

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Phelps County Courthouse

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 3rd and Main Streets not for publication

city or town Rolla vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Phelps code 161 zip code 65401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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(See continuation sheet for additional comments [] .)


Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell, Deputy SHPO Date 4 Dec. 92

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [] .)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register See continuation sheet [] .	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet [] .	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain See continuation sheet [] .	_____	_____

Phelps County Courthouse
Name of Property

Phelps County, Missouri
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone
walls brick

roof asphalt
other _____

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

Phelps County Courthouse
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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.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)
Politics/Government

Periods of Significance

1860-1942

Significant Dates

1860

1868

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Bishop, Edmund Ward/Lynch, P.J., and Malcolm, Andrew

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

Phelps County Courthouse
Name of Property

Phelps County, Missouri
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.9 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u>15</u>	<u>607820</u>	<u>4200310</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Art Smith/Treasurer, and Earl Strebeck/Vice Chairman
organization Old Courthouse Preservation Committee date June 8, 1992
street & number 208 North Rolla Street telephone 314/265-8329
city or town Rolla state Missouri zip code 65401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ date _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State

SUMMARY: The Phelps County Courthouse, Third and Main streets, Rolla, Phelps County, is located on Block 13 of a 50 acre parcel of land donated by Edmund Ward Bishop for the purpose of establishing a county seat.¹ Constructed in 1860 in the prevailing Greek Revival style but not accepted as complete by the county until 1868, the courthouse remains relatively unaltered on three elevations. A series of additions, most notably in 1881, 1912, circa 1950, and, most recently, 1979, have concealed the west elevation and partly obscured the east elevation; the facade, or north elevation, and the south elevation, however, remain essentially unaltered and still convey many of the characteristics of the style, such as its bilateral symmetry, simple rectangular shape, low pitched roof, and pediment, and are clearly distinguished from later constructions. The original 1860, two-story, brick courthouse measured approximately forty-five feet by sixty-six feet. Subsequent additions varied in height from one story to three. The original building was altered to align with adjacent three-story additions by adding a wooden floor between the first and second stories; the first floor tin ceiling was preserved, however. Access to the additions was provided by enlarging existing window openings, minimizing damage to the original building. Despite the alterations, the Phelps County Courthouse retains sufficient integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and association to convey its significance as the only permanent courthouse the county has ever had.

NARRATIVE: North Elevation: The north exterior elevation or front of the original 1860 portion of the Phelps County Courthouse measures 45' wide. From the foundation up to the top of the cornice it measures about 36' and from the top of the cornice to the ridge of the roof is about another 10' making the entire height of the two-story elevation about 46'. The foundation is smooth dressed ashlar stone in running bond with a water table. The walls are brick in running bond with quoin corners of smooth dressed rusticated stone. Each stone of the quoins measures 26" wide and 13" in height and depth. Large ogee wooden moldings crown the wood cornices and ranking cornice of the low pitched brick pediment. The frieze is a wide undecorated board. The eaves created by the cornice are about 18" in depth.

On the ground level the main centered entrance rough opening measures 7' 6" wide by 12' 6" in height. It is framed with a smooth dress stone lintel at the top and smooth dress rusticated stones on each side. The original

¹ Phelps County Court Records, Book A, January 21, 1858, p. 15.

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Phelps County Courthouse
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centered double doors for this main entrance still exist and are in storage. These original doors were paneled wood with no lights. Each door measures 3' 8" wide and are 9'11" high. The original doors have been replaced with modern paneled doors of standard size with two lights. The space around the new doors opening is a transom (still in place) with four lights. A concrete stoop is centered to this entrance and it is accessed by one step and a handicapped ramp.

Directly above the ground level entrance, the second level entrance rough opening measures 4'6" wide by 13' in height. Across the top is a smooth dressed stone lintel. The double centered doors at this entrance are each 2' wide by 10'6" in height. Each has three lights. The upper lights are arched. These two doors have had the lower 3' cut off and are now used as a window. The lower space of the opening is now filled in with wood. A transom of three lights is still in place above the doors.

A balcony was added to the building in 1863³ and it is centered to this second level entrance affording a small promenade. The balcony measures 6' wide by 14'6" in length. The balcony railings are cast iron about 30" in height. The balcony is supported by four iron brackets that appear to have not been sufficient to carry its weight and at a later date two iron posts were added under the front edge of the balcony. The posts extend down to the ground level stoop.

The window rough openings of the north elevation all measure 4'4" wide by 10'10" in height. The lintels above the openings are smooth dressed stone as are the lug sills below the window openings. The original windows can be seen in the old photographs. They were wood double sash with nine-over-nine lights. All these windows have been removed and appear to be lost. The present windows are metal double-sashed with two-over-two lights and a transom above. Also lost from the north elevation are the one-over-one window shutters which can be seen in the old photographs.

EAST ELEVATION: Despite two one-story additions, most of the east exterior elevation of the original part of the Phelps County Courthouse is still visible. It is two stories and measures 66' in length and almost 36' from the foundation to the top of the cornice. It had eight windows, the same size and

³ Phelps County Court Records, Book B, p. 287.

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description as those on the north elevation. Centrally arranged, four windows are on the ground level and directly above them, four windows on the second level. The lintels, sills quoins, cornice and eaves are the same as those of the north elevation.

The foundation is the same as found on the north elevation but is broken with four ventilation openings centered directly under each of the windows on the first level. Because the grade of the land drops off, more of the foundation is exposed at the south end of the elevation.

Visible also are the remains of two brick chimneys that divide the lower edge of the roof, lengthwise into almost three equal parts. The chimneys as seen in the enclosed old photographs, were about 2' in width and depth and about 18' in height. The upper parts of the chimneys appear to be metal funnels, no doubt, added to improve their ability to draw smoke. The low pitched roof is visible up to the ridge.

SOUTH ELEVATION: The south elevation of the original part of the Phelps County Courthouse mirrors the north elevation with these exceptions: the windows and entrance are more evenly spaced. There is no entrance on the second level and a window occupies that space. The lower level, now, has double centered doors of a modern style but since the rough opening measures the same as the rough opening of the doors on the second level of the north elevation, it is obvious that the identical doors were once at this south entrance. These doors are seen in old photograph C included in this application. Although covered, the original three-light transoms are still in place over this entrance.

Since the contour of the land is much lower at the south elevation, the stoop has five steps. The foundation is 4' or more in height and part of the stone footing is exposed.

WEST ELEVATION: Because of the three additions, very little of the west exterior elevation of the original part of the Phelps County Courthouse is now visible. But after examining this wall from the interior and looking at the included old photograph of this elevation taken in the 1880s and found in the collection of the Phelps County Historical Society (old photograph A included in this application), it is obvious that the west elevation was a mirrored image of the east elevation.

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Because of three additions which abut this wall, it has had several holes cut through the brick and stonework walls to create doors and openings. Rebuilding these walls will present the most problems in restoring the building to its 1880s appearance.

ADDITIONS A-1 AND A-2: Addition A-1, a one-story addition attached to the east side of the Phelps County Courthouse was completed in May of 1881 by Contractor C.B. Sanford.⁴ At the same time a mirrored addition (A-2) was added to the west side of the building. Both additions are used for storage of county records and were constructed as much as was possible to be fireproof. They are now referred to as the "vaults" because of their vaulted ceilings, iron doors and brick floors. The interior entrance doors were made by removing two windows, the window sills and a few courses of bricks below the sills down to the floor level, after which the metal doors were installed.

Both additions on the exterior measure about 17' in length by 17' in width. Each of the three exterior walls of each addition have centered wooden double-sash windows with four-over-four lights. The rough openings of the windows measure 3' by 7 1/2'. The stone lintels and sills match the original part of the building, only smaller. The brick walls, stone foundations and quoins were also constructed to match and blend with the original part of the structure. The walls at their highest points are 18' from the foundation to their stone ledge at the top. The ledge of the north and south walls are parapet in design.

Chimneys originally about 2' high also break the horizontal ledge on both the north and south side of each addition. The shed roof causes the outer east and west walls of each addition to be lower (about 12' high from the foundation.)

Although addition A-2 on the west side is now completely shrouded with later additions, it can clearly be seen in old photograph A. The Old Courthouse Preservation Committee plans to keep and restore both additions.

ADDITION B: Constructed by W. J. Mitchell and Fred McCaw, who were supervised by F.G. Allin. Addition B was added to the west side of the Phelps County

⁴ Phelps County Court Records, Book E, May 5, 1881, p. 513.

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Courthouse in 1912 at a cost of \$2546.00.⁵ The largest of the additions, it measures 30' by 31'. Three stories tall with a shed roof, it has numerous windows and exterior doors on the west and south sides. The Preservation Committee plans to remove this addition from the original part of the building.

The bricks used in its construction appear to be the same size and quality as those in the original structure and the stonework for its foundation, sills, lintels, and quoins are hand cut and also closely resemble the same in the original structure. Because of this, when Addition B is razed, it will be a good source of bricks and stones to make needed repairs to the original structure. It will also be a good source for interior woodwork and doors to replace missing ones in the original structure.

ADDITION C-1: Although no information has been found to date Addition C-1, it is believed it was added to the east side of the original structure in the 1950s. This addition measures about 16' by 32'. It has modern windows on its east and south side. The outside walls and foundation are constructed with concrete blocks and it has a shed roof. Two windows in the east wall of the original structure were removed to create interior doorways and access to this addition. Because of its poor construction the Preservation Committee has decided to make it the first addition to be removed from the original structure.

ADDITION C-2: The Preservation Committee has not found information to establish a date of the construction for Addition C-2. It is an odd shaped addition that fits between Addition B and D and is attached to the west wall of the original structure. At least two windows were removed to create doorway access to this addition.

Three stories in height with a shed roof, it has an odd shape because it fits around Addition A-2 on the first level and then completely covers the one-story addition with its second and third levels. On its west side, there is an exterior door and one window on its first level and two windows in each of its second and third levels. The Preservation Committee plans to remove this addition.

⁵ Phelps County Court Records Book M, Aug. 10, 1912, p. 475.

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Because it covers Addition A-2 which the Committee wants to save and restore, Addition C-2 presents special problems of removal. The Committee will not know until the removal process starts how much damage was done to the exterior of Addition A-2. The interior of Addition A-2 is still intact.

ADDITION D: In 1979, Addition D was added to the west side of the Phelps County Courthouse. It was the last and the most visible addition to be made to the buildings. The addition was built by Bemmish Contractors and the architects were Marshall and Hodge. The addition cost \$71,245.00.⁶ The Preservation Committee plans to remove this addition.

The addition is constructed with bricks and it appears to have a concrete foundation and concrete quoins at the corners, north and west sides. There are no exterior doors and only three windows on the north side, one window on each of its three stories. At least two windows were removed from the west elevation of the original structure to make interior entrances to this late addition. Another doorway was probably cut through the west elevation of the original structure for the second story of this addition. This addition has a shed roof.

THE BELFRY: The Belfry⁷ which in the past crowned the Phelps County Courthouse, was located on the north end of the roof's ridge. When completed, the promenade of the belvedere afforded the highest prospect of the town.⁸

⁶ Phelps County Court Records, April 17, 1979.

⁷ The term "belfry" used in describing this feature is taken from Phelps County Court Records, Book B, p. 189, Feb. 6, 1867, when repairs were made on the same.

⁸ It is known that the Phelps County Courthouse was the tallest building in Rolla, Missouri until 1872 when the Rolla Building was completed on UMR campus.

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Seen in all of the enclosed old photographs, its deteriorated condition forced its removal from the building in the 1940s.⁹ Unanimously, the Preservation Committee has voted to restore it to the structure.

Using known measurements of architectural elements found on the building, then comparing them to the old photographs of the belfry and after taking into consideration the diminishing effect cause by prospective, its size was determined. It was estimated that the belfry measured overall 14' wide, 14' in depth, and 35' in height. Vertically, it was divided into five basic parts; finial, roof, frieze and cornice, belvedere and base. Centered on the roof, the finial was an obelisk about 7' in height with a molding at the base and another one about one-third up from the base. At the top, the point was broken with an interpenetrating sphere.

The roof, domical in shape, was about 9' in height. The frieze and cornice were about 4 1/2' in height. The frieze had a base and was broken horizontally one-third up from the base with a trim. The cornice was crowned with an ogee molding. The belvedere sported eight square columns about 9 1/2' in height. Trimmed with appropriate moldings and base, the columns supported the roof, finial, cornice and frieze. A balustrade between the columns, about 3' in height, completed the belvedere by enclosing it on all four sides. The base of the belfry, a box about 5' in height, was trimmed at the top with a molding and a cap.

THE INTERIOR - GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The interior of the Phelps County Courthouse contains about 25 rooms on three levels. The second level (also called the mezzanine) in the original part of the building was created by slicing the height of the first level in half with joists, floors and ceiling. Most, if not all, of the original embossed metal ceilings are still intact but have been covered with suspended ceiling tiles. The wooden floors throughout the building have been covered with linoleum or carpet.

The wainscotting, door and window facings are mostly still in place but they contain several layers of paint. Some of the baseboards have been removed. Paneling of several varieties now cover the original plastered walls.

