

PH 365017

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 15 1977

DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC  
\* Warren County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

429 East Tenth Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bowling Green

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

02

STATE

Kentucky

CODE

021

COUNTY

Warren

CODE

227

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Warren County Fiscal Court

STREET & NUMBER

429 East Tenth Street

CITY, TOWN

Bowling Green

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Warren County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

429 East Tenth Street

CITY, TOWN

Bowling Green

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE

1971

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

Frankfort

STATE

Kentucky

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Warren County Courthouse is situated on a rather small square near the center of downtown Bowling Green. Because the focal point of the commercial and financial district is the fountain park a block north, not the courthouse square, there is a certain dichotomy within the downtown area. There are several churches, as well as other public buildings such as the City Hall, Post Office, and Fire Station, within the vicinity of the courthouse. Adjacent to the east is the former Lawyer's Building shown on the 1874 engraving (photo 1).

The large rectangular mass of the courthouse is somewhat cramped on its site, but the relatively small scale of the surrounding structures and the articulation of the surfaces of the courthouse help mitigate what might otherwise be an oppressive effect. East and west of the courthouse, which faces north(east), are narrow lawns defined by a handsome wrought fence with large limestone **gateposts** at intervals. This fence, which appears to be identical with that shown in the 1874 view, curves inward toward the main north facade of the courthouse, which is flanked by pairs of gateposts that in turn resemble and reinforce the pedestals of the portico columns. The entire affect is quite Baroque and further compensates for the limited site. Thus, the building tends to be viewed from an oblique angle. This also allows the truncated western portico to be considered as a base for the cupola, and composes it three-dimensionally, rather than allowing the cupola to "float" in the middle of the long mass.

The courthouse is a brick structure with lavish stone trim. The north and south ends each have seven bays, the east and west sides eleven bays. The latter, however, are somewhat wider, as are the central units on all sides. The building has three main stories, although these are treated as two on the exterior and indeed the second-story courtroom is two stories high. The first floor is treated on the exterior as if it were a basement or pedestal for the main upper story. Except for the square bases for the pilasters of the porticoes, the first-story surface is not articulated. There is a narrow stone belt-course above, matching the ashlar foundations below. On the belt-course appear to rest the tall flat brick pilaster strips of the upper story, with their shallow stone bases and capitals. Between the pilasters the main wall surface is recessed slightly. The high brick entablature is divided by a stone molding and concludes with an elegant stone cornice with both dentils and curved modillions.

Although the east and west "porticoes" conform to the scale and divisions of the walls (creating somewhat squat square piers with disproportionately large capitals on the upper story), the main north portico is truly colossal. Its four exquisitely carved fluted limestone columns, as well as the two square brick pilasters against the wall, descend below the belt-course to handsome monolithic pedestals set on a low two-step podium. By the

(continued)

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1868-1870

BUILDER/ARCHITECT D. J. Williams

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Warren County Courthouse in Bowling Green is the largest and finest post-Civil War Italianate courthouse in Kentucky, as is appropriate for the commercial and educational metropolis of the south central region of the State. Although the interior has been drastically remodelled, the exterior is in virtually unaltered condition and it is still set in a courthouse square enclosed by a Victorian iron fence with limestone posts. An 1874 description rightly stated that the city had, "next to that at Louisville, the most elegant courthouse in Kentucky, built in 1868-69, at a cost of \$125,000." Although virtually nothing is known of the architect, D. J. Williams, he was obviously capable of producing an appropriately ambitious design.

As succinctly put by Lois Okott Price in *The Magazine Antiques* (April 1974), "this building expresses the growing importance of Bowling Green as a commercial and transportation center for the surrounding region. In size and shape it resembles the Jefferson County Courthouse [a massive Greek Revival structure designed by Gideon Shyrock in 1834 but not completed until 1858; listed on the National Register April 10, 1972], but a new aesthetic is evident in its elaborate Corinthian columns and ornamental stonework." These features, and the NeoBaroque cupola--a landmark of downtown Bowling Green--that seems to sum up the rhythmic curves of the openings below, make the design an important architectural transition between the typical Greek Revival courthouse of the antebellum period and the more boisterous French Second Empire manner prevalent in the 1870s.

Warren County, Kentucky, the twenty-fourth formed in the state, was established in 1796.<sup>1</sup> It was formed out of a part of Logan County and was named in honor of Major General Joseph Warren, M. D., hero and victim of Bunker Hill and one of the most distinguished patriots of the American Revolutionary War.

