

= Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District =

The Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District is located in Hartford City , Indiana . Hartford City has a population of about 7 @, @ 000 and is the county seat of Blackford County and the site of the county courthouse . The National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior added the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places on June 21 , 2006 ? meaning the buildings and objects that contribute to the continuity of the district are worthy of preservation because of their historical and architectural significance . The District has over 60 resources , including over 40 contributing buildings , over 10 non @-@ contributing buildings , 1 contributing object (a World War I statue) , 8 non @-@ contributing objects , and two other buildings that are listed separately in the National Register .

Much of the District 's significance relates to the discovery of natural gas in the east central region of Indiana . The discovery led to a regional economic boom known as the Indiana Gas Boom . Beginning in the late 1880s and lasting for about 15 years , the Gas Boom changed the economy and the appearance of the region . The Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District is situated in what was the center of Hartford City in the 19th and 20th centuries , and most of the buildings within the District were constructed during the Gas Boom era . The buildings within the District were built in several architectural styles , including Commercial Italianate , Romanesque Revival , Renaissance Revival , and others . Many of the buildings ' exteriors have not been changed from their original appearance .

= = History = =

Hartford City began in the late 1830s as a few log cabins near a creek in East Central Indiana . The community was originally named Hartford . This was later changed to " Hartford City " after it was discovered that another " Hartford " already existed elsewhere in Indiana . The East Central Indiana version of Hartford was named county seat of Blackford County early in its existence , thereby ensuring its importance . It took over 40 years for the rural community to grow to a population of nearly 1 @, @ 500 . During that time , community planners had the foresight to plan for railroads , which linked the community to other cities , beginning in the 1860s . With a focus on agriculture , the entire county had only 171 people working in manufacturing as of June , 1880 .

Hartford City Gas and Oil Company was formed in February 1887 , and the company found natural gas in March of the same year . Surnames of some of the directors of this company can be found on the District 's buildings today ? Campbell , Smith , Dowell , and Weiler . Both oil and natural gas were discovered in the county in 1887 , and the city began a period of rapid growth . Described as the " future metropolis of Eastern Indiana " , the city successfully used its railroad facilities and abundant natural gas resource as enticements for manufacturers to locate there , and became a boom town . Hartford City was not alone with its good fortune ? natural gas (and some oil) had also been discovered in adjacent counties . The entire East Central Indiana region was transformed during a fifteen to twenty @-@ year period that became known as the Indiana Gas Boom , as manufacturers moved to the area .

Upon examination of Hartford City 's infrastructure , the Gas Boom 's transformation of the city is apparent . The wooden buildings surrounding the courthouse prior to the Gas Boom were vulnerable to fire , and the District had at least three major fires between 1871 and 1881 . During the Gas Boom , wooden buildings were torn down and replaced with brick buildings . The courthouse was replaced with a magnificent stone and brick structure (see recent photo herein) . Eventually , an interurban rail line ran by the east side of the courthouse square , providing easy access to the courthouse square commercial district and adding to the two rail lines that already served the city . The Gas Boom 's economic transformation of the city is also apparent when examining the city 's population . By 1900 , the city had grown to a population of 5 @, @ 912 . Over 1 @, @ 200 people worked in manufacturing in Hartford City in 1902 ? and this was in addition to the bankers , merchants , physicians , and lawyers necessary for a growing population . These population and manufacturing figures are considerably larger than the pre @-@ Gas Boom figures for 1880 .

The gas and oil became depleted in the early 20th century , and the Gas Boom era came to an end . However , Hartford City was permanently changed . The city 's infrastructure was vastly improved . Buildings in the commercial district surrounding the courthouse square were made of brick and stone instead of wood . A municipal waterworks was built in 1894 . Telephones became available to Hartford City 's surrounding rural areas in 1903 . By 1914 , 98 percent of the houses in Hartford City were wired for electricity . Roads were being paved , and the interurban line made it easier to travel to / from other cities . While some of the manufacturing facilities that depended on a low @-@ cost source of fuel were closed after the boom , others remained in the city because they did not have a better alternative . A city that had very few manufacturing jobs now had a supply of skilled manufacturing personnel . Some of this skilled workforce remained in the city after the boom , while some found new occupations in the automobile and auto parts manufacturing facilities that were beginning to be located in nearby cities .

