

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Jackson County Courthouse

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 1001 Walnut Street

City or town: Murphysboro State: Illinois County: Jackson

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<p><u>[Signature]</u> <u>DSHPO</u></p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p><u>Illinois Historic Preservation Agency</u></p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><u>11/6/15</u></p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p>	<p>_____ <b>Date</b></p>
<p>_____ <b>Title :</b></p>	<p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>                    </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register n/a

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government: Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government: Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Classical Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Bedford Limestone

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Jackson County Courthouse is located 1001 Walnut Street in Murphysboro, Illinois, (pop. 8000) on the town's main thoroughfare. Completed in 1928 by the English Brothers Construction Company and designed by architect Nelson S. Spencer & Son of Chicago the structure was a symbol of permanence for the community. This Classical Revival building sits on elevated ground consisting of a square city block surrounded by a retaining wall and sidewalks. The nomination consists of one contributing building (the courthouse) and one contributing site (the square). Commemorative historical markers were recently placed at all four corners on the lawn but none are contributing. The three story courthouse is covered with Bedford limestone, has a commanding presence and looks very much the same as the year it was built. Many 19c commercial buildings still surround the courthouse projecting a majestic and timeless presence at the center of town.

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## Narrative Description

The Jackson County Courthouse is located in the center of the public square of downtown Murphysboro, Illinois near the center of the county. The first twenty acres were platted in 1843 and were a gift from Dr. John Logan of Murphysboro. The plat designated a city block for a county courthouse in the center of town. Corresponding streets and blocks radiate from the courthouse and are bound by Walnut Street on the north, Chestnut Street on the south and 11<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> streets on the west and east. This is the third courthouse structure at this location. The four square three story symmetrical building offers an entrance on each side at the first floor level. The name Jackson County Courthouse is inscribed on the entablature above the north face entrance, the main entrance. All four facades are identical in design and follow the Doric order with the exception of the inscription on the north face. The third floor has a terrace with a surrounding balustrade. An original green clay tile roof tops the building with a centered skylight to illuminate the buildings' interior through to the first floor.

There were a few necessary additions to the south side of the courthouse during the mid 20<sup>c</sup> such as a handicap ramp and partial enclosure of area ways. The environmental systems were added and updated in the 1960s along with plumbing and electrical services. The interior is much the same with the exception of the County Sheriff's Office and Jail, originally on the third floor, but moved to a new location in 1988. New sidewalks and lawn retaining walls have been recently updated. Commemorative historical markers were recently placed at all four corners on the lawn. A cornerstone is located at the northeast corner of the courthouse.

### Exterior:

This following plan description corresponds on all four sides. The courthouse square is approximately 175 feet by 175 feet at a 420 feet elevation. The lot size is approx 0.7 acres. The building is a four square structure 117 feet on each side. The exterior has a four inch Bedford limestone fascia with brick under structure, and a poured concrete basement. Access to the building is gained by a concrete stairway with a midway deck followed by another flight of stairs and entry deck. Stepped limestone buttresses rest on either side of the steps each contains a double light cast-iron lamp post. Metal railings and concrete steps combine to make a large welcoming entrance. The steps and railings are the same width as the frontispiece. The stairs number thirteen with a landing after the first five. Railings on the right and left of the stairway are simple black iron banisters with a paired center set of railings in the middle of the stairway. The center set of railings are approximately four feet apart

The three story building has four symmetrical facades each containing an identical fenestration and frontispiece with a centered Doric order tetrastyle entry which extends up to the third floor terrace. The fenestration is extensive with nine single hung windows on the second floor and eight on the first floor. Limestone cornices with dentils compliment the first floor windows and

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entrance. The three centered windows on the second floor have bronze grills; all others have that area filled with limestone in corresponding shape. The tetrastyle entry follows the Doric Order with four fluted columns, a pediment, twenty triglyphs, eighteen metops, (ten and nine on each side) and dentils. A parapet tops the frontispiece and a balustrade caps the fenestration. The balusters are in groups of seven with fourteen on each side of the frontispiece. The parapet and balustrade conceal the third floor terrace. Acanthus leaves grace the pediment at the top center and on opposite corners. A first floor entrance is centered between two columns with windows on either side. Each first floor window has a cornice above it. Directly above on the second floor are three windows. On either side of the entry is a recessed wing with a pilaster and a corresponding Doric order frieze. On either side of the pilasters is another recessed area with the same frieze. The Doric order entablature continues around the entire fenestration.

South of the stairs on the east side is an original basement entrance for emergency exit. The west side fenestration and frontispiece are symmetrical but void of the inscription. At the basement level on the west side, north of the stairs both windows are sealed with limestone and the areaways have been filled so that only about twelve inches of the original window can be seen. On the south side of the stairs an original descending stairway and door remain while one window is filled with glass and the areaway has also been filled.

### **Interior:**

#### First floor

All four exterior entrances have vestibules and a second set of doors that flow into corridors and a large rotunda (atrium). The interior entrance doors were replaced within the original portals. The corridor wainscoting is marble as are the rotunda walls. The courthouse interior walls are one inch plaster over red brick. Government offices surround the rotunda. Light from the rooftop skylight illuminates the first and second floors. The second floor gallery overlooks the first floor. For the most part the public areas, in the atrium and offices are original. Original marble wainscoting and terrazzo flooring exist throughout. The original crown molding ceiling ornamentation is in place. Winding circular stairwells are on the east and west sides of the atrium next to the corresponding corridor. The stairwells are original with bronze electro plate balustrades, oak railings, marble wainscoting and terrazzo stairs. The stairs and elevator provide access to all four levels. The stairwells on the east and west sides of the building from the basement to the second floor are circular with an open railing on one side. They are identical and original. The stairwells have marble wainscoting with an oak wall railing. The corresponding banister is also oak with ornate bronze electroplate and iron balustrades with oak and bronze newel posts. The steps are terrazzo.

Many of the offices are used for their original purposes and all of the offices have original doors and transoms, such as the County Clerk's, County Treasurer and the Circuit Clerk's offices. Entrances to each office are original. The County Board Offices have taken the place of the County Superintendent of Schools. The Coroner's office has been absorbed by the Treasurer's office. While some changes have been made for office space designation the original interior design of marble base plate, wainscoting and plaster walls were retained. The original wainscoting, marble counter and walls are *in situ*. The window surrounds are original. The vault

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room is now office space and the vital record storage in the basement has direct access via a stairwell from the County Clerk's office. The Treasurer's office is much the same as when it was built. The original brass teller's cage and counter and vault continue to be used. Marble base plates and wainscoting are in place. The Circuit Clerk's Office doorways and windows are original, with the exception of a new service counter, a retiled public area and new window sashes. The vault room is now office space. The stairway to the basement records storage is off the vault office space.

#### Second floor:

Courtrooms and judge offices reside on the second floor. The second floor has a square gallery looking down on the first floor. The second floor gallery is open to the skylight and first floor. The gallery banister is oak and the balustrades are electroplated bronze and iron. The ceiling and skylight contain coffers with dentils and crown moldings. They are painted in a contrasting palette to illuminate the details. The original marble wainscoting and terrazzo floor remain throughout the gallery. All of the doorways are in their original locations. The original columns and recessed ceilings remain inside the courtrooms and the ceilings and walls maintain the original embellishments.

