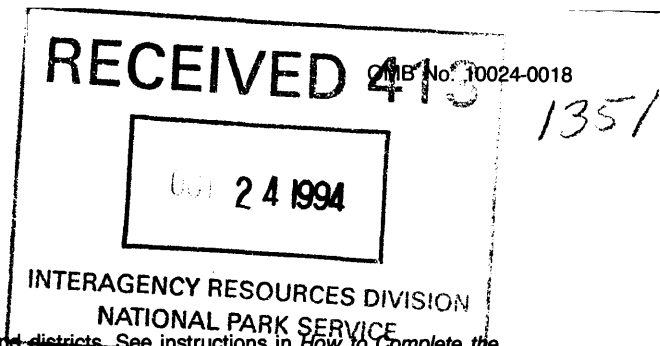


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Owen County Courthouse

other names/site number 119-605-36010

2. Location

street & number Courthouse Square N/A not for publication

city or town Spencer N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Owen code 119 zip code 47460

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 36 CFR 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] 10-20-94  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State of 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:
- 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:)

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Edson B. Beall Entered into the National Register 11-25-94 Date of Action

Owen County Courthouse Square  
Name of Property

Owen County, IN  
County and State

00001 0000 0000  
0000 0000

**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(s)
- 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
1	0	objects
2	0	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)

Neo-Classical Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls STONE: Limestone

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: Copper

METAL: Bronze

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See 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 contribution 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.)

**9. Major Bibliographical 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1911-1944

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1911

1927

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Johnson, Jesse Townsend (J.T. Johnson & Company)

Christ Kanzler & Son

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

Owen County Courthouse Square  
Name of Property

Owen County, Indiana  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approximately 1½ acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	5 2 0 5 4 0	4 3 4 6 2 9 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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 Patricia Powell, President

organization Owen County Preservations, Inc. date December 15, 1993

street & number 8000 W. Sand College telephone 812-876-6017

city or town Gosport state Indiana zip code 47433

**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 Owen County Commissioners

street & number Main Street, Courthouse Square telephone 812-829-5043

city or town Spencer state Indiana zip code 47460

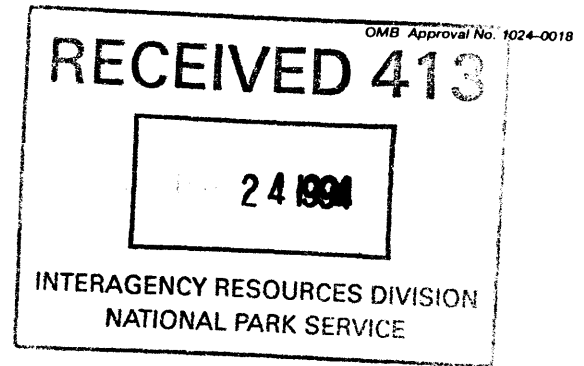
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to 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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1



Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

The Owen County Courthouse, built 1910-11, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on the basis of its architecture. The finest example of Classical Revival architecture in the county, it is representative of government and the democratic process. Designed by the Indianapolis firm of J.T. Johnson & Co., the courthouse is prominently situated on the square in historic downtown Spencer.

The characteristics of the Classical Revival style of architecture are evident in the symmetrical arrangement of the facades with the prevalence of tall pilasters flanking the entries. The massive size of the limestone blocks and the total appearance of its monumental though simple design carries out the manner of imposing governmental buildings of this period. The restrained design of the entablature and parapet add to the quiet dignity of this major limestone structure typifying the Classical Revival style.

The courthouse is a three story limestone structure with an underground basement. It is of a rectilinear dimension with a symmetrical appearance on all four sides. The roof is flat with a copper dome situated prominently on top in the center of the roof. The dome houses a Seth Thomas clock, original with the building, with a face on each of the four sides of the dome. A flag pole sits at the top of the ribbed dome. All four facades are five bays wide and are similar in their details. However, the west (or main) facade, is more ornate in design than the other three. All have oak double door entrances.

The west entrance (photo #1) has an arched transom above the eight foot wide double doors and the entire opening is flanked by concave carving on the limestone molding with a keystone centered above the transom. This entrance is further accented with a protruding row of limestone blocks supporting a stone balcony for the second floor with scroll brackets under the corner "posts" of the balcony. There are ledges extending out from either side of the seven steps leading up to the main door with a light post on top of each ledge. There is one other outside door on the first floor of the west facade, located on its north side. This door is the only entrance to the G.A.R. office. The west facade has a projecting pavilion set off on either side with banded rustication. The banded rustication is repeated on every corner of the courthouse. The west facade has two Ionic columns, in antis, on either side of the balcony. The balcony, entered from the second floor through double glass doors, is framed by sections of panes

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

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**Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana**

on either side above the doors. The panes of various sizes are arranged in a symmetrical pattern around and above the door, eight panes in all. The four double-hung windows on each level are symmetrical with narrower windows between the Ionic columns and wider ones on the outer edges of the building. The entablature around the top follows the line of the projecting pavilion and is continuous, on all four sides of the courthouse. The architrave with three depths of carved molding sets off the same plain stone frieze with dentil molding beneath the cornice. On the west facade the frieze has the words "Owen County Courthouse" carved into it, centered above the door (photo #5). Above the entablature is a parapet which follows the same configuration.