The first courthouse of Warren County was built on the public square in Bowling Green as ordered by the county commissioners on July 4, 1797.<sup>2</sup> It was a small

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Chapter 911, An Act for the benefit of the County of Warren," Acts of the General Assembly of Kentucky. Volume LXXI (1863).

"Chapter 1903, An Act for the benefit of the County of Warren," Acts of the General Assembly of Kentucky, Volume LXXVII (1869).

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY LESS THAN 1 ACRE

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	54,95,7,5	4,09,39,7,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dr. Calvin Jones, Historian; Walter E. Langsam, Architectural Historian VI

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

104 Bridge Street

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Frankfort

Kentucky

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Edward W. Melton*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

2/8/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

*Charles Adams*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

8/2/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

7.6.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 15 1977

DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

same token, the rusticated round-arched frame of the main entrance rises partially above the belt-course. The affect seems to bring the portico down to ground level, integrating it with the city-scape, while at the same time symbolizing the unity of the lower story, where ordinary civic functions would have been performed, with the courts in the upper story.

Against the quite clear-cut rectangular geometry of the classical order--both vertical and horizontal--is set the rhythmic variety of the openings, which seem to have a vitality--and Victorian quality--of their own. All the sills, like the foundation and belt-course, are plain and are not linked by framing devices to the lavish hoodmolds above. The first-floor windows have stilted segmental hoodmolds; the doors are round-arched. The windows of the upper story are round-arched, but those over the lower entrances have triple arches. The three windows under the east and west "porticoes" are further set into round-arched recesses. All these hoodmolds have richly projecting moldings, curved keystones, and stylized corbels.

Along with the contrast in height between the upper and lower floors, and the extravagant out-pouring of the Corinthian capitals, the treatment of the windows provides the verticality and rhythmic excitement so characteristic of late Victorian architecture, counteracting the horizontal emphasis of the "basement" and continuous entablature. The pediments of the porticoes are also quite narrow, especially as usually seen at an acute angle, and lead the eye upward to the cupola.

This cupola--a compromise between a tower and a dome--is set over the center of the building, where the implied cross-axes of the porticoes meet. It was replaced after fires in 1911 and 1930 but comparison of its present appearance with that shown in the 1874 engraving indicates that the reconstructions were accurate, except perhaps for the slight bulbousness of the curve of the dome and a lack of vertical articulation of its surface. It is possible, too, that the volutes were a little more lush. In the actual structure steel bracing replaced much of the original wood and the roof was surfaced in rustproof copper. Nevertheless, the cupola is to all intents and purposes authentic.

It rests on a square pedestal at the junction of the ridgelines of the low roofs. The drum is basically octagonal, but the corner angles are flattened so that they form eight additional

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

shorter sides that consist of slender paired Corinthian columns--miniatures of those that form the main portico. The entablature, too, suggests a reduced version of the main cornice, perhaps creating a "distancing" affect that makes the cupola seem larger and higher than it actually is. The second stage of the tower has four clock faces and four round-arched louvered openings between narrow Baroque volutes (reminiscent of those on Santa Maria della Salute in Venice) that lead up to the ribs of the dome, which is in turn topped by a series of diminishing balls and a fine weathervane.

The exterior of the building was repaired and the stonework sandblasted in 1954; it remains in excellent condition. The interior, however, was drastically remodelled in 1957 and again in 1963 to utilize space for contemporary needs. Very little remains of the interior, even the cross-axial halls (reflected on the outside by the porticoes) and much-admired staircase having been altered in the process. Nevertheless, those alterations have made possible the continuance of the county courts and office in the building, and it is hoped will set precedents for future accommodation.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

building one-and-one-half stories high, constructed of hewn logs, only 24 X 20 feet in size, with one room downstairs and two rooms upstairs. The county court met in this structure for the first time on March 6, 1798.

