



1933

Providence County Courthouse

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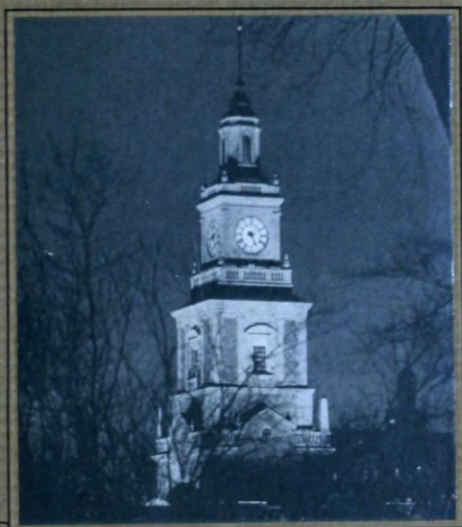


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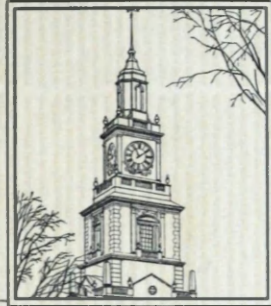
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Providence County
COURT
HOUSE



Providence County
COVRT
HOVSE
—

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Court House Commission





The Providence County **COURT HOUSE**

Completed A^o Dⁱ 1933

A BRIEF and informal report to the people of Rhode Island, touching on the conception, planning and erection of the structure; accompanied by an historical memorandum concerning the land on which the building stands; certain notes covering the resolutions and acts of the general assembly pertaining to the project, together with data relative to the building, including a list of those who designed and built it; also some photographic views appropriate to the text.



Printed at Providence for
PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT HOUSE COMMISSION
in September, A^o Dⁱ 1933

The Historical Background *of the* Providence County Court House

QUITE regardless of its obvious excellence of location with relation to practical considerations, the new Providence County Court House has been most appropriately placed. It stands on land that was included in the original group of "home lots" turned over to the first "proprietors of Providence" by grant or deed from Roger Williams.

It is this very direct connection with the first Rhode Islander that gives the court house site its primary appropriateness. Whatever else may be said for or against Williams, no one ever questioned that he was a man exceptionally imbued with the sense of justice. Next to his universally famed battle for and belief in religious tolerance in an age that took the harshest of intolerance for its guidance, no better evidence of this could be asked than his attitude toward the Indians in all land transactions. He held that the red men, though subject to the British King, were the true owners of all the land and that none could with right or justice take it from them except by purchase,—by a fair bargain satisfactory to all concerned. This "real-estate creed" of Roger Williams was so contrary to the general attitude in neighboring colonies that it probably had as much to do with his banishment from Plymouth as did his more commonly known differences with his neighbors on religious questions.

In fact, during the earliest days of the Providence settlement, Williams was much more than a recognizedly just man. He was at times virtually the entire and only court of justice for the community. He was not merely called in as mediator between fellow townsmen in occasional differences, but was even known to have used his good offices in averting conflicts between near-by Indian tribes. The use of land that was a part of his original purchase, as the site of a great building housing courts of justice is appropriate beyond question.

There appears further evidence of appropriateness when one realizes that the corner-stone of the new Providence County Court House is laid on ground once occupied by the home of Stephen Hopkins, chosen Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in 1739.

The

The diagonally opposite corner of the new building covers the lot, at the junction of College and Benefit Streets, where once stood the Town House and, in later years, the old Providence County Court House.

Elsewhere on the present court house site have stood other buildings of note. Upon this very land, and that immediately neighboring it, have taken place important and varied activities guided by noteworthy and interesting personalities,—activities and personalities of such a nature as to have stamped this spot, through all the years, as being in many ways the real heart of old as well as new Providence County.

The court house site covers parts of four original home lots that fronted on Towne Street (now South Main) and ran in a general easterly direction up College Hill. The northern lot of this group was first held (about 1636) by Chad Brown. Next to the south lay the piece turned over by Roger Williams to John Warner. George Rickard originally held the next of the four divisions. Finally, in the southwestern or corner-stone section of the court house area, is a small portion of the home lot of Richard Scott, who, many authorities believe, was the first Quaker resident in America.

ON this bit of the Richard Scott land was built, about 1743, the home of Stephen Hopkins, Chief Justice, ten times Governor of Rhode Island, First Chancellor of Brown University, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Like so many others among this community's great men of the 1700's, Hopkins was also a successful merchant and ship-builder.

The Hopkins house is of particular interest for another reason. Even those who sometimes wonder how George Washington found enough hours in the day, days in the year and years in his life to have visited all the houses and slept in all the beds he is reputed to have stopped at and occupied, need have no doubts as to his having been entertained, in 1776 and 1781, at the home of Stephen Hopkins. Ample, accurate and unimpeachable records of the occasions are in existence.

The Stephen Hopkins house itself is still in existence and, thanks to a strong appreciation of its historic and inspirational value, bids fair so to remain for the generations that are to come.

True, it has been removed from its original location. That happened during a period when it was little appreciated and almost forgotten, and it remained for those who planned the new court house to bring it to a place of well deserved honor by further removal to a more commanding site, on land purchased



The STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE

Originally built about 1743 by Stephen Hopkins, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, ten times Governor of Rhode Island, first Chancellor of Brown University, ship builder, merchant, signer of the Declaration of Independence, friend of George Washington and his host in this house on two occasions, in 1776 and 1781. Originally the Hopkins house stood at the junction of the present South Main and Hopkins Streets. It has been twice removed from its location, once to make way for the erection of "50 South Main Street" and recently to give place for a section of the new court house. It has been renovated and placed on its present site (Benefit Street at the top of Hopkins Street) in the custody of the Society of Colonial Dames of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.



The OLD TOWN HOUSE

It stood at what is now the junction of Benefit and College Streets, where the northeast corner of the new court house is placed. Built about 1723 as a Congregational Church, it was purchased in 1794 or 1795 by the Town of Providence and thereafter was used as the Town House, although certain town functions were also carried on in the Market House (now the Chamber of Commerce building) at the foot of College Hill. College Street, first known as Rosemary Lane and later as Hanover Street, was originally laid out to give access to this building when it was a church. The Town House site has since been covered by both the old and the new Providence County Court Houses. (From a photograph taken previous to 1875.)

purchased by the State for the purpose, at the south-west corner of Benefit and Hopkins Streets. There it now stands in a state of dignified restoration, and houses one of the more interesting small historical museums of America.

