NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Posey County Courthouse Square

other names/site number 129-439-36083 (Courthouse)
129-439-36084 (Monument)

2. Location

street & number 300 Main Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mount Vernon N/A vicinity

state IN code IN county Posey code 129 zip code 47620

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
☐ private	☒ building(s)
☒ public-local	☐ district
☐ public-State	☐ site
☐ public-Federal	☐ structure
	☐ object

Number of Resources within Property		
Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official — Date 11-15-88

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
RECREATION AND CULTURE: monument/marker

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Italianate
Second Empire

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone
walls BRICK
STONE: limestone
roof STONE: slate
other METAL: iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Courthouse

The Posey County Courthouse, 1874-6, is located in the center of a grassy, landscaped square block in downtown Mount Vernon, Indiana. The courthouse square is surrounded by commercial and public buildings, including a post office, a WWI memorial hall and a masonic temple. The 119 feet tall, three and one-half story masonry building dominates the skyline of this river town. The courthouse is built of red brick with Bedford limestone details and a wood lantern.

Italianate style detailing predominates on the building, the arched window surrounds and entablature with brackets are examples of this influence. The boldly scaled classical elements of the structure, such as the segmental pediments and mansard roof of the lantern, add a second Empire style touch to the building.

In plan, the courthouse consists of a central rectangular mass with two projecting gabled pavilions on the east and west elevations and one gabled projection on the north and south elevations, all in a symmetrical double-cross arrangement. The building rests on a raised dressed limestone foundation with a molded water table and plain beltcourse at the top. The foundation is pierced by small windows covered by decorative grills. Walls are constructed of red brick laid in Flemish bond.

The main facade of the courthouse faces west (photo 1). The east and west elevations are identical, consisting of five sections divided by two symmetrically placed projections. The central section has three bays and contains a principle entry. A flat roofed porch shelters the entry, and is reached by a flight of stone stairs. The porch has four thin iron Corithian columns and a balustrade. The main entry has double leaf, nine light paneled doors with a twenty-one light transom. A stone architrave surround frames the entry. Two round-arched, four over four windows with limestone surrounds and sills flank the entry. The surrounds have a wider hood molding with a keystone at the top and plinth blocks. The sills rest on molded corbels. This style of window and surround is typical to all first floor fenestration.

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☒ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance
1876 - 1938

Significant Dates
1876
1908

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Vrydagh, Josse A., and Clarke/
McMannomy, John

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Built in 1874-6, the Posey County Courthouse is significant for its grand architecture. The imposing brick building dominates Mount Vernon and is the most sophisticated nineteenth century architectural statement in Posey County. The Posey County Courthouse is among the finest Italianate style courthouses in Indiana, and is also the best surviving work of a significant Indiana architect, Josse Vrydagh. The Courthouse has remained in continuous use for 112 years, and is therefore a significant symbol of local government.

The Posey County Courthouse is significant in the context of nineteenth century county courthouses in Indiana, 1816 - 1900. This context is of obvious importance to Hoosier history. As Professor David Hermansen noted in his study Indiana Courthouses of the Nineteenth Century, cities competed to be recognized as county seats and courthouses became political, social, and architectural symbols of a county's development. The dates of the context relate to the founding of Indiana (1816) and the end of the nineteenth century.

In order to be considered significant in this context, the building should have been erected for use by a county government. Structures adapted for government use do not reflect the importance of this context. Integrity of window and door dimensions, surrounds, decorative cornices and towers are essential in order for a building to be considered under this context. Additions to rear or secondary elevations need not disqualify a building, provided that the primary elevation retains a high degree of integrity. The Posey County Courthouse has exceptional integrity and clearly qualifies under this context.

The history of the current courthouse is related to the development of the county in general. Posey County was created on September 7, 1814, from parts of Warrick and Gibson Counties by an act of territorial legislation and named after Thomas Posey, governor of the territory at the time.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Hermansen, David R. "Indiana County Courthouses of the Nineteenth Century." Ball State University Faculty Lecture Series, 1967-68. Muncie, Indiana.