In September 1808, after a bitter political fight, the county seat was removed from Bowling Green to a site on Barren River which was called Jeffersonville or New Town. John McNeel agreed to move the log courthouse from the square in Bowling Green to the new location to set it up, and to put it in good repair for the sum of \$2,000 within two weeks time. The court met in it during October, November, and December of 1808. Evidently the building was not comfortable during very cold weather or was possibly flooded out. As a result of the difficulties involved in heating the building, the March 1809 term of Circuit Court met in Bowling Green at the home of Williamson Gatewood on the public square.<sup>3</sup> It was used for this purpose until January 1812. Evidently public opinion caused a move back to Bowling Green as the county seat sometime during this period and a new courthouse was erected suitable for the growth of the county.<sup>4</sup> This was a large, two-story brick structure surmounted by an imposing cupola completed in 1811. It served Warren County residents for more than 50 years.

Before the close of the Civil War, Warren County officials again felt the need for expanded court and governmental facilities to serve a growing city and county. Early in 1863 the General Assembly of Kentucky passed an act giving the Warren County Fiscal Court the authority to sell the old courthouse building, to acquire land on which to erect a new courthouse, and to levy a special tax in order to raise additional monies needed for these purposes.<sup>5</sup> Late in the year 1864 the Warren County Fiscal Court ordered that the existing courthouse be sold at its own door in a public auction and a committee of three, T. Hines, James L. Donaldson, and S. S. Potter, was appointed to execute that order and was given the authority to determine whether the old courthouse should be sold for the price bid.<sup>6</sup> The following year another Fiscal Court order stipulated that three Commissioners were to be appointed to select a site for a new courthouse.<sup>7</sup> They were also authorized to receive plans and proposals for the erection of a new building but were not empowered to incur any indebtedness in this respect. They were to report to the Fiscal Court no later than July 1865 concerning

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

their progress. The County Judge, Charles E. Blewett, was named Chairman of this group, and he was authorized to appoint the other two members. He selected James T. Donaldson and Hecter /sic/ V. Loving to assist him in these tasks (for the later career of Loving see the National Register nomination form for the Louisville Trust Building, Jefferson County, Kentucky).

Within the period of a year the Commissioners had made a decision on the site. In a new court order, the Commissioners were instructed to accept the proposition of T. B. Gorin for his acre lot on the Corner of Plain and Bridge Streets in Bowling Green for the amount of \$5,000.<sup>8</sup> They were also authorized to sell the old courthouse and the two acres on which it was located to the City of Bowling Green for \$8,000. In less than a month, a subsequent court order directed the Commissioners to readvertise for plans for the projected courthouse construction.<sup>9</sup>

In September 1866, the Warren County Fiscal Court took further action regarding the proposed new courthouse.<sup>10</sup> The Commissioners who had been appointed two months before now presented two proposed plans. The one was known as "the Frick plan" and may have been designed by J. K. Frick, the otherwise unknown architect who was responsible for the Christian County Courthouse in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, which was also built about this time.\* The other was called "the plan of the Murphresboro /sic/ (Tennessee) Courthouse," which was probably the work of D. J. Williams.<sup>11</sup> At this time the Court adopted "the Frick plan" and authorized the County Judge to appoint a building committee of three, including himself, which was to employ an architect who would assist them in the overseeing of the construction of the new courthouse. James T. Donaldson and P. Hines were selected by the Judge, C. E. Blewett, to assist him in this task. By action of the Court approximately six weeks later a new Committee was appointed for this purpose.<sup>12</sup>

Early in the year 1867 it became evident that some Warren County citizens were becoming concerned about the contemplated costs of the new structure because they petitioned the Court in this regard.<sup>13</sup> The result was that the Court ordered that not more than \$70,000 was to be spent on the new courthouse. This court order also set apart as a fund for this purpose all of the proceeds of the special levy of 15¢ on each

\* According to Wilbur D. Peat, Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1962), p. 187, Frick and his partner Henry Mursinna worked in Evansville, Indiana, where they designed the severe Italianate William Heilman House built in 1869.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

\$100 of the taxable property in Warren County that would be collected for the years 1866, 1867, and 1868. The County Judge was also authorized by this order to issue county bonds to raise money for the new courthouse and stipulated that these bonds were not to exceed a total amount of \$40,000, could not exceed a period of twenty years, and could not pay interest exceeding 8 per cent per annum. Evidently there was still not total agreement as to the proper architectural plan for the courthouse because this order referred to two plans, "the Frick plan" and "the Bradshaw Plan." The latter was probably contributed by the Louisville architectural firm of the Bradshaw Brothers or H. P. Bradshaw (see the National Register nomination forms for the Church of the Messiah (First Unitarian Church), Louisville, listed April 21, 1976; and for St. Louis Bertrand Roman Catholic Church, approved at the state level on October 21, 1975). Both plans were referred to another building committee, this one composed of John C. Underwood, William H. Payne, S. A. Barclay, and C. E. Blewett. This committee was ordered to prepare cost estimates of each plan and to make a report to the Court in this regard. This court order also directed the committee appointed at the January 1865 term to sell the old courthouse to pay over the money collected for that sale to the new committee and also authorized the latter committee to receive any and all monies collected by the Sheriff as a result of the special levy. The committee was directed to "invest said money in good safe and interest paying securities available at any time for courthouse purposes."

Approximately three months later, the Fiscal Court took further action regarding the new courthouse.<sup>14</sup> In this court order, J. M. Donaldson was authorized to turn over the deed for the old courthouse property to the trustees of the town of Bowling Green and to receive a deed for the T. B. Gorin lot on which the new courthouse was to be built. This order definitely stipulated that "the Williams Plan" for the new structure was finally adopted. In this order the Committee was "authorized to employ an architect and to /sic/ all things necessary in building said courthouse and report their acts and doings to this court from time to time."

In September 1867, the Warren County Fiscal Court authorized a bond issue of \$80,000.<sup>15</sup> Evidently the original projected amount of \$40,000 was not deemed sufficient by that time. Evidently this complex plan for financing did not please some of the influential people in Warren County or in the Legislature because less than a month later this court order was rescinded and a new one was issued, which was actually used to finance the construction.<sup>16</sup>

Although we know little about the architect of the courthouse, D. J. Williams, we do know that he had an office in Louisville, Kentucky, during 1883-84,<sup>17</sup> when he advertised in the Kentucky State Gazetteer and Directory. This advertisement included an engraving of

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

a still more ambitious Neo-Baroque structure resembling the enlarged U. S. Capitol in Washington. At the time he was associated with the building of the Warren County Courthouse he may have been a resident of Tennessee because we know that he designed the Courthouse at Murphreesboro.<sup>18</sup> It is also possible that he was at one time associated with the Louisville firm of Bradshaw Brothers, who not only designed several of the most impressive churches in Louisville but had also submitted a design for an enlarged Kentucky Statehouse in the early 1870s; only the eastern wing of this design was executed, fortunately sparing the Greek Revival Old Statehouse designed by Gideon Shryock, which the central block of Bradshaw & Vogles' design was intended to replace (see the National Register nomination form for the recently restored Old Statehouse, Frankfort, Franklin County, listed March 11, 1971; and the Old Statehouse Historic District, approved at the state level October 21, 1975). The only other known design by Williams was for the T. C. Calvert mansion (later Ogden College) in Bowling Green. Razed in 1964 or 1965, this had been an elaborate Italian palazzo, with quoins, bracketed cornice, rooftop balustrade and Baroque window frames similar to those on the courthouse.

Stylistically, it is interesting that the Warren County Courthouse follows the basic format of the Greek Revival Jefferson County Courthouse: a large rectangle with porticoes centered on the sides, although the main portico in Bowling Green is at one end, that in Louisville on one long side. The latter was to have had full porticoes also on the ends, but these were in execution confined to engaged temple-fronts very much like those in Bowling Green. The Jefferson County building is, of course, an example of the most austere American Doric, whereas Warren County's Corinthian order is of comparably exaggerated elegance and luxuriance. Like Bowling Green's, the Louisville courthouse was originally to have had a tower-dome, although of strictly classical rather than Baroque character. Louisville's building has two visible stories over a proportionately lower basement, and an enormous flight of stairs up to the main story of the portico, unlike the solution of a ground-level colossal order on pedestals in Bowling Green. Nevertheless, Williams may well have been looking back to the Louisville example for his basic conception.

Certainly his exterior is far more restrained than those of the Second Empire courthouses of the following decade in central Kentucky: Scott County (by Thomas Boyd of Pittsburgh, 1877; see the National Register form listed September 28, 1972), Jessamine County, and the former Bourbon County building replaced at the turn of the century. All these had still more exaggerated verticality, virtually no direct reference to the classical orders,

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse  
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 6

mansard roofs of various angles and curves, and an incrustation of sculpture, much of it allegorical or symbolical. In comparison to these exuberant Frenchified confections, and even to the smaller but more elaborately articulated Christian County Courthouse by his competitor, Frick, Williams' design is a model of decorum. A certain tension is in fact observable between the relatively "correct" proportions of the orders and the "Victorian" proportions of the openings, especially the attenuated upper windows and the varied curves of the cupola and hoodmolds; even the latter, however, are quite chaste in detail, lacking the floral or figurative ornamentation of much post-Civil War trim.

The four huge solid limestone Corinthian columns were hewn from native Warren County limestone by local craftsmen. At least one of the columns was cut from a quarry on nearby College Heights (now the location of Western Kentucky University). The immense weight of its sections forced workers to wagon the column down the south side of the hill because it could not be safely moved by the closer route down the north face of the hill. The capitals are said to have been carved by Sam Johnson, Pierce Malone, and Charles Ott.<sup>19</sup> More is known about Ott, who was apparently also the stone contractor for the job, than about most 19th-century builders. He is said to have planned and constructed several buildings in Bowling Green and to have been directly responsible for laying out and embellishing the city's public park in the center of the business district with trees and shrubbery. It was of this park, a block from the courthouse square, that Richard Collins in his 1874 History of Kentucky said, "No small city in the Union has so handsome a public park and fountain" (II, p. 737).

One tribute to the sound construction of the present Warren County Courthouse was a special bill that passed the State Legislature in 1869 releasing Warren County from the requirements of having safes and vaults in the courthouse because the clerk's offices were considered "fireproof."<sup>20</sup>

When it was finally completed in 1868, the new courthouse building had cost something over \$125,000.<sup>21</sup> By 1886 the County Fiscal Court had redeemed about half of the bonds issued for the new courthouse, leaving a total indebtedness of about \$83,000.<sup>22</sup> This indebtedness had been reduced to only \$12,000 by 1893 owing to the efforts of County Judge John B. Grider.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

Various improvements and renovations have been conducted on the courthouse through the years. One such project occurred in 1893.<sup>23</sup> Another took place in 1910.<sup>24</sup> The contractor for this latter improvement was named Squire Dearing and in this project additional windows were made at the entrance which slightly altered its outside appearance. In 1957-58 the complete remodeling of the interior made possible 60% more usable space.<sup>25</sup>

There have been at least two fires in the courthouse tower or cupola. The first of these occurred in 1911.<sup>26</sup> It was caused by sparks originating from a conflagration which levelled almost a block of buildings on one side of State Street. In this fire the cupola was totally destroyed. At that time a local architect named Fred Fleenor, who was described as "one of the outstanding architects of the South," designed a new tower.<sup>27</sup> In 1930 the tower was again damaged by fire. It was rebuilt again, this time according to the same plans used by Fleenor in 1911. The 1930 replacements were supervised by another local architect, C. H. Smith.<sup>28</sup>

The Warren County Courthouse has been the site of many famous and sensational trials.<sup>29</sup> In the smoke-filled county courtroom, ballots were counted to decide many hot political contests in the days before voting machines were installed. It can boast one of the most dignified, yet colorful figures in Kentucky judicial history, Circuit Judge John B. Rodes (1870-1970), the oldest man ever to be sworn in for a six-year term as a circuit judge in the State.<sup>30</sup>

Judge Rodes participated in at least two major landmark decisions in Kentucky Legal History, one as an attorney and the other as circuit judge. Both cases eventually went to the Kentucky Court of Appeals and in each case his position was upheld. In *Nicholas et al. v. Henry* (191 S.W. 2d 301 Kentucky 434) 1945, Rodes represented the Roman Catholic Diocese of Louisville in a case involving the right of Catholic school children in Kentucky to ride on public school buses.<sup>31</sup> *Brown v. Gosser* (262 S.W. 2d, 480), 1953, was a suit for injuries sustained by a woman riding in an automobile driven by the defendant who later became her husband, which altered the common law by which a woman in Kentucky could not sue her husband.<sup>32</sup> Both legal cases characteristically broadened the legal rights of certain groups to participate in public benefits and reflected Rodes' continuing willingness to recognize and effect change.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 8

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Headley Garr, History of Kentucky Courthouses (State of Kentucky: The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1972), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis and Richard H. Collins, History of Kentucky, Volume II (Covington, Kentucky: Collins Publishing Company, 1874), p. 747.

<sup>4</sup>Bob Dickey, "Courthouse Built at Present Site in 1868," Park City Daily News, undated but sometime between September, 1958, and September, 1959.

<sup>5</sup>"Chapter 911," Acts of the General Assembly of Kentucky, Volume LXXI (1863), approved February 26, 1863, pp. 509-510.

<sup>6</sup>Warren County, Kentucky, Records, Order Book M, December 29, 1864, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., June 26, 1865, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., June 25, 1866, p. 319.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., July 9, 1866, p. 323.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., September 11, 1866, p. 348.

<sup>11</sup>Information obtained from Riley C. Handy, Librarian, Kentucky Collection, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, in a telephone conversation on Tuesday, September 7, 1976.

<sup>12</sup>Warren County, op. cit., October 25, 1866, p. 367.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., January 29, 1867, p. 410.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., April 22, 1867, p. 445.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., September 23, 1867, p. 501.

(continued)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 9

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., October 7, 1867, p. 506.

<sup>17</sup>Kentucky State Gazeteer and Business Directory of 1883-84, p. 359.

<sup>18</sup>Information from Riley Handy.

<sup>19</sup>Dickey, loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Letter from (Miss) Margie Helm, Librarian, Western Kentucky State College, Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Charles A. Pressler of Galveston, Texas, a grandson of Charles Ott, dated May 6, 1936, found in the Kentucky Collection.

<sup>21</sup>"Chapter 1903. An Act for the benefit of the County of Warren," Acts of the General Assembly of Kentucky, Volume LXXVII (1869), No. 2, approved March 11, 1869, p. 139.

<sup>22</sup>Dickey, loc. cit.

<sup>23</sup>"We Are Free of Debt," Park City Weekly Times-Gazette, May 10, 1893.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>"Improvements to Courthouse Nearing Completion and Add Much to the Building," Bowling Green Messenger, May 1, 1910.

<sup>26</sup>"New Courthouse Well Worth Inspecting," Park City Daily News, October 8, 1958.

<sup>27</sup>"Court House Fire Caused \$7,000 Loss," Park City Daily News, October 14, 1930.

<sup>28</sup>"Restoration of Tower Voted For By Fiscal Court," Park City Daily News, October 7, 1930.

<sup>29</sup>"Court House Cupola Work is Arranged," Park City Daily News, November 14, 1930.

<sup>30</sup>Dickey, loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup>"Ex-Judge John Rodes of Warren County Dies," Courier-Journal, March 26, 1970.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 15 1977

DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 10

<sup>32</sup>William E. Townsley, "Husband and Wife--Torts--Wife's Suit Against Husband For Personal Injuries--Brown v. Grosser (sic), 262 S. W. 2d 480 (Kentucky Ct. App. 1953). Texas Law Review, Vol. 32 (October, 1954), 884-886; William J. Briggs, "Tort Actions Between Husband and Wife," Kentucky Law Journal, Vol. 42 (March, 1954), 497-503; and South Texas Law Journal, Vol. I (July, 1954), 210-213.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

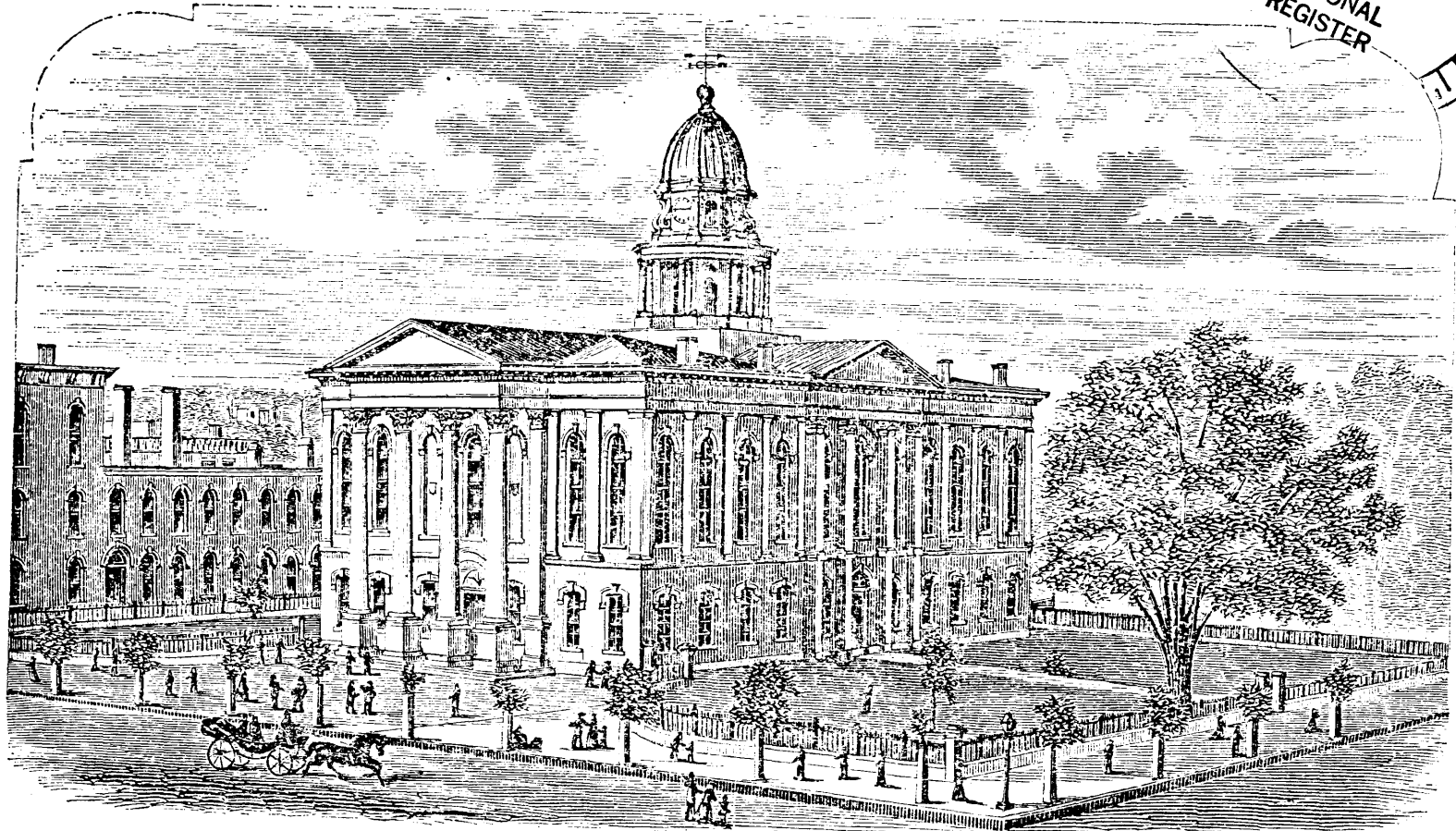
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 15 1977
DATE ENTERED	AUG 2 1977

Warren County Courthouse  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

9 PAGE 2  
ITEM NUMBER

- Collins, Lewis and Richard H. History of Kentucky. Volume II. Covington, Kentucky: Collins Publishing Company, 1874.
- "Court House Cupola Work is Arranged," Park City Daily News, November 14, 1930.
- "Court House Fire Caused \$7,000 Loss," Park City Daily News, October 14, 1930.
- Dickey, Bob. "Courthouse Built at Present Site in 1868." Park City Dailey News, undated but sometime between September 1958 and September 1959.
- "Ex-Judge John Rodes of Warren County Dies," Courier-Journal, March 26, 1970.
- Garr, Elizabeth Headley. History of Kentucky Courthouses. State of Kentucky: The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1972.
- "Improvements to Courthouse Nearing Completion and Add Much to the Building," Bowling Green Messenger, May 1, 1910.
- Information obtained from Riley C. Handy, Librarian, Kentucky Collection, Kentucky Building, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky in a telephone conversation September 7, 1976.
- Kentucky State Gazeteer and Business Directory for 1883-84.
- Letter from (Miss) Margie Helm, Librarian, Western Kentucky State College, Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Charles A. Pressler of Galveston, Texas, a grandson of Charles Ott, dated May 6, 1936, found in the "Kentucky Collection."
- "New Courthouse Well Worth Inspecting," Park City Daily News, October 8, 1958.
- "Restoration of Town Voted For By Fiscal Court," October 7, 1930, Park City Daily News.
- Warren County, Kentucky, Order Book M, pp. 51, 141, 319, 323, 348, 367, 410, 445, 501, 506.
- "We Are Free of Debt," Park City Weekly Times-Gazette, May 10, 1893.

RECEIVED  
FEB 15 1977  
NATIONAL  
REGISTER



WARREN COUNTY COURT HOUSE, BOWLING GREEN, KY., Erected 1870.