= = Architecture = =

Three styles of architecture are well represented in the collection of buildings that are part of the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District : Commercial Italianate , Renaissance Revival , and Romanesque Revival . A few examples of the Queen Anne style can also be found . Grouped together , these styles are called Victorian architecture , and buildings constructed in these styles during the 19th century are more likely to have decorative ornamentation (such as the face @-@ like object from the east side of the Weiler Building shown herein) than buildings constructed later in the 20th century . Because many of the District 's buildings were constructed during the Gas Boom era (between 1885 and 1905) , these styles of architecture are more prevalent than the styles that became popular later in the 20th century . However , additional architecture styles are also represented . An outstanding example of the Art Deco style can be found in the district 's Scheidler Theatre , and the Post Office is the single outstanding example of the Neoclassical style . The commercial building at 210 East Washington Street is the District 's sole representative of the Art Moderne style of architecture .

Romanesque Revival architecture was very popular in Hartford City , and at least 7 of the District 's contributing buildings were built using this style . This style of architecture is known for round arches in many of the openings . Smooth surfaces , sometimes with belt courses are also typical . A variation of the Romanesque Revival architectural style known as Richardsonian Romanesque was popular in America near the end of the 19th century , when much of the construction around Hartford City 's courthouse took place . The courthouse and Presbyterian Church are outstanding examples of Henry Hobson Richardson 's variation in Romanesque Revival style . (See photos herein .) A corner tower , arched windows , recessed entrances , steeply pitched roofs , and multiple exterior textures (rustication) are typical of this style of architecture . The Richardsonian Romanesque buildings differ from the original Romanesque Revival buildings by having rough @-@ textured exterior surfaces instead of all @-@ smooth surfaces . The Hotel Ingram , Kirshbaum , and Weiler buildings were built in Romanesque Revival style with arched windows and multiple exterior textures , but they were not identified in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form as Richardsonian (see photos of all three buildings herein .)

= = Boundaries = =

Located in the original center of the community , the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District includes significant portions of the city 's historic commercial district . The town was platted using the Public Land Survey System typical of Northwest Ordinance communities ? with rectangular blocks , and streets running north @-@ south and east @-@ west . Hartford City 's layout of a courthouse surrounded by an open area was a common design in the " Midwest " of the United States . The Courthouse Square Historic District includes the courthouse and surrounding blocks . Franklin Street is the northern most street in the district , and Water Street borders part of the southern part of the district . The west side is past High Street almost to Walnut Street , and the

east side reaches half a block past Monroe Street toward Mulberry Street . The adjacent diagram shows the district and its buildings . (The buildings may not be exactly to scale .) The property locations shown in orange are the sites of outstanding buildings of historic and / or architectural significance . Two of these buildings , the Blackford County Courthouse and the First Presbyterian Church , are listed in the National Register of Historic Places . The locations shown in bright green are for buildings considered notable in historic or architectural significance , and the buildings sites (and one monument) denoted in pale green contribute to the continuity of the district . The dark gray locations are for properties that do not contribute to the historic district . At least two contributing buildings have been torn down since the Courthouse Square District was added to the National Register . Two additional Gas Boom era buildings located nearby and often mentioned in Hartford City history , the Van Cleve Block and the Cooley Block , were gone by the time the District was nominated for the National Register .

= = Outstanding properties = =

The Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana , which has since been renamed Indiana Landmarks , identified seven properties within the Courthouse Square Historic District that have enough historic or architectural significance to potentially be listed in the National Register of Historic Places . These properties have been assigned a rating of " outstanding " , which is the top rating . The properties are assessed for their historic significance , architectural merit , environment , and integrity . All seven of the outstanding properties listed here are contributing properties to the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District , and two have already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places .