The south facade (photo #2) has five bays of paired double-hung windows across each of the three floors. On the first floor, the six foot wide oak double entrance doors in the central bay have two narrow sidelights. There are three steps up to enter these doors. The windows on the first floor are somewhat narrower than those on the second and third floors. The projecting pavilion on the south facade has two full Ionic pilasters centered above the doors and two half pilasters next to the banded rustication. The banded rustication is again repeated on the corners of the south facade. There are two extremely narrow windows on the second and third floors in the depth created where the projecting pavilion meets the main wall. On the east side these windows are set into the main wall but on the west into the pavilion. These small windows are to allow light into small storage areas and restrooms for the various offices. All windows on the second story of the courthouse have raised limestone surrounds with limestone lintels. The difference in the third story windows is that they have no lintels but do have limestone sills supported by decorative limestone brackets. The banded rustication and the entablature are identical to all other facades.

The east facade (photo #3) of the courthouse has five bays across with a different arrangement of windows than any other facade. The first floor has a central double door, without sidelights, which is three steps down from ground level and is more narrow than any of the other doors. There is a small rectangular transom above the doors. There is a single double-hung window on either side in a projecting pavilion. There are two windows on either side of the projecting pavilion in the main wall. On the second and third floors there are three double-hung windows in the projecting pavilion and one pair of double-hung windows

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

on either side in the main wall. The third floor middle window, a blind window, is closed off with stone, but is framed with raised limestone surrounds to keep the symmetry. The arrangement of pilasters is the same as the south facade: two Ionic pilasters in the center with a half pilaster next to the banded rustication. The banded rustication and the entablature are identical to all other facades.

The north facade (photo #4) of the courthouse has five bays across on all three floors. The difference between the north and south facades is in the first floor. The central door is flanked by two narrow sidelights and there are three steps up to the entrance. The difference is the bay to the right (west) of the main door has an outside door to the men's room and is also used as a handicapped entrance. There is another outside door to the ladies' room in the left bay in the main wall of the building. On the second and third floors the projecting pavilion with the same banded rustication is identical to the south facade with the same arrangement of Ionic pilasters and windows. The one slight difference is an additional narrow window on the second floor, left corner of the projecting pavilion. This window is in the main wall adjacent to the projecting pavilion. There is the same arrangement of Ionic pilasters in the projecting pavilion on the north facade as there is on the east and south. The banded rustication and the entablature are identical to all other facades.

From the exterior, the courthouse looks very much the same today as it did in 1910 when it was built. The woodframed windows were replaced in 1991-92, but the same sash formation was kept and the brown aluminum replacement frames give the same appearance as the original windows. One major change is the appearance of the dome. The windows of the dome were covered over with sheets of galvanized metal in 1983. In addition the entire dome was painted gold in a misguided attempt to imitate the original copper patina. A recent feasibility study has recommended opening up the dome windows and replacing the copper on the dome. Hopefully this is forthcoming.

The octagonal dome on the courthouse's flat roof enhances the building's Classical Revival design (photo #2). It is a copper shell over a steel beam and wood decking structure. The lower section is plain except for the Doric pilasters beneath the clock faces. The simple molding of the capital on the pilasters is carried through on the corner sections. There is a surround of similar design

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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**Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana**

around the closed off windows on the lower part. The original double-hung windows are still intact under the galvanized steel sheets covering them. There is a band girding the entire dome which divides the lower flat windowed section from the curved, ribbed dome section. To accentuate this distinction the dentil molding used in the stone facades of the courthouse is repeated in a smaller way in the cornice, made of copper, at the top of this band. Above this, the clock faces are framed by a small projecting portico with two small pilasters and a cornice with dentil molding. The entire effect is very classical in style. The contrast of the rectilinear porticos with the curvature of the eight ribs and triangular faces to the entire dome provides some variety. The dome is capped with a small doughnut shaped top and an urn-like support for the flag pole.

The interior of the Owen County Courthouse is an eclectic mixture of the Classical Revival style prevalent on the outside with added Arts and Crafts style features on the inside. The iron balustrades and curvilinear capitals on the pilasters give a more ornamented style to the interior. This with the Classical Revival marble, geometric lines and decorative tiles are apparent throughout the building.