IN historical interest the old Town House stands second only, if second at all, to the Stephen Hopkins home. This building, from its erection in 1723, housed a diversity of institutions. It was the scene of meetings of citizens to consider and act upon public matters; it was the headquarters of certain of the town officers; it was on occasion used as a court house; as will be noted from the sign on the College Street side, in the illustration opposite, it contained at one time the police office. Yet the Town House did not begin its career as a civic building. Originally it was a church. With the exception of the Baptists and the Friends, there had been no regularly organized religious societies since the settlement of Providence Plantations. About the year 1720, with a Dr. Hoyle as one of its chief promoters, a movement was started to erect a Pede-Baptist Congregational Church. Dr. Hoyle and his associates were successful, and in 1723 a meeting house was built a little way up the hill at what is now Benefit and College Streets. A lane, first known as Rosemary Lane, later as Hanover Street and now familiar as College Street, was laid out to give access to the building. About 1794 the structure, which had been considerably enlarged, was purchased, with the land on which it stood, by the town. It was converted into, and was thereafter known as, the Town House.

AS a matter of fact, the whole growth and development of the Rhode Island community and particularly of Providence and Providence County, may be traced in a study of the court house tract and its immediate neighborhood. It may almost be traced by consideration of a single characteristic structure that stood for many years on the corner once occupied by the Hopkins house. "50 South Main Street," which finally was demolished to make way for the corner-stone end of the new court house, had its roots in, and in its time housed, a variety of activities and influences — commercial, financial, industrial, educational and cultural — that may be taken as a reasonably complete cross section of Rhode Island's evolution.

The history of the entire Rhode Island commonwealth is that of men who first were pioneers; who quickly had to become farmers for the sake of their very existence; who, as their farms tended to give them better than a bare living, found time to turn attention to trade with the Indians and neighboring colonists

colonists; who later realized and took advantage of the remarkable facilities for maritime commerce afforded by Narragansett Bay and Providence Harbor, becoming ship builders, ship captains, ship owners and merchants dealing in commodities from the ends of the earth and the Seven Seas; who finally, with the first signs of the coming of the mechanical age, realized that for the greatest prosperity of their community they must also become manufacturers and sellers of fabricated and processed goods, as well as raw materials, to other parts of the nation and other parts of the world.

BUT the outstanding building to occupy any portion of this land previous to the erection of the present court house, if judged from the point of view of size and architectural impressiveness, was the old Providence County Court House which stood, throughout the last half century, on land at the corner of Benefit and College Streets. On March 9, 1875, the land necessary for that structure, including the site of the old Town House, was condemned and taken for public use by act of the General Assembly, and on the following day there was elected in grand committee of the assembly a commission consisting of Amasa S. Westcott, Edwin Darling and Thomas P. Shepard, empowered to build a new court house. Their plans, prepared by the architectural firm of Stone & Carpenter, were approved and they were instructed to proceed with construction on March 30, 1875.

Ground for the building was broken July 30, 1875, and the corner-stone was laid by the Grand Lodge of Masons on May 15, 1876. On this occasion the oration was delivered by Hon. John H. Stiness.

The building was dedicated on December 18, 1877, at ceremonies attended by members of the General Assembly, the bench and bar, and numerous others prominent in public and private life. Hon. Thomas Durfee, then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, was the orator of the day, while other speakers in the course of the exercises were Governor Van Zandt; Hon. Amasa S. Westcott, chairman of the commission; Alfred Stone, representing the architects; Christopher Holden, Sheriff of the county of Providence; Hon. Abraham Payne; Hon. George A. Brayton, Ex-Chief Justice; Hon. Zachariah Allen; Senators Henry B. Anthony and Ambrose E. Burnside; James C. Collins; Nicholas Van Slyck; and Gen. George Lewis Cooke. The dedicatory prayer was offered by Right Rev. Thomas M. Clark, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island.

The

The Daily Journal of December 19, 1877, included in its account of the dedicatory exercises a brief description of the building, in part as follows:

"The building stands on the old Town House lot, a site held sacred to the law and the gospel for well-nigh a century. The structure is an irregular pile of the modern Gothic, based on the French Gothic order of architecture. The down-hill site presented great architectural difficulties, but they have been so far overcome that the building is noticeably in harmony with its natural surroundings. The same rule of adaptation appears in the exterior of the building, which, instead of enclosing a space to be filled, conforms largely to the interior arrangement of the rooms."

Certain remarks by Hon. Thomas Durfee in his dedicatory oration showed clearly the need of the then new court house, and might well be taken, almost verbatim, as a statement of the crying necessity for the impressive structure that has replaced it. He said: "It is the first house ever built exclusively for the courts. It signifies that the courts have outgrown their ancient accommodations. or, in other words, that their business has greatly and permanently increased. Thirty years ago the Supreme Court sat in Providence from sixty to seventy days a year; now it sits two hundred days, or three times as long. The cases, now, are not only more numerous, but also more varied, intricate and important. A similar change has taken place in the Court of Common Pleas. . . . As respects the community, I do not think the change has come, as might be supposed, from any growing litigiousness. Litigiousness . . . is not the vice of a busy community. . . . Rather does the change imply that the community, while becoming more populous, is also becoming more variously developed in its social, civic and business concerns. It is a sign of progress, not deterioration. . . . We, then, who are lovers of progress, have no right to complain of its complications, nor to expect that the questions thence arising will not lead to a continual increase of litigation."

IN short, the new court house stands on historic ground. The stretch of old Towne Street to its north and south, the hill at its back, the old market place at its front — which, by the way, is actually the *widest* bridge in the world — all help to form a great outdoor museum of American History. Towne Street itself — now North and South Main Streets — is remarkable, for it shows one of the few instances in America where the original main street and political and business center of a community has not, with the passing of the years, sunk into insignificance save for historical associations. It is not the province

province of these pages to make mention of the prominent institutions of a semi-public and private nature that stand along old Towne Street and in its immediate neighborhood, but even a cursory examination of this old street and its environs will demonstrate that it is, perhaps in increasing rather than diminishing degree, an important part of Providence County.

