

= Blackford County Courthouse =

The Blackford County Courthouse is a historic building located in Hartford City , Indiana , the county seat of Blackford County . The building stands on a public square in the city 's downtown commercial district . Built during the Indiana Gas Boom , most of the construction work was completed in 1894 . The current courthouse was preceded by an other courthouse building on the same site , which was declared inadequate by a judge in 1893 , and was torn down . Following the condemnation of the original courthouse , the county ' s judicial activities were temporarily located in a building across the street .

The current courthouse was designed by architects Arthur LaBelle and Burt L. French , who were from nearby Marion , Indiana . The building ' s architectural style is Richardsonian Romanesque , which was popular during the second half of the 19th century . The large corner tower of the building is the tallest structure in the downtown commercial district . Considered " the county 's most outstanding landmark " , the structure is often pictured on web sites associated with the area , and continues to house local government over 100 years after its construction .

In addition to the courthouse building , the buildings around the courthouse square are also historic in nature and considered contributing properties to the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District . The courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 and was included as a contributing property to the historic district in 2006 . Most of the buildings in the Courthouse Square Historic District continue to have facades that look similar to their original design . Although the interior has been remodeled , the exterior of the courthouse also retains its original appearance .

= = History = =

The small cluster of log cabins called Hartford was designated the county seat of Blackford County in 1837 , when legislation to create the county was proposed . Despite being created in 1838 , no county government was organized until 1839 , and there was some dissent over the location of the county seat . During June 1839 , Indiana Governor David Wallace appointed Nicholas Friend as the new county ' s sheriff , and elections were held soon thereafter . The log cabin homes of county officials served as county government buildings during the first year of the county ' s organized existence . County affairs were first handled at the log cabin home of Andrew Boggs , which was located just north of Little Lick Creek in Licking Township . This cabin was , in effect , the capitol of Blackford County for about three months .

= = = Site = = =

Among the first orders made by the new county government was a survey of 40 acres (16 ha) of wilderness located to the north of Boggs ' cabin , parts of which had been donated for the purpose of housing the seat of government . A public square was to be located on 1 acre (0 @ . @ 4 ha) of land , on which the seat of justice was to be located . It was also ordered that the seat of justice was to be named Hartford . The 40 acres (16 ha) were owned by three individuals living in an adjacent county . The owners donated every other lot to the county as part of a plan to ensure that the county seat was located there ' and increase the value of their property . Despite the county government 's orders and plans , no action was taken on constructing a courthouse . In September 1839 , the county commissioners began conducting business in the home of Jacob Emshwiller . For a few months , the Emshwiller home was the new capitol of Blackford County .

Montpelier , Indiana , is located in the northeastern portion of Blackford County , in Harrison Township . In late 1839 , the location of the county seat was formally contested , as the citizens of Montpelier believed their community would be a better location . Montpelier had been platted in 1837 , while the " town " of Hartford was still wilderness north of a cluster of log cabins . However , Licking Township , where Hartford was located , contained more of the county 's population . Licking township did not have a platted community like Montpelier , but had attracted farmers because the

land near Lick Creek had acceptable drainage .

The board of commissioners ruled against Montpelier in a January 1840 , session . In November 1840 , the board ordered the construction of a courthouse ? which was to be located in Hartford . The plan was for a 25 @-@ foot -square (8 m) , two @-@ story , " hewed @-@ log " courthouse . The commissioners went into considerable detail describing the building . However , the courthouse was not constructed because of continuing controversy over the location (Hartford or Montpelier) of the county seat .

In 1841 , the commissioners again settled on Hartford as the location for the county seat , and planning for Blackford County ? s original courthouse began . On September 11 , 1841 , the Blackford County board of commissioners ordered that written proposals should be received to build a courthouse on the public square in the town of Hartford . The building was to be 40 feet (12 m) square , 25 feet (8 m) high , and built of brick on a stone foundation . The courthouse grounds occupied 1 @.@ 5 acres (0 @.@ 6 ha) instead of the 1 acre (0 @.@ 4 ha) proposed in 1839 .

= = = Original courthouse = = =

The contract for Blackford County 's first courthouse was let on December 7 , 1841 , and construction was supervised by Charles and William F. Jones . The proposed cost for the courthouse was \$ 5 @,@ 600 . Until the courthouse was ready , rooms were rented from various members of the community for conducting county government . By May 1845 , an arrangement was made for the upper floor to be used for court proceedings until the entire building was completed . Finally , in a special session held October 31 , 1845 , the board of commissioners found that the courthouse had been completed according to contract . The total cost for the courthouse building was \$ 5 @,@ 750 .