The interior of the Courthouse has an underground basement and three floors containing county governmental services. The entire appearance is very close to its original construction. The basement has in the past been purely storage and mechanical services for the courthouse. In the past two years it has undergone extensive renovation and now houses the Owen County Archives. This 1200 square foot area has heat and humidity control for preservation of the many papers discovered in the reorganization of the basement. Plans have been made to move some county governmental offices to the basement soon. Recently, an opening was made in the cement foundation on the northeast corner for a handicapped ramp. At present inner walls are being constructed for specific storage of records: small claims, health, judge, prosecutor, etc. There are other areas for the mechanical, electrical, heating and other services. This project is in progress now.

The main entrance has a small vestibule with three interior sides having a second set of doors on either side. The main stairways to the upper floors are paired on either side of the steps down to the first floor. To the right of the entryway on a plaque on the wall is a good description of the original dedication (see historical



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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

section). All of the doors, trim and moldings in the courthouse are made of oak. The baseboards however, are marble. The stairways are of cast iron construction with ornate iron balustrade in a geometric design (photo #6). The geometric design of the balustrade is the same from the first floor to the third floor. The banisters and newel posts are all constructed of iron with oak railings.

The first floor is at a lower level than the entrances. At the main (west) entrance, there are seven marble steps down to the main floor. The north and south entrances are three steps down to the main floor. The Classical Revival style of the exterior is carried into all three floors of the interior. The marble steps leading to the first floor, the small hexagon shaped white tile flooring with a brown Greek Key geometrical pattern around the perimeter of the floor carries out the classical motif (photo #7). The pilasters reflect the eclectic Arts and Crafts mixture with the classical in the raised geometric base connected by a classical bracket to three bands of a variety of curvilinear and rectangular beveled raised panels on the capitals. All of the ceiling areas are outlined with dentil molding similar to the exterior with an additional band of egg and dart molding above it (photo #8).

The east entrance is lower than the other entrances, consequently there are three steps up to the main floor from the hallway on the east side. When the building was originally built, the east side held a large auditorium. That area has been remodeled and now has a library and an extension office as well as a bathroom for office workers. There are both ladies and men's public restrooms on the north side. These are very much in their original state. The marble stalls with brass supports and small wooden doors with original hardware reflect the building's original appearance. One partition and one stool were removed in order to enlarge the north stall to allow for handicapped use. There is an elevator to the second and third floors in the northeast corner near the surveyor's office.

On the second floor the same combination of hexagonal white and brown geometrical tiles are used in the identical pattern as on the first floor. The ceiling is lower than the first floor, but has the same egg-and-dart and dentil moldings outlining each of the rectangular areas. The second floor offices are in the same location as the original floor plan. The oak doors of all offices have glass panes with decorative gold lettering naming each office (photo #9). This floor has its original appearance more than any other floor. The fluorescent lights are all that

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

seem to have changed. The office of the treasurer still has the marble ledge and barred railing with windows for tellers to collect tax payments. The offices have an oak picture railing and all oak woodwork, which has recently been refinished. The large open central area contains some showcases with historic artifacts and statues. It serves as a mini-museum with historic paintings and plaques lining the walls. There is a flag made by some Spencer women during the Civil War for the first company to be organized from Owen County, the 14th Indiana Volunteers.

The wide central stairway leading to the third floor has a large landing halfway up which is the entrance to the balcony on the main (west) facade. The balcony is used during festivals and parades for viewing and public announcements. The paired stairways on either side of this balcony are the final path to the third floor. The same hexagonal tile flooring is repeated here.

The third floor holds the courtroom with its pertinent offices. The prosecuting attorney, probation office, small claims court and the judge's offices are reached from the hallway which surrounds the centrally located courtroom. The jury room with accompanying bathrooms is located off the southeast corner of the courtroom. The courtroom is a spacious high-ceilinged room with more ornate pilasters than any other place in the courthouse. (photo #10) The capital of the twenty foot high columns is a cartouche with leaf and circular shapes surrounding it, ending with folded draped patterns on either side of the base of the capital. A stylized vine pattern is used briefly just below the capital outlined by the same rectangular classical ornamentation used throughout the courthouse. There are five identical pilasters on the north and south walls with a half pilaster in the corners. The back of the courtroom has library stacks on each side of the central doors. There are 99 oak folding seats with lyre shaped iron sides on either side of a central aisle for spectators to use. The jury box contains 12 seats of the same oak style but on a slightly raised platform for better viewing. The railing separating the judge's bench from spectators as well as the bench itself and the wall behind the bench is all made of a wonderful simple classic arrangement of posts and panels made of oak. These panels are graduated in height from the spectators area to the panels behind the judge's bench. The doors into the courtroom are in original alignment with the door closest to the judge leading to his office. There is a dumb-waiter located in the north wall which leads to the clerk's office. It is not functional since the wall has been covered at the opening

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

in the clerk's office. The entire effect of the courtroom is of an imposing, calm atmosphere.

Near the judge's office is a doorway leading to the small stairway going up to the roof and dome. This stairway goes from the basement to the roof. It is of all iron construction.

The statue on the courthouse grounds referred to as *The Spirit of the American Doughboy* is eligible for consideration as a contributing object due to its close proximity to the courthouse, its historic importance to the county, and the local sculptor, E.M. Viquesney, who became known nationally for this specific sculpture.