History of Posey County Indiana. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1886.

Leffel, John C., ed. History of Posey County Indiana. Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1913.

Leonard, W. P. History and Directory of Posey, County. Evansville: A. C. Isaacs, Book Printer & Binder, 1882.

Leaves of Thyme, Volume X, No. 10 November 1959 (Vigo County Historical Society Newsletter, Biography of Jesse Vrydagh.)

Posey County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory. Indiana Department of Natural Resources, 1985

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: Less than one acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	421420	4198460
B			
C			
D			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

One square block in Mount Vernon, Indiana, bound by the north curb line of East 3rd Street on the south, the east curb line of Main Street on the west, the south curb line of East 4th Street on the north, and west curb line of Walnut Street on the east.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the historic boundary of the property.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Wanda L. Griess, President
organization: Posey County Historical Society date: 10/12/838-3518
street & number: Post Office Box 171 telephone:
city or town: Mount Vernon state: Indiana zip code: 47620

The second floor of the central area has three bays. All of these rectangular openings have shouldered surrounds with cornice moldings. The central bay has a transom above French doors which lead to the porch roof. Two two-over-two double hung windows flank the central opening. This type of sash and surround is typical to all second floor windows.

Three two-over-two windows are found on the third story of the central section. The window surrounds and sills are similar to those of the first story, but the openings are segmental-arched rather than round-arched.

A broad wooden entablature with corbels, a molded architrave, and a frieze of scroll brackets separated by panels is carried around the entire structure.

The central mass of the building has a truncated hip roof covered with slate and copper flashing and ridgework. There is decorative iron crestwork at the hip curb.

Two identical projecting pavilions flank the central section of the main elevation, embracing the entry porch. Each pavilion has two typical windows on the first story. Three limestone belt courses separate the first and second stories, the center course is wider and the upper course serves as a sillcourse for the second floor windows. These three belt courses are carried around the entire building. The second story opening has paired typical windows, as does the third story. The exterior corners of the pavilions are defined by corner pilasters. The pilasters are paneled above the second story sill level.

The pavilions are capped by gable roofs. The gable ends have a raked entablature with returns matching the main entablature. There is a glazed four-light oculus centered in each gable end. The oculi have stone surrounds with symmetrically placed keystones on the top, bottom, left, and right sides of the opening.

The sides of the gabled pavilions have three windows, with one typical opening on each story.

Flanking the projecting pavilions to the north and south are two one bay sections of the main block of the building. Three

apertures, one typical window for each story, are found in these wall areas. The belt courses between the first and second levels are continued across these sections, and then on to the north and south elevations. Corner pilasters matching these of the gabled pavilions define the corners if the main block.

The north and south elevations are identical. These elevations are divided into three sections by a centered, gabled pavilion (photo 2). The gabled projection houses a secondary entry. The entry is reached by a stone staircase with stone walls. An ornate limestone surround shelters the doors. The surround is capped by a massive segmental pediment hood resting on ornate consoles. The pediment has oversized modillions on its entablature and under the segmental arch. The doors have an archivolt surround and a semicircular fanlight.

Above this entry, the gabled projection is identical to those of the east and west elevations. The pavilions on the north and south facades, however, project forward only to the width of the corner pilasters; there are no side windows.

Two portions of the main block flank the center pavilion. There is one typical window on each story of these sections, with an ample blank wall space on either side of the windows. The entablature and roof are the same as the east or west facades.

The Posey County Courthouse is completed by a large dome and lantern complex centered on the roof of the building (photos 1 and 2). A low circular drum is visible to the east and west. The wood drum has paneling with stylized swag forms and the crest work of the main roof is carried around the top. A low saucer dome springs from the drum.

