

TIPPECANOE  
COUNTY  
COURTHOUSE

Tour





## LOCATED IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN LAFAYETTE—WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA

The Tippecanoe County Courthouse is on the National Register of Historic Places and is truly a treasure. Built in the 1880s, this third courthouse was designed by the citizens to be “of permanent and durable character.” Residents wanted a building that would show the pride they had in their county and filled 45 pages with instructions on how their wishes should be carried out. It has now served the community well for over 100 years and it will continue to do so for years to come.

The Tippecanoe County Courthouse is located on the public square in the city of Lafayette in Tippecanoe County, Indiana. The public square is located on 4th Street between Main and Columbia Streets in the heart of downtown Lafayette. Three courthouses have served the people of Tippecanoe County over the past 190 years.



FIRST COURTHOUSE  
1829-1845

### The First Tippecanoe County Courthouse

stood between the years of 1829-1845

This courthouse was a small, Colonial style, simple brick building.



SECOND COURTHOUSE  
1845-1881

### The Second Tippecanoe County Courthouse

stood between the years of 1845-1881

It was larger than the first building and had a classical influence, including two large Greek-style columns in front. The cost to build it was approximately \$5,000. An artesian well was added to the public square in 1857. It was located in the northeast corner of the square. Because of its sulphur content, the well was a controversial subject for many years. After several unsuccessful attempts to re-drill the well, it was sealed off and covered in 1939.



THIRD COURTHOUSE  
1882-PRESENT

### The Third Tippecanoe County Courthouse

built in 1882 and still serves as the present Courthouse.

The architectural style of the building suggests the influence of Baroque, Gothic, Georgian, Victorian, Beaux Arts, Neo-Classical, and Second Empire styles. In 1880 the County Commissioners chose Elias Max, a local contractor, to design the Courthouse. A bidding system was used to determine who would build the Courthouse. The contract was awarded to Farman and Pearce for their bid of \$208,000. However, Farman died before the first floor was completed in 1882. After the death of Farman, work stopped and the contract had to be re-bid. The bid of Charles Pearce, the surviving partner, was accepted by the Commissioners for an additional \$241,000. The builder was Elias Max, and James F. Alexander was superintendent of construction. Originally, credit for the architectural design and plans was given to Elias Max. Additional research has recognized that James F. Alexander was probably the architect for the Courthouse.

# FIRST FLOOR

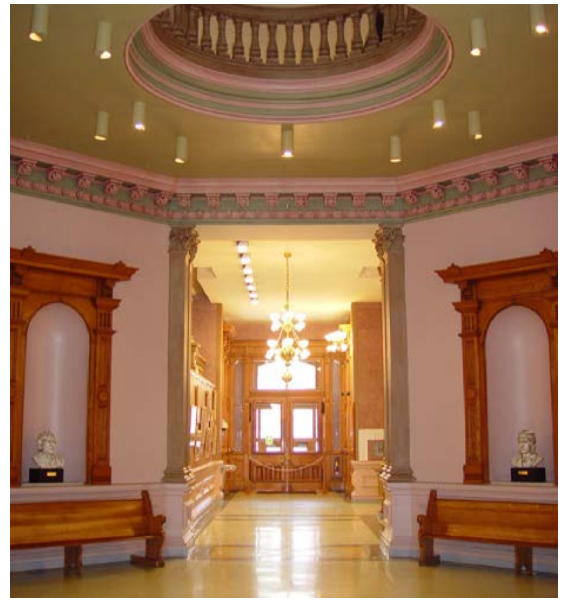
- The small glass inserts above the entrances and at the back of the stairs were originally used to allow light from the 2nd floor exterior doors to the lower level since there were not exterior doors on this floor. The doors were added in 1966 when the steps were cut to make ground floor entrances.
- Tunnels under the original, outside stairs brought fresh air into the building. The air was then delivered to all floors by (6 feet x 6 feet) chambers located in the corners of the building. These corner chases also served as dumbwaiters to take coal and wood up to the fireplaces and to remove the ashes. The chases are now used for electrical wiring.
- The original 1906 elevator is still in operation. During the restoration a new hydraulic system was added. This elevator serves floors 1-4. A modern elevator serves floors one through five.
- The original floor plan of the building showed stairs next to the women's restroom, but they had been removed years ago. During the restoration, the stairs were reconstructed with a new hand railing and detailing to exactly match the original. The new hand railings are made of fiber reinforced plaster while the originals are made of cast iron. To differentiate between the two, use a magnet, as it will stick to the original railings and will not stick to the new plaster duplicates.





