In Appreciation

This project is a cooperative effort of the City of Bloomington and The Monroe County Convention and Visitors Bureau. It was researched and written in part by Danielle Bachman-Bell. Other assistance was provided by Bradley Cook, Tom Kavanagh, Jane Marie Lind, Valerie Pena, Laura Newton, Nancy Hiestand, and Kari Price.

Many thanks for the photographic services of:

The Herald Times, Bloomington, Indiana
Indiana University Archives

Additional information gathered from the archives of:

William Hammond Mathers Museum, Indiana University Indiana Room, Monroe County Public Library, Monroe County Historical Museum

April 2002

A Walk Through the Monroe County Courthouse

Historic Tour Guide No. 9

The former Circuit Courthouse, now the Judge Nathaniel Usher Hill, III Meeting Room is housed on the north side of the building. Dedicated to the memory of a judge who presided longer than any other judge in the county’s history, the room is now used for county commission meetings. Once hidden by acoustic tiles and largely forgotten, the courtroom dome was uncovered in 1984. Impressive features in the room include the original mahogany wood paneling, clock, judge’s bench, two original tables, an original spectator bench and numerous brass light fixtures. Enjoy the architectural details and view of downtown from this commanding perspective.

commanding perspective. Enjoy the architectural details and view of downtown from this original spectator bench and numerous brass light fixtures. Throughout the building there are many original lighting fixtures. This brass Chandelier hangs in the stairway and matches the style of fixtures in the Nathaniel Hill Meeting Room.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

In 1984. Impressive features in the room include the original marble mosaics, the expansive ceiling, the clock and judge's bench. The wall paneling is composed of original oak and mahogany wood.

In 1984. Impressive features in the room include the original marble mosaics, the expansive ceiling, the clock and judge's bench. The wall paneling is composed of original oak and mahogany wood.

The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

In 1984. Impressive features in the room include the original marble mosaics, the expansive ceiling, the clock and judge's bench. The wall paneling is composed of original oak and mahogany wood.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corrosion and pigeon droppings and reinstated. The entire project consisted of about 2,000 hours of labor over a ten week period.

The stained glass, again created by Gustav Brand, shows the Arts and Crafts style with images of justice including wreaths, olive branches, bay leaf bands, a torch, a shield and an axe. The glass utilized is Kokomo Opalescent, a glass manufactured in Kokomo, Indiana. Restoring the glass was a painstaking process involving removal of the 160 panels and old grout. Each was cleaned of dirt, corruption and pigeon droppings and reinstatet.
The Grounds

At the time of the courthouse’s construction there were no large trees or shrubbery on the square. A plaque commemorates the early landscaping, which was done in memory of those Monroe County citizens who perished during World War II. At the time of the building’s restoration in 1984, additional landscaping plans were made which included sites for future monuments, all of which are primarily sculpted of limestone.

1. Center of Population Stone
The Center of Population stone is located on the south side of the square to the east of the sidewalk. In 1910 the center of population for the United States was located in Bloomington. Originally sited at the Hoosiers Brothers Furniture Factory at 8th and Morton Streets, now City Hall, it was moved to the courthouse lawn when the center of population shifted further west.

2. Civil War Memorial
The Captain William Alexander Grand Army of the Republic memorial, “To the Soldiers of Monroe,” was erected in 1928. Designed by George W. Bunting and carved by Harry McVeen and Josef Graf, it features depict battle scenes from the Mexican War, Civil War, Spanish-American War, and World War I. It is topped with the figure of a Civil War soldier. Elsewhere on the site is a 816-pound cannon removed from the USS Phoenix in 1864.

3. World War II Memorial
The World War II monument titled, “Spirit of the Fighting Yank,” was designed by Emery V. Viguiessey and carved by Harry Donato. The original cornerstone can be viewed on the northeast side of the building nearby.

4. Korean War Memorial
On the northwest side of the building is the “Freedom Flame,” erected in 1952 in honor of Monroe County’s Korean War veterans. The 12-foot tall monument highlights the four freedoms—from fear, from want, of religion, and of speech—by noted President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his address to the 77th Congress on January 6, 1941.

5. Vietnam Memorial
The largest monument is the Monroe County Vietnam Veterans Memorial erected in 1991. The monument honors the 4,000 area residents who served in Southeast Asia and lists the 24 Monroe County citizens who lost their lives. A large wind chime honors the prisoners of war and those missing in action.