= = Blackford County Courthouse = = =

The Blackford County Courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places on August 11 , 1980 . Like most of the other buildings in the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District , the Blackford County Courthouse was built during the Indiana Gas Boom . The county 's original courthouse was condemned in 1893 , and removed to enable the construction of a new all @-@ stone structure . The courthouse was built by Christian Boseker & Son in 1894 . Designed by Arthur LaBelle and Burt L. French (of Marion , Indiana) , the courthouse features the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture . (See adjacent photo .) The building has two main entrances (north side and south side) that both open into a main hall . The walls feature marble paneling , and the ceilings are covered with paneled steel . (Fireproofing was an important consideration for the courthouse construction plan .) The magnificence in architecture and size of the courthouse dominates downtown Hartford City . The Blackford County Courthouse reflects the wealth of the city during the Gas Boom , and could be considered a monument to that era . Continuing the " monument " theme , the grounds of the courthouse are the location for American war memorials , including structures commemorating the Revolutionary War , World War I , World War II , Korean War , and Vietnam War . A Civil War monument was added in 2006 .

= = First Presbyterian Church = = =

Hartford City 's First Presbyterian Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places on June 13 , 1986 . The building was designed by local architect Alec Gable , and built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style . Another monumental building built during the Indiana Gas Boom , construction of the church building started in 1892 , and was completed in 1893 . The church is the oldest church building in Hartford City . Located at the corner of Franklin and High Streets , the structure features huge stained @-@ glass windows that were installed by local glass workers . (See photo herein .) The chapel contains features a pipe organ that was partially funded by a donation made by businessman and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie . With only one major addition to the original structure , the exterior of the building looks almost the same as it did in the 1890s .

= = = Other outstanding properties = = =

Blackford County Jail The Blackford County Jail was completed in 1879 , and it is considered an outstanding example of the Italianate style of architecture . It is located at 120 East Main Street . The jail is the Courthouse District 's oldest contributing building still in existence . T. G. Tolan and Son was the architectural firm , and the firm of Hinkley and Norris (of Indianapolis) was the builder .

Campbell Building The Campbell Building was built in the Renaissance Revival style in 1901 . The two @-@ story building is crowned with a large gable that bears a limestone tablet that reads " 1901 Campbell " . This building has the addresses of 207 through 211 West Washington Street . This building was originally an office building , and some of the occupants in the early 1900s were an attorney , a dentist , insurance agents , a physician , a realtor , and a steamship agent .

Ervin Building The Ervin Building was built in the Queen Anne style around 1890 . It occupies the addresses of 201 through 205 West Washington Street . The facade of this corner building features three oriel windows . The name " Ervin " appears in stained @-@ glass in the center of the building . The Campbell & Ervin dry goods store was housed in this building in the 1890s and early 1900s . The store sold clothing , hats , and shoes . (See 2010 photo herein)

Kirshbaum Building The Kirshbaum Building was built in the Romanesque Revival style in 1893 . It is located on the corner of High and Washington Streets , with an address of 123 W. Washington Street . An early occupant was the city 's First National Bank , and its name is engraved in limestone on the building . The engraving " 1893 Kirshbaum " is located centrally atop the cornice . (See 2010 photo of Briscoe Block and Kirshbaum Building , Kirshbaum Building is corner building on far right .) Raphael Kirshbaum (also spelled " Kirschbaum " in earlier years) was the builder of this building . Another building constructed for Kirshbaum in nearby Randolph County is listed in the National Register of Historic Places . Kirshbaum was a German merchant that sold goods in Portland , Union City , and Hartford City (all in Indiana) . At one time , he partnered with Adolph Weiler in Hartford City . (See also section on Weiler 's Building .) Eventually , Mr. Kirshbaum settled in Indianapolis , and was the key contributor for the Kirshbaum Center in that city .

United States Post Office Hartford City 's Post Office is one of the few buildings in the Courthouse District built during a period other than the Indiana Gas Boom . Built during the Great Depression , the project was Federal Public Works Number 207 . Construction began in 1934 , and was finished in 1935 . Designed by Louis A. Simon , the Post Office is the only example of the Neoclassical style of architecture in the Courthouse District . It is located at 123 South High Street .

= = Notable properties = =

The Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana has also identified five properties within the Courthouse Square Historic District that are above average in importance . After further research , these properties may have enough historic or architectural significance to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places . These properties have been assigned a rating of " notable " , which is just below the top rating . The properties are assessed for their historic significance , architectural merit , environment , and integrity . All five of the notable properties listed here are contributing properties to the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District .