On the northwest corner of the Owen County Courthouse lawn sits the statue named *The Spirit of the American Doughboy* by its creator, E.M. Viquesney (photo #11). This bronze figure of a World War I soldier sits on a limestone base. The statue is seven feet high, 31 inches wide and 52 inches deep with a base which is 51 inches high, 32 inches wide and 36 inches deep. A concrete foundation supports it all. This life-size figure shows an infantryman advancing through stumps and barbed wire, with a bayoneted rifle in his left hand and a grenade in the upraised right hand. This statue was dedicated on May 30, 1927 at a Memorial Day service in observance of Decoration Day on the courthouse lawn. The creator, E.M. Viquesney was present.

The statue is presently in good condition. It remains in its original state, other than a coat of gold paint, which was applied at the same time the courthouse dome was painted in 1983.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

The Owen County Courthouse is one of the most historically and architecturally important buildings in Spencer and Owen County. Completed in the Classical Revival style of architecture in 1911, it was the third courthouse built by county government. Based on its excellent architecture with a high degree of integrity, the Owen County Courthouse is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C.

The first courthouse was a log structure situated just off the southeast corner of the present town square in the vicinity of the Spencer-Owen County Carnegie Public Library.

The second brick courthouse built in 1825 stood on the town square in the location of the present courthouse. It was removed in 1909 to allow space for the new much larger limestone courthouse.

The present Owen County Courthouse was built as a result of an emergency meeting held by the County Commissioners on May 14, 1909 that was continued to May 15th. The old brick courthouse built in 1825 was declared unsafe: "No longer fit or safe for occupancy." Some of the itemized problems were: "the walls are cracked, plaster falling from the ceiling, doors and windows spreading apart, roof and upper floors in danger of collapse, no vaults for safe preservation of records, the Circuit Court refuses to hold court here." To verify the last comment a contract was made on June 8, 1909 to April 1910 with Ruth Peden and John Greene for rental of the second story of the Union Hall or Opera House for the use of the Circuit Court.

There were several meetings held in June 1909 to plan for the construction of a new courthouse. Bids were advertised then the decision was made on September 30, 1909 to have J.T. Johnson & Co. from Indianapolis as the architect and Christ Kanzler & Son of Vanderburgh County be the general contractor for the price of \$80,000 to be completed in 18 months. A building committee was formed and David Beem was named its chairman. It was his grandfather who donated the land for a seat of government when the town of Spencer was platted in 1820. The Beem Family was instrumental in the origin of Owen County. The plaque on the wall just inside the main (west) entrance of the courthouse tells of the dedication of these men. "The name of Daniel Beem who donated 70 ½ acres of land on

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

which this building stands as a seat of justice for Owen County is hereby commemorated. This building was begun September 15, 1909, cornerstone laid May 4, 1910, dedicated August 31, 1911. County Commissioners: James Truax, William Kneble, Rufus H. Cline, Samuel Oberholtzer. County Council: Samuel M. Royer, George Berry, Thomas N. Nugent, Robert Johnson, Stephen Roger, Holt Pickens. Architects: J.T. Johnson & Co. Contractors: Christ Kanzler & Son. Cost of Building, furniture and improvements of ground \$106,000.00". It is interesting to note that according to the history of Owen County published in 1884, James W. Archer stated the brick courthouse: ".is yet in good repair and will answer our purpose for a courthouse for twenty-five years yet to come. We are not in a hurry, as some other counties have been, to build a gorgeous courthouse, with a mortgage on top of it. Our people think it best to keep out of debt. . . ."

At the dedication of the current courthouse on August 31, 1911, Judge John C. Robinson gave an address on "The New Courthouse". The entire program was a lengthy all-day affair and included famous speakers such as the Honorable Samuel M. Ralston, Governor of Indiana, who gave the "Dedicatory Address." There was a wealth of entertainment with orchestras, bands and choirs all participating.

Some interesting items in the Commissioners records show \$1,365.00 was paid for the Seth Thomas Clock and 100 pound bell; 500 Lyric opera chairs in quartered oak were purchased from the Wisconsin Lumber & Veneer Company in Port Washington, Wisconsin for \$2.20 each; George Babbs was paid \$75.00 to tear down and remove the old jail apartment and room containing the iron cells, located on the public square in order to make room for the erection of the new courthouse. He also was to remove them to the town hall and reconstruct them.