#### Third floor:

The third floor was originally built as a jail and living/food preparation quarters for the sheriff and inmates. Alterations were made to the original floor plan to accommodate various office configurations for the States Attorney, and Superintendent of Schools as well as the law library. An attempt was made to preserve as much of the original third floor configuration as possible so the ornate support columns and horizontal beams were preserved along with portions of the floor and walls. The east side windows have been sealed or covered over and a stairwell has been added. At the time many of the original attributes were saved, such as posts, window frames, stairwells, dining room doors and doors to the terrace. The terrace is still accessible.

#### Basement:

Both the Circuit Clerk and the County Clerk use assigned areas for files and record storage as originally intended. Men's and women's restrooms and the boiler room are still in place. The original stairs are in service and have not been changed.

#### **Integrity:**

The Jackson County Courthouse is well preserved and maintains excellent architectural integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Only necessary and minimal changes have been made to the eighty eight year old building. Throughout the years the Jackson County Board has made appropriate decisions regarding the courthouse repairs, changes and maintenance and in doing so has insured its integrity.

Necessary updates for security purposes and government regulations such as sealing off basement areaways and adding a handicap ramp have been made. Areaways were sealed and buried for security and environmental reasons. A limestone and concrete handicap ramp was

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added to the south side at the southwest corner and appears the same as the original exterior stone. A privacy fence was built to conceal the trash receptacles and environmental units east of the stairwell on the south side. The exterior stairway railings were replaced in 1992. The window sashes on the first and second floors were replaced in 1966 and are metal. Energy efficient window sashes have been installed along with updated heating and cooling systems, paint, electrical and plumbing systems, entrance doors, and courtroom furnishings.

The third floor remained largely intact until 1988 when the entire floor was renovated. The original jail cells and security bars were removed and the space was modified for use as office space. The majority of the original flooring and ceilings have been modified or altered as have many of the original internal walls. The window sashes have been replaced but the original window openings and millwork have been preserved on the south, north, and west sides of the third floor interior.

The poured concrete basement has been remodeled. The floor has been retiled and the ceiling has been modified. A large jury selection room has been created in the basement from what use to be the community room.

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### 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1928-1965  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1928  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

N.S. Spencer and Son-Architect  
English Brothers-Contractor  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Jackson County Courthouse is locally significant and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A-Politics/Government and Criterion C-Architecture. The present courthouse, completed in 1928, and its predecessors have served as the administrative and governing center of Jackson County since 1844. It is an excellent, well-preserved example of the Classical Revival style. The Jackson County Courthouse reflects ancient Greek and Roman architectural style. Characteristics of Classical Revival style as shown on the Jackson County courthouse are, a symmetrical plan, Doric columns and entablature, pediments, the use of acanthus leaves, and the eclectic use of cornices and balustrades on the exterior. The interior reflects the style of a classical rotunda/atrium. Constructed and designed by the experienced firms of English Brothers Construction Company and Spencer and Son

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Architects, the magnificent structure has served as the anchor of the Murphysboro Public Square for almost 90 years and has provided a sense of community pride and stability over the years. The period of significance is from 1928 when construction was completed to 1965 which represents the 50-year cut-off for National Register significance.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Jackson County, Illinois Historical Background**

Jackson County, Illinois was formed during the early nineteenth century while Illinois was still a territory and almost three years before Illinois was admitted to the Union on December 3, 1818. A man named Conrad Will came to be known as the "Father of Jackson County" because he moved to southwestern Illinois from Pennsylvania and proposed formation of a new county in Illinois territory that would later be named after President Andrew Jackson. Jackson County was formed from a portion of Randolph County by an act of the Illinois Territorial Legislature on January 10, 1816. The first named county seat for Jackson County was called Brownsville although it is believed that the first official county seat was in the house of Nathan Davis on the Big Muddy River from 1816-1817. Dr. Conrad Will donated 20 acres near his salts works on the lower Big Muddy River for the new town site (Husband (1973)). Dr. Will was a physician, salt manufacturer, merchant, statesman and operated a tannery. He died while serving as a member of the state legislature in 1834 (Husband 1973).

Brownsville was incorporated on March 25, 1819 (Wright 1983) and the first record of a county commissioners meeting is September 1, 1823 (History of Jackson County 1878). Shortly thereafter three county commissioners along with a sheriff, a county clerk and other officials were elected and the town was platted and the first lots were sold by 1816. The first commissioners were Jesse Griggs, Nathan Davis, and James Hall Jr. During this period both grand and traverse jurors were selected for the spring term of the circuit court in March of 1824 along with supervisors of road districts. After the new Jackson County seat of Brownsville was formed in 1816 lawyers and county officials moved in (Allen 1945). Elections were held by voice vote since there were no printed ballots. Brownsville was to become an important town during the early formation of Illinois which is apparent by virtue of the fact that one of only three banks in Illinois at the time was located there. The population of Brownsville is said to have peaked at around 500 individuals in 1834.

A two-story frame courthouse was built on the public square in Brownsville beginning in 1816 followed quickly by a jail. After a fire destroyed the courthouse on January 10, 1843 the state legislature passed a bill authorizing the establishment of a new county seat with a more centralized location within the county. It should be noted that before the courthouse in Brownsville burned, settlers moving into the eastern portion of Jackson County were not happy with the location of the county seat so there were discussions regarding a more centralized location (Allen 1945). After the courthouse was destroyed by fire William C. Murphy, John

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Cochran, and Samuel Russell were appointed by the legislature to select a new site for the county seat. Dr. John Logan donated the SW quarter of Section 4, Township 9 South, Range 2 West for the new county seat which was originally called Murphy's Borough. The spelling was later changed to Murphysboro, then back to Murphysborough, and finally to its current spelling of Murphysboro in 1893.

The last meeting of the county commissioners in Brownsville was on December 6, 1843 (Fishback 1982). Jackson County commissioners decided to accept an offer of land donated by Dr. John and Elizabeth Logan in what was to become the new county seat of Murphysboro, Illinois. The first county commissioners' meeting was held in Murphysboro on Dec. 4, 1844 after relocation of the county seat from Old Brownsville that same year. The early county court proceedings in Murphysboro were conducted in a frame house that had been moved to the county seat for that purpose in 1844 (Fishback 1982). The first courthouse in Murphysboro, a two story frame building, was completed December 3, 1845 at a cost of \$4,659.00. It was located in the center of the public square and served Jackson County until 1855 when it proved to be too small and plans for a new courthouse were made. The new courthouse was built east of the old building facing 10<sup>th</sup> street and was completed by 1859 at a cost of \$7,000.00. It was changed several times and was enlarged in 1877 by adding additional rooms, a third floor, and a mansard roof topped with a cupola clock (Fishback 1982). It wasn't until 1849 that one of the three commissioners was elected as county judge with other two commissioners serving as associate judges (Wright 1983).