For practical reasons, for sentimental reasons and for reasons of historical appropriateness, the people of Rhode Island can be, and are, glad that their newest and largest court building is so ideally placed.

They may, likewise, take great pride in the nature of the court house itself, in the fact that, although it was constructed, decorated and furnished for a sum substantially less than that appropriated for the purpose, it is one of the most finely designed, soundly constructed and perfectly equipped court buildings of this nation.

The keynote of its architecture is also historical in tone. With full regard for the efforts, suffering, courage and success of those pioneers of the 1600's who blazed the trail and cleared the way, it may truly be said that Rhode Island, and Providence County in particular, started its real march of progress in the middle and late 1700's that comprised what is generally known as the Colonial era. What more natural and fitting than that this great building should be an expression of Georgian Colonial architecture at its purest and best?

In its First Baptist Meeting House Rhode Island has one of the finest Georgian Colonial "originals," and in its new Providence County Court House one of the finest Georgian Colonial "reproductions" in America.





THE OLD PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Formerly located at the corner of Benefit and College Streets and extending about half way down the lower section of College Hill. Erected to relieve the excessive congestion of the courts during the 1870's, and for over 50 years one of the outstanding architectural features of Providence. A bronze chest, taken from its corner-stone, has been placed in company with a similar bronze box in the corner-stone of the new Providence County Court House.



*The PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT
HOUSE COMMISSION and REPRESENTATIVES of the ARCHITECTS and
BUILDERS at the BREAKING of GROUND*

*Reading from left to right: Edwin A. Burlingame; F. Ellis
Jackson John F. Conaty; Charles F. Stearns Chairman
William B. Greenough; John E. Canning Wayland T.
Robertson Rush Sturges; Hon. J. Jerome Hall; A. V.
Dove; Hon. Felix Hebert.*

The Planning and Building of the Providence County Court House

*An Informal Report to the Citizens of Rhode Island
by the Providence County Court House Commission
September 28, 1933*

WHEN considering the reasons for building the new Providence County Court House we may well quote the words of Chief Justice Thomas Durfee in his oration on the occasion of the dedication of the old county court house, December 18, 1877.

"The State," he said, "is a humming hive of industry. Its industry is not homogeneous, but of many kinds, co-operative and competing. Hence new duties, new interests, new and complex relations, evolving new and complex questions of law and fact. The resources of jurisprudence are taxed to the utmost. New laws are constantly demanded, and the General Assembly, as well as the courts, prolongs its sessions . . . Life, as it develops, propounds more problems than it solves, and can not multiply rights without multiplying the wrongs which result from their infringement."

What was true in 1877 and for many years previous is equally true in 1933, and a condition even more difficult and undesirable than that which was faced and rectified in the 1870's has been developing during the last generation.

As the years have passed, the inadequacy of the picturesque building erected during 1875-1877 has become increasingly evident. With the addition of new judges to care for the growing congestion in the courts, the rooms were insufficient in number, — a fact which often forced the courts to sit in chambers neither designed nor intended to be used as court rooms.

But it was not only a matter of actual court room accommodations. Rhode Island possesses a state law library containing one of the most valuable collections of colonial and early session laws in existence. In the old Providence County Court House this was lodged in cramped, non-fire-proof quarters on the top floor. This priceless collection, the eager young apostles
of

of jurisprudence constantly there to "look up law" and those in attendance at court sessions were virtually at the mercy of any fire originating elsewhere in the building and capable of spreading through the open ventilator shafts and corridors with lightning rapidity.

Moreover, the Supreme Court had long since been forced into its separate, and somewhat isolated, building at the junction of Angell, Benefit and Waterman Streets, a condition occasioning inconvenience to the bar as well as to the judiciary, and further risk to the valuable possessions of the law library through constant shuttling back and forth of books from one building to the other.

These conditions led to many justified complaints by members of the bench and bar and by the general public.

For years there had been discussion by the bar association, at first rather desultory but steadily becoming more pressing, until its president, the late Richard B. Comstock, appointed Rush Sturges to investigate and report to him what could be done. Mr. Sturges, at a meeting at his home, laid the matter before a small group consisting of Robert L. Whitten, then engaged as zoning expert by the City of Providence, Mr. Comstock, president of the Bar Association, Frederick S. Peck and Jesse H. Metcalf. A plan of procedure was worked out at this meeting, was later accepted by the General Assembly, and has been substantially followed since.

SUBSEQUENT to certain acts passed by the General Assembly authorizing the submission to the people of a bond issue for the erection of court houses in the cities of Providence and Newport, there was passed in 1923 a resolution (Acts and Resolves. Res. No. 51, p. 384) creating a commission to consider the selection of a site and the preparation of preliminary plans for a new court house in the City of Providence. The membership of the commission as then created was as follows: — Jesse H. Metcalf, Chairman, James H. Higgins, John E. Canning, Charles F. Stearns, J. Jerome Hahn, Harry A. Sanderson, Frederick S. Peck, Rush Sturges, John F. Conaty, Percy A. Harden.

This commission, in accordance with the outline of its duties contained in the resolution creating it, proceeded with the difficult matter of selecting a suitable site for the new court house and with the formulating of a practical plan for its construction. It was also charged with the duty of framing a general program providing for the accommodation of the supreme and superior



A VIEW OF THE NEW PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT
HOUSE FROM A COLLEGE HILL VANTAGE POINT

at a Time When Outside Construction Was Nearing Completion



HERE SITS *the* SUPREME COURT
of the STATE of RHODE ISLAND and
PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

In every way a most impressive court room. The foresight of the architects so placed this room that through its north windows is seen a striking vista of the State Capitol topping its distant hill, linking in an interesting bit of symbolism the spots where Rhode Island laws are made and where they are sometimes given their final testing.



CONSULTATION ROOM
of the SUPREME COURT

Close to this dignified and beautiful room, wherein are reached decisions of the utmost importance to the state and its citizens, are the chambers of the justices and general rooms for the accommodation of the attorneys and others who appear before the bar of this highest court of Rhode Island.