The architect for the Owen County Courthouse, J.T. Johnson & Co., is a relatively unknown firm. According to his obituary, Johnson graduated from Shortridge High School and Cornell University, however, Cornell has no record of his enrollment. At some point, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and reached the rank of Lt. Colonel. The obituary further states that Johnson was stationed at Washington after World War I and assisted in the redesigning of Arlington National Cemetery to include the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is possible, then, that Johnson abandoned private practice for a career in the Army Quartermaster's office, which designed buildings for the military. Of the few buildings

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

Johnson is known to have designed, the Bona Thompson Library, 1903, is most similar. Located in the historic Indianapolis suburb of Irvington (NR, 5-27-87), the brick and limestone library uses much of the same classical vocabulary as the Owen County Courthouse. Johnson is also reputed to have designed the Indiana pavilion at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Upon his death in 1953, Col. Johnson was interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Owen County Courthouse is significant as the only building to contain county governmental offices and records. It is located just slightly east of the center of the entire county and is in the center of the town of Spencer, the county seat. It is the symbol of the political process for the county, the center of social activities in the county and the seat of justice for the county. From the time it was built until the present, it has been used for the same purpose and has held few changes.

The Owen County Courthouse typifies the Classical Revival style through several characteristic elements. Among the details are Ionic columns and pilasters, quoins, and dentils.

The Odle, McGuire & Shook Architectural Firm recently performed a thorough study on the exterior condition of the courthouse focusing on the roof and dome. Due to deterioration in the flat roof and the thinning and loose joints on the copper dome, there is a definite need to start a restoration on the upper part of the courthouse.

The Owen County Commissioners have always been the caretakers of the courthouse and its surrounding space. There are three commissioners each elected for a term of four years. Two are elected in one year and one the following year. The present commissioners are: Dwight Dunigan, Wiley Truesdel and George Jennings. They presently meet twice monthly on the second and fourth Mondays. They received the recommendations of Odle, McGuire & Shook for the proper restoration with interest and are at present trying to locate funds for that purpose.

*The Spirit of the American Doughboy* is significant and a contributing element to the nomination because the creator was an important person in Owen County, Spencer, Indiana all of his life and was well-known throughout the nation for his patriotic statues.

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

Earnest Moore Viquesney was born in Spencer, Indiana on October 4, 1876 to Paul Alfred Viquesney, a French immigrant, and Jane Leamon Viquesney from Greene County. His father, Paul, was a stone carver who first settled in Virginia where he worked as a carver on the Capital building. He came to Spencer in 1874 and set up a stone and marble carving shop. There are stones in local cemeteries which have the name Viquesney on them and some include the name Viquesney & Son. E.M. Viquesney grew up in his father's shop. As an adult, he opened his own studio in Spencer although he moved to Americus, Georgia at one time.

His advertising literature states the name of his studio as The American Doughboy Studio and sometimes The World War Memorial Association. His promotional efforts were designed for patriotic groups such as V.F.W., American Legion, D.A.R. and military groups of all types. He always included suggestions for fund raising and guaranteed "quick results." His statue *The Spirit of the American Doughboy* was sent to all parts of the United States. In addition to "the Doughboy" he made other patriotic statues (e.g. *Spirit of the Flag*, *Spirit of the American Navy*) and plaques (e.g. the American's Creed, Dedication Plaques for memorials) and *The Unveiling*. *The Unveiling*, a memorial statue, stands in the Viquesney burial lot at Riverside Cemetery in Spencer, Indiana. However, none of these other statues were as popular as his "Doughboy". One hundred forty statues of *The Spirit of the American Doughboy* were erected during the 1920's and 1930's in almost every state in the union.

The *Spencer Owen Leader* newspaper of Wednesday June 1, 1927 described the Annual Decoration Day Service of the G.A.R. when "The Doughboy" was unveiled. There was a parade which formed on Main Street and marched to the cemetery for speeches and decoration of graves, then it reformed and marched back to the courthouse square for the unveiling of the statue and the principal address. Two war mothers whose sons had died in the military service pulled the cords which drew the flags from the front of the statue. There was music and group singing of patriotic songs and Viquesney himself was there and spoke a few words. The newspaper stated that it was estimated there were 3,500 persons attending. This large crowd would indicate support and popularity for Viquesney and his statue.

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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

The statue has been the gathering place for Memorial Day services ever since its dedication. Although it may be a shorter simpler service today, the idea of the statue being the focus of memorial services is still important to the citizens of Owen County.

E.M. Viquesney was also involved in local business. He built a large brick building at the corner of Washington and Franklin Streets. (this building was later destroyed by fire). He built the Tivoli theater on Washington Street in Spencer. It is still in use as a movie theater. He is one of Spencer's famous citizens and is still honored and remembered today.

Because of the Courthouse's architectural integrity and representation of the popular early twentieth century style, Classical Revival, and the identification of Viquesney with a typical example of his work, this property should be considered for the National Register of Historic Places.



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Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana

Bibliography

"Arlington Burial for Col. Johnson," Indianapolis News, Dec. 21, 1953, p. 15.

Blanchard, Charles, Ed. History of Owen County, Indiana.  
Chicago: F. A. Battey & Co., 1884.

J. T. Johnson & Co., original floor plans of Owen County Courthouse, 1909.

Owen County Commissioner's Office, Book #1, p. 22. Owen County Courthouse, Spencer, Indiana.