210 East Washington Street Commercial Building This building was constructed around 1940 using the Art Modern style of architecture that evolved from Art Deco . This architectural style is not found elsewhere in the Courthouse District .

Hotel Ingram A three @-@ story building built in the Romanesque Revival style . This corner building occupies addresses of 118 through 122 North Jefferson Street , and is located at the corner of Jefferson and Main streets , which is the northeast corner of the courthouse square . (See photo herein) Hotel Ingram is written in limestone on the second story of the building 's facade . The building was constructed in 1893 , and opened to the public on January 9 , 1894 . The hotel originally had 45 guest rooms , and featured a large dining room with excellent food . The hotel

building included a saloon known as the Ingram Bar . The Hotel Ingram 's grand opening included a dinner for about 150 guests , plus entertainment provided by the Montani Brothers ' orchestra . W. F. Crist was the hotel 's original proprietor . During the hotel 's first month in existence , it had 1 @, @ 200 " arrivals " . The building was also the site of the Ingram grocery . The hotel became known as the Hartford Hotel in 1922 . George D. Stevens , a local business executive and one of the community 's leading citizens , lived in a room at this hotel for many years during the first half of the 20th century . Stevens , who was described as " one of the richest men in Hartford City " , made news after his death when it was discovered that he was a black man living as a white man in a town that had become all white .

Knights of Pythias / Tyner Building Designed by A. W. Maxwell and constructed around 1900 , the building 's architecture is a mixture of Romanesque , Classical , and Queen Anne , and it is located at 204 ? 210 West Main Street . (See photo herein) The three @-@ story building also has decorative limestone elements that resemble flames ? possibly in tribute to the Gas Boom . " K of P " can be found on a western tablet , while " W.H. Tyner " can be found in the eastern panel . Among the offices in this Main Street building in the early 1900s were a confectioner , a doctor , and an attorney . The Knights of Pythias , Fraternal Order of Eagles , and Maccabees all held meetings in this building in the early 1900s . During a tumultuous period in the 1920s , the Ku Klux Klan had an office on the third floor of the building . Three events helped drive the Klan out of Hartford City ? including one that happened in the Tyner building , and one that happened about four blocks away . First , a disturbing murder case against the state Klan leader disgusted many members . (Charles E. Cox , uncle of local newsman and Cox Building owner Edward E. Cox , assisted in the prosecution of this case .) Second , a safe in the Tyner Building was broken into , and the names of local Klan members were revealed . Third , violence that occurred at an event a few blocks from the courthouse caused the Hartford City mayor to order the local Klan leader out of town in 1926 .

Rosenbush Building The Renaissance Revival building was built around 1890 . Located at 110 West Main Street , the name Rosenbush can be found on the two @-@ story building , written on a limestone tablet . The building has terra cotta star @-@ like patterns on the brick above the windows . Tailor Aaron W. Rosenbush ran his business from this building in the early 1900s . The Rosenbush building was also the site of Rosenbush 's Royal Theatre , where silent movies were shown accompanied by piano . Years later , when the theater was closed , the building was the home of a tavern .

Scheidler Theater First owned by Matt Scheidler , this " very elegant and beautifully decorated " building was originally called the Hartford Theatre . Unlike most of the buildings in the district , this building was built after the Gas Boom , in 1947 . Its architectural style is Art Deco . The structure is located at 122 East Washington Street .

= = Other properties = =

Other properties , in addition to those listed as outstanding or notable , contribute to the Hartford City Courthouse Square Historic District . Many of these were also built during the Gas Boom . Some of the contributors are listed below .

The terminology used to describe the buildings of the Gas Boom era is slightly different from that used today . The term " block " was often used to describe the group of offices or stores located in a building instead of referring to the building . As can be seen in the boundaries diagram and descriptions herein , these " block " buildings did not occupy an entire city block , but they often had multiple storefronts or offices with multiple occupants . For example , the New York Times article from 1899 (see below) refers to the " Briscoe Block " instead of the Briscoe Building . The article also lists multiple businesses that occupied the building . Another example can be found in a business directory from the Gas Boom Era . Some of the attorneys (and other businesses too) listed their address as part of a " block " such as " Campbell Block " or " Tyner Block " . Most of the building names used herein rely on the building names found in either National Register forms or publications from the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana .

Bank Block This two @-@ story building was constructed in the Commercial Italianate style in the

1880s . In the early 1900s , Citizen 's State Bank was located at the 102 North Jefferson Street address . A law firm and barber also listed " Bank Block " as their addresses . The southern portion of the original building still has much of its original appearance . It is located at the corner of Jefferson and Washington streets , with an address of 100 North Jefferson Street . However , the northern portion has been substantially remodeled , and is now considered a separate building . The words " Bank Block " are on the northern portion that occupies addresses of 102 and 104 North Jefferson Street . All of the north building 's Commercial Italianate features are now removed . The Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana 's Blackford County Interim Report has a picture , on page 63 , of the entire magnificent building circa 1900 .

Briscoe Building This two @-@ story Romanesque Revival building was constructed in 1893 , and occupies the addresses of 113 through 121 West Washington Street . Three colors of brick are found on the facade , effectively dividing the building into three sections . (Adjacent photo shows building in 2010 .) While the county 's new courthouse was being constructed in 1893 and 1894 , Blackford County 's courtroom and office of the county clerk were located in two rooms in this building . In 1899 , this building , described as the " Briscoe Block " , was originally thought to have been destroyed by fire . However , the fire destroyed the roof of the building , and the remaining portion of the building escaped significant damage . The damage to the building was repaired , and the Briscoe Building still stands today . Occupants at the time of the 1899 fire included Kentucky Liquors , Western Union , Central Telephone , a grocer , and the J. L. Hoover Furniture Company ? which later became long @-@ time local retailer Hoover @-@ Needler Furniture .

Cox Building Located at 217 North Jefferson Street (Jefferson and Franklin streets) , the Cox Building is simply identified as " Commercial Building " in the District 's National Register of Historic Places Registration Form . An industrial building originally used for printing newspapers such as Hartford City 's Telegram , its architecture style has some Craftsman influences . The original building was designed by local architect P. J. Loney in 1895 , and owned by newsman and prominent Democrat Edward E. Cox . The Cox Building was expanded to its present size around 1915 .

Dowell Building Located at 107 ? 109 West Washington Street , the Dowell building was constructed in 1893 using the Italianate style of architecture . Frank P. Dowell maintained an office in this building , conducting transactions related to real estate such as loans , mortgages , insurance , and titles . A notary public , he was also involved in buying , selling , and renting property . Frank Dowell 's father is Jessie H. Dowell , founder and president of Hartford City Natural Gas and Oil Company . In 1887 , this company drilled the city 's first successful natural gas well . The Dowell building is located on the south side of the square , east of the adjacent Briscoe Block .

W.H. Gable Block This two @-@ story Commercial Italianate building was constructed in 1891 , and occupies the addresses of 118 through 122 West Main Street . Five brick pilasters divide it into three storefronts and a stairway to the upstairs offices . " W.H. Gable 1891 " appears in the center of the cornice . William H. Gable participated in the California Gold Rush in 1850 through 1852 , and returned with enough money to begin various business interests , including furniture , undertaking , and real estate . The W. H. Gable business block was eventually built on land that was Gable 's first real estate investment .

Griffin Buildings Two Griffin buildings are located side by side with addresses of 106 and 108 East Washington Street . The name " Griffin " can be found on the cornice of both buildings . Both were constructed around 1900 . The 106 East Washington Street building was built in the Romanesque Revival style , and a second source believes this building was constructed in the 1890s . The Russell Lewis saloon was located at the 108 East Washington address during the early 1900s .