The oversized lantern rests on the saucer dome, almost completely obscuring it. The lantern is a octagonal in plan and is constructed of wood. The four sides of the lantern which aline with the building's four elevations are each framed by aediculea with pedastals, double engaged square Corinthian columns, and a heavily bracketed segmental pediment. These aediculea embrace one round-arched, two-over-two window each. The windows have archivolt surrounds with keystones. The bracketed frieze below the pediments is carried over to the four diagonal sides of the

lantern. The four diagonal facing sides of the lantern are paneled.

An octagonal drum with consoles above the pediments stands over the aediculea. A ribbed Mansard dome completes the lantern. Four bulls-eye dormers with keystones are found on the north, south, east and west sides of the lantern dome. A flagpole with a weather vane crowns the edifice.

The exterior of the courthouse is in excellent condition. The most significant alteration to the building has been the removal of all the chimney stacks. Originally, over ten chimney stacks rose above the roof line. Also, the lantern and entablature were painted in contrasting colors. Now, all exterior woodwork is painted white.

The interior of the courthouse is equally well maintained. The first floor plan has a long central corridor running north-south, intersected by a short east-west corridor (photo 3). County offices open off of either side of the first floor corridors. The hallways have diagonal checkerboard flooring, baseboards with quirk ogee moldings and plaster walls. Hall doors are paneled and have transoms. Doors have a molded architrave surround. The hall ceilings are segmental barrel-vaulted, bays are marked by pilaster strips and reinforcing arches. The central and entry spaces have groin vaulting.

A large staircase with rounded landings reaches the three main levels of the building (photo 4). The stairs have turned balusters, a wide handrail, and an extra railing above the stairrail consisting of an iron tube with turned wood supports. The baseboards and window surrounds are similar to those of the first story.

The court room, on the second story, is the most dramatic space of the interior (photo 5). This two story room is elliptical in plan with a balcony level on three sides supported by cast iron columns. The ceiling is coved and has plaster coffering. All the benches and railings of the courtroom were purchased in 1893. These permanent furnishings are Eastlake in style and are built of quarter-sawn white oak. The interior of the courtroom was restored and redecorated in 1974. Through the years, the

mechanical systems of the building have been updated. A steam heating system was added in 1891. The building was electrified at an unknown date. A modern HVAC system has in turn replaced the steam heating system.

Monument

The nominated property also includes the Posey County Soldier's and Sailor's Monument of 1908 which is centered in front of the courthouse on the west lawn. The monument has a limestone plinth with squat columns on the north and south sides. These columns have granite shafts and crocketed capitals. The plinth has a cornice with an acanthus leaf frieze. Four bronze figures stand on the corners of the base, representing the infantry (southwest corner), the navy (northwest corner), artillery (southeast corner), and a soldier (northeast corner). Each figure stands ten feet tall and weighs 1,500 pounds. A monolithic granite column climbs twenty-four feet above the base. The granite is from Barre, Vt. It has a limestone Corithian capital.

Crowning the monument is a thirteen foot tall representation of Liberty clad in a classical robe. The bronze figure holds a flag aloft in her right hand. Two cannons originally stood to the north and south of the monument, but they were removed for a collection of military materials during WWII.

The nominated property includes one contributing building (courthouse) and one contributing object (monument).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Posey County Courthouse Square

The first court in the county was held at the home of Absalom Duckworth, five miles north of Mount Vernon on March 20, 1815. The first permanent county seat was created January 14, 1816, in the no longer extant town of Blackford. In 1817, the county seat was removed to a more central location in the newly created town of Springfield. In 1825, the county seat was again relocated to Mount Vernon because Springfield did not seem to be flourishing as a town.

The first courthouse in Mount Vernon was a modest brick structure with a log structure for a jail at the rear. The bids for the current courthouse were received on February 4, 1874, according to plans done by the architects Vrydagh and Clarke. The contract was awarded to John McMannomy of Covington, Indiana. The building was completed in 1876.