Owen County Courthouse Archives, Folder #1, various clippings and papers.

Wesley, T. Perry. Personal collection, various items relating to E. M. Viquesney.

Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

The courthouse square is bounded by the south line of the Conrail right of way on the north, the north curb of Market Street on the south, the west curb of Washington Street on the east, and the east curb of Main Street on the west, Spencer, Owen County, Indiana.

Boundary Justification

This comprises the public square set aside for the construction of a courthouse for Owen County.

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## Photographs

The following information is the same for each photograph except where noted:

Owen County Courthouse  
Owen County, Indiana  
Les Jordan, photographer  
April 1993

Negatives on file at the Owen County Archives,  
Owen County Courthouse, Spencer, Indiana

- #1 West facade  
Camera facing east
- #2 South facade  
Camera facing north
- #3 East facade  
Camera facing west
- #4 North facade  
Camera facing south
- #5 West facade detail  
Camera facing east
- #6 West stairwell leading from second floor to landing  
Camera facing east
- #7 Second floor office, detail  
Camera facing south

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- #8 Second floor detail  
Camera facing northwest
- #9 Commissioner's Office, second floor  
Camera facing east
- #10 Court Room, third floor  
Camera facing south
- #11 Doughboy Statue  
Camera facing southeast

Additional Photographs:

Les Jordan, photographer  
March 4, 1994  
Negatives on file at Owen County Preservations, Inc.  
Gosport, IN  
save for #12

- #12 Historic Photograph ca. 1920 of exterior  
Camera facing north-west
- #13 North facade  
Camera facing south
- #14 East facade  
Camera facing west
- #15 South facade  
Camera facing north
- #16 West facade  
Camera facing east
- #17 Northwest corner of exterior  
Camera facing south-east  
Note Visquesney "Doughboy"
- #18 West entrance and stairs  
Camera facing west