⁹The decade of the 1940s was arrived at as the period of the belfry's removal after talking to several senior citizens who were present when the demolition took place.

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The west side of the original building has suffered more because of the three additions being added on this side and because of the haphazard ways of creating entrances to these additions. Two rest rooms have also been crowded into this area.

Very little of the original furnishings on the first level survives except for shelves located in the two vault additions that were added in the 1880s. The large iron doors to the vault additions are still in place and three of the rooms on the first level have additional individual metal vaults. These vaults are built into the walls and have highly ornamental doors.

The front foyer and stairway still maintain their earlier proportions but dark paneling covers the walls. The original double staircase remains but the walnut balusters and newels have been painted dark brown. Beyond the foyer a 9' wide hall continues to the south end of the building. The walls of this hall are the main supports for the upper levels. The ceiling of the hall has been lowered and the walls have been covered with paneling.

The large courtroom on the original second (now third) level of the building maintains its original proportions except the ceiling has been slightly lowered and several of the windows have been covered over with plasterboard. The original pews, judges' desk and railings that surrounds the judge's desk and jury seats are still in place.

Overall the interior of the building appears to be sound structurally. In a meeting with the present County Commissioners, they stated that the building had been inspected regularly for termites and other potential structural weakness and was found to be in good shape.

Some of the partitions dividing the rooms on the first level of the original part of the building have been rearranged to meet the needs of present offices but most are still in their original positions. On the original second level, all the walls seemed to still be where they were originally placed.

THE INTERIOR - RESTORATION: After the planned restoration, which will remove all the additions built after the 1880s, the interior size of the building will be reduced to about 12 rooms. The Preservation Committee has stated that the interior work will have to be done in stages; perhaps one room at a time

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or as money for the work is forthcoming (A committee is now in place and is planning several ways to raise revenues for the restoration).

The intention of the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee is to return the building to its original 1860 center section plus the two vault wings added in 1881. Some of the major plans for restoring are: The interior will be returned to two stories with about 15' ceiling heights. The original embossed metal ceilings will be uncovered and restored. At this point, using the ceiling borders as a guide, original partition sites can be located and original room sizes can be established. All the woodwork will be stripped and returned to their original finishes. Some doors and most of the windows will have to be replaced with reproductions of the originals. Paneling will be removed from the walls and the plaster restored or replaced. Linoleum and carpets will be removed and the wooden floors restored. All original furnishings that can be found will be restored and placed in their original settings.

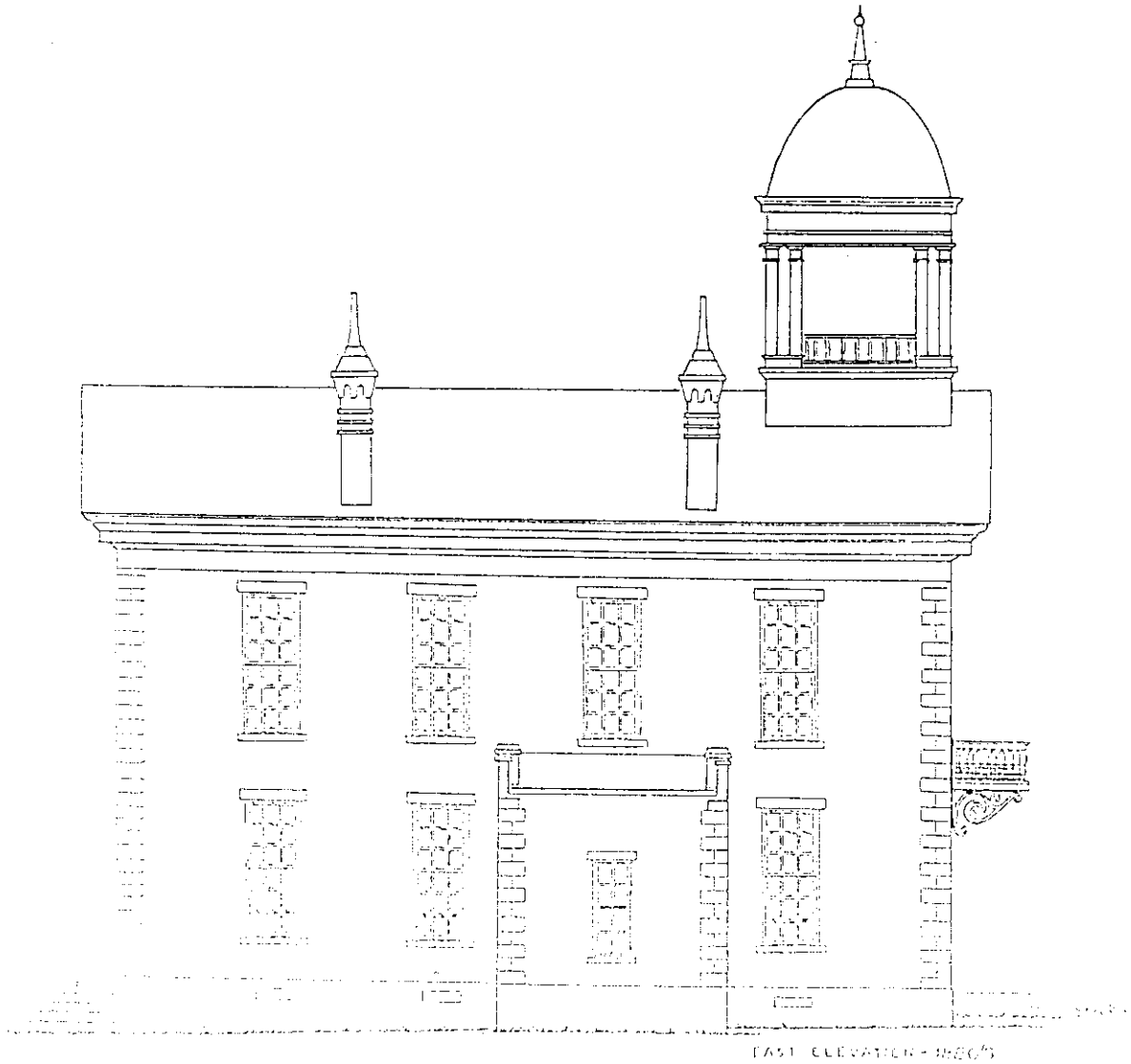
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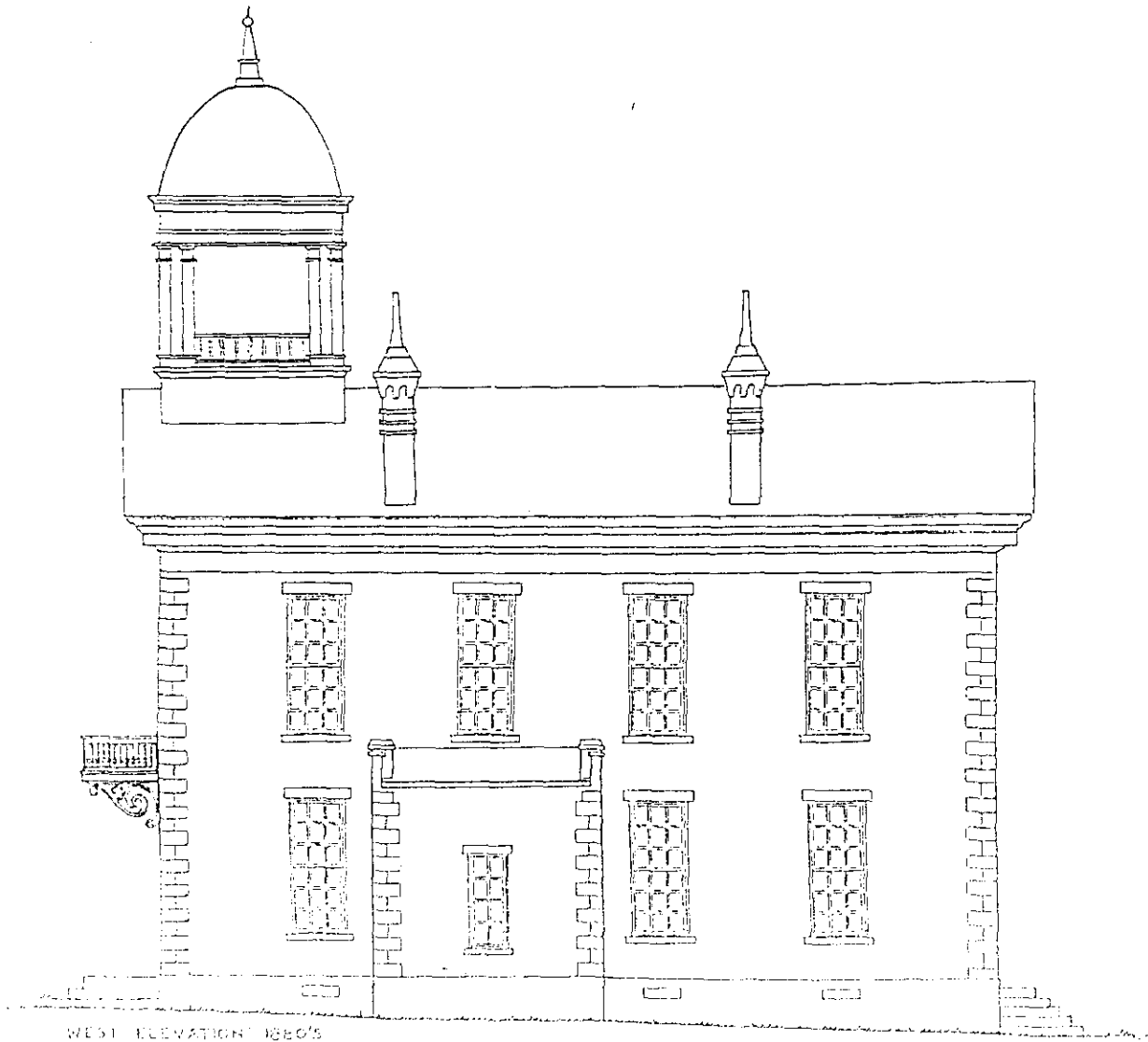
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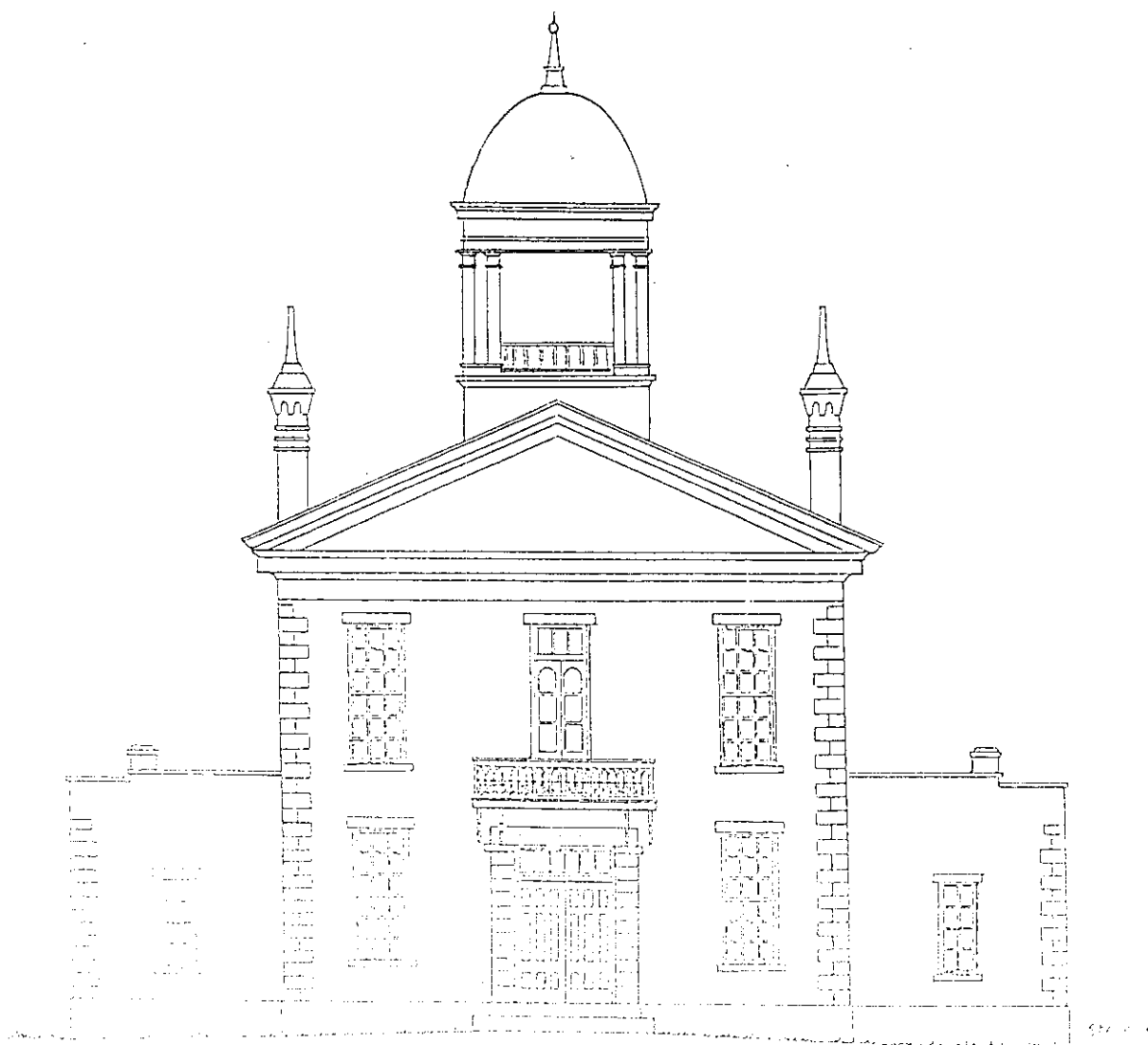
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NORTH ELEVATION 1890'S

