



STATE OF OREGON INVENTORY
OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
State Historic Preservation Office
Oregon State Parks, Salem, OR 97310

Significance Primary No. 98
County Jackson
Theme _____
Name Jacksonville Museum
(Common) Southern Oregon Historical Society
(Historic) Jackson County Courthouse
Address 206 North Fifth Street
Jacksonville, Oregon 97530
Jackson County
Present Owner _____
Address 206 North Fifth Street
Jacksonville, Oregon 97530
Original Use Governmental
Date of Construction 1883-84

Physical description of property and statement of historical significance:

The Jackson County Courthouse is a two story, brick I-shaped building constructed of unpainted brick on a cut sandstone foundation. The structure has a high attic and basement. The Courthouse was erected in 1883-84: G.E. Payne was the architect; L.P. Marsh, the building contractor; George Holt, the brick mason, and Jacobs & Russell were responsible for laying the stone foundation. The most predominant stylistic features are Italianate.

The front (west) facade is three bays wide on both first and second floors. Window bays are composed of a grouping of two to three individual windows. The central bay on the first floor is a double, wooden door with a rectangular transom light above: all are framed with pilasters. The central bay has a one story wooden porch with a gabled roof and is supported by groupings of Corinthian columns.

Both north and south elevations are five bays wide. Each bay is a window consisting of a grouping of two, double hung sash windows capped by a brick segmental arch. Each arch is articulated with a wooden, hood molding with a keystone and corbelled brackets.

The rear east elevation has a central double leaf door and a single window on the second floor that is consistent with the design of the windows on the other three elevations. The doorway is sheltered

Recorded by Gail E.H. Evans Date November 1979
Photographed by Gail E.H. Evans

Sources consulted (continue on back if necessary):
Please refer to footnotes

Please enclose map. Township 37^N_(S) 2^E_(W) Section 32, Block 19, lots 1-8
Account No. 3800 (32BA)

by a wood porch, supported by square chamfered and bracketed posts. A recent brick two story addition projects from the northeast wall, approximately twenty feet.

All the bays are inset in broad vertical panels. With the exception of the central second floor window on the main facade, the windows on all elevations consist of two windows framed under a segmental relieving arch. Each window is four-over-four double hung sash. The top two panes are rounded. The central window on the second floor is similar but of slightly larger proportions and consists of a triple window. The arch above each window is articulated with a wood keystone hood molding.

The roof is a low hip except for the pedimented gable on the main facade. The wood entablature consists of a heavily molded architrave, a frieze with alternating panels incised with East Lake ornament, and a cornice of deep scrolled brackets.

A square lantern rises slightly behind the plane of the main facade on the central axis of the building. Resting on a brick pedestal, a bracketed cornice supports a projecting molding. Each face of the lantern is sheathed with horizontal clapboards broken by a single four-over-four double hung sash window with a rounded semi-circular head. Each window is capped by a bracketed projecting pediment.

The Courthouse is located in the center of the block, oriented to the west. A low stone wall, running along the sidewalk, encloses a well groomed lawn and numerous maple trees. The old county jail, now used for additional museum display space and public rest rooms, is located to the north of the Courthouse. An inconspicuous recent one story addition extends in the rear. Two elongated buildings also used for display and storage space are situated in the eastern portion of the block.

Courthouse square was originally surrounded by a wooden fence. A picket fence was followed by later variations of wood fences. When the building was first constructed the porch had a flat balustraded roof.

The Jackson County Courthouse at present houses the main displays and administrative offices of Jacksonville Museum and the Southern Oregon Historical Society. The building is maintained in good condition.

As architectural historian Marion Ross has aptly written, "The most monumental structure in Jacksonville is the former Jackson County Courthouse of 1883."¹ Before all the finishing touches were completed the court convened for the first time on February 11, 1884.² This stately brick edifice represents not only one of Jackson County's most impressive architectural achievements, but it historically signifies an incorrigible tenacity of Jacksonville residents. The town had been for many years the largest in southern Oregon, but when the California-Pacific Railroad bypassed Jacksonville the year the Courthouse was completed,³ the town was effectively severed from the main route of economic traffic and social stimulus.