An act of the Illinois State Legislature in 1848 established county administrative districts that corresponded to congressional districts. A township form of government was tentatively established as early as 1871 and was discontinued and reestablished several times until 1884 when it was formally adopted as the government we have today (History of Jackson County 1878). Jackson County governing boards have also changed many times since the county was first created. It is noted that the governing board changed some eight times since its inception as a county court in 1816 fluctuating from County Court to Justice's Court, to Commissioner's Court, to County Board of Supervisors, etc. Its present form of County Board of Supervisors was adopted in 1885.

The courthouse initially constructed in the mid-late 1850s and later enlarged in 1877 remained in use until 1927. By 1926 it became apparent that the old courthouse, which had fallen into disrepair, was no longer suitable for conducting the business of the county. In fact, the courthouse that existed in 1926 made front page headlines in the local newspaper on the second anniversary of the infamous Tri-State tornado which occurred in Murphysboro in 1925. Once the tornado had passed and bewildered survivors peered from their points of refuge, they were amazed to see that the courthouse still stood. The survival of the courthouse, much to the people's chagrin, was considered to be a "freak" of nature.

The local newspaper states "What right had a relic to stand like a rock in the blast? Why should an eyesore remain in the heart of a city that rebuilt itself in less than a year?" (The Daily Independent, March 18, 1927). This perhaps helps explain the headline of the Carbondale Free Press edition of December 9, 1926 which reads "County Board Votes to Rush Courthouse" and

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“Old Courthouse to be Torn Down by May 1, 1927”. Indeed, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors, under the leadership of Chairman H. J. Busch, voted unanimously on December 7, 1926 to proceed with construction of the new courthouse as authorized by tax payers in the November election. The price tag for the new courthouse was to be no more than \$375,000.00 and financed by bonds and “an additional tax of not more than 31 cents in \$100.00 of assessed valuation of taxable property for each year 1927-1945, both inclusive” (Carbondale Free Press, December 9, 1926). It should be noted that the County Board of Supervisors had authorized the bond issue and approved building of the courthouse in principal at their September 15, 1926 board meeting. They adopted a resolution agreeing to the “building of a new courthouse suitable for the needs of the county, the needs of county offices, and the proper housing and protection of valuable county records” (Centralia Evening Sentinel, September 15, 1926).

At the time the bond issues were approved the County Board of Supervisors also approved a resolution authorizing the establishment of a building advisory committee and a temporary courthouse office committee. Meetings were held with potential architects on December 21, 1926 and by January 7, 1927 the architectural firm of N.S. Spencer and Son of Chicago, Illinois was chosen to draw up plans and specifications for the new courthouse (The Carbondale Free Press, January 7, 1927). Razing of at least a portion of the old courthouse was to be underway well before May 1, 1927 and construction was to begin in June (Carbondale Free Press, December 9, 1926). It is important to note the role played by the Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce during the period of courthouse design. According to the local newspaper the chamber voted on January 13, 1927 to adopt a resolution urging the Jackson County Board of Supervisors to require the architect to design the courthouse such that brick from the Murphysboro Brick Paving Co., and other materials produced in Jackson County could be used. They also advocated for use of a local county building contractor and local county mechanics (Murphysboro Daily Independent, January 14, 1927). Indeed a host of local county suppliers were used in various aspects of courthouse completion including materials and labor by local plumbing, heating, electrical firms, and a furniture store (Murphysboro Daily Independent, October 2, 1928).

The last day for use of the old courthouse was May 21, 1927 after which the building was razed and temporary offices were set up in at various locations around the public square (The Daily Independent, June 6, 1946). As noted above, the courthouse design is based on architectural plans drawn up and finalized by N.S. Spencer and Son architects of Chicago in April of 1927. The construction firm English Brothers of Champaign, Illinois was chosen as the building contractor. Both the architect and building contractor were seasoned veterans of public building design and construction with good reputations and had collaborated on many similar projects. This may explain why they were selected since the County Board of Supervisors in a directive at their December 7, 1926 meeting had dictated to the Building Advisory Committee to recommend a “reputable, competent, and reliable architect to make plans for the new courthouse” (Carbondale Free Press, December 9, 1926). A ceremony to lay the courthouse cornerstone was held on Monday, January 26, 1927 with popular County Board of Supervisors Chairman H.J. Busch speaking under the direction of the Masonic Fraternity of Jackson County assisted by the Masonic Grand Lodge and engaged by the commander’s of Egypt (Murphysboro Daily Independent, January 26, 1927).

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The present day Jackson County courthouse was completed in the fall of 1928 and dedicated on October 2, 1928 at 1:30 PM. County Board of Supervisors Chairman H.J. Busch represented the board at the dedication ceremony and Southern Illinois Teachers College president Shryock gave the dedicatory address. The honorable A.L. Spiller, circuit judge of Carbondale presided. The ceremony was a huge, important event for the county and southern Illinois at large as thousands of people flocked to town. Farmers brought their children and rural and city schools closed early and local shop doorways and streets were filled to capacity. The large throng of people “lifted their voice” to sing “America” and “Illinois” with “lines of sightseers passing through the Capitol Building”. It is stated that “on the north steps of the magnificent building were represented the Nation, State, County, Courts, Church, Schools and Community”. Reservations were made by officials from adjacent county offices and the Murphysboro’s hotels and homes were “thrown open to accommodate the people” (Murphysboro Daily Independent October 2, 1928). October 2, 1928 represented a new beginning for Murphysboro. Residents, still fresh with memories of the devastating tornado that destroyed so many lives and devastated so much of the town, responded to the new courthouse with pride.

“City Beautiful Invites You-Could the tens of thousands that poured into a stricken city but return as feverishly as they came, they would find Murphysboro today the “City Beautiful”- a place transformed. It is a business adage America over that one can judge a community by its courthouse”. (Murphysboro Daily Independent March 18, 1927). On August 15, 1946 the bond debt was officially retired in a huge ceremony on the west steps of the courthouse via a bond burning witnessed by hundreds (The Daily Independent, August 15, 1946).

Over the years, a number of social-political-economic events and meetings have taken place at the Jackson County courthouse that did not involve official county business. Perhaps the most memorable was the 1950 Murphysboro city centennial celebration (which happens to coincide with the establishment of the county seat in Murphysboro). The celebration was held from Saturday September 23 to Saturday September 30. The 100 year celebration was delayed by seven years to allow for the return and settling in of the returning WWII war veterans. The Jackson County courthouse served as the focal point for many of the events that took place during the centennial celebration including hosting of a Jackson County day on Wednesday September 21 where kiddy rides and concessions were in operation at the courthouse along with a husband-calling contest, a mayor’s milking contest, and square dancing. Other events occurring at the courthouse during the celebration included parades, a ladies old-fashioned costume contest, a “funny money” auction, a best looking-worst looking men’s beard contest, and pioneer recognition awards. The governor of Illinois at the time Adlai Stevenson actually participated in the ceremony by giving a closing speech and was “arrested” and temporarily placed behind bars in the “Kangaroo Corn Crib” on the Jackson County courthouse lawn for the offense of attending the celebration without a beard. It is noted that the Murphysboro Chamber of Commerce held regular monthly meetings at the courthouse in 1930 (Murphysboro Daily Independent, March 3, 1930) and various Republican and Democratic candidates for office used the courthouse for political rallies through the years (Murphysboro Daily Independent February 28, 1940, October 21, 1948; Southern Illinoisan October 12, 1964).