# SECOND FLOOR

- The second and third floor hallways are painted to look like granite, even to the extent that mortar lines have been added. This was very common paint detailing in the 1880s. Notice that there are three different shades of blocks incorporated into the wall.
- Be sure to look up and see the original skylights. During the 1940s the skylights and the light wells were covered. Floors were constructed across them and they had been used as storage. Part of the restoration was to open them up and allow the natural light to filter into the interior spaces. A portion of the original terrazzo floor was left under the north skylight so it can be seen today.
- No pictures exist of the building's original 48 chandelier wall sconces. During restoration, the architects used sconces similar in design to those in the Statehouse that were installed in the same time period.
- In the Clerk's office and Adult Probation, mezzanines have been added to create additional working office space. The Clerk's workroom has the original terrazzo floor. Workers found a 9x9x30 space that has been opened up, and is now used for storage. A mezzanine was also added in the Probation Department.
- The mural of the Battle of Tippecanoe is 48 feet long and was painted by Robert Grafton in 1915 for the old Fowler Hotel. In 1966 it was moved to the Courthouse and restored with the help of the Kiwanis Club.
- The four busts in the niches of the Courthouse rotunda are General William Henry Harrison (Battle of Tippecanoe), William Digby (Founder of Lafayette), John Purdue (Benefactor of Purdue University), and Tecumseh (Great Shawnee Leader). They were created by Susan Graham Wilde, who grew up in Lafayette, as part of the Bi-Sesqui-Centennial Celebration.





# THIRD FLOOR

- The original courtrooms extended from the third to the fifth floor, measuring 26 1/2 feet in height. They also extended from the wall on the exterior south side to the wall on the north side. Superior Court I has the original box, witness stand, and judge's benches which are reproductions of the originals. Benches in the other courtrooms have been patterned after these originals. Bullet resistant material has been installed behind the bench.
- The large wooden doors in front of Superior Court I are original. The doors into the Circuit Court have been missing for years, so new doors were constructed to match the originals. Note the large ornate hinges on the doors. Also take note of the wooden benches around the rotunda on this floor. They were made in 1864 by James Loveless for the Stockwell Collegiate Institute which was founded in 1859. (Stockwell is in Southeast Tiptecanoe County.)
- The Judges' chambers have been painted to match the original colors and patterns. The Circuit Court Judge's chamber has bookshelves that were used in the building but not necessarily in this location. All the original fireplaces are made out of slate painted to look like marble. Reconstructed fireplaces have been added in some areas. These have been included for historical value, but are not functional.
- There is evidence of gas wall sconces by some of the fireplace mantles; shortly after the building opened, electricity was added and the sconces were removed. Some rooms had chandeliers but not much extra light was needed. Shutters could be opened or closed to control the direct sunlight.





# FOURTH FLOOR

- Many people consider Superior Court II to be the most interesting courtroom in the building. It was created in a space entirely hidden by a false ceiling until the renovation. Beautiful oak woodwork and window moldings that had been hidden for years are now out in the open. One window molding in the courtroom is speckled with black dots that appear to have been caused by a shotgun blast (pigeon control???). The architects wanted to make sure that everyone could distinguish the old from the new. The flooring, which is not original, is separated from the walls by a six inch strip of glass. Visitors can now clearly differentiate between original construction and the later additions. Be sure to walk to the side walls to see the glass strip and the windows that span from the third floor to the top of the fourth floor. Along the ceiling, new smooth brackets have been added on the inside walls of the courtroom to blend with the original, flowery brackets on the outer walls.
- A new flight of stairs has been added to the Prosecutor's office allowing for easier access to the fifth floor.





# FIFTH FLOOR

- The fifth floor is used as additional space by the Prosecutor's office. Before restoration this level was an attic used for storage. New skylights have been added to provide more light and offer an excellent view of the dome.
- The floor had to be raised three feet in the corner rooms to enable individuals to see out of the windows, providing a spectacular view of the city.

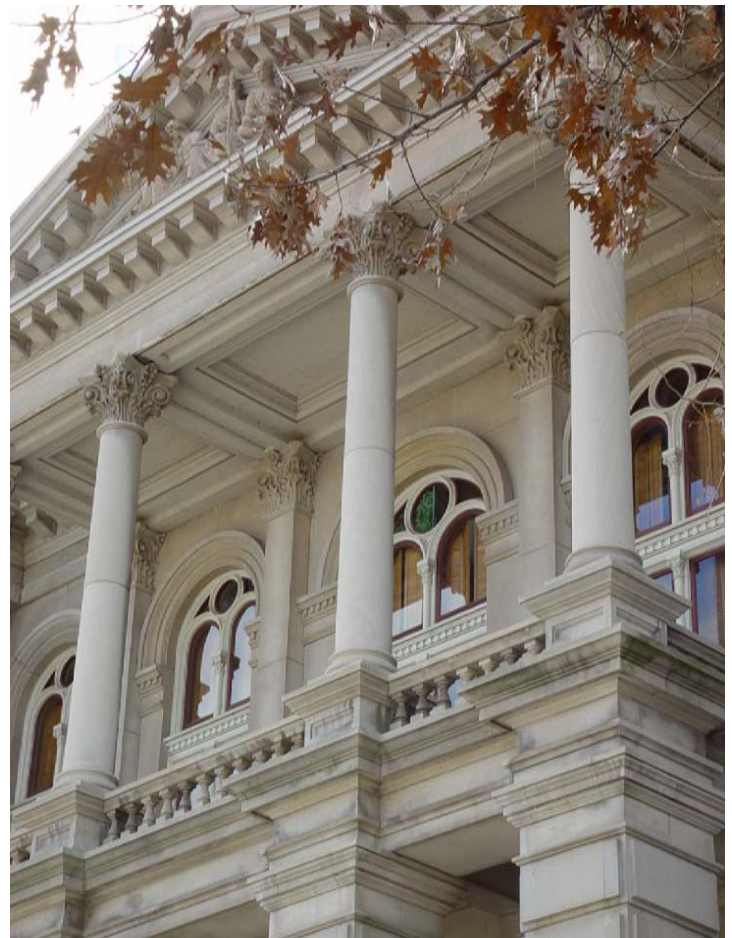
➤ *This floor is not open to the general public.*