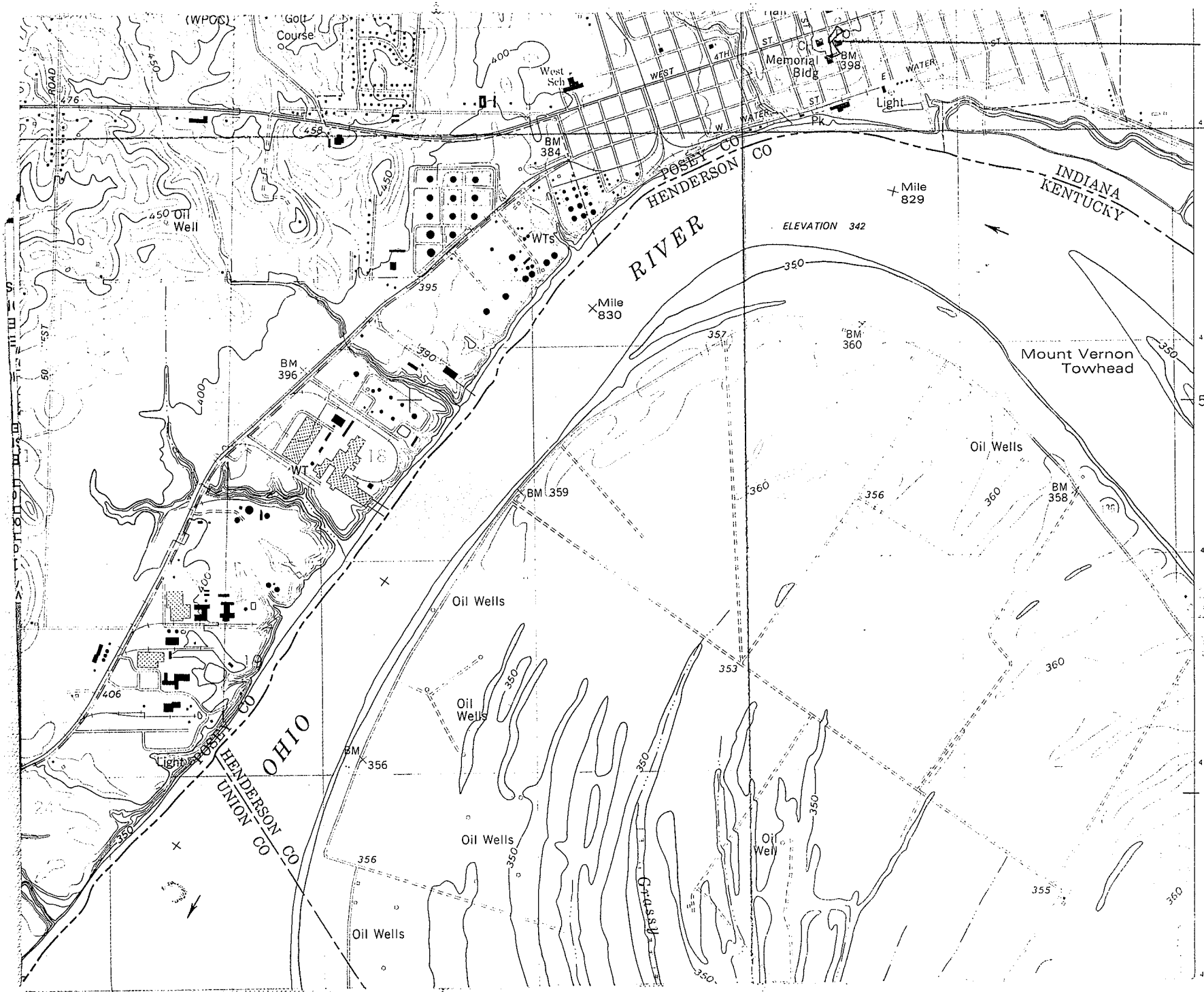
The Posey County courthouse is the most important surviving work of a well-known Indiana architect. Josse A. Vrydagh (1833-1898) was a native of Louvain, Belgium. Vrydagh worked for the civil engineer of Paris, France, and studied for about seven years at the Louvain Academie des Beaux-Arts. In 1854, Vrydagh joined the Phalansterian colony, composed of 250 individuals of French, Belgian and Swiss background, and came to America. After the failure of the colony in 1858, he traveled in America and Europe. He married in Belgium, and returned to the United States in 1863. Vrydagh settled permanently in Terre Haute in 1866. Almost immediately, Josse Vrydagh received large commissions such as the State Normal School building in 1867. (Burned in 1888.) Vrydagh's drawings received awards from the Federal government, and in 1881-2, he held a position in the architect of the Treasury Department office in Washington, D.C. Upon returning to Terre Haute, he entered into partnership with his three sons Martin, Jupiter, and Robert in about 1885. Vrydagh and Sons remained active until Josse's death in 1898. Most of Vrydagh's work in Terre Haute has been demolished, including the Terre Haute Post Office, 1887; the Terre Haute House Hotel, c. 1880; Wiley High School, 1886; and the Hulman Wholesale Grocery Building, 1867. Others, such as the former City Hall, have been drastically altered. The Posey County Courthouse is his finest remaining work.