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Today the Jackson County courthouse is still the centerpiece of a busy downtown Murphysboro and serves as the Public Square just as it has been since 1844. The grand architecture of the Jackson County Courthouse was seen by Murphysboro residents and southern Illinois in general, as a symbol of rebirth, community pride, success, and hope for the future after the devastating 1925 Tri-State tornado. Although some of the older buildings have been lost around the square, especially on the west side (Jones 2010), others remain much as they were at the turn-of-the-century. The courthouse accommodates many of the same county government offices it did in 1928 including the county clerk's office, the circuit clerk's office, treasurer's office, state's attorney office, county Board of Supervisor's office, courtrooms, Grand Jury Room, and law library. However the sheriff's office and jail are no longer on the third floor since the new county jail was erected in 1988. Likewise the Superintendent of Highways and Coroner's offices are no longer present at the courthouse. The County Board of Supervisor's still meets at the courthouse and maintains its core local government responsibilities of fiscal oversight and corporate management. The courthouse continues its important role as a place to obtain marriage licenses, pay taxes, record deeds and other documents, conduct trials, and probate estates for residents of Jackson County.

### **Jackson County Courthouse Architecture**

The Jackson County Courthouse architect Nelson Strong Spencer was born Dec. 3, 1857 in Dixon, Lee County and died April 29, 1949 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. He attended Dixon High School and obtained a B.S. in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1883. Spencer was an instructor in the Architecture Department at the University of Illinois from 1880-1883. He also served as Superintendent of Grounds at the University of Illinois from 1898-1902. He married Ida Florence Rush in 1881 and they had three children, two sons and one daughter. Spencer was an architect in the town of Beatrice, Gage County, Nebraska before moving back to Champaign where he served as an architect for the University of Illinois and was also in private practice as Spencer and Temple architects. The firm of Spencer and Temple of Champaign, Illinois was dissolved by mutual consent which took effect on January 1, 1915. N.S. Spencer and son C.B. Spencer formed a new company known as N.S. Spencer and Son. They maintained their office location in Champaign while Spencer's former partner, H.R. Temple, set up his offices on the second floor of the Illinois building on February 1, 1915. Nelson Spencer eventually moved to Chicago after forming the new company of N.S. Spencer and Son--a new office was eventually set up in Chicago at the same time the Champaign office still operating. N.S. Spencer and Son was located at 25 E. Jackson Boulevard in Chicago when they drew up the plans for the Late 19th and 20th century Revivals/Classical Revival Jackson County courthouse in 1927. N.S. Spencer had his own studio in Chicago by 1930.

N.S. Spencer, during his career as an architect for Spencer and Temple and N.S. Spencer and Son architects, designed numerous commercial and public building in Illinois. His work embraced a broad spectrum of architectural styles from Classical Revival to Beaux-Arts, to Renaissance Revival to Richardsonian-Romanesque, and Prairie Style. He designed the Men's Gymnasium (E. Kenney Gymnasium built in 1902) adjacent to the Military Drill Hall (Kenney Gym Annex built in 1890) on the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana campus which had been designed by his mentor at the University of Illinois, Professor Nathan Clifford Ricker.

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Spencer was greatly affected by Ricker's work and incorporated many of his techniques and designs into his own work and even named a son after him. Additionally, during his tenure as an architect in the Champaign-Urbana area, Spencer was responsible for designing a wide array of other buildings. These included the Inman Hotel, Champaign High School (Edison Middle School), Mahomet Graded School (Sangamon Elementary), the University of Illinois Chemistry Building (Noyles Laboratory), the University of Illinois Mechanical Shop Building, the Hydraulic Building, and the Masonic Lodge and First Baptist Church in Champaign. Other building designs attributed to Spencer include a grade school in Graysville, Illinois, and a Methodist Church in Monticello, Illinois. Further south in Illinois and Missouri, in addition to the Jackson County courthouse, Spencer designed the courthouse in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, the Williamson County Jail in Marion, Illinois, the First National Bank in Marion, Illinois, the DuQuoin Hospital in DuQuoin, Illinois and a grade school in Benton, Illinois.

While the Jackson County courthouse is the largest and most defined classical revival building in Murphysboro, there are four other examples of classical revival architecture. The two most notable of these are the old post office and the Elks Hall both on Walnut Street and circa 1909. The Elks Hall is on the national register. The other two are churches that have classical revival elements along with some arts and crafts influences.

The Jackson County Courthouse is architecturally significant because of its Classical Revival style and the importance for this type of architectural expression in the recovering region of Southern Illinois. Classical Revival style is influenced by Greek and Roman architectural orders and generally thought of as appropriate for government buildings. Southern Illinois was recovering from the 1925 Tri-State tornado and by 1927/28 had recovered enough that they were amazed by their own strength. The large grand classical building proposed by a Chicago architect Nelson Spencer fit the needs of the community. The Greek and Roman Doric order is followed in the court house frontispiece with columns, entablature and pediment. The excessive formalism, parapet and balustraded terrace along with the building's gleaming white Indiana limestone exterior and its symmetry are elements of Classical Revival as well. The period of significance is 1928 to 1965.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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*Centralia Evening Sentinel*, September 15, 1926

*Murphysboro Daily Independent*, October 2, 1928

*The Carbondale Free Press*, January 7, 1927

*The Daily Independent*, June 6, 1946

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*Murphysboro Daily Independent* March 18, 1927

*The Daily Independent*, August 15, 1946

*Murphysboro Daily Independent*, March 3, 1930

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*Murphysboro Daily Independent* February 28, 1940,

*Murphysboro Daily Independent* October 21, 1948;

*Southern Illinoisan* October 12, 1964

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**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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository: Jackson County Historical Society and Jackson County Courthouse

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 0.7 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Jackson County Courthouse  
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- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.763995 | Longitude: -89.334949 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

**Or**  
**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Jackson County Courthouse is located at 1001 Walnut St. in the center of the Murphysboro, Illinois Public Square. Land for the Public Square was Dr. John Logan for the county seat. The original land donated was the SW quarter of Section 4, Township 9 South, Range 2 West. The city block incorporating the courthouse and grounds is bounded on the north by Walnut Street, on the south by Chestnut St, on the east by 10<sup>th</sup> St., and on the west by 11<sup>th</sup> St.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Jackson County Courthouse building and grounds are confined to a square city block that corresponds to the center of the original Murphysboro Public Square donated by Dr. John Logan.

Jackson County Courthouse  
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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rachel M. Ensor Ph.D  
organization: Historic Properties Consultants  
street & number: 1515 Oak St.  
city or town: Murphysboro state: Illinois zip code: 62966  
e-mail malcolmensor@gmail.com  
telephone: 618 201-7435  
date: May 29, 2015

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Jackson County Courthouse  
City or Vicinity: Murphysboro  
County: Jackson State: Illinois  
Photographer: Blaine Ensor  
Date Photographed: May 2015

Jackson County Courthouse  
Name of Property

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 13.

North Elevation of courthouse, camera facing south.

Photo 2 of 13.

South Elevation of courthouse, camera facing north.

Photo 3 of 13.

East Elevation of courthouse, camera facing west.