E. Smilack Building The E. Smilack Building is located at 203 East Washington Street . The building was constructed around 1910 using the Craftsman style of architecture . A stone tablet above the second floor says ? E. Smilack ? . Elbert Smilack was a well @-@ educated Russian , originally named Smilackoff , who immigrated to the United States in 1899 . After brief stays in Philadelphia , Chicago , and Michigan , he found steady employment in Marion , Indiana . Smilack saved enough money to move to Hartford City with a horse and buggy ? and 35 cents in his pocket . A friend loaned him five dollars to start a junk business . After about a decade in the business , Smilack was

involved in scrap iron , metals , hides , fur , and wool . He also became a provider of coal and firewood . Smilack prospered enough that he was able to invest in land and oil wells . By 1914 , he was considered one of the wealthier men in Blackford County . Smilack , along with other family members , was killed on July 22 , 1922 , when his automobile was struck by a passenger train .

Sowers & Gough Drugstore This corner building , located at 200 West Main Street , was originally built around 1910 , and remodeled using the Art Deco style of architecture around 1940 . The Sowers & Gough Drugstore was originally across the street , but Gough bought the building at the 200 West Main street address and moved the drugstore after Sowers ' health failed . Cecil Gough 's drugstore became a favored gathering place during the 1930s and 1940s , as the store had a soda fountain and seating . The drugstore was bought by Merrit Tams in 1947 , and was later run by Pat Mehling as Mehling 's Drugstore . A 2010 photo of building , painted white and no longer a drugstore , is shown herein (notable properties section) .

Weiler Building Completed in 1896 according to the engraving at the top of the building , the three @-@ story structure was built in the Romanesque Revival style . The Weiler name , written on a limestone tablet , can be found on the third story . The uppermost portion of the building above the windows features terracotta rosettes and faces of men . The building is located at 104 West Main Street . This building housed the Weiler Brothers department store , and later a Montgomery Ward store . At one time , the Weiler Brothers store housed in this building was thought to be one of the largest department stores in Indiana . During construction , over 250 feet of glass cases were ordered , and the interior furniture was said to be " equal to that in any store in the large cities . " The store employed 80 people during the " busy season " in the early 1900s . The Weiler brothers originally involved with the store at this location were German immigrants Abraham , Adolph R. , and Meyer M. Weiler . Abraham Weiler was also on the board of directors of the Hartford City Gas and Oil Company that had the first gas well in town . Abraham Weiler became involved with dry goods when he moved to Union City , Indiana , and worked with Raphael Kirshbaum . (See Kirshbaum Building , section above .) They later established Kirshbaum & Weiler in Hartford City , Indiana , and Weiler eventually purchased Kirshbaum 's share of the business . The Weiler Brothers store was established in 1878 , and moved to the Weiler 's Building in 1896 . Products sold included hardware , furniture , clothing , carpets , crockery , glassware , boots and shoes . Because of Ku Klux Klan @-@ led boycotts of Jewish and Catholic merchants , Hartford City 's Weiler store closed during the 1920s . On April 14 , 2014 , this building partially collapsed . Most of the damage was to the roof and the rear of the building . On June 12 , 2014 the building was demolished .

World War I Memorial Hartford City 's Blackford County courthouse lawn is the home of numerous war memorials . The World War I memorial was the first of the four larger memorials to be located at the corners of the courthouse lawn . It was dedicated on September 28 , 1921 . James Taylor , president of Taylor University , was the dedication ceremony speaker . The sculptor was Ernest Moore Viquesney . The sculpture is known as the " Spirit of the American Doughboy " , and this particular version was the third one erected .

= = Significance = =

The Hartford City Courthouse Historic District is eligible for the National Register under two criteria . First , a number of events influenced the development of the area (Criterion A) , most notable the establishment of Hartford City as the county seat , and the Indiana Gas Boom . The district is the historic center of Blackford County 's commercial , social , and governmental activity . As county seat , the courthouse and nearby offices became the focus of Blackford County government . In the late 1880s , the Indiana Gas Boom brought major growth and prosperity to the region , resulting in the construction of numerous commercial , retail , and social facilities in the area surrounding the courthouse . Later , during the 1920s , the courthouse square was the site for events involving the Ku Klux Klan .

The second reason the district is significant is its collection of buildings and their architectural styles (Criterion C) . Most of these buildings were constructed during the Indiana Gas Boom in the late 19th century or early 20th century , and have many of their original features . Three styles of

architecture , Italianate , Renaissance Revival , and Romanesque Revival are all well represented , and additional styles can also be found .