The small community grew to a population of 250 by 1850 , and it took 30 more years to get close to a population of 1 @,@ 500 . Early during that period , " Hartford " became known as " Hartford City " because another Hartford existed elsewhere in the state . In 1887 , Hartford City Gas and Oil Company drilled Hartford City 's first natural gas well , and Hartford City 's participation in the Indiana Gas Boom began . The area experienced a period of economic growth and prosperity as manufacturers moved to the region to utilize the low @-@ cost energy .

An 1887 description of the courthouse called it " a plain building ? its architecture characteristic of the pioneer times " . It also said the building " is still good enough were it only in better repair . " On January 19 , 1893 , Judge Joseph L. Custer declared the " courtroom to be an inadequate place for the transaction of the business of this court " , and that court business " be held elsewhere in some suitable place in the county seat . "

= = = Current courthouse = = =

The county commissioners responded in March 1893 , to the Judge ? s declaration that the (original) courthouse was inadequate . The three commissioners , T. T. McGeath , I. L. Hughs , and A. W. Miles , ordered that a new courthouse was necessary . A week later , they engaged the Marion firm of LaBelle and French as architects for the new courthouse . Since the original courthouse was condemned , and Judge Custer (of the 48th Circuit Court of Indiana) refused to use it , arrangements were made to use the nearby opera house for courtroom proceedings until a new courthouse was available . On May 20 , 1893 , the old courthouse building was sold for \$ 20 , and removed from the grounds to enable construction of the new structure . In October , it was decided that the opera house was not suitable for courtroom proceedings because of possible theatrical conflicts , so rooms were rented at the newly built Briscoe Block building located on the south side of the courthouse square . Two rooms , with gas heat included , were rented for a total of \$ 400 per year . One room would be for the circuit court , while the other was for the county clerk ? s office .

On June 8 , 1893 , LaBelle and French provided the county commissioners with a complete plan for the new courthouse . The architects designed a monumental stone courthouse in the Richardsonian

Romanesque architectural style that was popular in the United States at that time . The four @-@ story building measured 71 by 126 feet (22 by 38 m) . It featured enormous arches on the northern and southern facades , semicircular towers on the east and west sides , and a 165 @-@ foot (50 m) clock tower on the southwest corner .

Although the community planned to build the courthouse as a monument to the city ? s (Gas Boom @-@ related) prosperity , the commissioners were still concerned with costs . In late July 1893 , the commissioners awarded the courthouse construction contract to the Fort Wayne firm of Boseker & Son . The price was cut to \$ 97 @,@ 000 by altering some of the architect ? s specifications . The stone chosen for the building was Amherst Blue from quarry number 9 in Amherst , Ohio . Work on the foundation was conducted in August , and the foundation stones were brought to town from Montpelier quarries located on the other side of the county .

On November 1 , 1893 , the city held a ceremony for the laying of the courthouse cornerstone . The local Free and Accepted Masons Lodge Number 106 ran the program . The ceremony included a parade , a welcome by prosecutor J. A. Hindman , a Masonic ceremony , an address by Mason Past Grand Master Martin H. Rice , and an address by historian Benjamin G. Shinn .

Although a harsh winter sometimes made work difficult , construction of the courthouse progressed far enough that work on the large (3 stories high) arch on the southern façade began during February 1894 . Around the same time , work to carve the frieze above the second story was sublet to Gustave Steuber . Much of the carving work around the building 's entrances was conducted under Mr. Steuber 's direction . The building ? s cornice was finished in April , and nearly all of the structure ? s stone was cut by that time . By June , work was started on the clock tower , and almost all of the roof was completed in August . The tower 's 4 @,@ 000 @-@ pound (2 @,@ 000 kg) clock arrived by rail in August from New Haven , Connecticut ? although the tower was not ready to accommodate the timepiece until October . Installation of the clock was completed in November . By February 1895 , the courthouse contractor considered the courthouse finished .

On February 27 , 1895 , county officials began moving into the new courthouse . Total cost for the new courthouse was \$ 129 @,@ 337 . Most of that expense was paid to the contractor , Boseker and Son . Among other expenses included in the total were \$ 2 @,@ 000 paid to the E. Howard Clock Company of Boston , \$ 7 @,@ 000 for furniture paid to the H. Ohmer and Sons Company , and \$ 6 @,@ 158 for architecture .

After the courthouse was completed , it was discovered that some modifications were needed for its plumbing and heating system . Outside of the courthouse , steps were also taken to beautify the surrounding grounds . Sidewalks were added , and eventually hitching racks for horses . A war memorial was added to the northeast corner of the courthouse grounds in 1921 , and this was the first of the major war memorials that occupy the corners of the courthouse lawn . A total of nine memorials , monuments and commemorative plaques have been added to the grounds within the courthouse square .