Photo 4 of 13.

West Elevation of courthouse, camera facing east.

Photo 5 of 13.

Third floor, renovated hallway, camera facing east.

Photo 6 of 13.

Third floor, staircase to second floor, camera facing west.

Photo 7 of 13.

View of first floor rotunda (atrium) from second floor, camera facing east.

Photo 8 of 13.

View of central public space outside courtrooms on second floor, camera facing east.

Photo 9 of 13.

View of skylight on second floor, camera facing east.

Photo 10 of 13.

View of courtroom, north side of courthouse, second floor, camera facing southeast.

Photo 11 of 13.

View of courtroom, south side of courthouse, second floor, camera facing west.

Photo 12 of 13.

View of first floor ceiling and door to County Clerk office, camera facing north.

Photo 13 of 13.

View from first floor rotunda of east entrance corridor/vestibule, camera facing east.

Jackson County Courthouse  
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**Jackson County Courthouse Location Map**



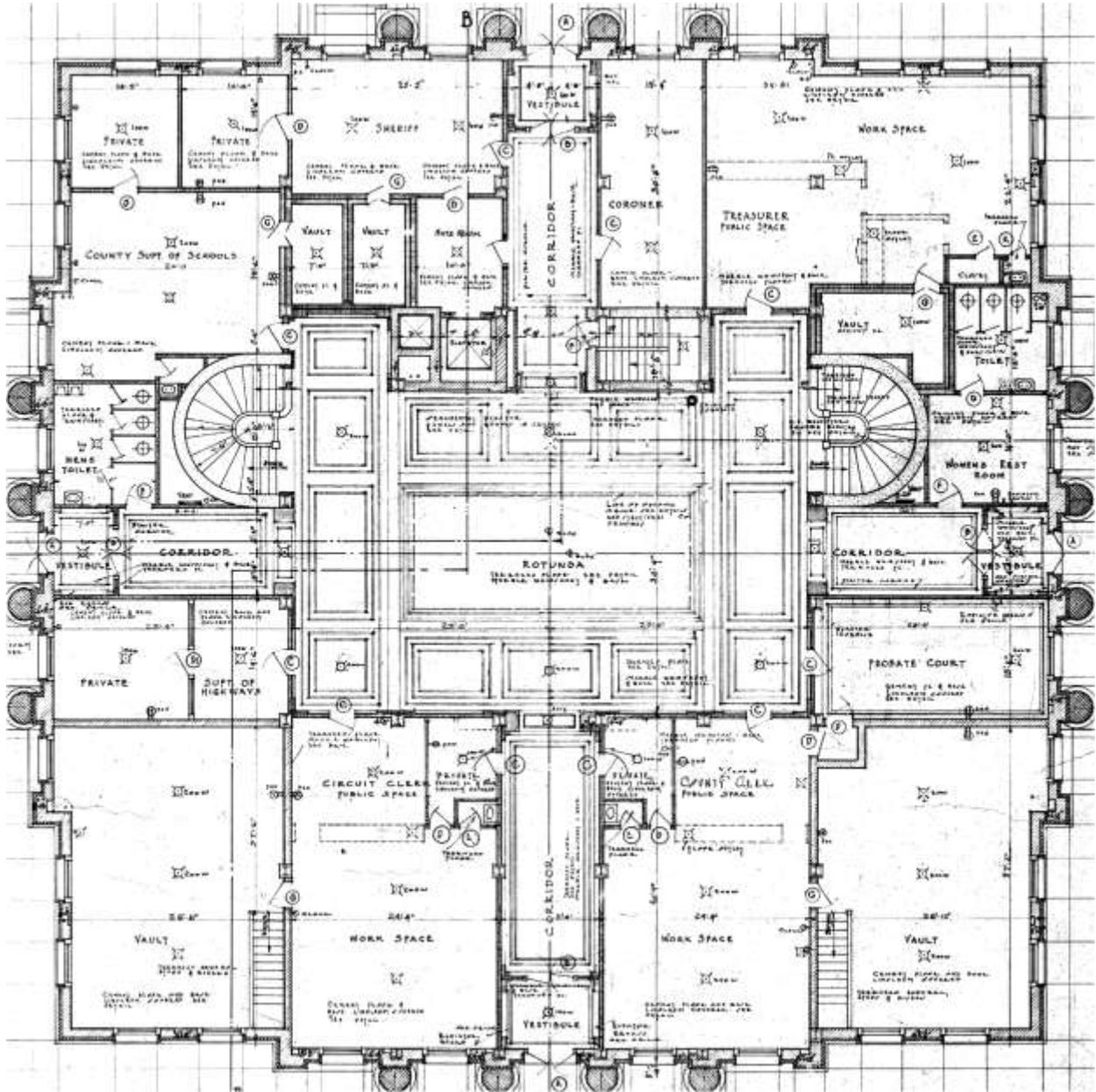
**Jackson County Courthouse  
1001 Walnut Street  
Murphysboro, Illinois 62966**

**Lat. 37.763995 Long. -89.334946**

Jackson County Courthouse  
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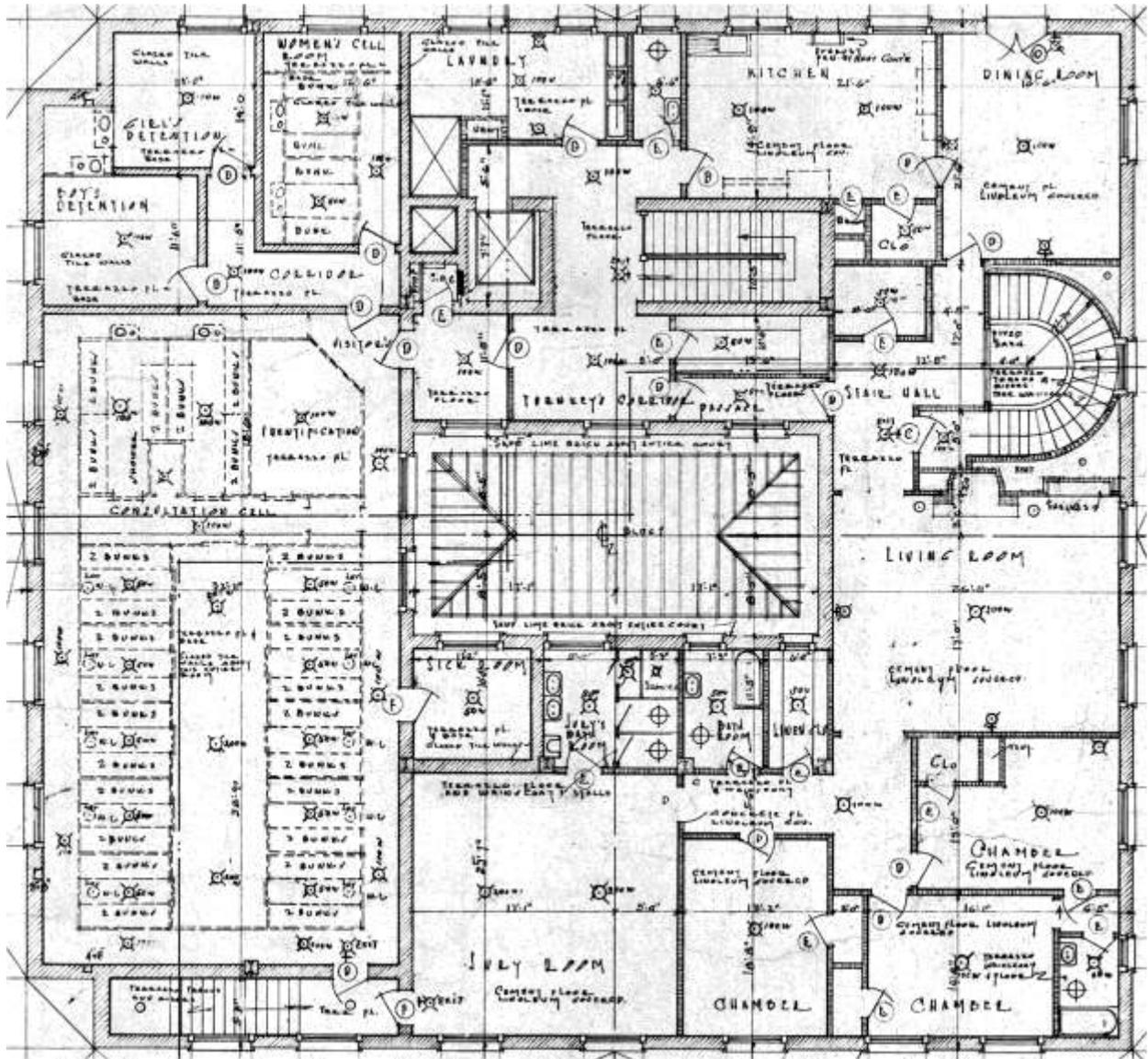
Jackson County Courthouse First Floor Plan





