

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
 RECEIVED JUL 12 1975
 DATE ENTERED APR 22 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
 ** Fulton County Courthouse
 AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
off KY 94
 CITY, TOWN Hickman VICINITY OF First
 STATE Kentucky CODE 021 COUNTY Fulton CODE 075
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Fulton County Fiscal Court
 STREET & NUMBER
 CITY, TOWN Hickman VICINITY OF STATE Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Fulton County Courthouse
 STREET & NUMBER
 CITY, TOWN Hickman STATE Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
 DATE 1971 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Kentucky Heritage Commission
 CITY, TOWN Frankfort STATE Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site is a dramatic one, almost at the peak of a bluff with views in all directions. The actual site, however, is only slightly sloped. The three entrances face the streets on the three sides; toward the west the property adjoins the grounds of a private residence.

The basic layout of the building is comparable to that of dozens, if not hundreds erected in the late 19th century in Kentucky and elsewhere. The structure is essentially square, with a central hall, stairs at the ends, offices located on the first story with the direct access to the street, and the courtroom on the upper story, with several small rooms for the judge and jury. A bell-tower or cupola is also requisite. Here, however, Milburn has taken the standard and given it several new twists.

Instead of a single central dome, there are four octagonal corner towers, three the same, the one to the northeast (toward both the commercial area at the foot of the bluff and to the north, the usual eastern approach) taller and more elaborate. Between these towers along the flank are high Flemish gables outlined by convex and concave curved copings and flanked by handsome brick chimneys. The porches are definitely subsidiary to the roofline, being square brick and stone projections that almost disappear into the walls between the towers; that to the south has two stories and round arches on the first floor. In spite of its varied profile, the building is set firmly on the ground by means of a rough limestone foundation and several horizontal bands of stone and cornice work, at the level of the window sills. There is also stone trim in the chimney tops, coping, and keystones of the round-arched windows of the upper story. Terra cotta hoodmolds on this story and in the attic, as well as emphasized joints at the corners of the octagonal towers, and brick quoins on the projecting eastern central pavilion, add to the variety of texture. The relation between the rectangular windows of the first story, the apparently taller and rhythmically spaced arched windows of the second story and the curves of the gables against the steep angular roofs of the towers, is satisfying and most effective.

The octagonal towers add further interest to the interior. Two of them contain elegantly curved spiral cast-iron staircases that lead directly to the courtroom above. Here the angled corners not only provide visual interest--focussing the attention of the raised judge's bench--but also useful withdrawing rooms. Much of the original vertical tongue-in-groove wainscoting is intact, although the original cast-iron supports in the courtroom have been encased in artificial pine panelling. This remains one of the least disturbed of Kentucky's pre-World War I courthouses, both inside and out. A fine clock installed in 1904 in the north-east tower has recently been repaired and set working again.

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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1903 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank P. Milburn

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fulton County is situated in the southwestern part of the Jackson Purchase. This region was added to Kentucky in 1818 when Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby negotiated a treaty with the Cherokee Indians in which they ceded their lands along the Mississippi. Fulton County was formed from part of Hickman County in 1845. According to Garr (1972), "The first permanent settlement of Fulton County was made at Hickman (then known as Mill's Point) in 1819 by Mr. Mills. The Indians had known it as Chicken Point" (p. 69).

The first courthouse, a small frame building, was erected in 1845. By 1899 there was a need for a larger courthouse. The commissioners decided it would be less expensive to build a new courthouse than to expand the old one.

At a meeting of the Fulton County Commissioners, May 29, 1899, they voted to build a much-needed courthouse. They asked that bonds in the amount of \$40,000 be issued to cover the cost of such a building. This was voted upon favorably at the regular November election in 1900.

In January 1901 the plans submitted by architect Frank P. Milburn, of Columbia, South Carolina, were chosen and advertisements for bids were placed in the Louisville Courier-Journal, The Manufacturers' Record of Baltimore, Maryland, The Hickman Courier, and other newspapers and trade journals.