6. Women’s Christian Temperance Fountain
A water fountain erected by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in memory of Elizabeth Lovden was originally on the sidewalk in the southwest corner of the lawn but was moved in the early 1960s.

7. Peace Memorial
The “Peace Memorial,” carved by Bill Dahman, was erected in 1978. The artist’s intention was for the monument to serve as a complement to the “Four Freedoms Memorial” and to serve as a balance between the war memorials.

8. First Floor Carvings
On the first floor, the design of the rusticated stone is characterized by horizontal banding and keystones above the windows. This heavily beveled stone gives the building a monumental gravity. Each of the four projecting facades has an elaborately detailed doorway with carved acanthus consoles at the corners and foliated pilasters. False doorways on the east and west provide symmetry to the building design.

9. Second Floor Decoration
The second and third floors are constructed of smooth, or dressed stone and columns and pilasters unify the height of the combined floors. The Ionic and Doric columns and pilasters, semi-attributed to the wall, are decorated with the fasces symbol of justice repeated throughout the exterior and interior of the building. The large domed mouth, the repeating blocks beneath the roof line and the balustrade, the decorative railing projecting above the roof are additional characteristics of the Beaux Arts style.

Standing on the cornice are two figures called Caryatids. They flank the date of construction carved into a panel surmounted by the shield-like cartouche.

The name of the courthouse is carved into the frieze and flanked by festoons.

10. Entrance Sculpture
Above the main entrance on the south side is a sculptural group called “The Light of the World,” carved in limestone by Hungarian native Albert Molnar, Sr who was locally known through his work at the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair. The central figure holds the torch of enlightenment and is framed by figures personifying the law and power.

The Building’s Exterior

Beaux Arts Classical style was popular during the period 1890 to 1920 and is typically seen in corporate or civic buildings. The Monroe County Courthouse is an excellent example with its display of grand classical forms and details. Extensive use of symmetry was featured throughout the building beginning with its cross axial floor plan. In keeping with local stone tradition, the courthouse, with the exception of the dome, is entirely carved of limestone.

The Beaux Arts Classical style was popular during the period 1890 to 1920 and is typically seen in corporate or civic buildings. The Monroe County Courthouse is an excellent example with its display of grand classical forms and details. Extensive use of symmetry was featured throughout the building beginning with its cross axial floor plan. In keeping with local stone tradition, the courthouse, with the exception of the dome, is entirely carved of limestone.

8. First Floor Carvings
On the first floor, the design of the rusticated stone is characterized by horizontal banding and keystones above the windows. This heavily beveled stone gives the building a monumental gravity. Each of the four projecting facades has an elaborately detailed doorway with carved acanthus consoles at the corners and foliated pilasters. False doorways on the east and west provide symmetry to the building design.

9. Second Floor Decoration
The second and third floors are constructed of smooth, or dressed stone and columns and pilasters unify the height of the combined floors. The Ionic and Doric pilasters, columns semi-attributed to the wall, are decorated with the fasces symbol of justice repeated throughout the exterior and interior of the building. The large domed mouth, the repeating blocks beneath the roof line and the balustrade, the decorative railing projecting above the roof are additional characteristics of the Beaux Arts style.

Standing on the cornice are two figures called Caryatids. They flank the date of construction carved into a panel surmounted by the shield-like cartouche.

The name of the courthouse is carved into the frieze and flanked by festoons.

Education (north side)
The importance of Indiana University’s presence in the community is illustrated by various objects including books, a globe, a surveyor’s transit, and subjects such as ancient history and teaching.

Justice (west side)
In the center the goddess of justice holds the sword of righteousness and the wreath of peace and glory. The figure on the far left holds a lyre representing the balance of peace and harmony. To the right the figure holds the mirror of truth. The military figure to the right of the center goddess symbolizes defense against malice and treachery, which is suggested in the figure lurking on the far right. The eagle and patriotic shield again point to the county’s national pride.

Agriculture (south side)
The importance of Indiana University’s presence in the community is illustrated by various objects including books, a globe, a surveyor’s transit, and subjects such as ancient history and teaching.

Stone Industry (east side)
The limestone industry, the county’s chief industry during the early 1900s, is depicted. A quarry is in the background while the figures portray the progress of working the stone from rough block to a finished column. The figure in the center symbolizes the Stone Age.

Stained Glass Window
At the landing between floors is an elaborately carved stained glass window, one of many restored in 1984. The window design displays the clean geometric lines of the Arts and Crafts style with symbols of justice as the dominate theme.