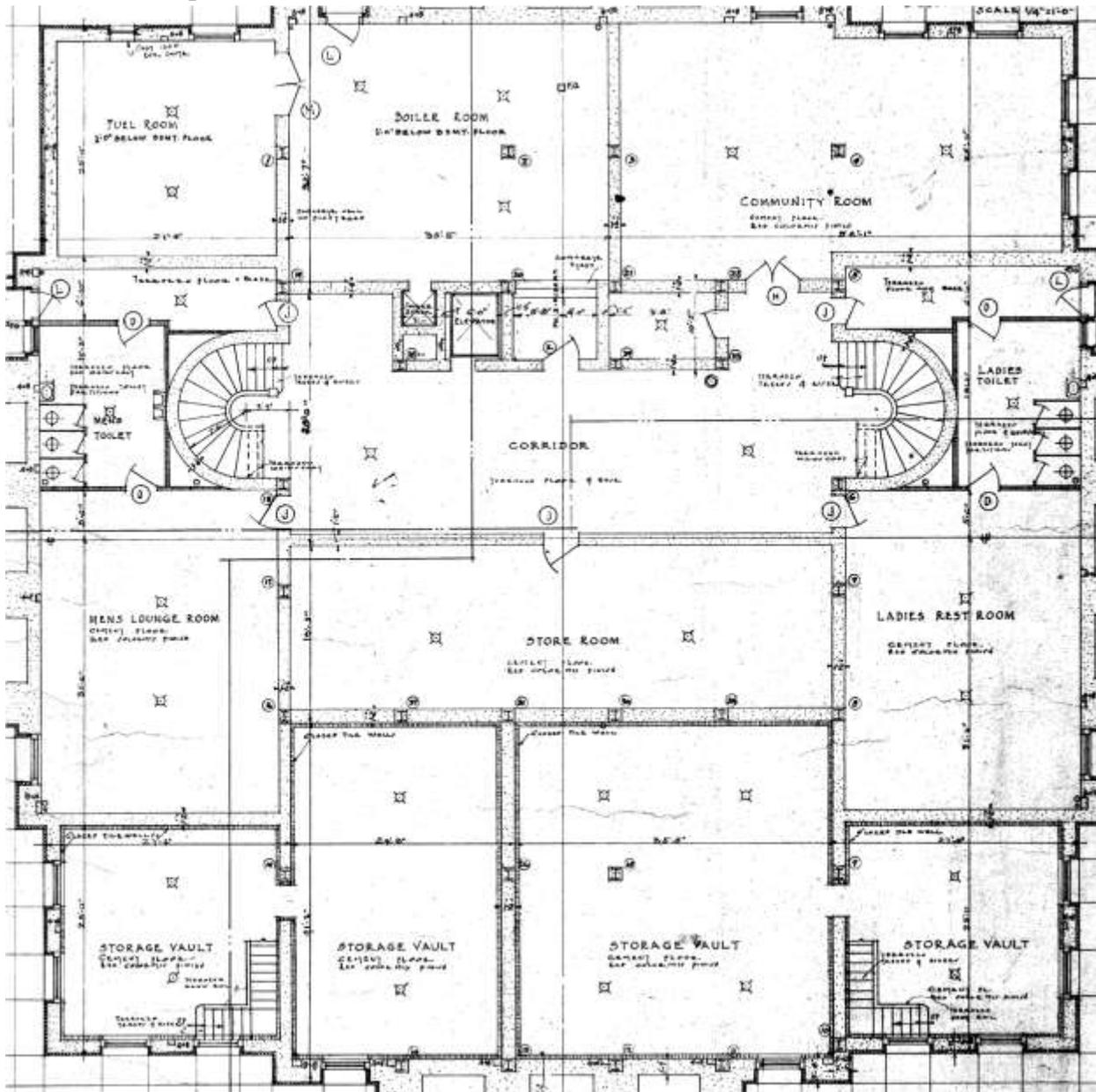
Jackson County Courthouse  
Name of Property  
Jackson County Courthouse Third Floor Plan

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Jackson County Courthouse  
Name of Property  
**Jackson County Courthouse Basement Plan**