The first plat map of Jacksonville identified "Court House Square" as the block north of California Street between Third and Fourth Streets.⁴ No Courthouse building was ever constructed on this site, however. For six years after the town's beginnings in 1852, court was held in a variety of locations including a wood frame structure on the present site of the Kubli Building,⁵ the Methodist Church,⁶ and a building used by Rev. T.F. Royal,⁷ Methodist clergyman who built

the first Methodist Church in southern Oregon.⁸

With the growing need for permanent space to hold court hearings and execute governmental business, a committee of three stalwart citizens was appointed to recommend a site for a courthouse. Jacksonville's Accepted Free and Ancient Masons were, at the same time, anxious to locate a site and construct a building to conduct their meetings. In 1858-59 the Masons erected a two story, Classic Revival, clapboarded structure on the present site of the Jacksonville Museum.¹⁰ On the 6th of March, 1859, the Masons dedicated their building,¹¹ and for eight years had their lodge room on the second floor. Shortly afterwards, the Masons agreed to let the first floor to county officials for the purpose of holding court proceedings. In 1867 Warren Lodge No. 10 of the Free Masons relinquished their space on the second floor to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners.¹² Eventually, the Courthouse was utilized not only by the commissioners, judges and county officials, but by private local lawyers including W.C. Kahler, E.B. Watson,¹³ and James D. Fay.¹⁴

A number of improvements were made to the property over the years including the reconstruction of steps and fences,¹⁵ the planting of young maple trees,¹⁶ and the laying of a new roof and floor.¹⁷ A new jail was built in 1875 on the northeast corner of the block which included "4,000 pounds of iron spikes for strength." It was acclaimed for its "neatness and usefulness - but few institutions on the coast [could] excel it when completed."¹⁸

Regardless of the many additions and improvements made to the property, there was growing discontent with the condition, size, and image of the Courthouse building. As early as 1869 an Oregon Sentinel, editorial "deplored the old building and [pleaded] for a new one."¹⁹ And two years later the same newspaper lamented: "This dilapidated old structure is a disgrace to the county."²⁰ Finally, in 1880 the grand jury condemned the building.²¹ It took another two years before the commissioners seriously discussed the need for a new building, and definite action was taken to draw up plans and select an architect and builder for the project.²²

The County Commissioners determined that they wanted a two story brick structure, ninety-two by sixty feet, with fourteen foot ceilings. G.E. Payne of Ashland was appointed the architect,²³ and L.P. Marsh, also of Ashland, was awarded the construction contract.²⁴ George Holt, (builder of the U.S. Hotel and Redmen's Hall) was the brick mason,²⁵ and Jacobs & Russell laid the sandstone foundation. Many town merchants supplied materials and labor.²⁶ As the Courthouse assumed proportions it was visual testimony of the interminable confidence and skilled craftsmanship of local Jacksonville residents.

The cornerstone was laid on June 23, 1883.²⁷ By August the brick walls were raised and the frame of the tower in place, and by September the cupola was completed.²⁸ Even before the building was finished it received wide acclaim: The West Shore magazine wrote in August 1873: "The most prominent buildings of the city [Jacksonville] aside from the long rows of substantial brick blocks are the Masonic Temple, Orth Block, United States Hotel, the Presbyterian Church and the Court House, now in progress of erection . . . It will be very ornamental in its architecture, two stories high and surmounted by a belfry."²⁹ A.G. Walling, author and publisher of a loquacious account of southern Oregon history in 1884, declared that this towering edifice was "the crowning glory of Jacksonville . . ." In addition, "at a cost of \$32,000. . . . It [was] the cheapest building ever erected in Oregon and the bill of costs never increased by a single dollar from the amount stipulated in the contract. . . ."³⁰