The Posey County Courthouse is credited to Vrydagh and Clarke by a number of sources. Biographies of Vrydagh do not identify Clarke as his partner, nor do directories list Clarke as a partner of Vrydagh. One source credits Clarke with a "patented self-coiling steel shutter" fire proofing system for the Posey County structure (Leonard, p. 26). This, along with the other information, suggests that Clarke may have been a consulting engineer on the project. Unfortunately, Clarke's first name and roll in the design of the Posey County Courthouse remains unknown.

The Posey County Soldier's and Sailor's Monument, 1908, stands close by the courthouse. The monument was designed by F. M. Young of Litchfield, Illinois, and the bronze figures were cast and sculpted by Rudolph Schwartz.

Swartz was a noted Indianapolis sculptor. He designed figures for the Indiana Soldier's and Sailor's Monument, completed 1902 and the Gibson County Soldier's and Sailor's Monument, 1912, in Princeton, Indiana. Swartz taught at the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis.
Although primarily commemorative in nature, the monument should be considered a contributing element to the property. For eighty years, the monument has occupied a prominent place on the courthouse square and its location, centered in front of the west elevation of the courthouse, defines the main facade of the symmetrical building. The monument's bronze figures and granite columns complement the colors and textures of the red brick and limestone courthouse.

The courthouse and monument have remained largely unaltered, and the building continues to serve Posey County. The courthouse still exudes the same sense of dignity and authority that it did in 1876, when it was deemed a "handsome temple of justice." (Leonard, p.25.)