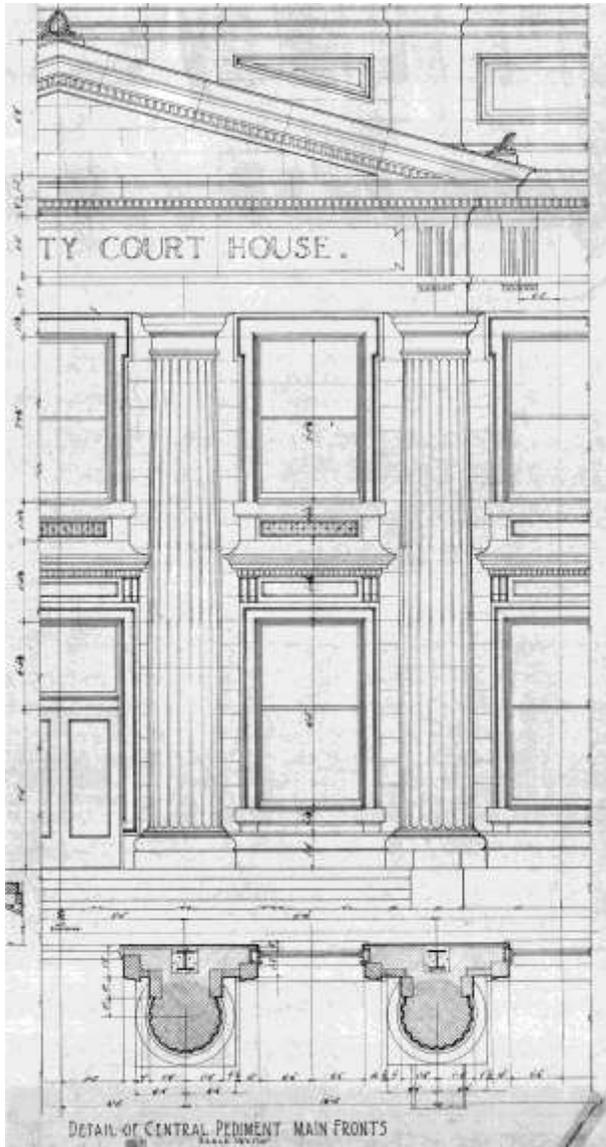
Jackson Co., Il.  
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Jackson County Courthouse  
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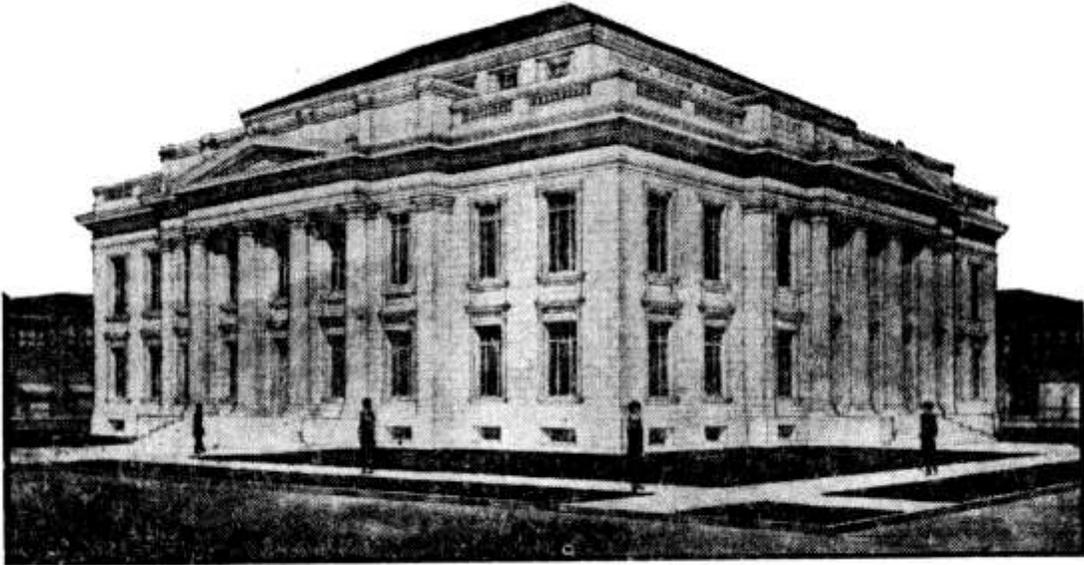
Jackson County Courthouse-Detail of North Elevation Central Pediment



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**Historical Image Present Day of Jackson County Courthouse**



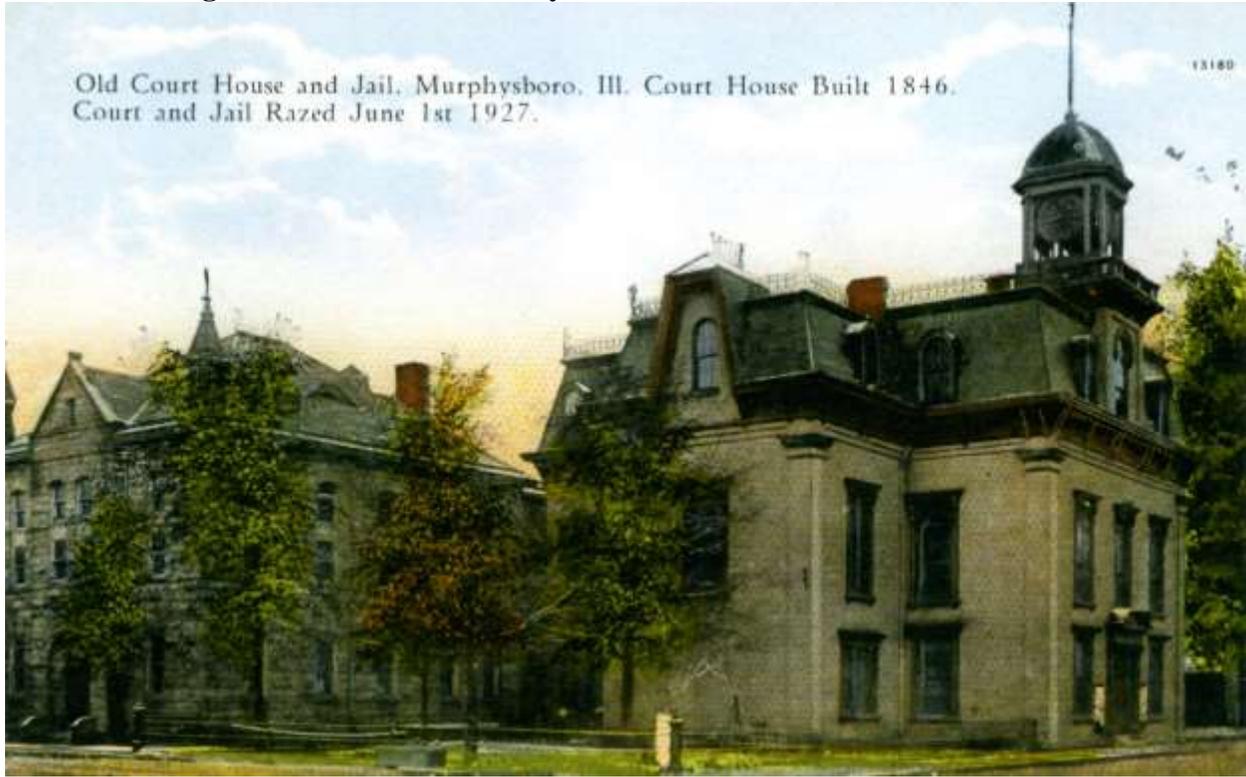
Jackson County's New \$375,000 Court House—Murphysboro, Ill.

