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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Tennessee Supreme Court Building

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & Number: 401 Seventh Avenue North

City or town: Nashville State: TN County: Davidson

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

[ ] **national** [X] **statewide** [X] **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria: [X] **A** [ ] **B** [X] **C** [ ] **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official: **Date**

Title: **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

_____
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

Private	
Public – Local	
Public – State	X
Public – Federal	

Category of Property

Building(s)	X
District	
Site	
Structure	
Object	

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions	Current Functions
GOVERNMENT: Courthouse	GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
EDUCATION: Library	EDUCATION: Library
	RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

OTHER: Stripped Classical

Materials:
Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: Granite, Limestone; METAL: Bronze, Steel; GLASS

Narrative Description

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building is located in downtown Nashville, Tennessee (Davidson County) at the intersection of Charlotte Avenue and Seventh Avenue North, across from the Tennessee State Capitol (NHL, 11 November 1971). The Tennessee Supreme Court Building was constructed in 1936-1937, to replace the limited Supreme Court space in the Capitol, where it had been primarily located since 1853.[1] The new Supreme Court building was designed in the Stripped Classical style by the Nashville based architectural firm, Marr and Holman. The building is four stories in height and has a full basement. The façade, on Seventh Avenue, features doors and windows separated by square limestone piers with simple Doric capitals. Above the third story on the façade is a classically detailed cornice featuring metope, antefix, and guttae. Above the cornice is an attic story recessed from the main building block. This section has no fenestration on the façade, and apertures with decorative grilles on the elevations. The other elevations are simple and restrained with minimal decoration but display some classical motifs. The interior, particularly on the first floor, features a higher degree of decoration than the exterior, including extensive use of marble

[1] Wilbur Foster Creighton, *Building of Nashville* (Nashville, 1969), 20.

throughout and decorative elements in bronze, walnut, and plaster. There have been very few changes to the building on both the interior and exterior.

The building contains three main stories with an attic level and a full basement. The main entrance is through three evenly spaced double doors located on the east façade which faces Seventh Avenue North. The building has minimal exterior decoration and a horizontal mass, both typical of the Stripped Classical style. The building is 140'4" wide, 82'4" deep, and the top of the parapet is 61'0" above street level on the façade, which faces Seventh Avenue North. The building is steel and concrete frame with a granite faced base. The upper stories are clad in limestone from the Ordovician-age Holston Formation in East Tennessee. This stone is popularly known, and sold, as "Tennessee Marble" because it is mined in quarries in the Knoxville vicinity, and may be polished to look like marble.[2] The original plans specified Standard Buff Bedford Indiana limestone, but in its stead limestone from Tennessee was used in the building's construction.

The east façade is clad in cut limestone with a continuous cut granite base. (Photograph 0001). There are eight evenly spaced square piers with Doric capitals, with a half pier on each outside edge abutting and recessed from two large outer square piers. There is a recessed wall on either side of these that forms the corner of the north and south elevations. The entrance court area features three rows of square panels of tan Crab Orchard stone alternating with grey granite at the sidewalk level, creating a checkerboard pattern. There are then five grey granite steps leading to the entry plaza, which also features grey granite slabs with fill-in panels of tan Crab Orchard stone, these arranged in a diamond shape within a square border. (Photograph 0009). The building is accessed through three evenly spaced sets of polished bronze and glass double doors. These all feature decorative polished bronze grilles with palmettes and polished brass and glass sidelights, fixed transom windows above with decorative grille work featuring square cast bronze rosettes in each corner of the outer edge, and cast bronze palmettes in the middle of the two central bronze bars. (Photograph 0008).