A county tax of 25¢ per \$100 on real estate and personal property and an additional 50¢ on each poll tax was levied to pay the cost of the new courthouse. This was paid in the six years, the estimated length of time.

W. H. Spradlin of Fulton, Kentucky, was the lowest bidder and made a \$10,000 bond required of him. This was on January 14, 1902. He was to complete the building by August 15, 1903. The original bid was \$20,250. Five hundred dollars were added for the red mortar required by the architect, and \$900 for other additions requested by the commissioners. In the summer of 1903, the building was completed and occupied. The Judge of the County Court during this period was the Honorable H. M. Kearby. The commissioners were: J. W. Mayes, John Williams, J. Hays Blair and G. B. Terrett. A plaque naming these gentlemen is on the northeast corner of the building together with the erection date 1903.

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Fulton County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

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The Fulton County Courthouse is most unusual among the county courthouses in Kentucky, in the nature of the county it represents, its dramatic river bluff location, and in the way its noted architect took advantage of these factors to create a unique design. Fulton County is the western-most of Kentucky's 120 counties. (Confusion is caused by the fact that the largest town in the county is called Fulton, but the county seat is Hickman; the name of the adjoining county). It extends along the southern border of the State north of Tennessee, with whose western river culture it seems to have more in common than with much of Kentucky. The northwestern boundary of the county is the Mississippi River--a constantly fluctuating border as the river changes its course and land is deposited or eroded. The town of Hickman is located at the far southwestern tip of both the county and also of the State, on a high bluff overlooking both the Mississippi and the Bayou de Chien (its name a rare survival from the period of early French occupation of the Mississippi Valley). The "downtown" area is literally down at the bottom of the bluff, squeezed between the steep hillside and the bayou--a location once both strategic and commercially attractive. Fulton County shares with much of the southern Mississippi a cotton culture; its rich bottom land soil grows 90 percent of Kentucky's cotton crop.

The courthouse and the more affluent residential part of the town, however, is situated atop the bluff, with spectacular views in all directions and a share of summer's precious breezes. Approached from the south or the east, the courthouse is seen across a shallow dip just between the incoming traveller and the final height of the east-west ridge that terminates above the River.

It is this situation that the architect, the prolific Frank P. Milburn of Columbia, South Carolina, so effectively capitalized on. Milburn (1868-1926), born in Bowling Green, Kentucky, was apprenticed to his father's design and construction business in eastern Kentucky, where the firm was responsible for several now-destroyed courthouses in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Having cut his teeth professionally, so to speak, in Kentucky, Milburn then moved to South Carolina in 1893, where he established one of the most successful architectural firms in the country, specializing in public and commercial buildings in the South. In 1902 Milburn became staff architect for the Southern Railway and opened an office in Washington, D. C., with Michael Heister as partner. Milburn not only designed courthouses and city halls, but also remodelled and enlarged several Southern state capitols. His proposal for a new Kentucky Statehouse in 1903 was apparently used to support the retention of the capital city in Frankfort, but the actual commission went to Frank M. Andrews of New York. Instead, Milburn used his ambitious Beaux-Arts design for the Bourbon County Courthouse in Paris, Kentucky (1902-1905). It was about the time that the State Capitol design was presented that Milburn's firm designed the totally different Fulton County Courthouse.

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The design for Paris features a powerful central cupola-dome over a large rectangular limestone block with elaborate porticoes, pavilions, and ornamental sculpture. The Fulton County building, in contrast, is of rich red brick trimmed with stone with four octagonal towers at the corners, lavishly curved Flemish gables as additional features of the picturesque skyline, and modest square porches on three sides. Milburn has here combined an ingenious plan, utilizing the apparently decorative towers for circulation and subsidiary chambers, with a dramatic exploitation of the possibilities of the site. The towers and gables sit like a crown on the forehead of the bluff, vivid against the sky and the river, yet in its domestic material harmonizing with the residential area around it. The ability of competent eclectically-oriented architects to work in different historical styles at the turn of the century is effectively demonstrated here, in an efficient, economical, yet imaginative solution to the common problem of the county courthouse.