# EXTERIOR

- The shape of the building is a large 150 foot Greek Cross. From the ground to the top of the statue, the building measures 226 feet.
- Indiana limestone and brick were used for the construction of the walls. Cast-iron beams and supports, as well as the finest woods were used.
- The Courthouse has one hundred columns, nine pieces of statuary and a cast iron dome containing four large clock-faces and a bell.
- The statue on top of the dome stands 14 feet high, is hollow inside, and made of sheet metal. The original specifications for the Courthouse described the statue as the Goddess of Liberty, holding a shield and sword. Some people believe that the statue was meant to be a statue of Justice, holding a set of scales. The statue is now holding scales that were found in the clock tower during restoration.
- Each entrance to the Courthouse has a pediment above it. The east and west pediments display relief carvings of Justice, Industry/Education, and Agriculture. The north and south pediments display carvings of George Rogers Clark, George Washington, and Tecumseh.
- The plans also state that four female figures in the niches beneath each clock face represent the four seasons.
- The clock was made in Boston. In 1884 the faces were installed, and are eight feet across with hands that are four feet long. The faces originally had gas lighting and the clock was regulated by a pendulum.
- The bell was cast in Baltimore, weighs 3,300 pounds, and is tuned to the key of C sharp.
- The large walnut doors at the main Courthouse entrances each weigh 500 pounds.





# ADDITIONS

- The shape of the building is a large 150 foot Greek Cross. From the ground to the top of the statue, the building measures 226 feet.
- 1887: A statue of the Marquis de Lafayette was added to the square. The sculptor was Lorado Taft. The statue is located on the northeast corner of the square, on top of the fountain.
- 1897: Two cannons were donated for the Courthouse lawn by the Grand Army of the Republic, to represent veterans of the Civil War. Displayed in the northwest corner is a Howitzer cannon, and in the southeast corner, a Parrot cannon.
- 1906: An elevator was installed at a cost of \$4,000. The original elevator is still in operation. During the renovation a new hydraulic system was added. This elevator serves floors 1-4. A new elevator serves all five floors.
- The mural of the Battle of Tippecanoe is 48 feet long and was painted by Robert Grafton in 1915 for the old Fowler Hotel. In 1966 it was moved to the Courthouse and restored with the help of the Kiwanis Club.
- 1966: The steps were cut away to allow ground floor entrances for easier access. Before that, there were broad steps that went all the way across each entrance.
- 1973: The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Sites by the U.S. Department of the Interior.
- 1989: Antique-style street lamps and acorn-shaped luminaries were added to the courthouse square to resemble those that existed in 1925.





# RESTORATIONS

- The shape of the building is a large 150 foot Greek cross. From the ground to the top of the statue, the building measures 226 feet.
- 1991: Major renovation began. The two year project cost over \$15 million.
- The woodwork throughout the courthouse is oak, ash and walnut. Any woodwork in the courthouse that had to be altered or added is designed to blend with the original. The old woodwork is more ornate with considerable detail. The new woodwork has been made to closely match the old in general design, but with less detail, allowing visitors to distinguish the old from the new.
- Before restoration, all of the ceilings were unfinished barrel vaulted. After further study of the original plan, it was decided that the intent was to have flat ceilings but, because of the cost, they were never finished. Therefore, as part of this renovation, they have been finished as originally intended.
- In several of the rooms in the courthouse stencils have been hand painted to match their original color and patterns. In some of the rooms as many as 13 layers of paint had to be removed before the original pattern was discovered. Some of the patterns date back to 1885. Due to costs, only the stenciling in public areas such as the courtrooms have been fully restored. All information concerning research on the patterns and colors has been filed for reference.
- The statue on the top of the dome is now holding scales that were found in the clock tower during renovation.
- The courthouse has 66,000 square feet of usable space. This includes adding the fourth floor and reworking the attic area.
- Citizens were able to participate in preserving the Courthouse through a Friends of Downtown Shutter Campaign. Over \$150,000 was raised to contribute toward the shutter reproductions. Native poplar and oak were used to construct the more than 1,200 shutter panels, which match the trim on each floor of the courthouse.