The STATE LAW LIBRARY

This collection of volumes of almost incalculable value—many of them of great antiquity and rarity, furnished one of the major reasons for erecting the new court house. Formerly at the mercy of the first fire that might have attacked the old court building, it is today housed in the most modern of fireproof quarters on the 8th level of the new structure. Its entire layout and equipment have been greatly influenced by the special knowledge of the Librarian, Clarence F. Allen, and its fame as a model of modernity, efficiency and beauty is already nation-wide.

superior courts, the law library, the sheriff of Providence County, the attorney general, and for such other facilities as it deemed proper to recommend.

After determining the major accommodations to be included within the proposed building, the preliminary commission took up the difficult question of the best available site. Suggestions of locations in the vicinity of the State Capitol and of various downtown areas were rejected because of inaccessibility, noise, traffic congestion and expense. It finally became apparent that the best place for the new building lay somewhere on the hill sloping down to the old water front, where a structure harmonizing with the colonial traditions of Providence could be assured of a maximum of light, air and quiet. After long discussion the preliminary commission selected as a site, on which to base an architectural competition for plans and drawings, the area between Benefit and South Main Streets, south of Hopkins Street and facing Crawford Street bridge. Because of objections, mainly as to remoteness, this site was later changed to the one north of Hopkins Street upon which the new court house now stands.

The architects engaging in the competition were: Homer & Henshaw, Clarke & Howe, Jackson, Robertson & Adams, George F. Hall (all of Providence); Albert Harkness of Providence and H. V. B. Magonigle of New York, Associated; Parker, Thomas & Rice, Bellows & Aldrich, of Boston; John M. Howells & Raymond M. Hood, Associated, of New York.

The judges of the competition were: Jesse H. Metcalf, Chairman of the commission, Hon. J. Jerome Hahn, and the following three architects of high standing, Charles Butler of New York, William Emerson of Boston and Norman H. Isham of Wickford, R. I.

After long consideration they selected the design and plans of Jackson, Robertson & Adams of Providence as entitled to the highest award. It is worthy of note that no sketches, plans or notes submitted by the architects bore their names. All were numbered, and their source was absolutely unknown to the judges.

This commission presented its report and recommendations to the General Assembly in accordance with resolution No. 51, which called for such a report "on or before January 31, 1924," and thereupon, again in accordance with the act of appointment, its tenure of office automatically terminated.

To the members of this first commission the thanks of the citizens of the state are most assuredly due. Not only did they prepare the way for the building

building of a most notable structure, but their wise and foresighted planning to a great degree aided in the economical carrying through of the entire project by their successors.

ON April 28, 1925 the General Assembly passed an act creating and defining the powers of the second Providence County Court House Commission (Chapter 675 of the Public Laws passed at the January Session A. D. 1925). Thereupon Governor Aram J. Pothier appointed the following commissioners: — Frederick S. Peck, John E. Canning, John F. Conaty, William B. Greenough, Felix Hebert, Harry A. Sanderson and Rush Sturges. The Supreme and Superior Courts, in accordance with the act, respectively appointed Justices Charles F. Stearns and J. Jerome Hahn.

On the 6th day of May of that year the commission organized at a meeting called by the Governor, electing Frederick S. Peck as its Chairman and Felix Hebert as its Secretary.

An early act of the commission, after organization, was the very logical one of employing its architects. It is gratifying to be able to report that upon exhaustive study of the infinite detail of the designs and plans, and after thorough investigation of capabilities and equipment for the practical carrying out of the project, Jackson, Robertson & Adams, of Providence, the winners of the preliminary competition, were chosen by the commission as its official architects.

The next step was the acquiring of the necessary land. The general recommendation of the previous commission had been in the direction of land contained within the South Main-College-Benefit-Hopkins Street block, of which a considerable portion (the site of the old court house) already belonged to the state. By chapter 675 of the general laws, the present commission was directed to acquire by condemnation or purchase such portion of that land as it deemed requisite. It consequently acquired for the state the entire block, at a total cost of \$498,662.75.

THE second annual report of the commission calls attention to the fact that Mr. Frederick S. Peck, who had been the commission's chairman since its organization, resigned as a commission member on December 15th, 1926. Just previous thereto Mr. Peck, after long and valuable service to the state as a member of the General Assembly, had retired from that body to take the post of State Commissioner of Finance. Naturally this precluded



*The SOUTH MAIN STREET COLLO-
NADE in AFTERNOON SUN and SHADOW*

Days might be spent by an observer with the "seeing eye" in searching for the most striking among the many views and vistas the court house affords. Taken from certain angles the lofty tower would seem to deserve the palm. Within the interior are many spots at which the visitor could profitably stand long to gaze. This colonnade, facing old Market Square, and touched by the western sun, will command the reverent attention of tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders for as long as the court house may stand.



COURT ROOM NUMBER 11

One of the rooms used by the Superior Court, and the largest in the building. This particular room is perhaps more strongly imbued with the true Colonial atmosphere than others where the feeling of decoration and equipment tends sharply toward the more elaborate Georgian type. The graceful simplicity of the public benches is strongly reminiscent of old town meeting days in the 1700's.

precluded the possibility of Mr. Peck's continuing as a member of the Providence County Court House Commission, with which he had to come in contact in an entirely different relation as a result of his new appointment. It may fairly be said, however, that where a man of lesser ability, understanding and co-operative spirit might have greatly hampered the work of the commission from the office of State Commissioner of Finance, Mr. Peck, through absolutely just actions and attitudes, through a fine spirit of always working with the commission for the state, continued to be one of the most helpful factors in carrying through the court house project. The commission presented Mr. Peck, at the time of his resignation, with a handsome plate of antique silver, suitably inscribed, and a most laudatory resolution was passed by the General Assembly upon his retirement from that body.

Mr. Edwin A. Burlingame was appointed by the Governor in Mr. Peck's stead on January 11, 1927, and later the commission elected William B. Greenough as its new chairman on January 13, 1927. Mr. Greenough has since continued in that office.

From its appointment to the present day the commission has held innumerable meetings, and its sub-committees and individual members have constantly been in conference with the architects, numerous state officials for whom quarters were to be provided in the new structure, and with the representatives of the contractors in charge of all types of construction work. It has tried not to interfere with the progress being made by specialists and experts, but it has also determinedly kept its eye on every detail for which the people's money has been expended. This commission, like the preliminary commission, has served throughout without compensation.