On the first floor there are six ten-light painted steel sash casement windows, with the only two operable sash in the center, located on the outer edges of the façade, evenly spaced between the square piers. Above each window and each door on the first floor is a cast bronze medallion featuring the seal of the Tennessee Supreme Court. (Photograph 0011). On the second story there are nine ten-light painted steel sash casement windows, with the only two operable sash in the center, located in line with the windows and doors of the first story. Above these windows are square painted steel panels, each featuring a central square rosette. Above these steel panels are the windows of the third story, which are similar to the windows on the second story but are only seven-light painted steel sash casement windows: the three lights above the operable portion as seen on the first and second story windows are absent on this level. (Photograph 0007).

Above the third story is a simple architrave over which there is a frieze. This contains the words "TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT" carved in the limestone of the central portion with guttae below the letters "SE" and "ME". On either side of this name area are triglyphs with guttae below. Beyond this, to the outer side of these triglyphs are metope with ornamentation of rinceau, or arabesque carvings, and a central carved acanthus, reminiscent of both Art Deco and Beaux Arts styles. Beyond, on both sides, are two sets of alternating triglyph with metope, and the carved metope with rinceau and acanthus. Above this section is a course of block modillions with antefix above, placed in line with the triglyphs and guttae below. (Photograph 0013). On the top of the building is the attic story, which is set back from the façade. There are

[2] "Buildings and Building Stone: 'Tennessee Marble' in the Tennessee State Supreme Court Building." Accessed 15 November 2013, http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/BS/BS-TSC.html.

no vents or fenestration on the façade of the attic level. The attic section is surmounted by a simple cornice with two courses of limestone coping. The roof is flat. The east elevation also features granite walls on either side of the building just below the outer large piers. The granite wall has rectangular granite bases on either side of the entry steps. These bases have a top granite buttress that features a scalloped motif along the edges. (Photograph 0017). Atop each of the bases is an original bronze lamp standard, now vertigreed. These feature a glass dome at the top, and an animal motif throughout: a wolf head atop each of four columns and animal feet at each column's base. (Photograph 0010). There is an accessible ramp located on the north side of the entry area to the building; this was installed in 2007, but was meticulously undertaken to lessen the impact of the change to the building. This feature was needed to meet modern accessibility requirements, and is in keeping with the building. (Photograph 0009).

The south elevation is composed of cut limestone with a continuous granite base and is simple in decoration. (Photograph 0002). This elevation also has three main stories, the attic story, and the basement level. The basement is clearly visible on this elevation. It gradually gains in height as the ground level slopes downward. This basement level is clad in cut granite and has two square metal hopper windows on the western half, in line with the windows above, with six lights and visible metal bars on the interior. To the west of the building, on this elevation, is a cut granite wall that runs along the Charlotte Avenue sidewalk nearly to the curb, ending at the entry to the parking lot behind the building. This granite wall features a large square post in the center and two other posts on the ends with fluted bases, evocative of the Art Deco style. Just above the granite basement level are the first floor windows: these are five ten-light bronze casement windows, with the only two operable sash in the center. The second and third story both have five evenly spaced painted steel casement windows and share a recessed frame around both levels' windows. On the second floor the windows have ten lights and on the third story the windows have seven lights, both with only the two central panes being operable. Between all five pairs of second and third story windows, and within the inset recessed limestone frame, are square painted steel panels, each featuring a central square rosette. Above the third story is a simple molding with one course of cut limestone, then a cornice featuring block modillions. Above this cornice is the recessed attic story, which has five evenly spaced rectangular apertures with decorative grilles, and has a simple cornice above with cut limestone capstones. On the far eastern side of this elevation you can see the side of the large square pier with Doric capital that is visible on the east façade.