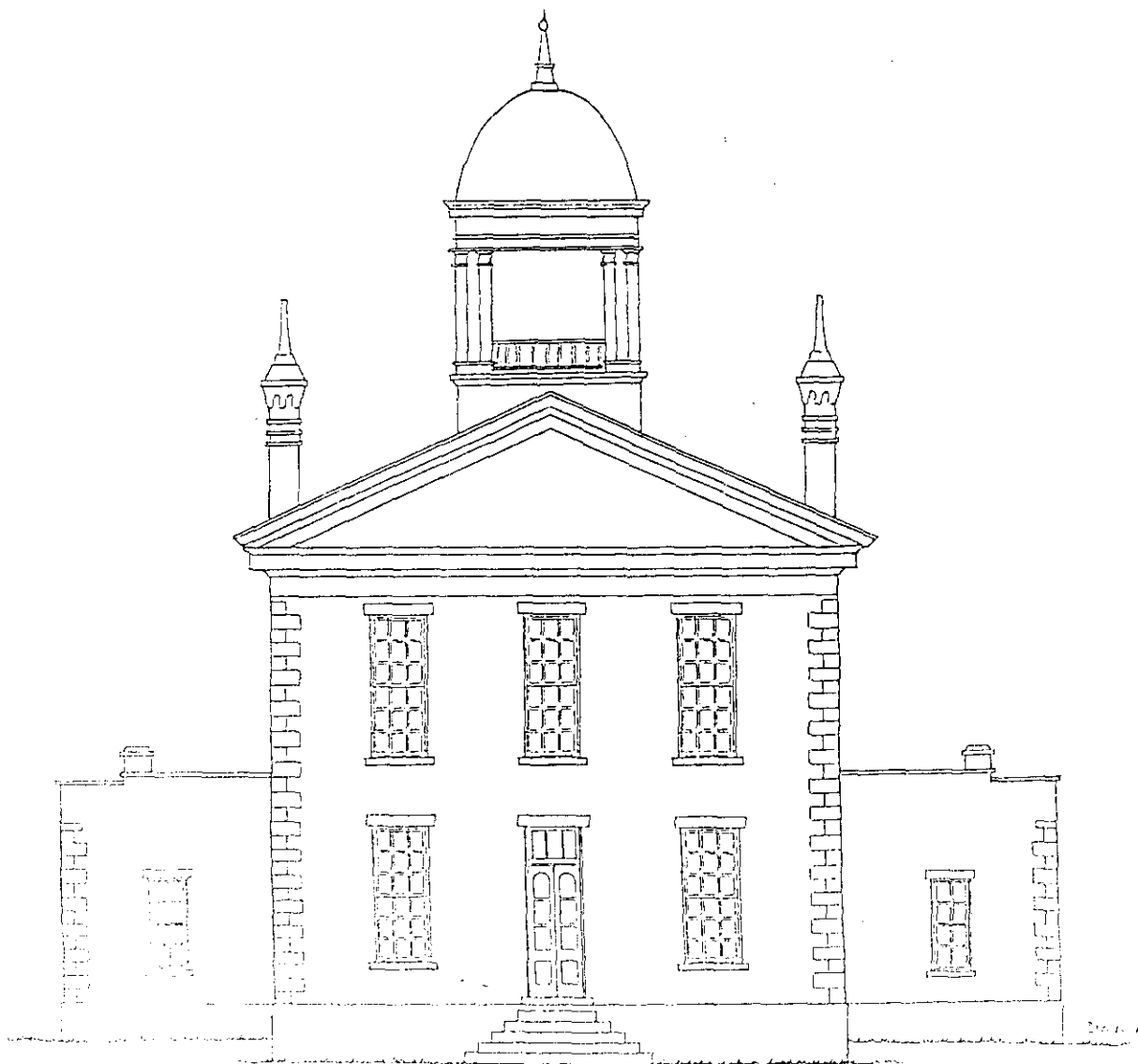
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SOUTH ELEVATION 1880'S

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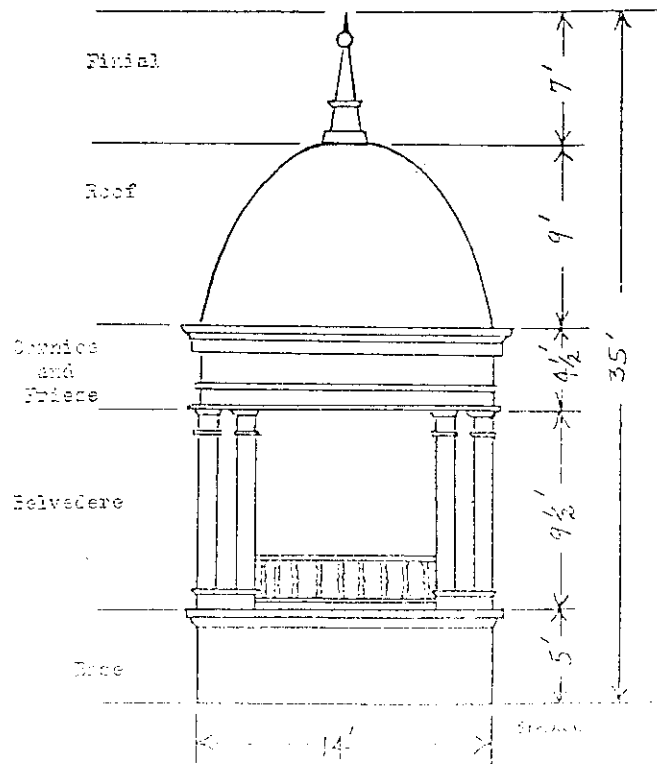
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 14

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State

OMB BELFRY
Phelps County Courthouse
Rolla, Missouri



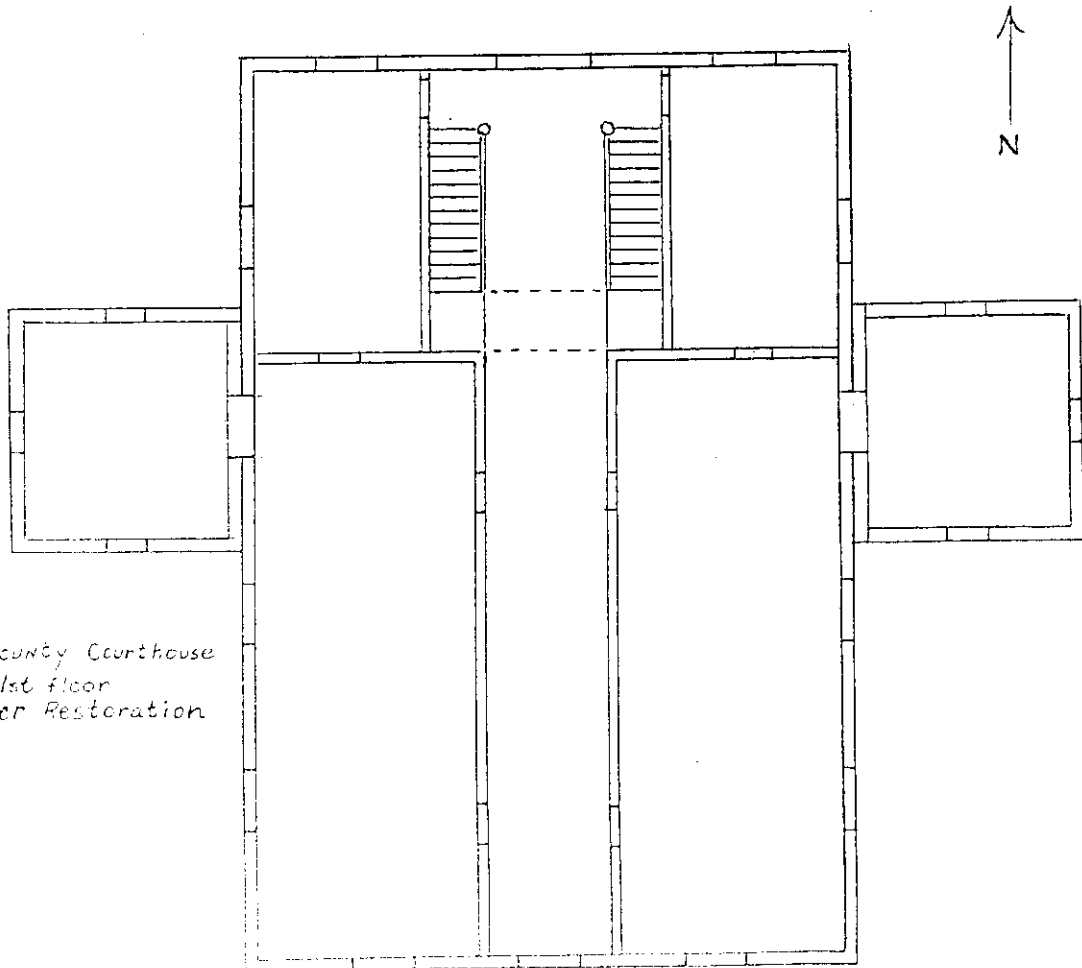
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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 15

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State



*Phelps County Courthouse
1st floor
after Restoration*

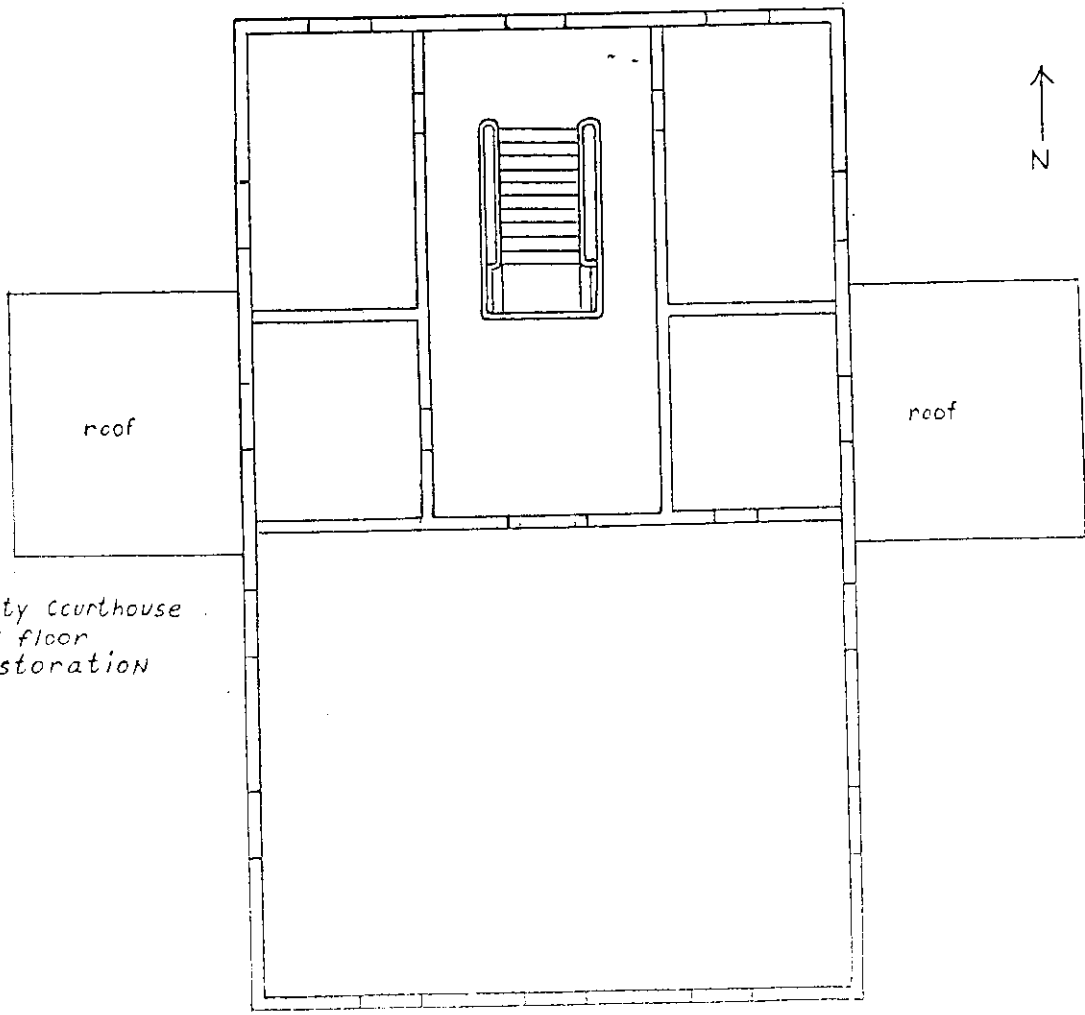
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 16