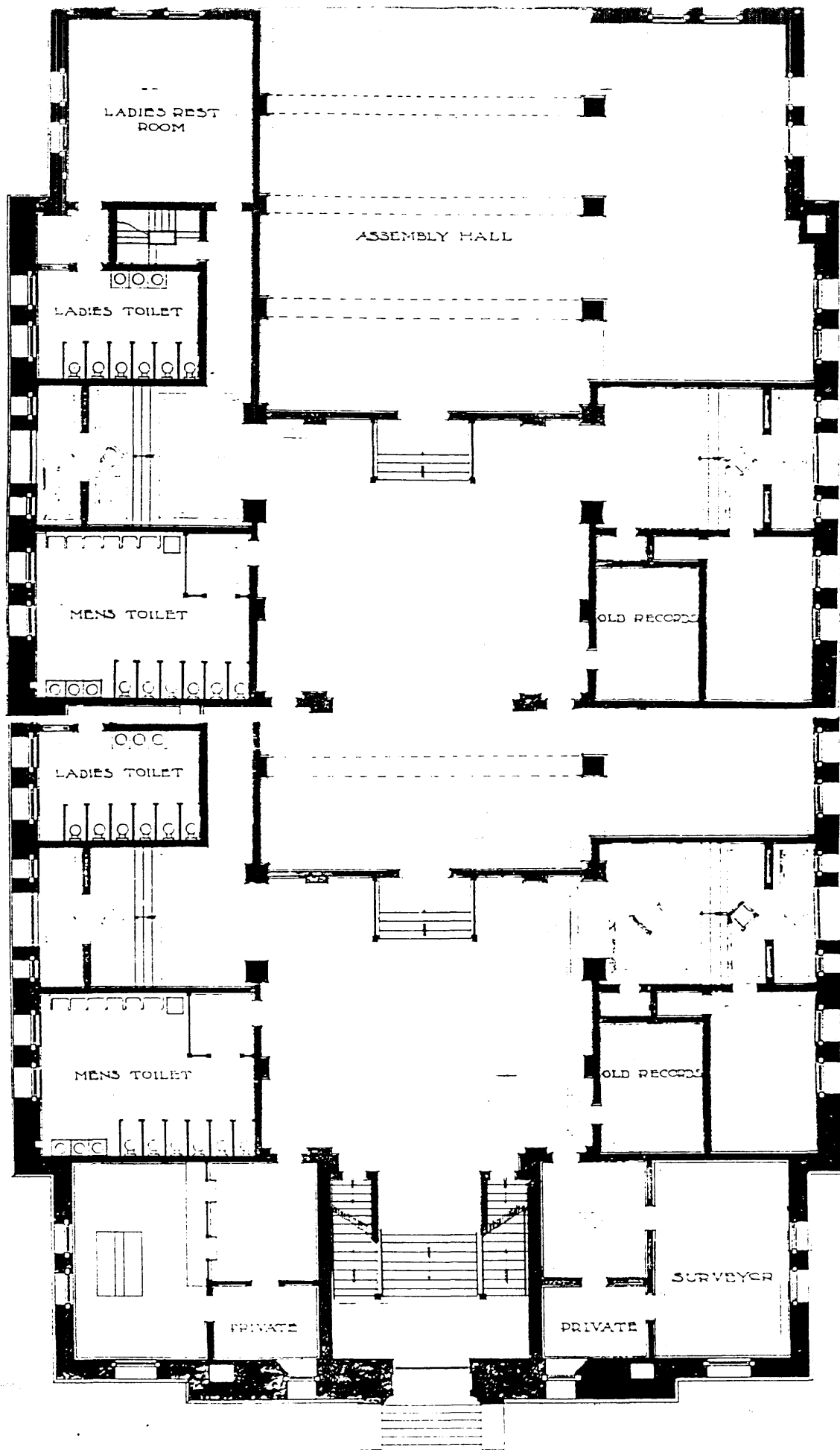
**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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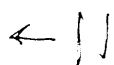
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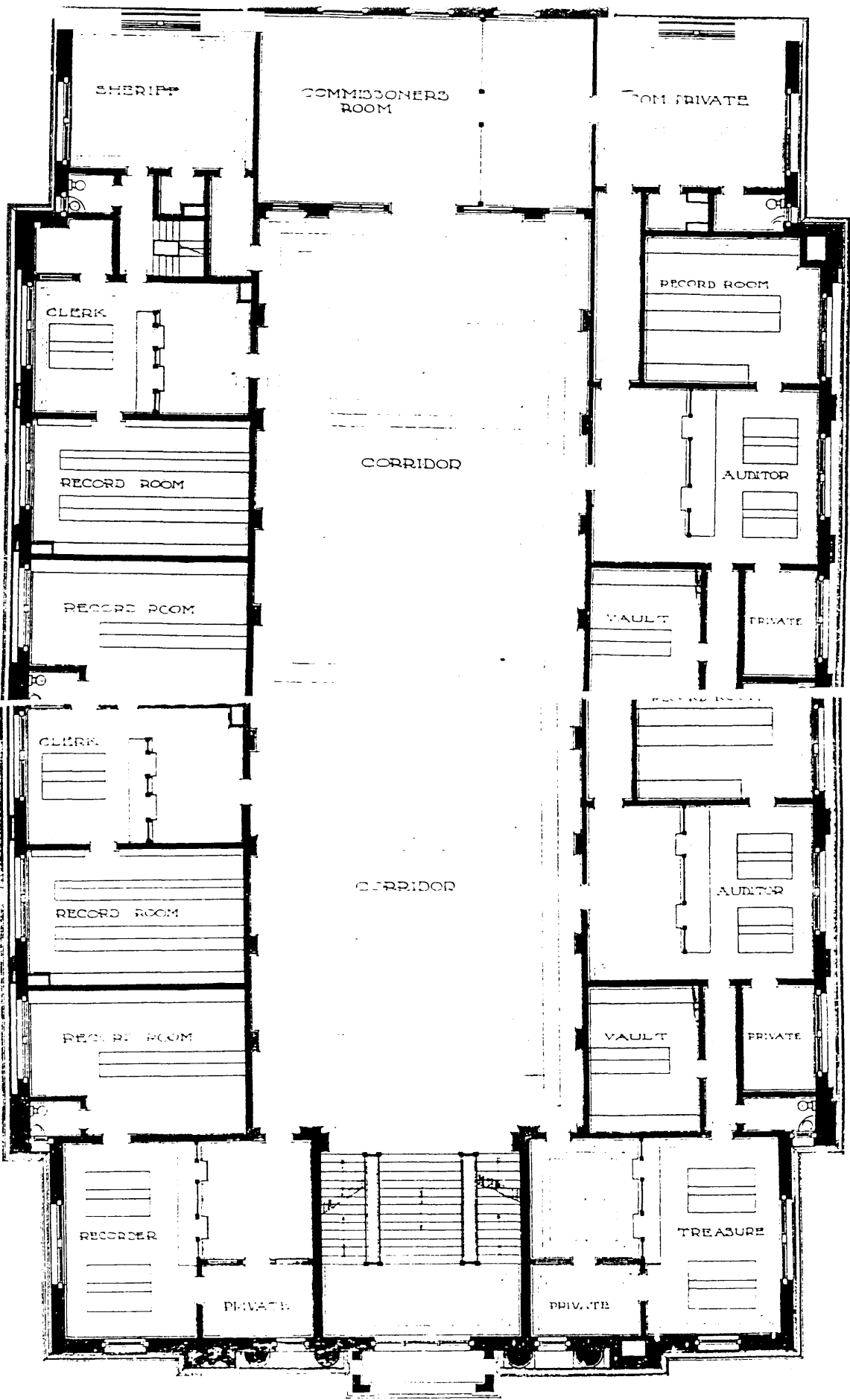
- #19 South Entrance and lobby  
Camera facing south
- #20 Second floor entrance on south facade  
Camera facing south-west
- #21 Detail of Treasurer's office door  
Camera facing south
- #22 Interior of Commissioner's Room  
Camera facing south
- #23 Courtroom lobby - third floor  
Camera facing north-east
- #24 Interior of courtroom  
Camera facing east
- #25 Interior of courtroom  
Camera facing west
- #26 Interior of courtroom  
Camera facing south-east
- #27 Interior of Jury room  
Camera facing south
- #28 Interior of Courtroom Annex  
Camera facing north-west
- #29 Interior of courtroom annex  
Camera facing south-west