PRINTED BY THE DAILY INDEPENDENT

Jackson County Courthouse  
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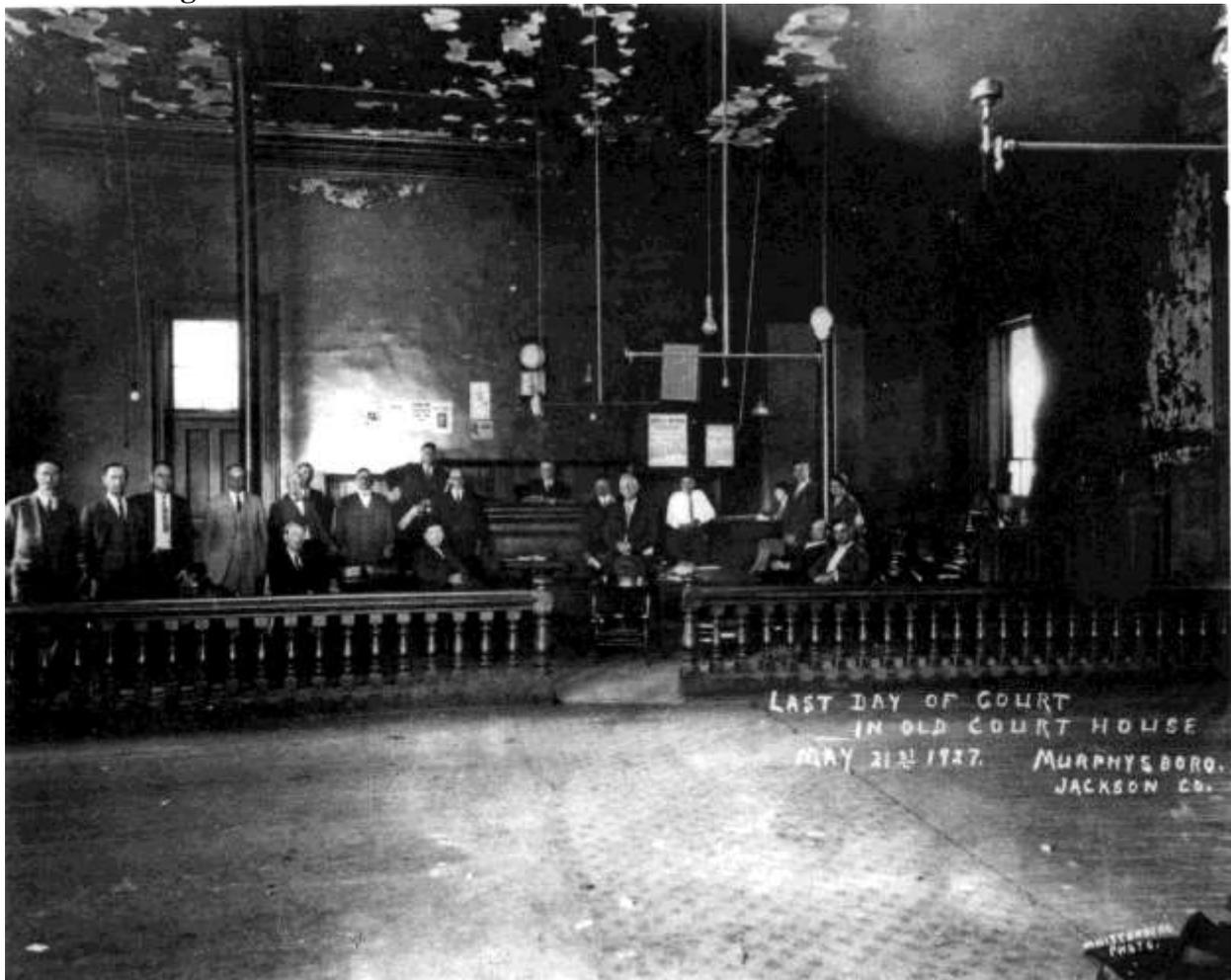
**Historical Image of 1877 Jackson County Courthouse and Jail**



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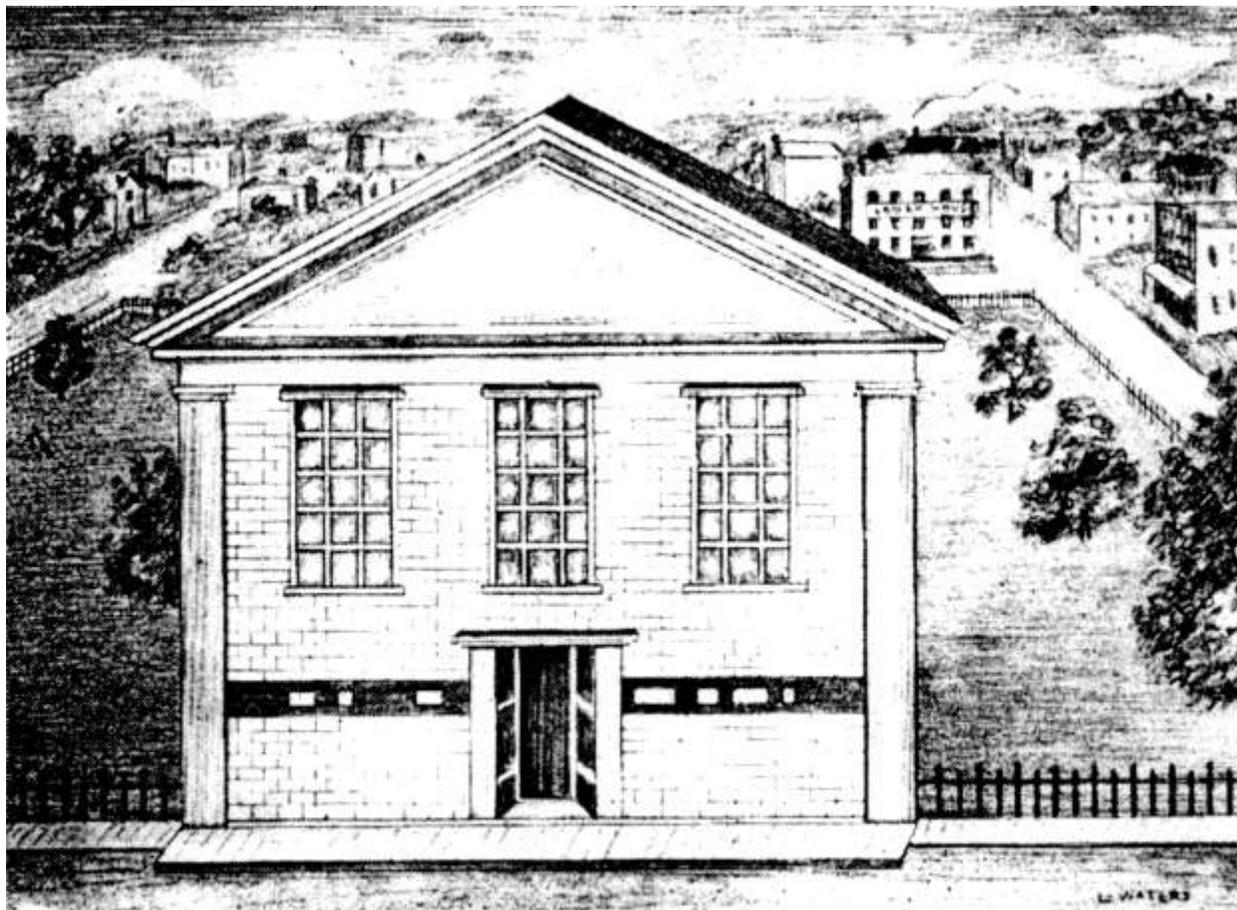
**Historical Image Showing Last Court Session of 1877 Old Jackson County Courthouse Before Razing in 1927**



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**Historical Image Showing Early Jackson County Courthouse Built Around 1855 Before Renovation in 1877**



**JACKSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE**  
1855-1877

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.