

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUL 8 1975

DATE ENTERED AUG 22 1975

**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

Todd County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Todd County Courthouse

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Elkton

— VICINITY OF

1st

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Todd

CODE

219

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 checked="" 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

Todd County

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Elkton

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Todd County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Elkton

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

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Todd County Courthouse is one of the very few surviving astylar Greek Revival courthouses in Kentucky, and one of the earliest surviving at all. The original structure was erected in 1835 by Jesse Russell, a local brick mason who was employed to supervise the construction. It consists of an almost cubical block of Flemish-bond brick with queen closers at the corners and beside the openings. There is a fairly low hipped roof, with projecting gables on the north and south sides. Beside these gables are prominent chimneys. The walls below the gables project very slightly from the main surface of the block, without interrupting the overall impression of massiveness.

The original triple openings in the center of each side--the only tell-tale Greek Revival feature of the design--and flanked by single openings on both stories. The proportions are distinguished, the scale rather taller than usual for the period. Over all the openings are stone lintels with carved concentric circles in the corner blocks which project beyond the ends of the openings. Between the tops of the doors and the transoms are interesting bands of "tear-drop dentils," which also appear in the interior architectural details of the courtroom. The foundations are of stone.

After Union troops used the courthouse as their headquarters during the Civil War, the building underwent necessary repairs and some superficial alteration. Several years later, about 1871, there was extensive remodelling. Apparently at this time a frame tower in the Second Empire manner was added to the center of the roof. It effectively marks the intersection of the main roads and marks the location of the courthouse from a considerable distance. The steeply slanted Mansard roofs of the tower retain some of their polygonal Victorian tiles. Each side features a round-arched dormer containing a clock-face. The clock was provided in 1888 by the City of Elkton. A bulbous lightning rod forms a finial. Oddly, the story below the roof has pointed-arched ventilator openings. During the remodelling in the 1870s the courtroom was removed to the second floor, its usual position in Kentucky courthouses, and offices for county officials were located on the first floor, where they all remain.

The balusters of the south stairway have an unusually heavy quality, suggesting Grecian entasis (photo 4). Although maintenance has been uneven, the building has suffered little inappropriate modernization.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES    1835; circa 1871

BUILDER/ARCHITECT    Jesse Russell

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Todd County Courthouse was built in 1835 under the supervision of Jesse Russell, a local brick mason. The courthouse is one of the very few surviving astylar Greek Revival courthouses in Kentucky. In spite of the addition of a Second Empire Mansard cupola and internal alterations after the devastations of the Civil War (known as "the War Between the States" in South Central Kentucky--as farther south), the building remains essentially as originally built. It is the focal point of the courthouse square that marks the center of the community and forms a landmark on both north-south and east-west routes.

Todd County was formed in 1819 from Christian and Logan Counties. In 1820 Elkton was designated the county seat. It was selected because of its central location, its plentiful supply of water, and the availability of land, granted by John Grey. Grey was one of the earliest settlers in the area. He owned a store and later started a stage coach line. Williams describes Grey's plans in The Story of Todd County, Kentucky (1972, p. 120):

"In 1819 Grey offered a plan of a large addition which consisted of more than 250 lots. According to his design the principal streets radiated from a square which contained about two acres. The plan was so carefully adapted for the terrain that the square occupied a slight eminence. Consequently, the courthouse which stands at the center of the square, dominates the area. The square is really a trapezoid, with the south side being longer than the other sides."

Grey built the first courthouse in 1821, from bricks burned on the site. This structure served as the courthouse until 1834, when it was decided a larger building was needed. At this time it was torn down and Jesse Russell was hired to supervise the construction of its new courthouse. According to legend the building was built on "honor," that is, each of the four sides was assigned to a workman of approved skill, and a premium offered to the one who should erect the best wall. The courthouse is unusual in that it has no central arch or support and this could be explained by the contest. It was recorded that a Mr. Shemwell built the best wall (south) and received a coat as a prize.

During the Civil War (1865) the Union troops used it as their headquarters. Afterwards, a few repairs and alterations were needed. About 1871, extensive remodelling was done. The building continues to serve as the Todd County Courthouse although the county's business has outgrown it and it is now less than adequate in size and facilities. Nevertheless, the building is architecturally significant and, in spite of the two periods of construction, retains considerable dignity achieved through modest means.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Battle, J.H. & W.H. Perrin. Counties of Todd and Christian, Kentucky. Chicago & Louisville: F.A. Batley Publishing Co., 1884.

Williams, Marion. The Story of Todd County, Kentucky 1820-1970. Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1972

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 | 48,62,6,0 | 4,07,35,5,0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Miss Marion Williams, Librarian

(W.E.L. & M.C.)

ORGANIZATION

Todd County Central High School

DATE

August, 1974

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

265-2506

CITY OR TOWN

Elkton

STATE

Kentucky

# 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Cedric W. Melton*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE July 2, 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*A.R. Winters*

DATE

*8/20/75*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE AUG 20 1975

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER