

20. MAY AND COONEY/ELBERT H. PARSONS LAW LIBRARY
205 East Side Square

Madison County
James Record, Chairman
Board of Commissioners
Madison County Courthouse
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

South 40' of Lot 1, Block 33, Old Town; 40' (East Side Square) X 100'
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1913: Edgar L. Love, Huntsville, architect
James E. Milligan, Huntsville, superintendent
1974: Harvie Jones, Huntsville, architect for renovation

DESCRIPTION

This is a three-story, attached, commercial building with mezzanine and full basement measuring 40 feet on the street by 100 feet deep. Of masonry and steel construction, it is faced with glazed terra cotta. The facade is flat with five window bays; the windows are recessed and decrease in height at each floor. An ornate, polychromed, terra cotta cornice projects beyond the wall plane while a molding of bay leaf garlands extends across the facade between it and the third story windows.

The first floor facade is defined by a large arch set in a frame of white bay leaf clusters on a dark blue field and flanked on either side by a row of alternating red and green rectangles. During the 1974 renovation, the entire wall area under the arch was filled with glass having an arched door in the middle.

The most notable feature of the interior are the exposed steel trusses that span the building at regular intervals and support each floor. The bottom member of each truss is curved, and this curve is duplicated in the arched opening of the facade. A narrow wooden stairway encircles the elevator at the back. The small mezzanine floor is edged with a wooden balustrade composed of alternating narrow and wide slats, the latter pierced with triangle and diamond patterns. It is identical to the stairway balustrade.

SIGNIFICANCE

May and Cooney was a locally owned dry goods firm that had lost its building during a fire in 1911. In April, 1913, the owners signed a lease with Mrs. P. Milligan to erect a new building on East Side Square to cost \$30,000. They occupied this structure until 1931 when they went bankrupt as a result of the Depression. The firm was re-organized as May Dry Goods Company and continued business another year

May and Cooney, 205 East Side Square, Huntsville, Alabama;
Continuation:

until it too went bankrupt, and the stock and fixtures were sold at auction. In 1934 the J. C. Penney Company moved into the vacant building and remained there until 1965. In 1973 Madison County purchased the structure and renovated it for use as the county law library.

It is one of the few extant, glazed terra cotta, commercial buildings in Huntsville, two of which were designed by local architect Edgar Love. The construction was supervised by Mrs. Milligan's son who died before it was completed. The initials "KM", for Kate Milligan, appear at each end of the facade arch. Only the ground level was altered during conversion to a library, and this remodeling was done in a manner sensitive to the original lines of the building. It is notable for the use of decorative, exposed steel trusses to support each floor.

