

Old Knox County Court House
Knox County
Knoxville, Illinois

HABS No. Ill.-248

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Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. Ill.1.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Earl H. Reed, District Officer
435 North Michigan Ave., Chicago.

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OLD KNOX COUNTY COURT HOUSE
Knoxville, Illinois

Owner - City of Knoxville

Date of Erection - Completed in 1840

Builder - John Mandeville, Architect.
Alvah Wheeler and Zelotes Cooley, Builders.

Present Condition - Good

Number of Stories - Two

Materials of Construction - Foundation, local stone; walls and columns, red brick; caps and lintels, stone; entablature, cornice and entrance doors, roof shingles, roof trusses and rafters, wood.

Additional Data - This fine Greek structure was designed in 1837 by Mandeville who was only 22 years old at the time and had, according to his journal, just arrived from Bergen, New Jersey in this, "The prettiest town of the Bounty Tract".

The year before, the log courthouse began to be regarded as wholly inadequate by the Commissioners. On September 6th, 1836, the Clerk advertised for plans and on March 10th, 1838 the contract was let for the sum of \$15,450.00 for completion by May 1st, 1840.

Originally, no cupola was included but in January the Commissioners ordered one erected at an additional cost of \$725.00.

The red brick walls were immediately painted a cream color.

Old views show the classic courthouse imposingly located just northward of the center of a fenced space in the middle of the public square, with a Hall of Records, completed in 1854, just to the westward. An octagonal steep roofed toilet was built northwest of the Court House. The solidly built four foot fence was surrounded by a hitching rail.

In 1872 Galesburg became the county seat. After disuse for several years, the Old Court House was remodelled into an Opera House with an Auditorium on the second floor. The present exterior iron stairs was installed at this time. The main entrance was modified and a stage was built at the south end of the auditorium, replacing one of the original interior stairs.

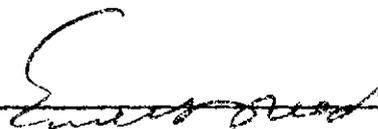
A comparison of an old photograph of the wood upper portion of the main entrance with the Choragic Monument of Thrasyllus, as shown in the Stuart and Revett, strongly suggests that Mandeville was familiar with the latter.

It is interesting to note that Mandeville was commissioned to design the adjacent "Hall of Records" in 1854 and that it was erected by the same builders as those employed on the Court House.

Structurally, "The Hall of Records" is unusual for its period, in that the floors were covered with 1/4" steel plate and window openings were supplied with heavy metal shutters inside. Walls were of masonry.

Cooley, the builder, is reputed to have designed the Jail erected by his partner Wheeler in 1841.

Sources: Journal of John Mandeville 1836 - 1837.
History of Knox County, Chas. C. Chapman 1878.

By 

Notes on Jail: Materials of Construction- Rear, prisoner's portion is built of local stone; front Sheriff's portion, brick; formerly with wood cornice and attic. Kitchen wing, wood.

This old early jail structure has been used by the City of Knoxville since 1874. The original cost was \$7,734.00 and it replaced a shed-like frame jail.

An interesting side-light on the plan of the jail is afforded by a statement that shortly after it was built, a prisoner secured a key and escaped with five others, whom he had liberated.