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State



*Phelps County Courthouse
2nd floor
after Restoration*

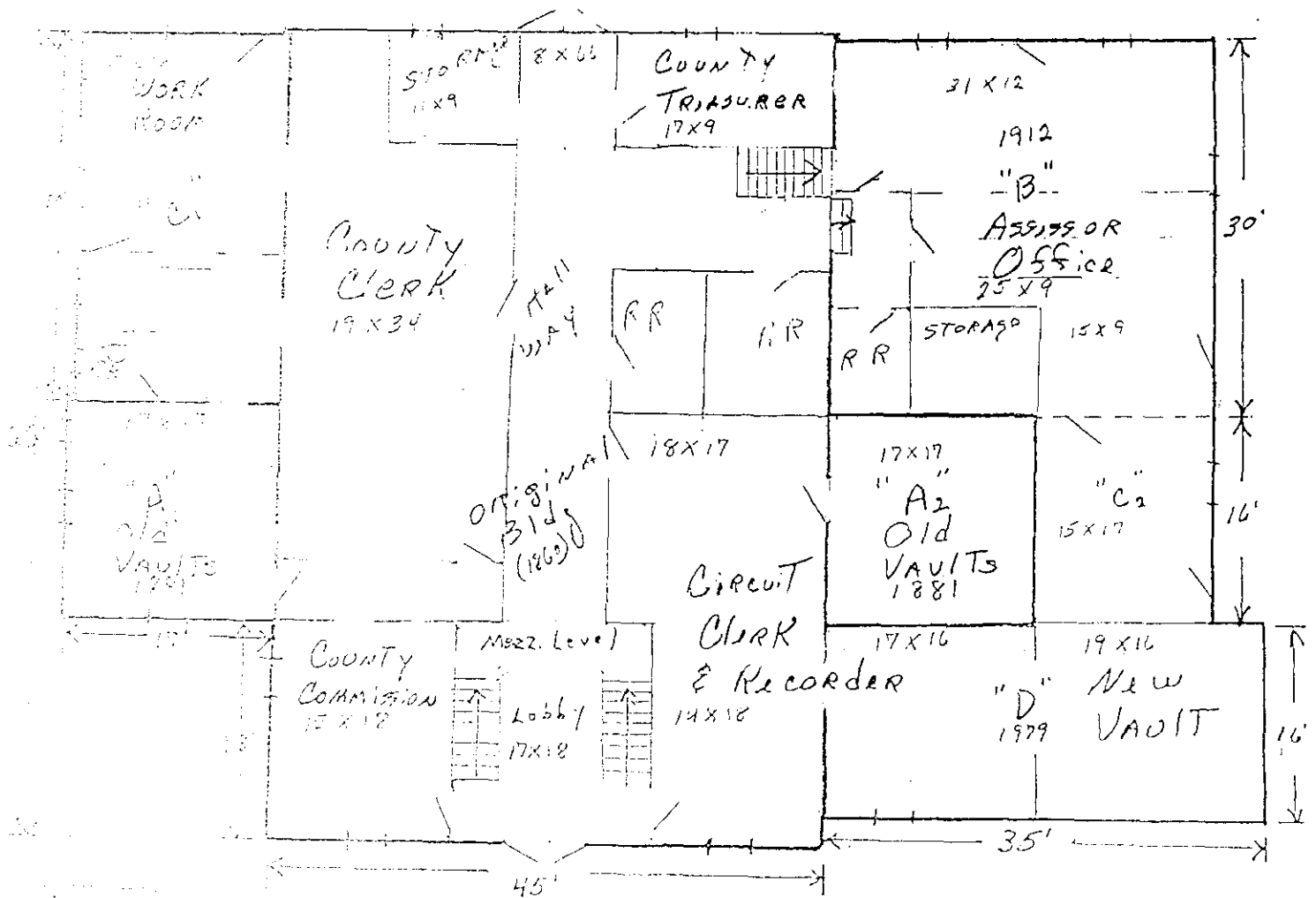
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

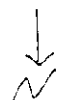
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Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State



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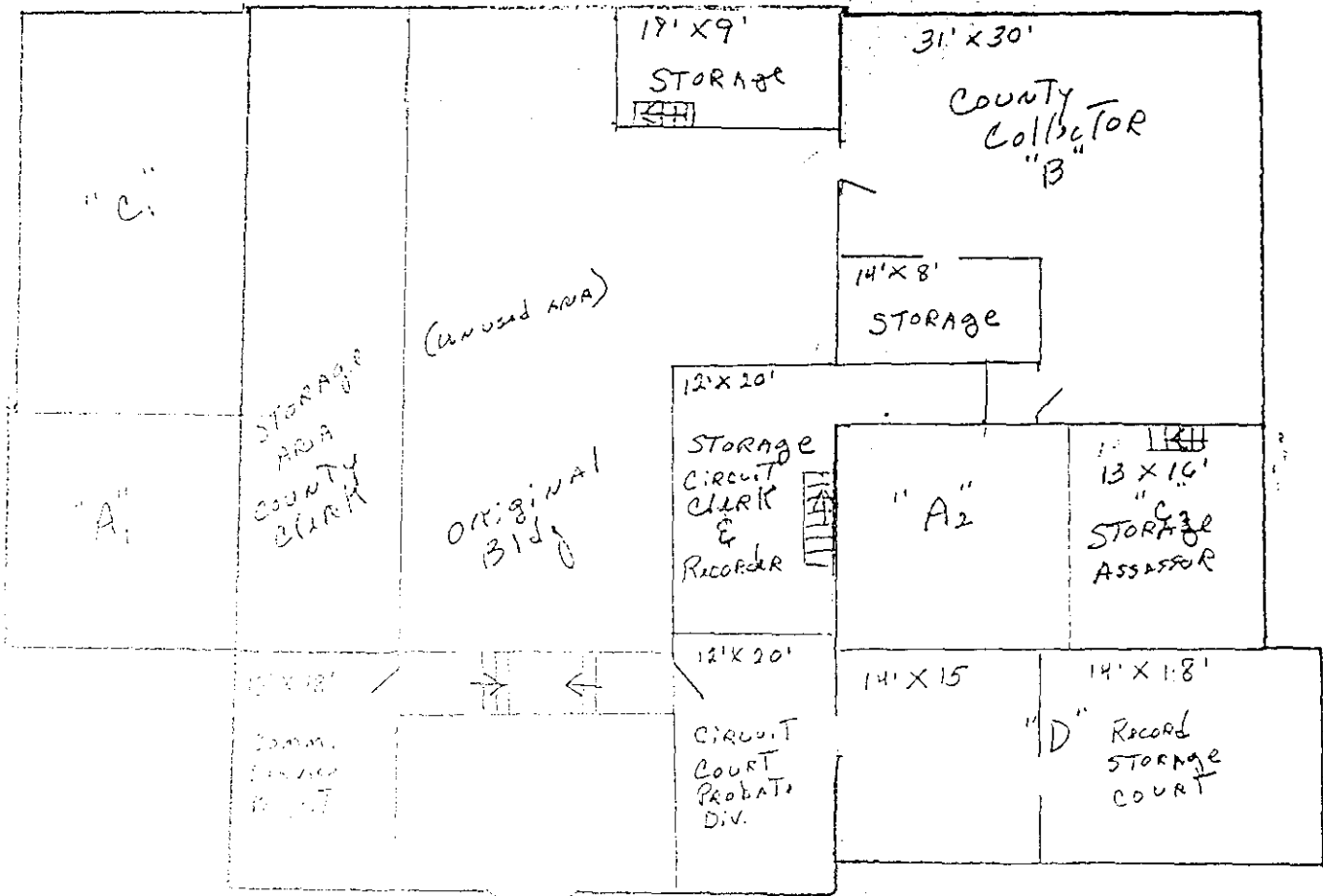
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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

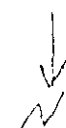
Section 7 Page 18

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State



Phelps County
1860-1893



1981-1982
100-1000-100/100

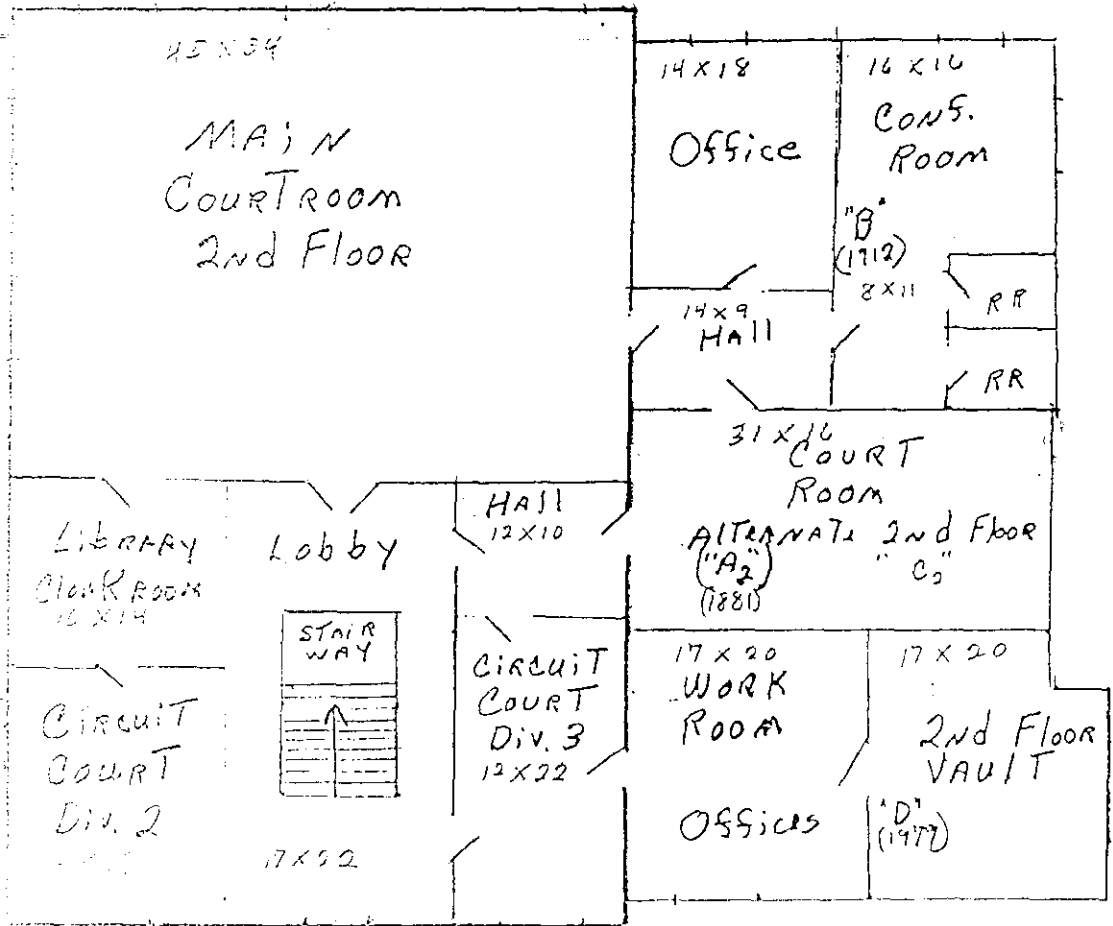
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 19

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State



(3)

(P)
(1880)

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45' 45'
45' 45'

DATE: 1980
BY: [illegible]



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Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
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SUMMARY: The Phelps County Courthouse, Third and Main streets, Rolla, Phelps County, is significant under Criterion A in the area POLITICS/GOVERNMENT. Constructed 1860-1868, it is the third oldest courthouse still in use in the state and was the first and only permanent building to serve as the seat of government for Phelps County.¹ The original Greek Revival courthouse has suffered several additions since its completion, but its original form and design are still apparent and the building retains sufficient integrity to reflect its importance as the hub and focus of county government and the symbol of local authority. Although the building continues to function as the county courthouse, its period of significance extends only from 1860, when the still incomplete building first housed the offices of the Phelps County government, to 1942, the arbitrary fifty year limit.

NARRATIVE: Following its creation by the Missouri legislature on November 13, 1857, the new county of Phelps held its first county court meeting at the John Dillon house, located six miles east of Rolla. The court consisted of William C. York as presiding judge, with Hiram Lane and John Matlock as associate judges. This new court selected Lyle Singleton as the county clerk and Franklin Wishon as the county treasurer. The first sheriff selected was Francis M. Wishon. The newly formed county court spent much of their first meetings developing a basic road system to connect Rolla with the many surrounding communities.² Another action undertaken by the court was the selection of Rolla as the county seat, a move that caused a great amount of protest. To show its commitment to Rolla, the court began meeting at various temporary locations while waiting on the building of a permanent home. One of these was at the office of the Southwest Branch of the Pacific Railroad on Eighth Street, another at the corner of 3rd and Park streets.³

¹The two older courthouses, already listed in the National Register, are the Lafayette County Courthouse (constructed 1847; NRHP 1970), and the Ralls County Courthouse (constructed 1858, NRHP 1972). Marian M. Ohman, Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia, Extension Division, 1981), n.p. The 1836 Jackson County Courthouse (NRHP 1972) has been extensively remodeled. The 1841 Johnson County Courthouse (NRHP 1970) houses a museum.

²Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 1.

³Clair V. Mann, The Story of Rolla, Missouri, p. 8.

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Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

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On August 5, 1859, the court appropriated \$8,000 "for the purpose of building a court house on the land selected as a public square at Rolla, the Seat of Justice".⁴ This location for the courthouse was to be a city block surrounded by Second, Third, Rolla, and Main Streets on land donated by Edmund Ward Bishop for that purpose. It was not until October 24, 1859, that the court requested plans to be drawn for the building.

The contract was ultimately awarded to Andrew Malcolm and his partner P.J. Lynch, of the firm Lynch and Malcolm, Contractors. Although both men were declared to be eminent citizens of Rolla, very little is known about Mr. Lynch. It is believed he left Rolla at the outbreak of the Civil War to join the cause of the South. Mr. Malcolm, who was born in Scotland, came to Rolla and owned the first store built on Pine Street. He was a president of the local bank and well known in the community.

Financing the building project became a problem when the court became involved in a legal battle over its right to borrow other county funds for the building of the courthouse and the selling of the bonds for the loan. The starting date was moved to January 14, 1860.

The Phelps County Historical Society had for several years what was said to be the only surviving plan drawn for the building. It was a small sketch drawn on a piece of paper about 8 1/2 by 11 inches. This side view of the building was attributed to Edmund Ward Bishop. The sketch cannot presently be found in the Society's holdings.

On September 17, 1860, the local paper described the progress on the courthouse as follows:

The work upon the courthouse under the charge of Messrs. Lynch and Malcolm is now progressing rapidly and bids fair to become a splendid specimen of architecture, and creditable to the builders. The work has been delayed for some time during the past summer, waiting upon the brick kilns. The bricks which are made for this building are the first lot ever burned in this region and are of a very fair quality,

⁴Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 90.

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Phelps County Courthouse
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especially those of the last kiln. The house is being carried up with fine cut stone corners, door facings and window sills."⁵

Although Lynch and Malcolm had contracted to build the courthouse for \$7,975.00, they never received the entire amount. They did receive their first \$500.00 on account for construction on June 5, 1860 and they were paid another \$3,500 on December 19, 1860. Soon afterward, the work on the building was interrupted by the Civil War, at which time Mr. Lynch and many others left Rolla to fight for the Confederacy.

The building was largely completed at the outbreak of war and was usable by county officials. All of the exterior was finished, as were the rooms on the first floor. A temporary stairway had been built to the uncompleted second floor. On the second story, the flooring and windows were in place but the partitions, laths, and plaster remained unfinished. Early views of the building from this period showed its clear dominance of the still embryonic town.

The Civil War in Rolla became a more immediate concern on June 13, 1861, when Union troops occupied the town. They seized the courthouse, took down the Confederate flag that had been flying there for about a month and then used the building for military purposes. The October 19, 1861, issue of the Rolla Express related that:

"...up to September 24, 1861, the courthouse was filled with hay and oats and within a day 120 soldiers were kept there as a hospital."

With the building occupied by Union troops, Malcolm--with or without Lynch--could not complete his contract, and the county court had to utilize various buildings in town in order to conduct its business. The court still desired the building to be completed as was noted in the records of August 30, 1862, in which they expressed their desire to "complete before the cold weather."⁶ This goal was not achieved.

⁵Rolla Express, September 17, 1860, p. 2.

⁶Rolla Express August 30, 1862. p. 2.

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On May 9, 1863, the County Court ordered Malcolm to complete the building in accordance with the original plans and specifications. He was given until September 1, 1863, to comply. On June 12, 1863, Malcolm appeared before the Court and told the judges that since his partner, P.J. Lynch, was no longer a resident of the state, they could not complete the building. He pleaded for the county to take the building off his hands in its uncompleted state and to make a financial adjustment. Malcolm was willing to settle for a deduction of \$2,000 from the original contracted price and the court agreed. The courthouse was accepted in June, 1863, unfinished, at the total cost of \$5,975.⁷

Even though the building was "unfinished", the court did use it for a variety of purposes not related to the military. On June 12, 1863, the south room of the upper floor was rented to Ross, Spring, Smith and Chaddock for \$50 per month.⁸ Other parts were also rented and the Court even permitted the building to be used for "religious worship" on Thanksgiving of 1863.

The courtroom on the second floor received special attention on May 25, 1864, when the Court asked for specifications regarding furnishings for "...court room, clerk's desk, tables, judges rostrum and other furnishings needed." On August 16, 1865, the Court instructed the sheriff to let bids for a "...water closet to be located in the rear center of the courthouse being 15 feet long and 6 1/2 feet wide."⁹

Despite its continued use, the courthouse still remained uncompleted. On February 6, 1867, the Court had ordered the remainder of the building to be completed, and J.G. Braddish received the contract to do the work. During that year and the next, Braddish built the present split stairway to the second floor and partitioned, plastered, painted and otherwise finished the small chambers and large courtroom on the second floor. He also repaired the roof, chimneys and belfry. He installed two large front doors (now removed) and built the iron-bracketed veranda over the front doors. On November 10, 1868, Braddish received the final payment for his work and the original part

⁷Phelps County Records, Book B, p. 271.

⁸Phelps County Records, Book B, p. 272.

⁹Phelps County Records, Book B, p. 329.

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Phelps County Courthouse
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of the courthouse was completed.¹⁰ The period following the Civil War in Phelps County was one of reduced population and resulting loss of business. Limited activity occurred around the courthouse. A fence was installed around the block, landscaping carried out and minor projects were conducted to "finish" the building.

On May 5, 1881, C.V. Sanford was given a contract for \$2,176.00 to build two fireproof vaults on the exterior east and west side of the building.¹¹ These two small rooms would provide safe storage for county records and would be the first additions to the original building completed in 1868.

No major additions were made to the building until July 16, 1912 when the County Court orders that bids be sought for the building of "a jail, petit and grand jury room as an addition to the court house".¹² F.G. Allen is selected by the Court to act as agent for the court in the building of the jail addition. On August 10th, 1912, the Court selected the bid of Fred McCaw for \$2,546.00 as being the lowest bid and thus awarded him the right to build this three-story addition on the southwest corner of the building.¹³ Upon completion of this addition, the old jail on Park Street would be vacated.¹⁴ This addition, even though built to "blend in" with the rest of the building, would destroy the balanced look of the original rectangular building and become the beginning of other "additions" to the basic main building.

The original main building, the vault wings on the east and west, and the addition of the three-story wing on the southwest corner, served to meet the needs of the county for many years prior to the Second World War. There was remodeling done to the main building to provide more office space. The basic change was to lower the ceilings of the first floor offices by adding a

¹⁰Phelps County Records, Book ,

¹¹Phelps County Records, Book E, p. 513.

¹²Phelps County Records, p. 453.

¹³Phelps County Records, p. 475.

¹⁴"Phelps County Jail," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1990.

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temporary floor and thus creating some offices with low ceilings but usable as office space. These offices would match up to the later additions on the west side and thus create a second floor. The county court kept the "temporary" modifications over a period of years in their attempt to meet the needs of the county. It seemed to be the prudent thing to "make-do" with what the county had over the period leading up to the Second World War.

The building, however, was regarded by many as a run-down, out-dated public building with many problems. In 1946, the Rolla Herald noted there were no separate spaces for staff and public or record storage, nor were there separate toilet facilities. The later fact was important now that women were serving on Phelps County juries. The courthouse was also a firetrap with cast iron stoves and their long reaches of stovepipe providing warmth to the rooms. Electrical connections were primitive and dangerous, with all connections made to central overhead wires hanging from the ceiling. County records were at risk as well as the lives of county workers and prisoners in a jail seemingly more appropriate to the 1860 building a block to the west.

During the Second World War, plans for a new courthouse were generated by the Phelps County Postwar Development Committee chaired by W. B. Stoltz. Its final report published in the November 2, 1944, edition of the Rolla Daily New Era identified courthouse construction as the county's first priority.

With the support of the local Chambers of Commerce and other prominent citizens, the voters were asked to support an 18 1/2 cent increase per \$100 assessed valuation to provide bonds in the amount of \$400,000 to build a new courthouse. Plans for the building and a site would be chosen later. Since a two-thirds vote was required, the vote of 1,491 for and 2,182 against meant defeat on this August 6, 1946 election date. The reasons for the defeat were many varying from the changing of the site to a more "up-town" location, to the possibility of tearing down the historic Bishop mansion as a site, to the idea of recuperating from the lean war years.

In 1953, the county court was faced with the replacement of the heating stoves with a modern hot water system for the cost of \$15,000. The local historical society petitioned the county court to appoint a county-wide committee to study the expenditure and possibly consider a new courthouse instead. The county court created the Court House Study Commission with one member from each voting precinct in the county. The commission recommended a new building on the same site with the ultimate removal of the old building. The cost

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estimate was \$779,000 and entailed an increase of 20 cents on \$100 assessed valuation. After much discussion by the citizens, the June 30, 1959, bond issue failed with only 1,773 voting in favor less than the two-thirds vote required. Reasons cited for the defeat included the increased tax burden on landowners; the cost of the new building, which was regarded as extravagant; and the need for road improvements, which were regarded as more important than a new courthouse. Some voters also complained that, judging from the condition of the 1860 building as pictured in brochures issued by bond supporters, the county court would not properly care for or maintain a new building.

Fourteen months later, the voters were faced with another bond issue. This was for very basic and plain building for a cost of \$460,000 with an increase of 12 cents on the \$100 assessed valuation. The old courthouse would be razed and the new one be built on the site. The proposal received a 59.8% approval rate, again less than the two-thirds required. A second attempt to pass the same proposal on November 8, 1960, failed with votes very similar to the previous two elections. In this effort, the proposal failed in part because an issue to add to the county hospital was on the same ballot.

The county court seemed to give up obtaining a new courthouse at this time and began to "re-model" once again in order to obtain space. A drop ceiling was added to the courtroom as well as a heating system. Possibly the largest change came when the jail on the Southwest corner of the building was converted into office space and the prisoners were boarded in the Rolla city jail until a new building could be built on Second Street behind the courthouse.

In September of 1989, the Phelps County Courthouse Committee was formed around a 27-member citizens group interested in building a new courthouse. Subcommittees were set up to decide upon needs, location, and finance. Numerous meetings were held and options discussed. Finally, the Committee decided to recommend a $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax for a maximum of 10 years to be used to raise the \$7,636,860 cost of building a new courthouse, to make \$1,279,720 worth of renovations to the county jail, and to expend \$415,000 on bringing the old courthouse building "usable and maintainable."¹⁵ The selected site for the new building was to be in the block west of the present courthouse

¹⁵Rolla Daily News, January 30, 1990, p.1.

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Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
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building. The sales tax proposal was presented on April 3, 1990. The proposal lost by a vote of 2,535 for and 3,423 opposed. Many people voted "no" due to the selection of the site, the design of the building, or to the fact that tax money would be spent on the "old" courthouse building.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1990, the county commissioners wrestled with the problem of what to do about a new courthouse building. The citizens were invited to share their ideas with the commission and many did regarding a potential location for the building and ways to finance. Civic groups, individuals, and construction companies shared ideas and plans concerning a new courthouse. Most people saw a need for the new building, but disagreed over where to put it. The commission finally decided to build on land west of the present courthouse building. Stack & Associates of St. James was selected to design the building based on input from many sources.

A sales tax of $\frac{1}{2}$ cent for a maximum of 6 years was placed on the June 4, 1991, ballot seeking a majority vote. The commission presented the need for the sales tax issue citing: 1) the present building is not "handicapped accessible"; 2) judicial business might be lost to neighboring counties, especially Pulaski; 3) the site would be close to the county jail and fire protection; 4) the site would also be familiar to residents; and 5) the work would utilize local businesses and workers. The commissioners went on record against spending tax money on the old courthouse. They suggested that an interested group take responsibility for its upkeep after the new building was constructed. Two commissioners are personally involved in the plans of the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee in this regard. The sales tax issue passed with a vote of 2,900 for and 2,548 against. Hankins Construction Company's low base bid of \$4,159,000 was selected on a 2-1 vote by the commission. They have a deadline of February, 1994, to complete the building. Ground breaking was held on May 26, 1992.

Since 1860, the current courthouse has served as the center of governmental activity in the county, housing local officials and records and serving as the seat of local justice. With the need for expanded services in recent years, many of its functions were dispersed. When the new building is completed, all county offices will once again be serving the people from one location. The building will have expanded judicial facilities to fully serve the legal needs for the first time in many years. After the move, the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee will begin the task of returning the old courthouse to its 1881 look.

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Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

Phelps County, Missouri
county and State

Major Bibliographical References:

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Ohman, Marian M., Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses, Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Extension, 1981.

Phelps County Court Records, Rolla, Missouri 1858-1992.

Rolla Daily News, Rolla, Missouri, January 30, 1990; January 6, 1991; May 14, 1992; May 20, 1992.