BASEMENT PLAN

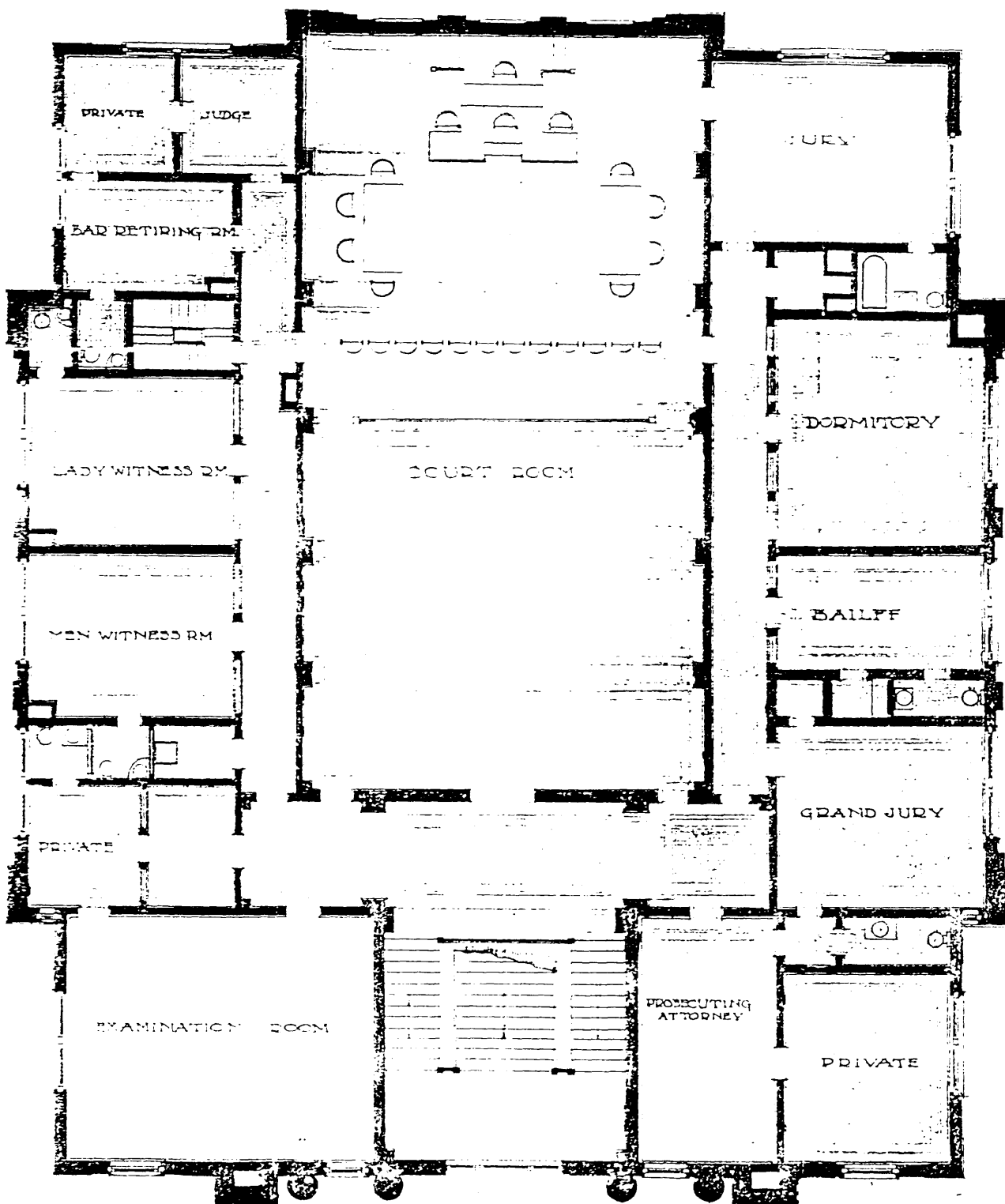
WOMEN'S CLUB HOUSE  
 1000 N. 10th St.





← 11 →  
 < FIRST FLOOR PLAN >

OWEN COUNTY COURT HOUSE  
 - SPENCER IND. -  
 J. T. JOHNSON & CO. ARCHITECTS -



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
 OF THE NEW COURT HOUSE  
 DENVER, CO.  
 HENRY W. HARRIS ARCHITECTS.