In the course of the commission's service many problems that may, at the time, have seemed supremely difficult, came up for handling. Thanks to the special efforts of individual members, and the constantly co-operative spirit of architects, contractors and employes of the commission, these now appear in retrospect as more interesting than difficult.

THE DISPOSITION OF THE STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE

UNDER provision of Chapter 675 of the Public Laws of 1925, the commission was directed to acquire suitable land as a new site for the historic Stephen Hopkins house, to have the building moved to that site, to place it upon necessary new foundations and there to have it properly repaired and

and renovated to bring it as close as possible to its original condition and to a state of preservation in harmony with its historic value.

The matter of the removal and restoration of the Stephen Hopkins house was considered to be one of especial importance and deserving of particularly careful attention. Consequently the commission appointed a committee to see this project through, and on January 19, 1928, called in Norman H. Isham, a resident of Rhode Island and a nationally known authority on Colonial architecture and Colonial times, as their special consulting architect. This was most fortunate, for the problem of bringing about a really worthy reproduction and restoration proved a most difficult and considerable one, and certainly never could have been so fully accomplished without the benefit of the broad and deep knowledge of such an architect-historian as Mr. Isham.

Many factors had to be taken into consideration in connection with the disposition of this ancient and famous structure. In the first place it had been allowed to fall into disrepair and to become structurally weakened in the passage of the years. In the second place, it seemed desirable for sentimental reasons that it should remain as close as possible to its original site, and, if possible, should be placed in an easily accessible position and in a prominent spot with dignified surroundings.

With these main factors in mind it seemed best to move it but a short distance, and finally land was acquired on the southwest corner of Benefit and Hopkins Streets, adjoining on the west certain land owned by the Counting House Trust. To this spot the house was removed, an undertaking calling for the greatest of care and skill on the part of the contractors and their workmen who were entrusted with the task. The moving of even a small dwelling house is at best a difficult accomplishment. The moving of a house nearly two hundred years old, and in none too good condition, proved a difficult problem successfully solved.

An additional advantage to the state through the acquisition of the land for the Stephen Hopkins house, and through an agreement with the Counting House Trust, is that perpetual light and air are assured the new court house for the greater part of its southern or Hopkins Street frontage.

The Stephen Hopkins house stands today in an ideal location, has been repaired and renovated, has had placed in it many interesting articles belonging to its own day and generation, all of which makes it one of the more
interesting

interesting small museums of early Americana. It has been appropriately turned over by act of the General Assembly to the care of the Society of Colonial Dames of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, but with its ownership remaining with the citizens of this state.

LETTING OF CONTRACTS

AS a result of advertising for bids for the general construction work, J. W. Bishop Company was chosen as the general contractor and shortly thereafter other contracts were entered into with firms whose names will be found listed in the Appendix. These contractors amply justified their choice by their known ability and the nature of their proposals, and have since fully justified it by their performance.

Owing to the economical and interesting manner, later described in these pages, in which a large section of the new Providence County Court House was completed and put into use before operations were started on that section of the land where the old court house was still standing, the contract for the demolition of the older structure was not placed until December 20, 1930. It was agreed by all concerned that prompt forwarding of the actual work on the final section of the building would be exceptionally worth while, in view of its helpful effect on the unemployment condition, then on the increase in this state as well as throughout the country.

SPECIAL PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN CONSTRUCTION WORK

FROM the outset it was obvious to the commission that, with Providence County already badly cramped for court house facilities, it would be out of the question to tear down the existing court house before a considerable proportion of the new building was completed and ready for occupancy. Consideration had been given to the plan of building a quarter section mainly to the southwest of the old structure, on the lower portion of the hill. It was soon realized, however, that this would call for certain costly retaining walls and other temporary reinforcing construction, with temporary heating, so the decision was finally made to finish the entire southern portion, virtually half of the building, stretching from Benefit Street to South Main Street and including the whole of the Hopkins Street facade. Beyond question, this decision by the commission and the architects saved the state very substantial sums.

Similar

Similar economy measures were put into practice with relation to the completion of the entire building. The original plan contemplated the construction of four sections. This would have called for much special and temporary work at high cost. Through changes of procedure in which the General Assembly, the commission, the state commissioner of finance, the architects and the contractors all co-operated, it became possible to build in two sections only, a south half and a north half.

APPOINTMENT OF RESIDENT ENGINEER

On October 1, 1926, J. Henry Woodard was appointed resident engineer of the court house building, assuring for the state special supervision during construction, and future service in the care and operation of the building, of the very highest order.

ASSURANCE OF A SUITABLE APPROACH TO AND SURROUNDINGS FOR THE NEW PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT HOUSE

THE character of the land and buildings on the northern side of College Street, the eastern side of Benefit Street, and the southern side of Hopkins Street seems to assure the preservation of proper surroundings for the court house, at its back and on the sides. Buildings standing across South Main Street, however, presented a problem, since they were, in the main, not of impressive character and, because of the narrowness of the highway, they tended to shut in and cramp the court house and destroy a free and beautiful view of its front facade.

Consequently action has been taken aiming toward co-operation between the commission and the City of Providence to bring about a suitable park development across the entire front of the court house structure. This will center on a sixty foot strip of land between South Main and South Water Streets, purchased by the State and placed under the jurisdiction of the commission under act of the General Assembly, flanked on the north by land now owned by the city and on the south by land owned by the state. Already this space has been cleared of buildings, and even in the rough state necessitated by incomplete outside work on the court house project, requires little imagination to visualize, for the immediate future, one of the finest approaches to any public building in America.

Flood



COURT ROOM NUMBER 5

Here, in another of the chambers allotted to the Superior Court, the swing toward the Georgian atmosphere is felt. Such a room might have been the ambition of the American designers and builders in Colonial days, but their facilities were less than their genius, and so their work, of Georgian inspiration, had to be simplified in detail, though not in major conception. As in the case of all other court rooms, Number Five is in easy reach of lounges for members of the bar and for witnesses and jurors. The Providence County Court House is one of the first in America to be provided with accommodations for both men and women jurors. The latter will serve for the first time in Rhode Island during the 1933 Fall term.



The "GIANT STAIRS"
MARCH UP THE HILL

An interesting view of the completed court house taken from the roof of the Hospital Trust Building, and showing clearly its unusual hillside construction. Here one sees the distinct steps ascending the sharp slope of College Hill. Here, also, is evident the intentional effect achieved by the architects, of a group of buildings of the Colonial type, enriched by a strong inmixture of the decorative and monumental Georgian feeling, and all blending into an equally clear effect of one lofty, dignified, unified and beautiful structure.

FLOOD-LIGHTING OF THE COURT HOUSE

Flood-lighting of the spire and main facade of the building has been considered, by the commission, by architectural authorities, by members of succeeding state governments, and by thousands of citizens, as a matter of artistic, inspirational and psychological value. It was first tried on the new court house during the Christmas holidays of 1932, when the spire was brilliantly illuminated as shown in the cover design of this book. Because of the favorable reactions of the public and because its cost of operation proved low, the commission voted to authorize indefinite continuance of this practice for nightly periods up to the midnight hour.

THE design for the court house the present commission was directed to construct and furnish was selected by the preliminary commission. The completed edifice stands as evidence of the excellence of the choice made by those charged with that task.

In the execution of the work, as directed in the enactment of the law under the authority of which it has proceeded, the present commission has adhered in all essential details to the original plans. Practically no alterations have been made in the design of the exterior as originally accepted by those who were entrusted with that part of the project. It was expected, as construction progressed, that some changes would suggest themselves to the commission as advantageous and therefore desirable, but in every instance there has been adherence to the original conception of what the building should be.

In the erection and furnishing of a structure of this kind, the thought of the commission has been that due regard must always be had for the convenience of those who are to make use of it. In this, they are satisfied the architects have co-operated to the fullest extent. As a result, the State of Rhode Island will have reason to feel proud of the facilities for the administration of justice it is providing for its people. The commission has given no little study to the interior arrangements of the building, in the hope that it would be a comfortable and convenient place in which to hear and to pass upon the issues presented there for determination. In all their studies, they have sought to visualize the needs of the people of the State, the maintenance of its high standards in the administration of justice and the carrying out of the purposes of our state government as conceived by the founders.

It

It has been a source of deep satisfaction to your commission to realize the interest its fellow citizens in all walks of life have taken in this work as it progressed, their desire to provide a building which would typify in highest degree the dignity of our commonwealth, and to have it so furnished and designed as to be a source of pride to all of us.

After all, through the centuries, the greatness, the dignity, and the supreme power of any government have been made manifest through exterior forms to by far the larger body of the citizens of any commonwealth. Our state capitol will stand for many, many years as the embodiment of those standards which are highest in the life of a sovereign state. This new court house, erected in a different style, embodies all that is most desirable in an architectural type originated by early comers to our shores.

It was a primary requirement that the building should fit its location and should be both reminiscent of Providence of the past and appropriate to Providence of the present and future. The building could not be one overpowering, lofty, unified structure without dwarfing and seeming out of place with its general surroundings and neighboring structures. Such a building, moreover, could have preserved none of the local flavor so strongly inherent in the court house as it now stands. It was, therefore, a happy conception to place against the side of old College Hill, a series of related units so treated as to suggest, at one and the same time, a *group* of fine Georgian-Colonial buildings and a *single edifice* of commanding size, impressive proportions and unified beauty.

In its treatment of interior arrangements, the commission has endeavored to adhere to the original conception, and to provide the atmosphere citizens of our state and of our part of the country expect to find in their public buildings. The furnishings themselves will undoubtedly prove well adapted for the use to which they are to be put. It was not intended that there should be any splendor; rather, an air of quiet dignity in keeping with the decorum always in evidence in the conduct of our courts. Again, in the choice of decorations and furnishings, there has been always in mind the original idea of those who chose the design of the structure, and always the convenience and the comfort of those who are called upon to make use of it. It is hoped that this commission's efforts will meet with the general approval of the citizens of the state.

Appendix

THE ARCHITECTS

JACKSON, ROBERTSON & ADAMS, of Providence

F. ELLIS JACKSON: Recipient of architectural degrees in America and Europe (l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1909); Fellow of American Institute of Architects; past president Rhode Island Chapter, A. I. A. and former director of the Institute; associated with Rhode Island School of Design as member of Architectural Advisory Committee and in other capacities; member Architectural Advisory Board of Cornell University; identified in official capacities with Brown University, Providence Civic Improvement and Park Association (one of its founders), Providence Zoning Board of Review, Providence City Plan Commission (present chairman of its Advisory Committee).

WAYLAND T. ROBERTSON: Formerly associated with Sawtelle, Robertson and Shurrocks; later association with the office of the supervising architect placed him in charge of the structural work in connection with the building of the present Federal building in Providence; past president, Rhode Island Chapter A. I. A.; former officer of Providence Engineering Society, and affiliated with numerous organizations having to do with civic advancement in the community.

J. HOWARD ADAMS: (Mr. Adams, though playing an important part in the designing and planning of the court house, did not live to see the completion of the structure into which he and his associates had put so much of effort and ability) Architectural training at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in Europe. Associated with the offices of Peters & Rice in Boston, McKim, Mead & White in New York and Clarke & Howe of Providence; later opened his own offices, and finally (1912) became a member of the firm of Jackson, Robertson & Adams.

Associated with the architects and their office in the execution of the project were:

CHARLES MCTAMMANY,
in charge of general direction
CLIFFORD WILLIAMS,
designer of both exterior and interior detail
FRANK RUPRECHT, specialist in metal design
THOMAS RUSSILLO, specialist in interior design
FREDERICK N. BROWN, JR., JOHN MACHON
and FRED BURCH, general assistants

THE GENERAL CONTRACTOR

J. W. BISHOP COMPANY

General Oversight of the work by John W. Bishop, President, and Jeremiah A. Sullivan, Vice President. Superintendent of Operations, Frank Davidson. Consulting Engineers, J. R. Worcester & Co.

Sub-Contractors and Material Houses

ALEXANDER THOMSON, INC., Granite and Limestone
THE MORRIS-IRELAND SAFE CO., Vault Doors
NATIONAL WATERPROOFING CO., Waterproofing.
LEHIGH STRUCTURAL STEEL CO., Structural Steel
CONCRETE STEEL CO., Concrete Steel Reinforcement and Permanent Steel Floor Tile
JAMES S. DUNNING CO., Roof and Floor Lath
E. T. RYAN IRON WORKS, INC.,
Ornamental Iron and Cell Work
GENERAL BRONZE CO., Bronze Work
THE GORHAM COMPANY, Bronze Work
TRAVERS-SANDELL, INC., Dampproofing
BETTER-BUILT FLOORS, INC., Linotile, Cork and Asphalt Tile Floors
DUDLEY HARDWARE CO., Finish Hardware
ART METAL CONSTRUCTION CO., Interior Hollow Metalwork and Bookstacks
SCULLY-McDONNELL & CO., Painting
SIMON VENTILIGHTER CO., INC.,
Ventilighter Cloth and Vane Shades
WELLMAN, OAKES & HIGGINS, INC.,
Linoleum Floors and Rubber Thresholds
CUTLER MAIL CHUTE CO., Mail Chute
VERMONT MARBLE CO., Marble, Terrazzo,
Tile, Interior Limestone and Slate
TROY BROTHERS, Marble, Terrazzo,
Tile, Interior Limestone and Slate
ROBERT CAMPBELL, Beam Caging
CAMPBELL INDUSTRIAL WINDOWS CO., INC.,
Steel Windows and Sash
H. CARR & SONS, INC., Furring, Lathing and Plastering
C. G. BRUNNCKOW CO., INC.,
Roofing, Sheet Metal Work, Bronze Grilles,
Weather Vane, Kalamein Doors and Trim
L. VAUGHN CO., Interior Finish and Cabinet Work
R. GUSTAVINO CO., INC., Ceilings of
Colonnade and Entrance Lobby
CHAPMAN WATERPROOFING CO., Caulking
JOHNS-MANVILLE CORP., Acoustical Treatment
Installed by Acoustical Contracting Co.
W. D. CROOKS & SONS, Mahogany Doors
JAMES R. PUGH, Bluestone and Slate Flagging
NATIONAL GLASS CO., INC., Glass and Glazing
ST. ANDREWS STAINED GLASS STUDIO, Leaded Glass

JOSEPH ARGENTIERI, Granolithic Sidewalks
 ST. CROIX LUMBER Co., Flexwood
 S. P. FLENCIE LUMBER Co., N. C. Roofs
 BURROW & KENTON, Inc., Lumber
 PROVIDENCE TRANSIT CONCRETE CORP., Cement
 F. B. LAWTON Co., Plastic Mat
 H. R. HORTON Co., Hydrated Lime
 PORTLAND STONE WARE Co., Belgian Cement
 JAMES C. GIFF Co., Celite
 BOITON & COAL & CLAY PRODUCT, Inc.,
 T. C. Partition Block
 E. EVERETT CARLETON Co., Inc., Cel-o-mech
 NEW ENGLAND BRICK Co., Brick Stretcher
 THE STILE & HART BRICK Co., Inside Brick
 RHODE ISLAND SAND & GRAVEL Co., Sand and Gravel

OTHER CONTRACTORS SELECTED BY THE PROVIDENCE COUNTY COURT HOUSE COMMISSION

SWIFT-McNULTY Co., Demolition of Building
 LINCOLN & LANE, Heating
 OTIS ELEVATOR Co., Elevator
 E. F. CALDWELL Co., Electric Fixture
 McKINNEY-WATERBURY Co., Electric Fixtures
 WALKER ELECTRIC Co., Electric Fixtures
 SCANNIVIN & POTTER, Electric Fixtures
 Clock and Floodlighting Equipment
 AMERICAN PLUMBING Co., Plumbing
 OFFICE APPLIANCE Co., Wood Furniture
 E. L. MORRIS Co., Wood Furniture
 MAURICE C. SMITH Co., Steel Furniture
 REMINGTON-RAND Co., Steel Furniture
 C. H. SPRING Co., Face Brick
 TILDEN-THURBER Corp., Electric Clocks
 JOHN H. PRATT & SONS, Draperies and Carpets
 H. E. HOLBROOK Co., Shade and Weather strip
 ACOUSTICAL CONTRACTING Co., Acoustical Material
 RHODE ISLAND ELECTRIC PROTECTIVE Co.,
 Watchman's Signal System

AUTHORIZATION OF COURT HOUSE LOANS

The various bond issues, necessary for the construction and equipping of the Providence County Court House were, through action of the electorate and the General Assembly, authorized as follows:

RESOLUTION providing for the submission to the people of a bond issue for the erection of court houses in the city of Providence and Newport. No. 44. H 506 B. Approved April 24, 1922.

AN ACT to authorize the issuance of bond to be known as the "Court House Loan." H 868 A. Approved April 28, 1925.

RESOLUTION providing for the submission to the people of a second bond issue for the erection of court houses in the city of Providence and Newport No. 3. H 840. Approved April 16, 1926.

AN ACT to authorize the issuance of bond to be known as the "Second Court House Loan."

RESOLUTION providing for the submission to the people of a bond issue for the completion of the Providence County Court House. No. 23. H 893. Approved April 15, 1930.

AN ACT to authorize the issuance of bonds to be known as the "Third Court House Loan." H 571. Approved March 20, 1931.

ACTS CREATING COMMISSIONS AND VESTING THEM WITH AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION creating a commission to consider the selection of a site and the preparation of preliminary plans for a new court house in the city of Providence. No. 51. H 616 B. Approved May 31, 1923.

AN ACT creating a Providence County Court House Commission and defining its power and duties. H 867 B. Approved April 28, 1925.

AN ACT in amendment of Chapter 675 of the Public Law, entitled "An act creating a Providence County Court House Commission and defining its powers and duties." H 977. Approved April 19, 1926.

AN ACT making an appropriation for the construction, furnishing and equipping of the new Court House in the city of Providence. H 801. Approved April 8, 1927.

AN ACT authorizing the Providence County Court House Commission to acquire the land bounded by South Main, College, South Water and Hutchinson Streets in the city of Providence. H 839 A. Approved April 10, 1929.

AN ACT in amendment of Chapter 675 of the Public Law, 1925, entitled "An act creating a Providence County Court House Commission and defining its powers and duties." H 885. Approved April 16, 1929.

AN ACT empowering the Providence County Court House Commission to complete said Court House, remove the present Providence County Court House and other buildings, to dispose of furniture and contents of the old Providence County Court House and for the maintenance of the new Providence County Court House. H 899. Approved April 15, 1930.