Today , the courthouse is still used by local government , and has a mailing address of 110 West Washington Street , Hartford City , Indiana . Hartford City 's ZIP code is 47348 . Courtroom facilities on the second floor of courthouse are used by the Blackford County Circuit Court and Blackford County Superior Court . The Blackford County Prosecutor also maintains an office in the building . The Blackford County commissioners meet on the first floor of the courthouse , and the county Clerk ? s office is also located on that floor . Additional office space is provided in the Blackford County Courthouse Annex , which is located across the street on the west side of the courthouse . The annex has an address of 121 North High Street . Among the offices housed in the annex building are the Blackford County Community Foundation , the Blackford County Emergency Operations Center , and the Blackford County Economic Development Corporation (including the County Assessor) .

= = Architecture = =

Designed by the firm known as LaBelle and French of Marion , Indiana , the Blackford County Courthouse is considered an excellent example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture , which

was popular at the time . LaBelle and French also designed the White County courthouse in Monticello , Indiana ; the Trumbull County courthouse in Warren , Ohio ; and other buildings in the region . Listed December 31 , 1974 , the Trumbull County courthouse is also part of the National Register of Historic Places . Unfortunately , the White County courthouse was severely damaged by a " direct hit " from a 1974 tornado (rated as " EF4 " using the Enhanced Fujita Scale) , and therefore demolished . LaBelle and French also designed one of Hartford City ' s hotels , and one of the city 's many glass factories .

= = = Exterior = = =

The courthouse was built using Henry Hobson Richardson 's variation of the Romanesque Revival style of architecture ? which later became known as Richardsonian Romanesque . Constructed mostly during 1894 , the four ? story building features a 165 @-@ foot clock tower located on the southwest corner , and is the tallest structure in the area . The roof is a high pitched hip roof , and exterior walls are made from stone .

The northern and southern facades of the structure are similar ? each consisting of three bays . The central bay is occupied by a massive round @-@ arched portal with enriched archivolts and a fan window . From the ground @-@ floor doorway to the top of the large central bay arch measures about three stories high . A gabled dormer rises above the central arch . The dormer has three double @-@ hung windows , and a central arched window resides above the middle . Each of the side bays has a set of windows for each floor , and the third floor windows are crowned with arched windows .

The huge clock tower is the main difference between the north and south facades . Located on the southwest corner of the courthouse , it is topped by a steeply @-@ pitched roof with round corner piers . Blind arcading is used on the upper portion of the tower between the clock faces and the roof of the main portion of the building . Three rows of slit windows are utilized within the blind arcading . A clock face can be seen on all four sides of the tower . An arch supported by Corinthian pilasters houses each face of the clock .

The east and west sides of the courthouse are identical up to the roofline . The west side also has the corner clock tower , which appears on the right when viewing toward the east . Both east and west sides have six bays . The first , third , fourth , and sixth bays have dual windows on each floor . A fan window crowns the dual windows on the third floor . The second and fifth bays are occupied by semicircular towers that rise above the bottom of the main roofline . The towers have three main windows on each floor , and the third floor windows are crowned with transoms that are crowned with fan windows . Above the towers ? third floor fan windows , near the top of the tower , are small arched windows resting above belt courses .

As time has passed , renovations and updates have been made to the courthouse and surrounding grounds . However , the courthouse exterior has retained its original form . Many of the nearby buildings , which were also built in the 1890s , also retain much of their original form . In 1940 , the hitching racks around the courthouse square were removed , as automobiles had replaced horses as the preferred mode of transportation . Parking meters were added to the square in 1952 . The building 's stone exterior was refreshed by a sandblasting treatment in 1963 . Exterior spotlights were added during the 1980s . The latest project to refurbish the courthouse moved forward during 2010 . On December 6 , 2010 , the county commissioners decided to proceed with a courthouse preservation project that was estimated to cost in excess of \$ 325 @,@ 000 .

= = = Interior = = =

The interior of the Blackford County courthouse has a twenty @-@ two feet wide main hallway that runs between the northern and southern facades . The original floors were tiled , and the walls were wainscoted with marble . Stairways to the second floor are located on both the north and south sides . The south side stairway continues from the second floor to the third floor . The north side of the third floor is occupied by the courtroom , and this room accounts for about half of the floor . The

space adjacent to the north @-@ south hallway on all three floors is used for offices with the exception of the third @-@ floor courtroom and a small library . The fourth floor is unfinished and used for storage . From the fourth floor , one can ascend a narrow stairway to the top of the bell tower .

The three finished interior floors have been renovated , modernized , and updated since the original construction . One step in modernization occurred in 1965 , when an elevator was installed in the building . Among various renovations , the second and third floors were updated around 1980 . Currently , the first floor has carpeting , fluorescent lighting , and acoustic ceiling tiles . The north and south facades now have modern glass doors that form vestibules at the entrances . The hallway ceilings have been molded with stenciling . Some painted scenes , which are not original to the building , can be found in the main hallway . One such scene includes a painting of the original courthouse surrounded by paintings of tablets representing each of the county 's four townships , each with local scenes .