Special Issue: The Phelps County Courthouse, Rolla, Missouri, Phelps County Historical Society, March, 1990.

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National Park Service

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Section 10 Page 29

Phelps County Courthouse
name of property

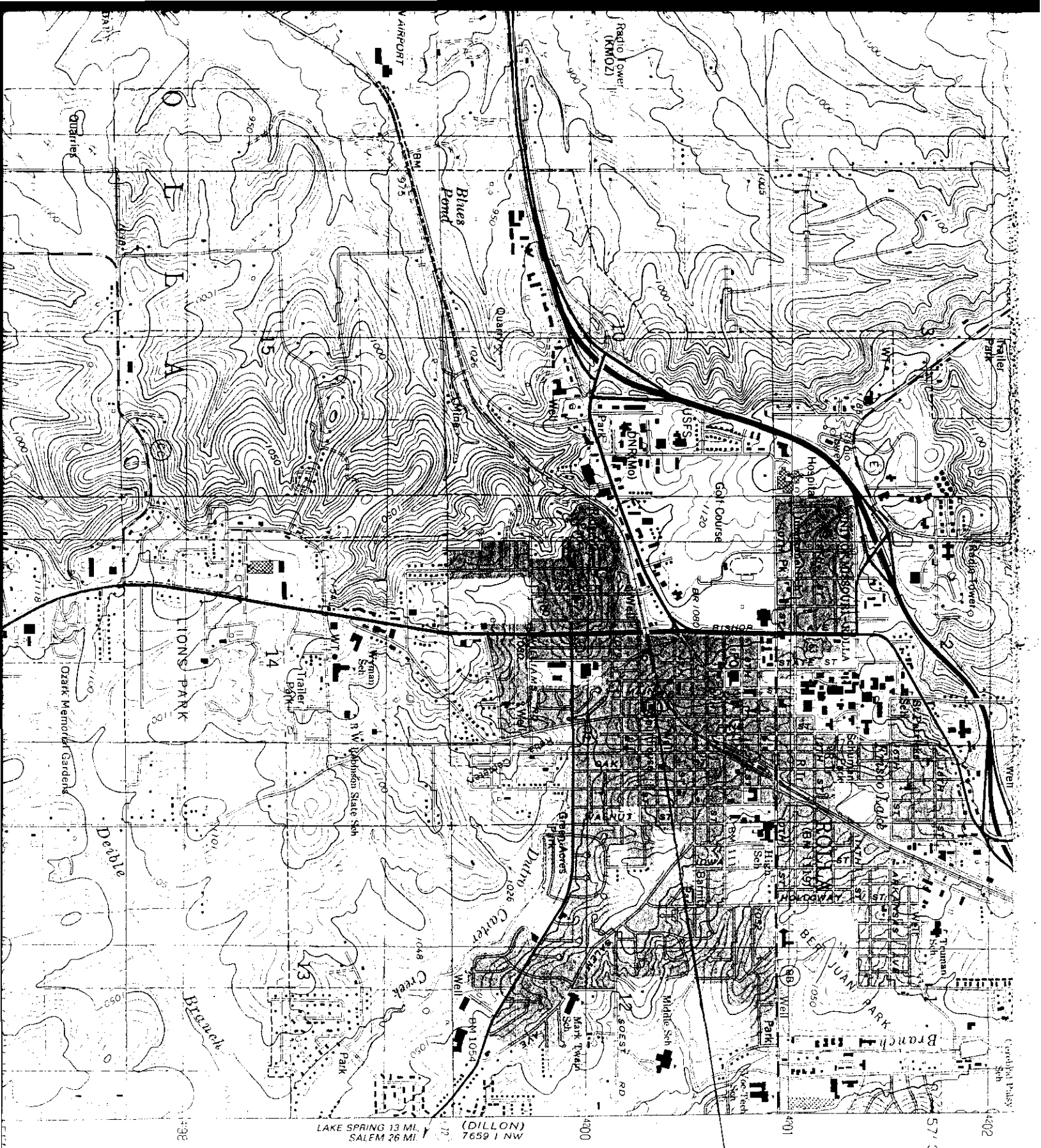
Phelps County, Missouri
county and State

Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 13, Original Town of Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri. The block measures 228' by 228'.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes all that city block which has been historically associated with the nominated property.



PHELPS COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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 SALEM 26 MI.
 (DILLON)
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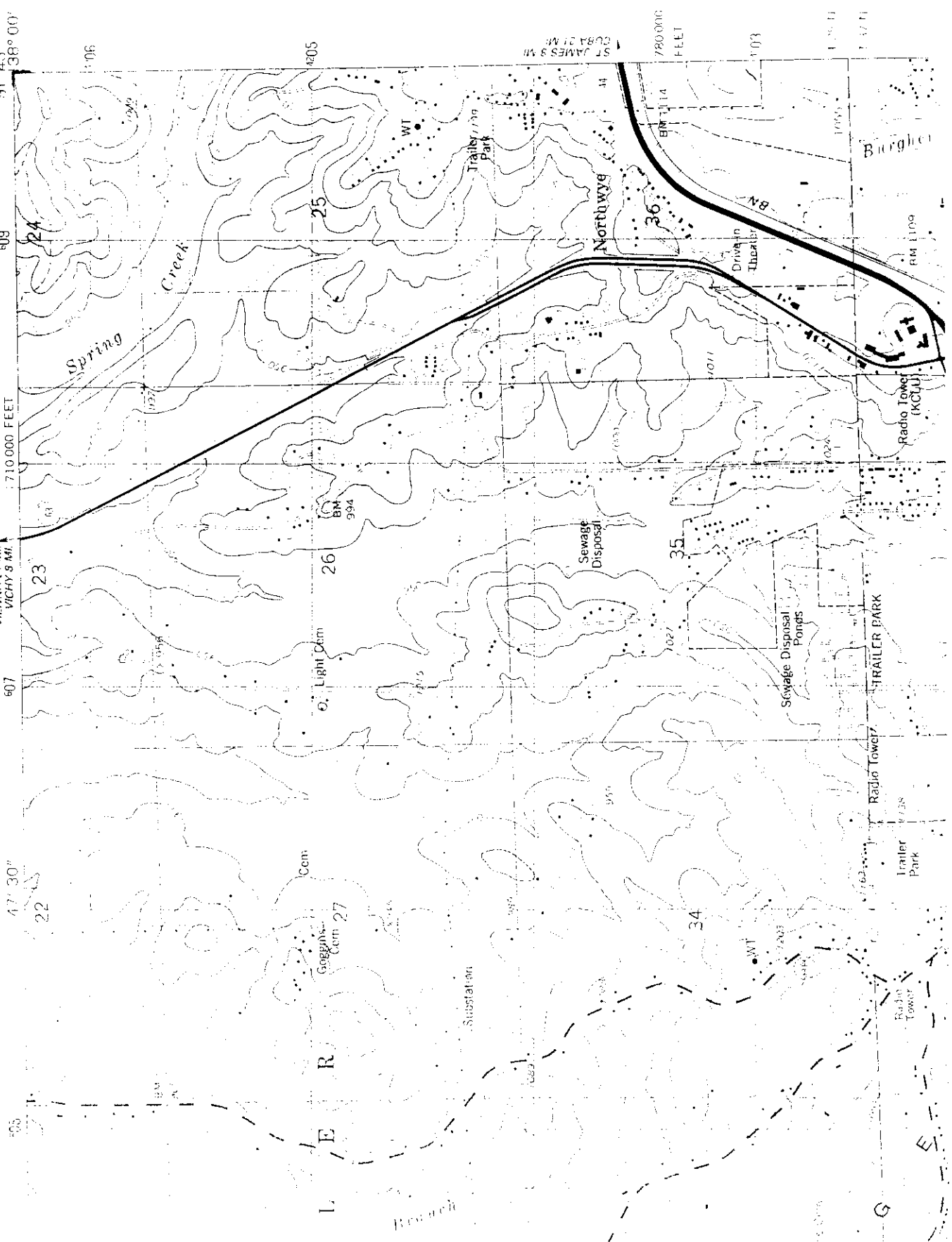
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NATURAL RESOURCES
STATE GEOLOGIST

ROLLA QUADRANGLE
MISSOURI-PHELPS CO
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

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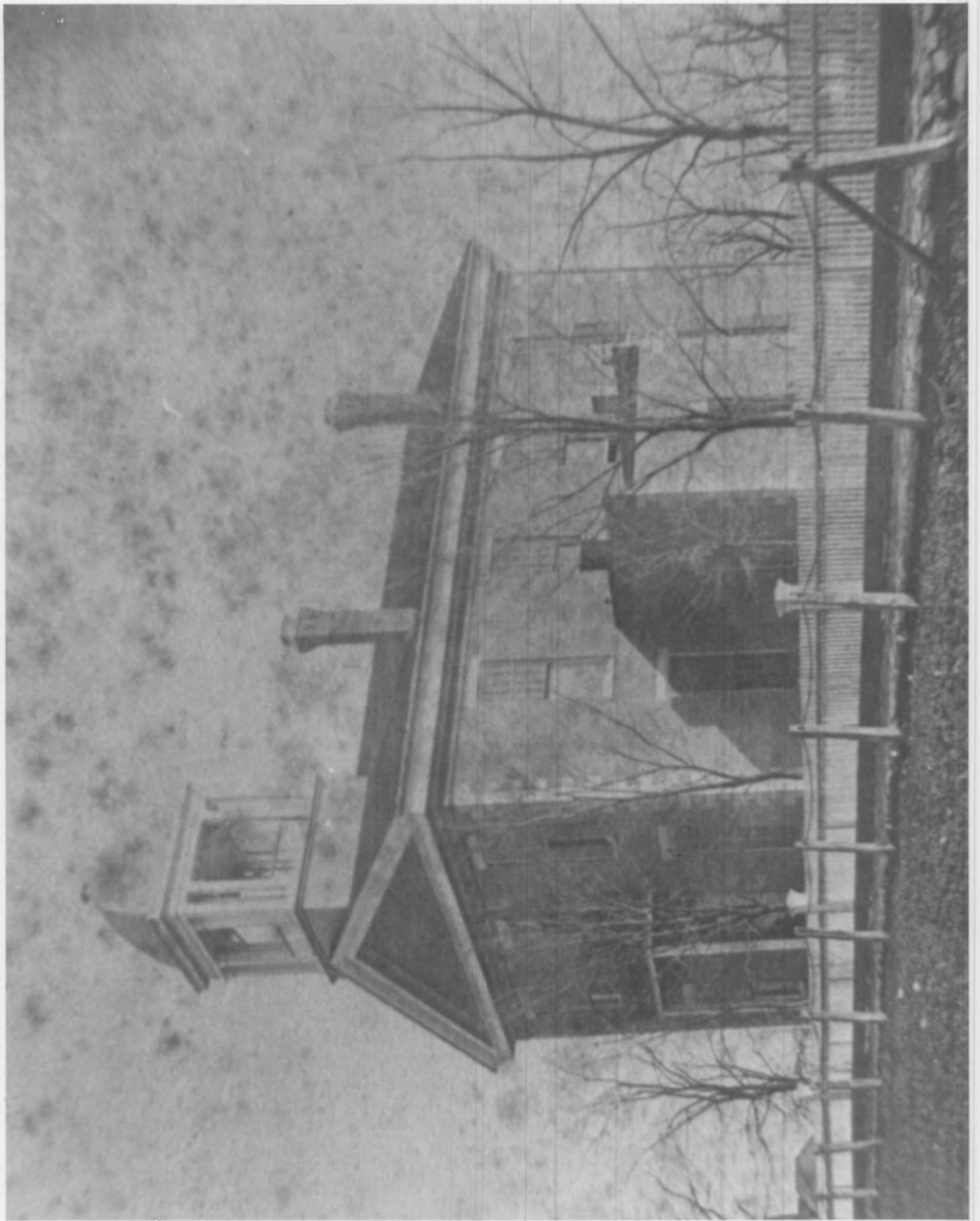
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Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Unknown photographer(copied by Art Smith)
Date unknown--estimate 1890's
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Northwest elevation
#1 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Unknown photographer (copied by Art Smith)
Exact date unknown--on a post card dated 1909
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Northeast elevation
#2 of 14