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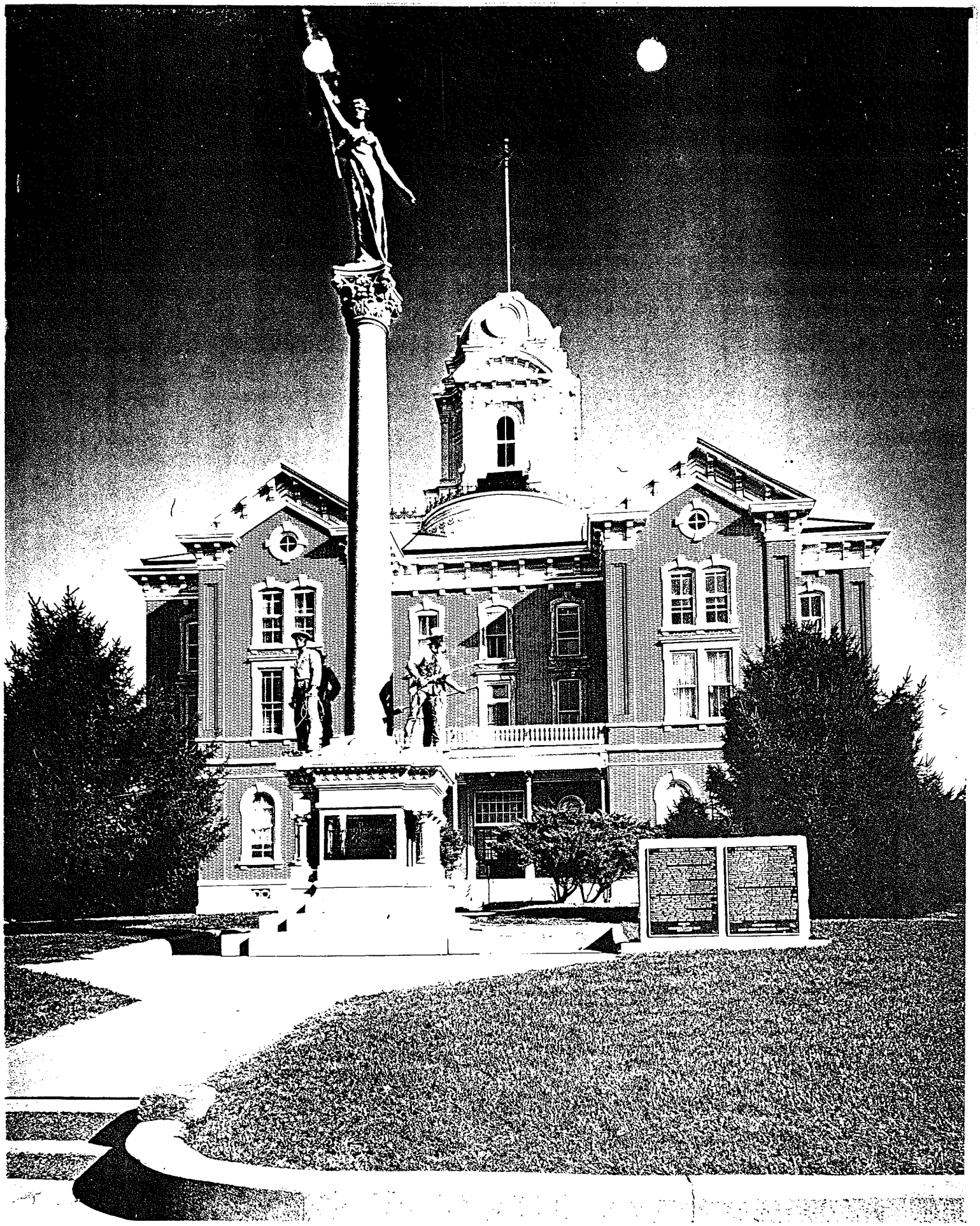


front view of Courthouse with War Monument

Posey County Courthouse -1986

the posey county co
mt. vernon, indiana
curt knight
1984
camera facing east. the front of
the courthouse facing west.
PHOTO 1

Posey County Courthouse 1986

+he posey county courthouse
mt vernon, indiana
curt knight
1986
camera is facing northeast
+he southwest corner of the square with the south
west side of the courthouse PHOTO #1

