

HABS  
ARK,  
60-LIRO  
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Little Rock City Hall  
Broadway and Markham  
Little Rock  
Pulaski County  
Arkansas

HABS No. AR-14

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE:

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Little Rock City Hall

Prepared for "America's City Halls" Project

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Little Rock City Hall was built in 1907-08 on the Northwest corner of the intersection of Broadway and Markham in Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, according to architectural records and contemporary news accounts.\* Architect for the structures was Charles L. Thompson, a noted and prolific Arkansas architect who designed hundreds of structures, many of them public buildings, throughout Arkansas in the latter part of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. The public opening of the new city hall was held on April 15, 1908, according to a news account in the Arkansas Gazette, April 16, 1908.

No information has been located concerning the builder, contractor or suppliers for the construction of the City Hall. However, the blueprints dated March 10, 1906 do exist for the building and are housed at the Old State House Museum in Little Rock.

While the shape of the exterior of the building has not changed through additions or removals since 1908 the appearance has been altered significantly. In 1956 the tile dome that sat atop the structure was removed and replaced with a plastic "skydome". In 1960 the structure was remodelled with the work including the enclosure of the windows, installation of new light fixtures, repainting the interior, installation of vinyl tile flooring and placement of aluminum awnings. This remodelling was designed by the firm of Ginocchio, Cromwell and Associates. In 1966 the rear windows (north) were closed as well. In 1968 the Markham Street (south and primary) entrance metal roof and ceiling were replaced with plywood. In 1976 several alterations were made to eliminate barriers to the handicapped including additions of ramps, railings, the installation of an electric door and wheel chair lift.

From the time of construction until the World War II era the Little Rock City Hall adequately served virtually all of the city's important offices and agencies, including a municipal court and the police department. In the 1950's and early 1960's, after Little Rock had almost tripled its 1908 population, the buildings became crowded and several departments were removed to new facilities.

City Hall is a three story structure with the principal facades facing east and south (to Broadway and Markham streets, respectively) with the south facade serving as the primary facade. The south elevation consists of three bays of equal size. The central bay is slightly recessed and features a monumental entrance portico. A bank of egg-and-dart moulding set between two broad stone bands distinguishes the ground floor from the upper ranges of the building. Stone string courses appear between the second and third floors and between the third floor and the attic. Additional stone bands appear between the spring lines of the arches. Stone sills and mouldings surround the second and third floor windows. Keystones articulate the radiating brick arches, and brackets define the centerpoint of the third floor window lintels. A heavy, dentiled cornice, surmounted by a simple balustrade, caps the building. The east elevation consists of a wide central bay flanked by two projecting corner bays. These two principal facades are faced with buff-colored pressed brick. The rusticated basement walls are granite. The decorative features continue through the southern portion of the west facade but the remainder of the west facade and the entire north facade are finished in pressed brick with little embellishment.

The most remarkable remaining feature of the interior is the rotunda, the public area one enters through the south entryway. The leaded glass ceiling features blue, green and gold designs and the original mosaic tile--once used in flooring for all public areas of the building--is intact. Wainscoting of Georgia marble is intact in the rotunda and partially through the second story of the building and is used in the interior columns and pilasters. Classical detailing executed in pilaster, particularly dentiling and the predominant egg-and-dart pattern, prevails in the cornices, mouldings, and column and pilaster capitals of these areas.

The City Hall faces south, sitting several feet above grade and set back about 50 feet from both Broadway and Markham. The south elevation is 144 feet across and the east elevation is 164 feet long.

Sources of Information:

The Arkansas Gazette, April 15-16, 1908, March 18, 1956, November 6, 1960.

Blueprints housed in Old State House Museum, 300 West Markham, Little Rock Arkansas 72201

National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Suite 500, Continental Building, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1913, Arkansas History Commission, #1 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

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Historical Statement on Little Rock City Hall  
Addendum to information previously presented

The grand opening of the Little Rock City Hall on April 15, 1908, was eagerly awaited. According to the Arkansas Gazette, it became "one of the greatest events of its kind in the history of Little Rock." The new City Hall was a civic center appropriate to a maturing community, and was considered a great showplace and a symbol of refinement. The far-sightedness of the city fathers in constructing the building is evidenced by the fact that it accommodated virtually all of the city's important offices and agencies, including a municipal court and the police department, through the World War II era. Though altered for modern use the City Hall still represents, in the interior public spaces, the period in the history of the city for which it was built and the continuity of the city administration to the current day. Several suggestions for demolishing the building and constructing a more "modern" facility have met with little success.

PREPARED BY:

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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