The FOYER on the BENEFIT STREET LEVEL

It is, unfortunately, impossible for the camera to give a true picture of this unusually impressive main lobby. It is actually in the shape of a great letter "T," with the broad leg of the letter running from the Benefit Street portico to the door of the offices of the Clerk of the Superior Court, where it is met and crossed by the top of the "T" in the form of a corridor running north and south. The main arm is flanked on either side by a battery of elevators traveling to and from the South Main Street level. On the south wall of this main foyer is placed a bronze tablet naming the members of the commission, the architects, the general contractors and the resident engineer. On the north wall a harmonizing tablet that serves as a building directory.



The LONG CORRIDOR on the THIRD LEVEL

The Providence County Court House has many points of distinction, but one of the strangest lies in the fact that it is a building with ground floor entrances on three distinct levels—on the first level at South Main Street, on the fifth level at Benefit Street, and on the third level, College Street and Hopkins Street entrances. The 235 foot corridor shown here runs through the entire north and south dimension of the building, connecting College and Hopkins Streets and taking on almost the proportions of a street in itself.

APPENDIX

ORDER IN WHICH MAIN STEPS OF THE PROJECT TOOK PLACE

Between appointment of the commission and its first annual report, March 25, 1926.

Purchase of land in the South Main-College-Benefit-Hopkins Street block.

Appointment of architects and acceptance of general plans.

Between first and second annual reports, March 25, 1926-March 29, 1927.

Test borings to determine average depth from land surface to underlying rock formation.

Further purchase of land, completing state ownership of the entire South Main-College-Benefit-Hopkins Street block.

Between second and third annual reports, March 29, 1927-April 9, 1928.

Breaking of ground, March 19, 1928.

Advertising for bids and placing of major contracts covering construction of first section.

Purchase of land for new Stephen Hopkins house site, removal of house to said land, and beginning of restoration work on the house.

Between third and fourth annual reports, April 9, 1928-April 17, 1929.

Laying of cornerstone, June 12, 1928. William B. Greenough, chairman of the commission, presiding. Invocation pronounced by William H. P. Faunce, D.D., President of Brown University; other addresses by Presiding Justice Willard B. Tanner of the Superior Court and His Excellency, Governor Norman S. Case.

Virtual completion of the outside of the first section.

Completion of renovation and restoration of Stephen Hopkins house and its placement in the custodianship of the Society of Colonial Dames of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations.

Between the fourth and fifth annual reports, April 17, 1929-April 16, 1930.

Virtual completion of the first section, and its formal acceptance by the Commission on April 2, 1930.

Steps taken toward the purchase of land for a suitable Court House approach.

Acts passed authorizing immediate completion of the second, and final, section of the structure.

Between the fifth and sixth annual reports, April 16, 1930-March 19, 1931.

Formal opening of the first section, Monday, September 15, 1930, their respective quarters being occupied by the judges and clerk of the Superior Court, the clerk of the Supreme Court and all other occupants of the old Providence County Court House.

Demolition of the old Court House building.

Between the sixth and seventh annual reports, March 19, 1931-April 11, 1932.

Construction of second and final section put under way and rapidly pushed to make it of greatest possible value in helping to relieve unemployment conditions in the city and state.

Conception of a comprehensive plan relative to a park development across South Main Street from, and paralleling the entire western facade of, the Court House, and steps taken to bring about co-operation by the city in such a plan.

Between the seventh and eighth annual reports, April 11, 1932-April 13, 1933.

Occupancy of new quarters in second section by Sheriff's department.

Opening for use of Court Room No. 10.

Completion and occupancy of Law Library.

Further progress by commission and city representatives in conference, leading to development of the proposed Court House park plan.

Announcement that Court House would probably be ready for virtually complete occupancy by the opening of the October 1933 session of the Supreme Court.

Since the last annual report work has progressed about as expected, so that, as this book goes to press, it is planned to hold the final dedication ceremonies, on Thursday, September 28, 1933.

BRIEF STATISTICS

Relative to the New Providence County Court House

COURT ROOMS—1 Supreme Court room with consultation room adjoining. 12 Superior Court rooms, with combined seating capacity of 1,020.

JUDGES' CHAMBERS—17 two-room suites; 8 single offices.

JURY ROOMS—14 jury rooms; men's and women's jury lounges.

LAWYERS', WITNESSES' AND PRESS ROOMS—Lawyers' lounges on 3rd and 7th floors. 14 witnesses' rooms. 1 press room.

SECRETARIES' ROOMS—Rooms for two secretaries of the Supreme Court and two secretaries of the Superior Court.

STENOGRAPHIC QUARTERS—10 stenographers' rooms.

STATE LAW LIBRARY—Main library with separate reading and storage rooms.

ELEVATORS—6 general elevators; 2 private elevators; 2 prisoners' elevators; 1 freight elevator.

CELLS—18 cells, capacity 2 prisoners each; 2 large cells, capacity 75 prisoners each.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT—The granite was quarried in Westerly, R. I., and there are thirty varieties of stone and marble in the building, from some of the best known quarries in this and foreign countries.

5,000 feet of indirect radiation; 25,000 feet of direct radiation on vacuum systems.

Fresh air from 10 supply fans and 24 ventilator fans.

Chilled drinking water circulated through 2,800 feet of tin-lined brass pipe to 24 drinking fountains and to 62 faucets in private lavatories.

GENERAL BUILDING DIMENSIONS—Frontage of 235 feet. Nine floors above basement, exclusive of elevator machine room on tenth floor and tower extending to 15th level with finial 49 feet above. Center of tower clock is 149.17 feet above Benefit Street sidewalk and 189.83 feet above sidewalk of South Main Street. Weather vane is 251 feet above South Main Street.

THIS BOOK has been set in type reproducing the Caslon Old Style face designed, cut and cast by William Caslon in England about 1763, and first extensively used by American printers in the so-called Colonial period, notably by Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia and William Goddard of Providence. The book has been originated, printed and bound at the Roger Williams Press (E. A. Johnson Company). The photography, save for the pictures of the old Town House and the former Providence County Court House, is by George H. Paine. The general design of the book, together with its writing and editing, has been in charge of Robert B. Jones, who acknowledges general co-operation of the most valuable sort by the court house commission and others connected with the court house.

