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Architecture

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HISTORY OF THE

HISTORIC JOHNSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE

1895

The Johnson County Courthouse was designed by Golucke and Stewart Architects from Atlanta, Georgia. This Courthouse was one of the first designed by the firm who went on to design sixteen others throughout the State of Georgia. The General Contractor was Wagner and Gorenflo also from Atlanta.

Another Courthouse, which is almost identical to Johnson County, still stands in Pike County, Georgia. This Courthouse has an offset tower that is toward the front of the building as opposed to the center mounted tower in Johnson County. All other exterior elements are identical. The General Contractor for this Courthouse was from Alabama.

The Johnson County Courthouse is that of early Neo-Classical Architecture with highly ornamented pressed tin pediments, ceilings, and ornamental metal clad tower. The original tower was replaced in the 1940 WPA renovation with a Colonial Revival style tower which was the common style of that period. The original tower was forty percent taller and boasted a beautiful statue at its peak. The entrances were covered with Classical Porticos with columns that were reproductions of the columns from the Greek "Temple of the Winds". These porticos were also removed in the WPA renovation and the building exterior was stuccoed and painted.

Another renovation, that was not as extensive as the 1940 renovation, was the work performed in the 1920's. At this time, a holding cell was built in over the back stair, restrooms were added, and plaster ceilings were replaced in many areas with beaded pine ceilings. Also, the wide pine floors were replaced with the current floor boards.

This fine example of Neoclassical Architecture certainly exemplifies the great wealth that Johnson County enjoyed during this time period. Few courthouses in the State can compare to the extreme high style and ornamentation exhibited by the Courthouses of Johnson and Pike Counties. It is most likely that the Architect, Mr. Golucke, visited the 1893 Chicago World's Fair in which the Neoclassical style was first introduced in the United States by the Country's leading Architects. Mr. Golucke designed quite an impressive structure that has stood the test of time as an historic and impressive structure that serves as a precious landmark for the citizens of Johnson County.

The Historic 1895 Johnson County Courthouse

The Johnson County Courthouse was the first courthouse, of sixteen, designed by well-known Architect J.W. Golucke while with the firm Golucke and Stewart.

Built, in 1895, the Johnson County Courthouse is Neo-classical in style. The building is load-bearing masonry exterior walls with wood floors, ceilings, and interior walls. The original finishes were wood floors, plaster walls, wood ceilings in all room except for the Superior Courtroom which had a pressed-tin ceiling and cove.

Before the current Rehabilitation, the building had undergone many remodellings, the first of which was in 1938 and was part of President Roosevelt's WPA program. This work included, among miscellaneous interior work, the removal of the original monumental clock tower and replacement with the current Colonial Revival style tower. The building exterior was also painted yellow at that time. The original building exterior was high-quality red face brick with matching mortar, stone accents, pressed metal ornamentation at the cornice and a standing seam metal roof. In later remodellings the building was painted red, then yellow again.

The current Rehabilitation included the removal of all non-original finishes and the removal of all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. A brief description of the work included the removal of all spaces built into the original hallways on the first floor; the removal of all lowered ceilings and restoration of original ceilings where remaining (the pressed tin 3' high cove was the only original ceiling element left in the Courtroom with gypsum board being used to resemble the original ceiling beam pattern); the removal of all sheetrock, paneling, etc. and restoration of all plaster walls; patching and replacing millwork where changes had been made or rot occurred; opening up and restoration of the Courtroom balcony; and installation of new Electrical systems, Plumbing Systems, Mechanical and Fire Alarm systems.

The exterior work on the building included research and replication of the original stone and brick colors with paint finishes; repair of the roof deck and removal of all old shingles and replacement with new; restoration of the Clock tower and dome; removal of all paint on the arched window transoms; repair of all original window sashes and frames; repair of all original concealed gutters and downspouts; removal of all added piping and wiring outside the building and the provision of a freestanding mechanical area with screenwall to conceal new equipment.

The Rehabilitated Courthouse will house all of the County offices with the exception of the Tax Assessor's Office which was relocated to a storefront on the Courthouse Square.