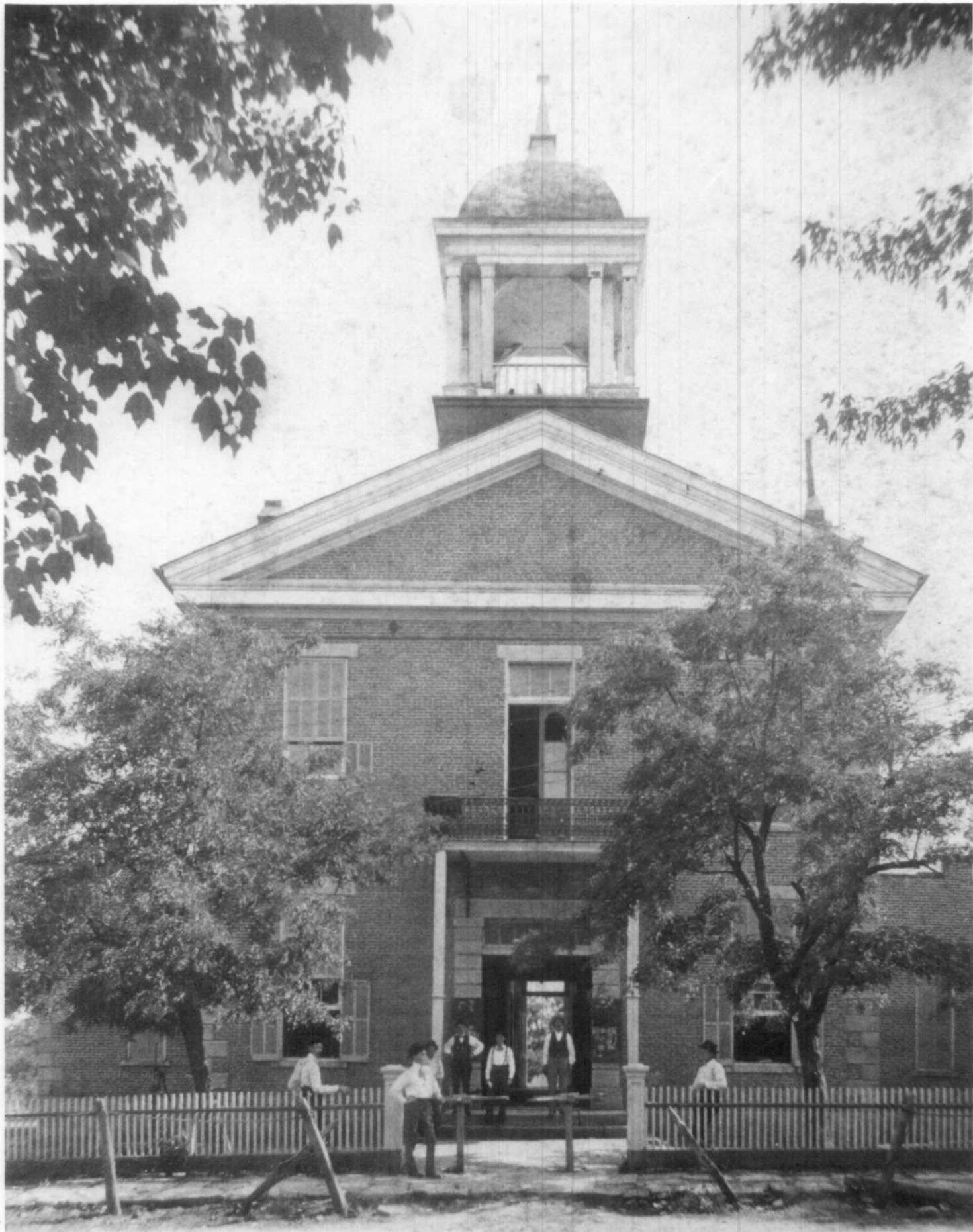


TOWN HOUSE, ROLLA, PHIELPS CO. MO.
1892

Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
February 23, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Northeast elevation
#3 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets ,Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Unknown photographer(copied by Art Smith)
Estimated date: 1900's
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
North elevation
#4 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
February 13, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
North elevation
#5 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County Missouri
Art Smith
February 23, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Detail of north entranceway
#6 of 14



HENRY COUNTY
OUT HOUSE

Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
February 23, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
East elevation
#7 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
February 23, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
South elevation from Southwest view
#8 of 14

Photo

Missing

Photo missing
8

Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
February 23, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
West elevation
#9 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
March 18, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Interior of hallway at entrance of first floor
#10 of 14



Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
March 18, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Detail of iron door and doorway to west vault
#11 of 14



RETURN
Shelves
Thank You!

PLEASE
Books to

ALL SAFE & LOCK
CO. N.Y.

Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
March 18, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Interior view of staircase and balcony leading to courtroom,
on second floor
#12 of 14



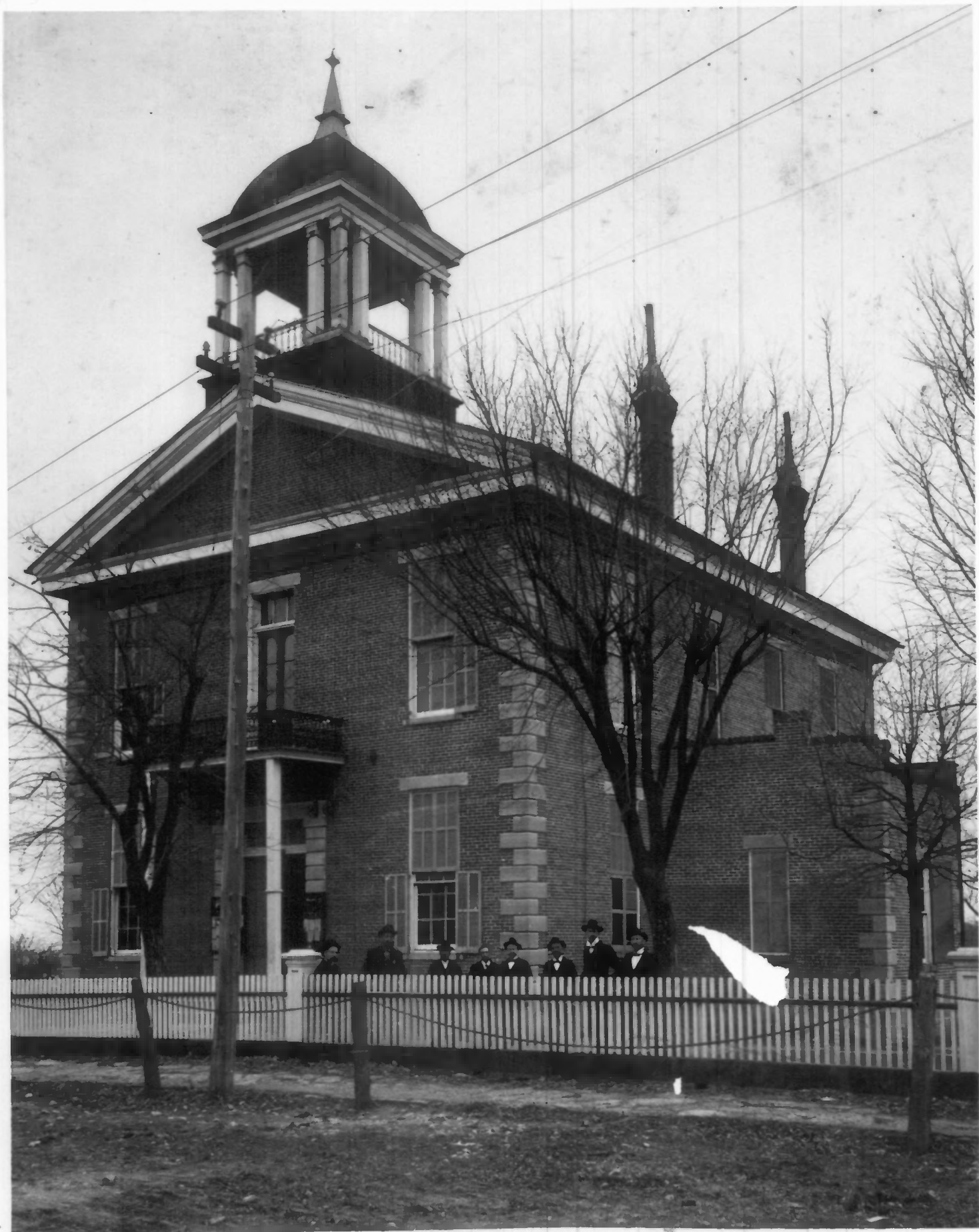
Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
March 18, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Interior view of courtroom on second floor
#13 of 14

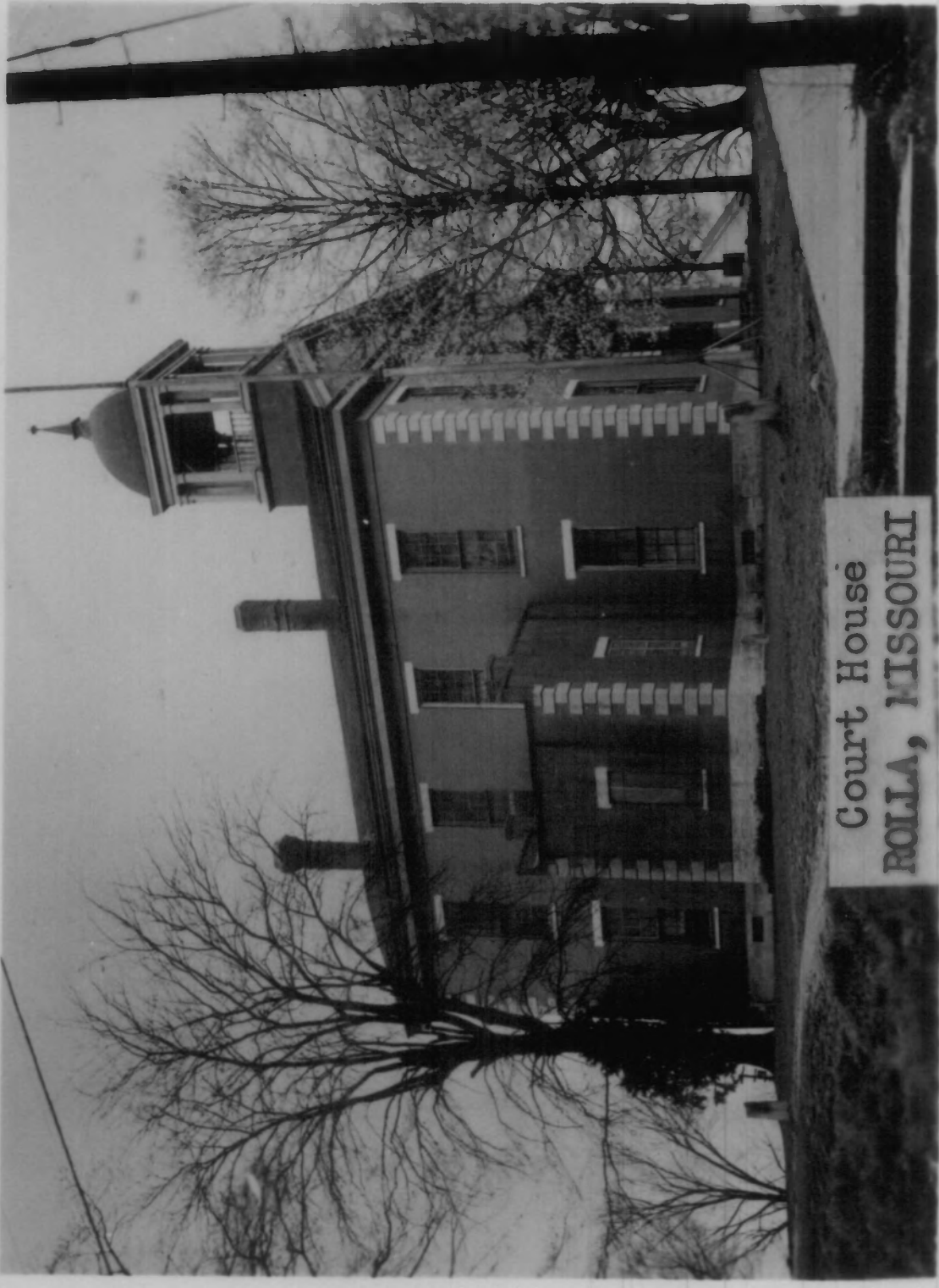


Phelps County Courthouse
3 rd and Main Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri
Art Smith
March 18, 1992
Old Courthouse Preservation Committee
Detail of tin ceiling of first floor rooms
#14 of 14