One of the most rancorous and notorious events to take place at the Jackson County Courthouse was the trial and execution of Lois O'Neil of Ashland, found guilty of shooting a fellow Ashland resident. Perhaps it was mounting anticipation created by appeal of the case to the Supreme Court of Oregon and the build-up in the local press that attracted two hundred "qualified" spectators to the ticketed hanging that took place in February 1885 on the courthouse grounds.³¹

Just as this case served as a dramatic christening for the building, the famous trial of the DeAutremont brothers (Tunnel 13 by Art Chipman) marked the finale for the official life of the courthouse. After a three year man hunt that extended into Mexico, Canada, and Australia, the three DeAutremont brothers were found, and they confessed their guilt in what has been coined as the West's last great train robbery. This was the final trial held in the Jackson County Courthouse before all legal business was removed to the newly-erected county courthouse in Medford.

Since then the courthouse has been used as a polling place and a meeting place for various groups including the Boy Scouts, Grange members, and other community groups. In 1848 Jackson County voters expressed their interest in transforming the building into a museum, and two years later the building was dedicated to this new purpose.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ross, Marion D., Historic Preservation, "Jacksonville," April - June, 1972, p. 28.
2. The Democratic Times, February 16, 1884. (Marshall Lango)
3. _____, "Historical Outline - Southern Pacific Company," prepared by Bureau of News Development Department, San Francisco (figures used - December, 1931).
4. Sherman, G., "Plat of Jacksonville," 1852.
5. Walling, A. G., History of Southern Oregon Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties, Portland, Oregon, Publishing House of A. G. Walling, 1884, p. 366.
6. Jackson County Commissioners' Journals, December 2, 1856. (Christopher Owens)
7. Ibid., July 9, 1856; August 7, 1856. (Christopher Owens)
8. Gaston, Joseph, Portland Oregon: Its History and Builders, S. J. Clark Publishing Co., Chicago, 1911, p. 718.
9. Jackson County Commissioners' Journals, July 9, 1856, August 7, 1856. (Christopher Owens)
10. Ibid., March 7, 1859. (Berry & Kerr were contractors for the Courthouse and allowed \$500.00 for construction.) (Christopher Owens)
11. The Jacksonville Herald, March 12, 1859. (Marshall Lango)
12. Jackson County Deeds, October 10, 1867. (Christopher Owens)
13. The Oregon Sentinel, September 21, 1876.
14. Jackson County Commissioners' Journals, February 7, 1872. (Christopher Owens)
15. Ibid., October 1, 1866; December 5, 1877. (Christopher Owens)
The Democratic Times, October 25, 1878. (Christopher Owens)
16. Ibid., June 9, 1869; March 8, 1871. (Christopher Owens)

17. The Oregon Sentinel, September 20, 1876 ("Smith and Hockenjos are now at work putting a new roof on the Court House and repairing The building."); October 3, 1876 ("The carpenters have completed the work of putting on a new roof and laying a new floor in the Court House....").
18. The Democratic Times, April 2, 1875.
19. The Oregon Sentinel, July 24, 1861. (Marshall Lango)
20. The Democratic Times, December 30, 1871. (Christopher Owens)
21. The Oregon Sentinel, February 18, 1880.
22. Jackson County Commissioners' Journals, August 10, 1882. (Christopher Owens)
23. Ibid., August 18, 1882 ("Payne was more likely a draftsman and not an architect.") (Christopher Owens)
24. Ibid., December 7, 1882. (Christopher Owens)
25. Ibid., September 16, 1882. (Christopher Owens)
26. The Democratic Times, October 17, 1884.
27. Ibid., June 29, 1883. (Marshall Lango)
28. Ibid., September 8, 1883. (Marshall Lango)
29. The West Shore magazine, August, 1883.
30. Walling, A. G., History of Southern Oregon Comprising Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Curry and Coos Counties, Portland, Oregon, Publishing House of A. G. Walling, 1884, p. 366.
31. The Democratic Times, February 29, 1885.