Warren County Courthouse  
Bowling Green  
Warren County  
Kentucky

Engraving from Collins, History  
of Kentucky (1874), II, 736.

1/2

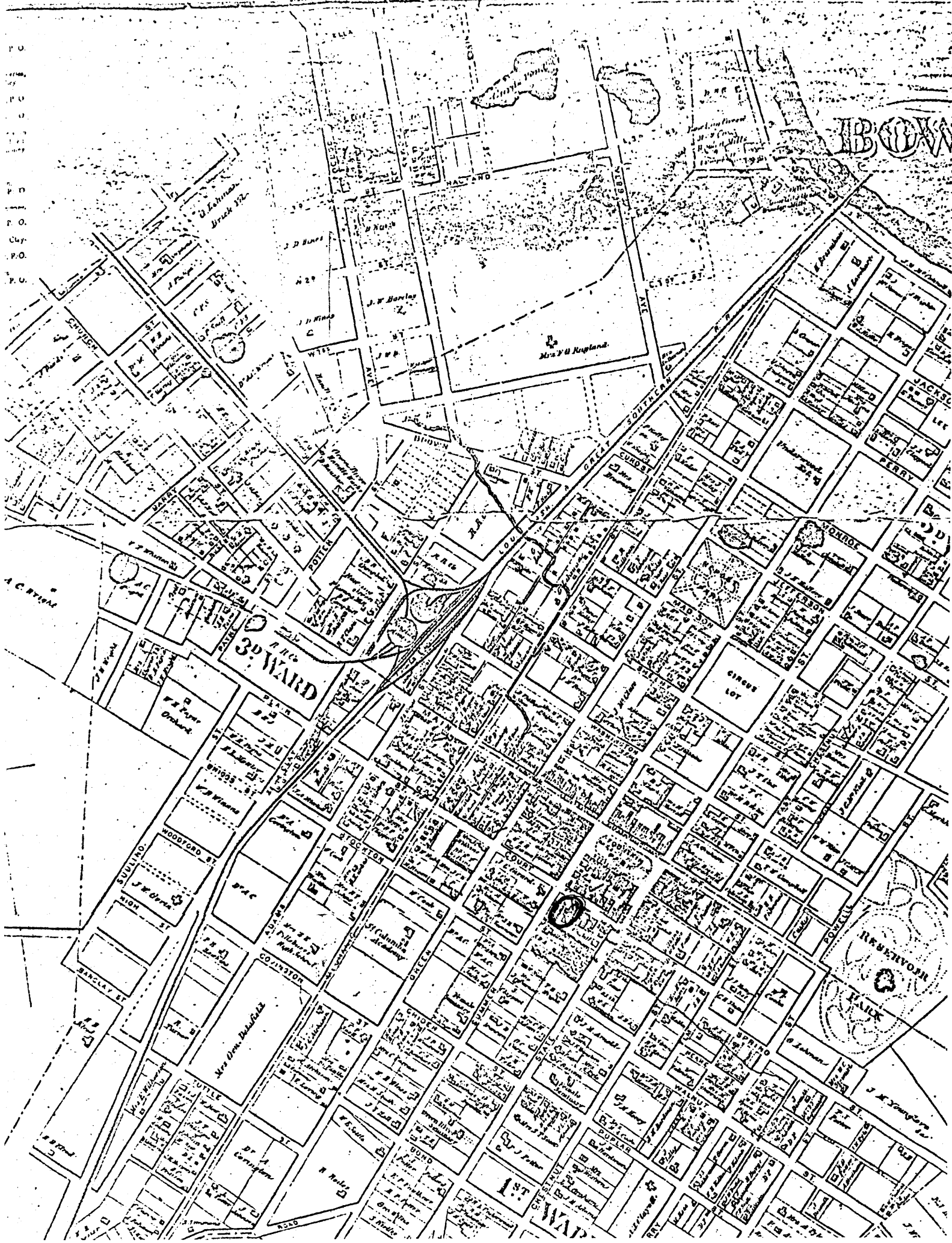
AUG 2 1977

Photo 1. View from north (main  
portico faces northeast) showing  
existing fenced square, former  
lawyer's building at left.

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

P.O.  
P.O.  
P.O.  
P.O.  
P.O.  
P.O.  
P.O.

BOW



3RD WARD

RESERVOIR

1ST WARD