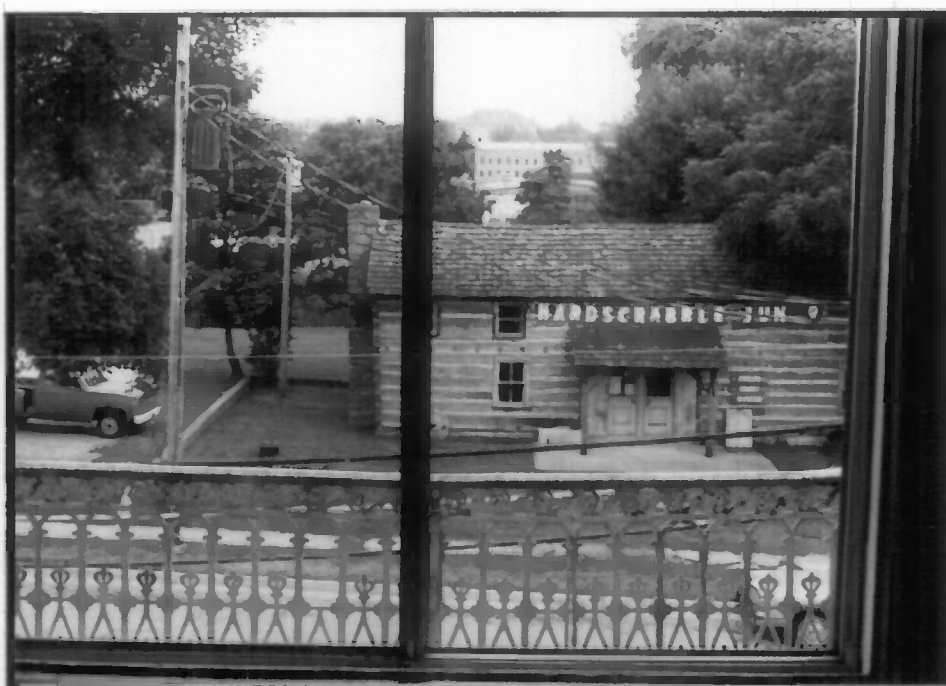
EXTRA
PHOTOS

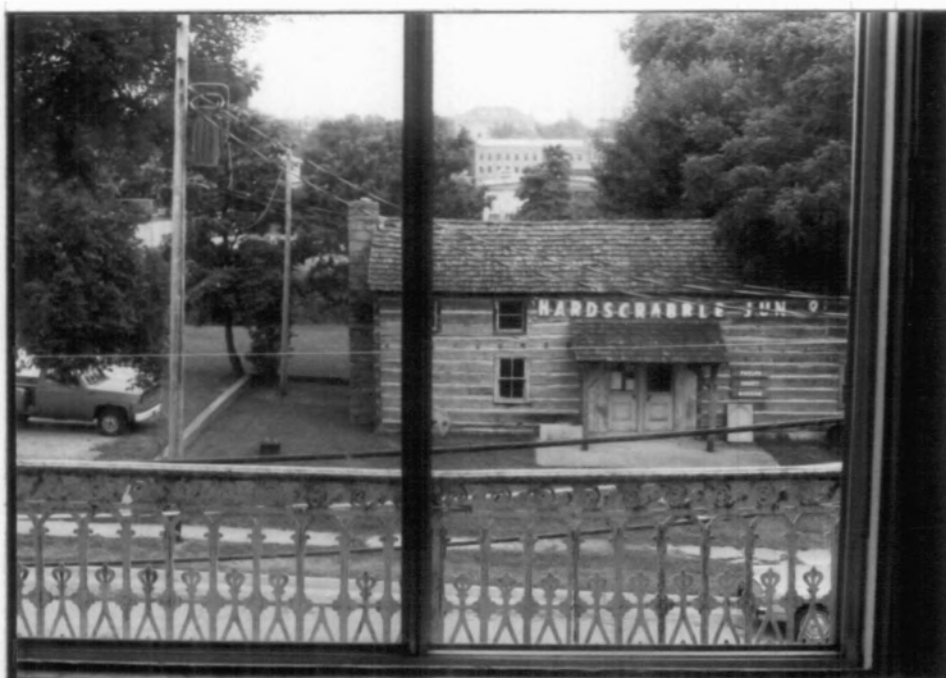


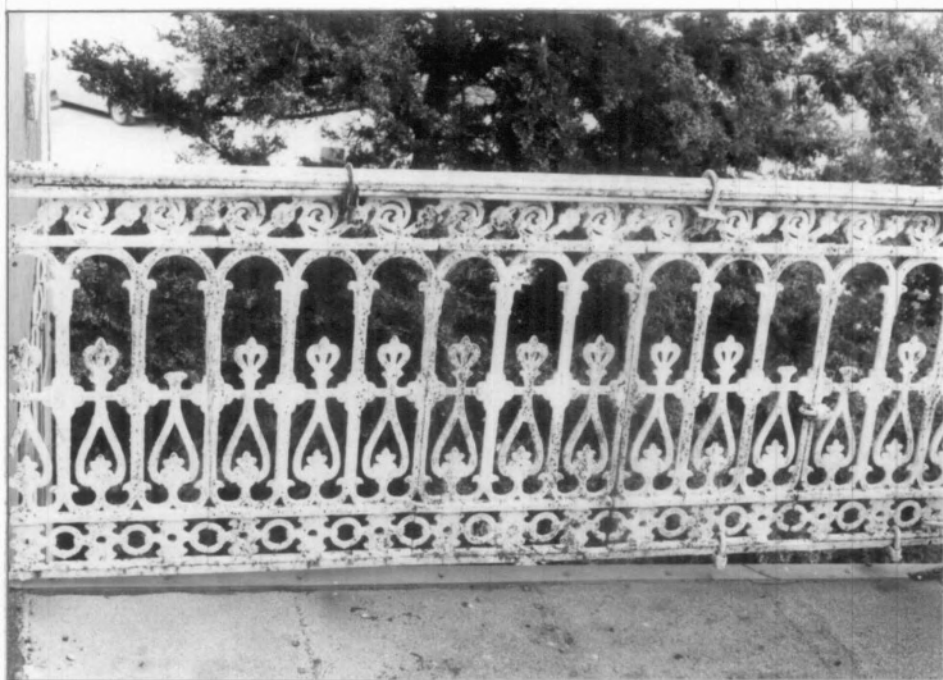


Court House
ROLLA, MISSOURI

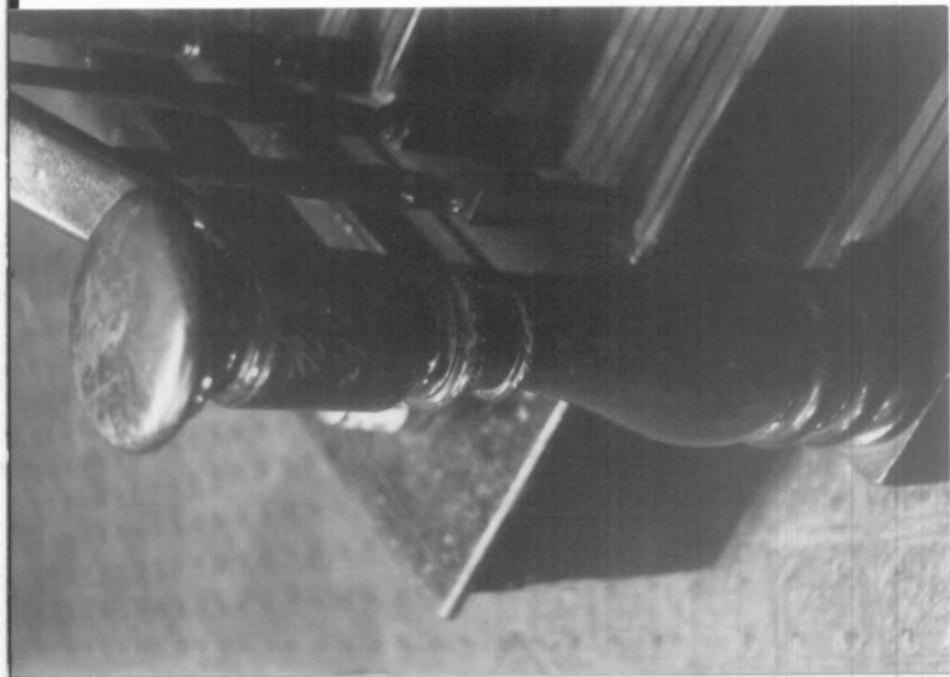
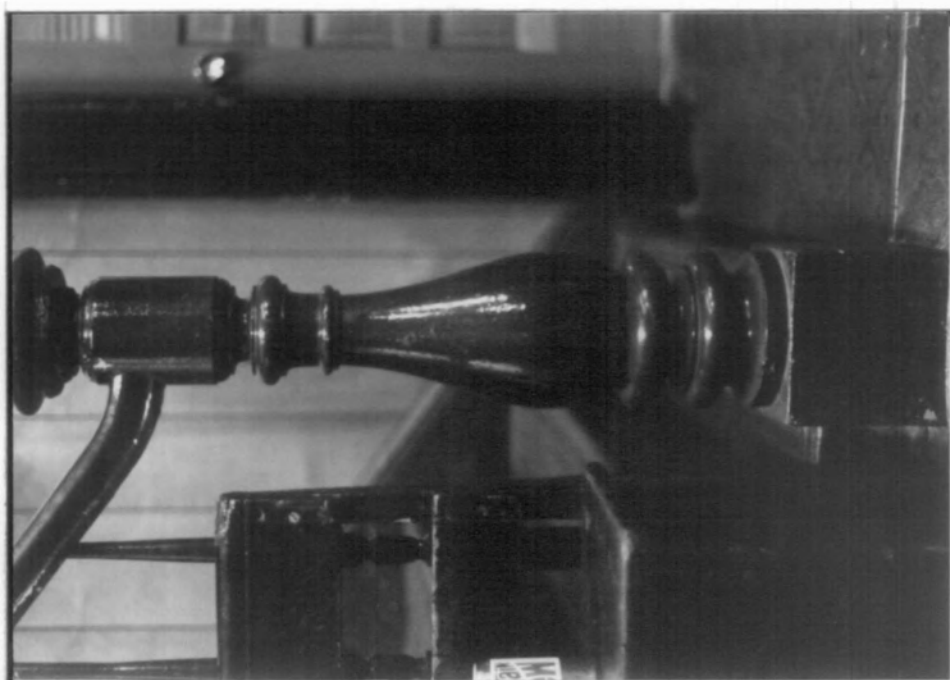


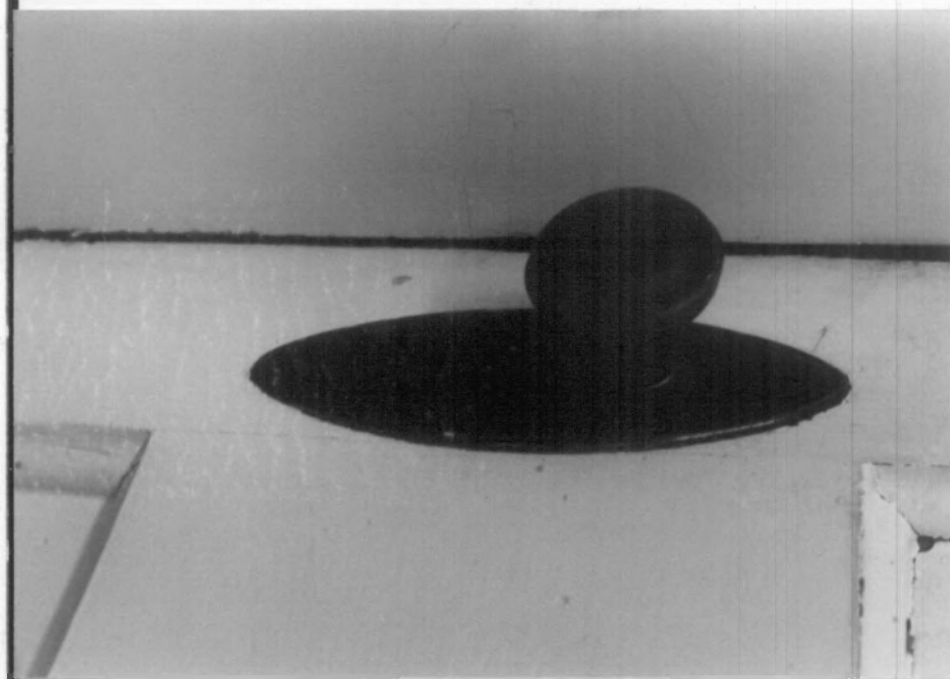
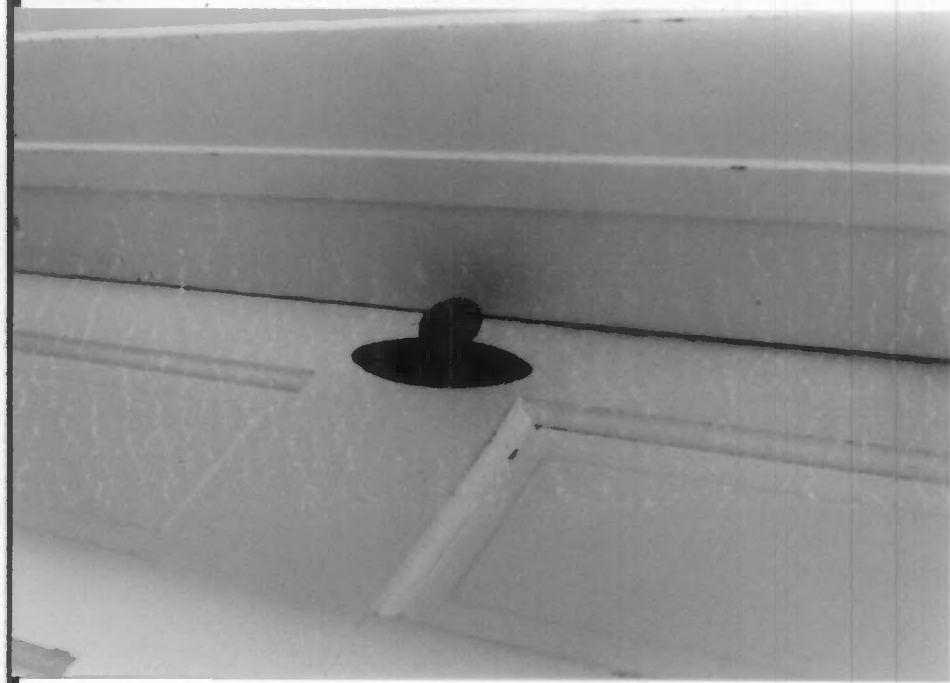
























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