to the northwest corner of South Market and Seminary Streets; westward to the northeast corner (continued)

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark A. Miles  
 organization Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana date June 1, 1986  
 street & number P.O. Box 284 telephone 317/478-3172  
 city or town Cambridge City state Indiana 47327

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Richard Hart for J. M. Robinson*

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 11-26-86

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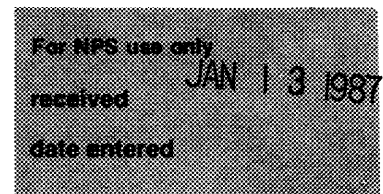
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Patrick Andrus* date *7/21/87*  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Union County Courthouse

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The east and west side elevations are identical except for the small stair tower located in the southeast corner of the building. Each of the two facades has seven bays. The southernmost bay projects out from the body of the building and is topped with a pyramidal roof. The next four bays are identical, while the sixth bay is a rounded turret, topped with a conical roof. The northernmost bay forms the area behind the gable dormers on the north facade. It has four small, square, single light windows on the attic level above which is a foliated molding at the roof line. On the second level there is a single fixed sash window above a double-hung window. This window opening is topped with a foliated molding band above the lintel. On the first floor is a similar set of windows. The basement contains a single double-hung window.

The rounded turret has two sets of paired windows with fixed over double-hung sash on the first and second levels. The basement level has two sets of paired double-hung windows. The second level windows are topped with a foliated band above the lintel.

The four bays on each side consist of arcaded, Romanesque style arches on the second story which share impostes at the intersection of the arches. A foliated archivolt tops the voussoirs and there is an elaborate carved foliated design at each shared impost. First floor windows are paired fixed windows set above paired, double-hung windows, separated by stone mullions.

The southernmost bay has similar windows on the first and second stories and paired, double-hung windows at the basement level. The second story window is topped with a foliated band above the lintel, and the fixed upper windows are rectangular in shape while the first story upper sashes are square.

The south facade of the buildings (photos 8, 9) consists of a central gable flanked by recessed square towers topped with pyramidal shaped roofs. The central gable itself is flanked by massive masonry chimneys which are banded just below the top with a carved, foliated molding. The central gable has a carved, foliated motif in the peak of the gable, and has three, round-arched windows in the upper attic level. These arches are joined together at the impostes and have a foliated archivolt. Directly below these windows are four, fixed sash, square windows spaced evenly across the face of the gable. Three, round-arched windows are located on the second story. These windows are joined at the impostes, and the flanking windows are smaller and narrower than the central window. These windows have a fixed, round-arched upper window and are double-hung below. The center window has paired, double-hung windows. On the first floor there are two windows flanking a central doorway. The side windows have a fixed, two-light transom separated from the double-hung window below by a dressed stone cross piece. There are doors to the basement directly below these windows.

The central doorway on the south has paired wooden doors with Eastlake detailing and recessed panels below. The doors are topped with a large transom above and flanked by two-part sidelights with a painted wooden, paneled base, very similar to the north entrance, except that the entrance is set within a rectangular opening instead of an arch. The entryway is reached by a flight of 20 stone steps.

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Flanking the central gable are recessed, one-bay square towers which are topped with pyramidal roofs. The second story windows have a fixed upper transom with a double-hung window below. At the top of the lintel is a foliated molding band. The first floor windows also have a fixed transom with a double-hung window below. On the eastern bay there is a double-hung window at the basement level while there is no basement window in the western bay.

In the southeast corner of the building is an unusual narrow corner turret (photo 9). This turret rises to about the level of the second floor transoms and is topped with crenellations. There are two narrow one-over-one, double-hung windows on the first and second stories. This turret contains a narrow, circular staircase which leads from the Clerk's office to the Judges' office.

In addition to the two chimneys flanking the south gable, there are two chimneys located just to the south of the curved turrets on the east and west faces of the building.

The interior of the courthouse is richly adorned and retains a remarkable degree of its historic fabric. A central hallway runs through the building on a north-south axis. The main floor contains the offices of the Recorder, Clerk, Treasurer, Auditor, and the Assessor, as well as containing the Commissioner's room and a ladies' restroom. The second floor contains the courtroom, Judges' chambers and survey office. The lower level contains the furnace room and mens' restroom, and in recent years, offices for the food stamp distribution, county welfare office, county planning agency, and Extension Service office. This area also contains a small historic artifacts collection.

Among the special interior features of the building are the encaustic tile floor and a glazed ceramic, pressed tile wainscot (photo 5). The oak trim of the interior doors and woodwork have never been painted, and the design of the doors and woodwork is Eastlake (photo 11). Within the various offices much of the original furniture and fixtures are still in place. These include oak bookcases, counters, tables and chairs. Several of the offices also retain original marble sinks (photo 6). The building has a cast iron staircase at the north end of the building which goes from the basement to the attic level (photo 13). The second story courtroom has, unfortunately, been remodeled in recent years. A dropped acoustical tile ceiling has been added, and the walls have been covered with paneling.

The courthouse is located in the center of the courthouse square which is nicely wooded. Other elements also located on the square are war memorials, and a pioneer log cabin owned by the historical society which was moved to the site several years ago. It is located in the southeast corner of the square. The cabin is the John Templeton Cabin which was built in 1807 by one of the first settlers in Union County. The building was disassembled and moved from its original site in 1938 to the Jail grounds, where it was reassembled. In 1980 it was moved to its present location on the courthouse grounds. The cabin is a non-contributing building. The war memorials comprise two stones from the 1970's, a bronze plaque, and two cannon barrels mounted on stone, none of which are substantial enough in size or scale to be included in the resource count.

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are all evidence of its significance as an example of the Romanesque style. Bunting also used elements of Eastlake detailing on the doors of the building. Of particular significance are the unusual multi-pane windows characteristic of the Queen Anne style, which provide a lightness and delicacy in contrast to the more vigorous Romanesque detailing.

The building's architect, George W. Bunting, was a prolific designer of Indiana courthouses, having designed a total of five, with additional courthouses having been built in Kansas, Michigan, West Virginia, and Tennessee. His earlier Indiana courthouses, such as the Johnson County, Clinton County, and Madison County courthouses, were erected in the early 1880's, and were designed in the Eclectic Renaissance/Second Empire style. The 1889 Wells County Courthouse was done by Bunting in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and, in this regard, heralds some of the design features of the Union County courthouse, although the Liberty building is much more symmetrical in design than the Bluffton building.

It is worthy of noting that the Wells, Johnson, and Clinton County courthouses have all been listed on the National Register of Historic Places (the Madison County Courthouse has been razed), a testimony to the recognition of Bunting's significance as a designer of Indiana courthouses.

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Item number 9

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The Liberty Herald, June 17, 1971, pp. 5-6.  
Union County Commissioners Records, 1889-90 Terms.  
Atlas of Union County, Indiana. J. H. Beers & Co. Chicago: 1884.  
Indiana Courthouses of the Nineteenth Century. David R. Hermansen, Ball State University, 1968.

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Item number 10 (continued)

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of Seminary and Main Streets; and northward to the beginning point. This acreage represents the area that has historically been the courthouse square since the erection of the second Union County Courthouse in 1854.