= = Other features = =

The public square where the Blackford County Courthouse stands is the heart of the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District . In addition to the courthouse in the center of the square , each corner of the square is the site of a war memorial , including one that is considered a contributing property to the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District . Additional memorials are also located on the grounds .

= = = Revolutionary War memorial = = =

On the southwest corner of the courthouse stands the county ? s Revolutionary War memorial . Consisting of a commemorative plaque on a large stone , the memorial was placed in honor of Blackford County ? s five Revolutionary War veterans buried within the county . A dedication ceremony was conducted on June 17 , 1933 , by the Nancy Knight Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution . The dedicatory address was given by the Reverend H. C. Cornuelle , paster of the local First Presbyterian Church . The stone was from the Twin Hills gravel pit in nearby Jay County .

= = = World War I memorial = = =

Blackford County ? s World War I memorial was unveiled on the northeast corner of the courthouse square on September 28 , 1921 , in a dedication ceremony with James Taylor , president of Taylor University as the speaker . The memorial is a reproduction of a sculpture known as the " Spirit of the American Doughboy " , which was created by Ernest Moore Viquesney . Beneath the Doughboy sculpture is a list of Blackford County residents that served in World War I. The monument was partially funded by a contribution from the ladies of the Service Star Legion .

= = = World War II memorial = = =

Blackford County ? s World War II memorial is located on the northwest corner of the courthouse square . Its dedication ceremony was held on May 30 , 1950 . City attorney Robert Bonham gave the dedication address . The monument lists over 1 @,@ 880 names of veterans associated with Blackford County .

= = = Korea and Vietnam War memorial = = =

Blackford County ? s monument to veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars is located on the southeast corner of the courthouse square . Congressman David Dennis spoke at the 1973 dedication of this monument . The monument , originally contained a list of the county ? s war dead

from the two wars . It was expanded in 1987 to include all of the county ' s veterans of the two wars . A tablet on the left of the monument lists veterans of the Korean War , while a tablet on the right side lists veterans of the Vietnam War .

= = = Monument to Veterans of the Civil War = = =

Blackford County ' s Civil War monument is located on the southwest corner of the courthouse square . The Blackford County Civil War Re -enactment Club is responsible for the monument . The project began with a Memorial fund in 1997 , and progressed for about 10 years to completion of the project . Construction of the monument began in 2004 with a granite base , pedestal , and walkway . A dedication for that portion of the monument was held on October 9 , 2004 . The sculpture of the civil war soldier was added a few years later . Stacks of black granite cannonballs were added to each corner of the monument in 2007 . The monument recognizes all soldiers associated with Blackford County : soldiers who lived in the county at the start of the war , soldiers who enlisted in the county , soldiers buried in the county , and veterans who moved to the county after the war .

= = = Other monuments and commemorative plaques = = =

The Blackford County Courthouse lawn is also the site of some smaller commemorative plaques . An early addition was the Orville Whitacre Memorial Marker , which was added in 1922 . The H. C. Cornuelle Memorial Marker was added in 1936 . The Reverend Herbert C. Cornuelle served in World War I as a chaplain in the United States Army . After the war , the American Legion named him chaplain for the state of Indiana . He also became the minister of Hartford City ' s First Presbyterian Church , serving from 1928 until 1936 . During World War I , Cornuelle suffered permanent injury from a gas attack , and his injury contributed to his death from pneumonia on April 21 , 1936 . A second plaque , the Bicentennial Capsule Marker , was also added in 1936 . Many years later , a Blackford County Courthouse Cornerstone Rededication Marker was added in a ceremony on November 13 , 1993 . The Free and Accepted Masons conducted the ceremony , and a time capsule was presented by the presidents of the Blackford County Historical Society and the Montpelier Historical Society . A Blackford County Courthouse Historical Marker was placed on October 1 , 1994 , by the Indiana Historical Bureau and the Blackford Lodge Number 106 of the Free and Accepted Masons .

= = Significance = =

The Blackford County Courthouse was added to National Register of Historic Places on August 11 , 1980 . On June 21 , 2006 , its historic importance was reasserted when it was included as a contributing property in the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District 's listing on the National Register . On its original National Register nomination form , the building was cited as significant in the areas of " architecture " and " politics / government . " The courthouse has been " the focus of governmental , political and civic affairs , " and " its size and architecture dominate " downtown Hartford City . In addition , the war memorials on the courthouse grounds contribute to the sense of time and place that the Hartford City Courthouse Historic District conveys .