TREASURER
AUDITOR
CLERK

Corridor on 1st floor
Posey County Courthouse - 1986

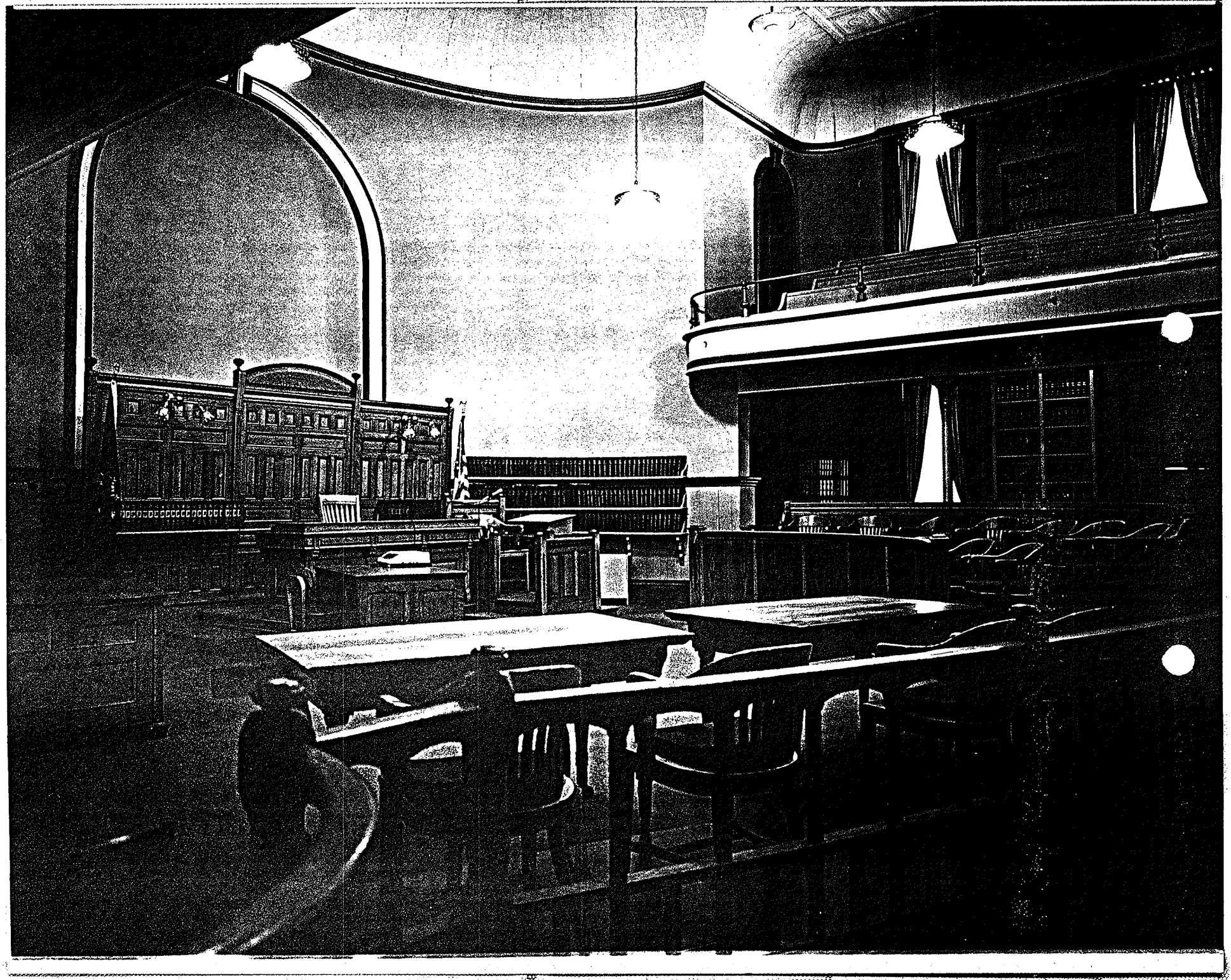
the posey county courthouse
mt. vernon, ind.
curt knight
1986
north-south corridor running
the long way of the courthouse
camera is facing north
PHOTO #3

One of 2 stairs from 1st floor to 3rd floor

Posey County Courthouse - 1986

the posey county courthouse
mt. vernon, ind
curt Knight
1986
camera to [illegible], down from the
third floor, showing turned
wooden spindles

PHOTO #4



Courtroom on 2nd floor

Posey County Courthouse -1986

the posey county courthouse
mt. vernon, ind.
curt knight
1986
camera is facing south.
courtroom on the second floor of the courthouse. also the balcony that comes off the third floor.
PHOTO #5

To err is human.
To really
foul things up
requires a
computer!

Original Safe Doors in Treasurer office

Posey County Courthouse - 1986

the posey county courthouse
mt. vernon, ind.
curt knight
1986
camera is front of original safe
in treasurer's office.

PHOTO #6