The west (rear) elevation faces toward the parking lot, which is located behind the building. The west elevation of the building is composed of cut limestone with a cut granite base. (Photograph 0003). The basement level is of cut granite and is pierced by two metal garage doors on either end. There are a variety of other openings on this elevation, including, from north to south between the metal garage doors: a four light fixed window with a vent above; a metal door with a small glass window with embedded wire; two evenly spaced vents; a double metal door with a three light window on the upper portion of each door; a small vent; a cast iron "Majestic" coal door; another metal door with small glass windows with embedded wire identical to the one to the north; and a six light, two operable, hopper window. The windows on all floors of this elevation are slightly different from the other two elevations and the façade. On the first story are eight four-light casement windows with the two central panels operable. Above these windows is a limestone rectangle the width of the window, recessed from the cut limestone wall. Like the side elevations this elevation features a recessed frame around the second and third story windows. Within this frame on the second story are eight four-light, two central operable, painted steel casement windows. Then above each window, within the recessed frame, is a square cast painted steel panel with a central square rosette. Above these bronze panels are the third story windows, which are three-light bronze casement windows, with the two top lights

operable. Above the third story is a simple molding with one course of cut limestone, then a cornice featuring block modillions. Above this cornice is the recessed attic story, which has eleven evenly spaced rectangular apertures with decorative grilles. Above the attic is a simple cornice with cut limestone capstones. This elevation is the only one where a person can get far enough away from the building to see that there is a small T-shaped structure atop the flat roof that is faced in the limestone of the main building. This small T-shaped structure houses systems for the building and steps to the roof. (Photographs 0004, 0015).

The north elevation is located to the south of the driveway that leads to the Supreme Court Building parking lot. This elevation is composed of cut limestone with a continuous cut granite base and is simple in decoration. (Photographs 0005, 0006). The basement story is composed of cut granite and has five evenly spaced square metal six-light hopper windows with interior metal bars. On the eastern corner of the north elevation is a fluted recessed granite panel that ties into the granite wall running along the steps on the façade and along the driveway. Above the basement is a course of baguette shaped cut limestone blocks. Above this are the first story windows. These windows are centrally evenly spaced; the three windows to the west and the one window to the east are ten-light painted steel casement windows, with only the center two lights being operable, while the second window in from the east is half height and only reaches from the top of the other windows to the center. This window is a seven-light casement window with painted steel sash. The second and third stories both have five evenly spaced painted steel casement windows and share a recessed frame around both levels' windows. On the second floor the windows have ten lights and on the third floor the windows have seven lights, with only the center two lights being operable on both floors. Between all five pairs of second and third story windows, and within the inset recessed limestone frame, are square painted steel panels, each featuring a central square rosette. Above the third story is a simple molding and one course of cut limestone, then a cornice featuring block modillions. Above this cornice is the attic story that is recessed from the main building block and has five evenly spaced rectangular apertures with decorative grilles, with a simple cornice above finished by cut limestone capstones. (Photographs 0004).

The Interior

The interior of the building is composed of three main stories along with a fourth floor attic and a basement. The first floor contains the main public spaces, and as such is the most richly detailed. This floor is comprised of the main entry foyer, the courtroom, the library and museum, offices, and auxiliary rooms. The upper three stories primarily house offices, and the basement comprises parking and mechanical rooms.

The First Floor

Primary entry to the building is through three sets of evenly spaced bronze and glass doors. These doors look nearly the same on the interior as the exterior, with polished bronze grilles, sidelights and transom with decorative bronze grilles, featuring cast bronze square rosettes on the outside corners of the doors, and polished bronze palmettes inside the grilles. Through these doors is the entry vestibule which is 32'3"x 7'0" and has a 16'0" ceiling. (Photograph 0018). This area contains floors of Tennessee Cedar and Rose Grey marble, featuring a central diamond shape and banding at the perimeter of the room. The walls are composed of Tennessee Roseat marble and the ceiling is plaster with double-revealed panels. Hanging from the ceiling, aligned with the entry doors, are three original Art Deco style pendant lights featuring bronze floral motifs

and banding throughout over opaque white opal glass. Each light has an acorn finial hanging down from the middle of the bottom of the fixture. These lights are also aligned with the doors on the west elevation. Three sets of doors, on the west wall, in line with the exterior three sets, lead to the main lobby. They are composed of bronze and glass with a large bronze and glass transom as well as sidelights. The doors are simple, with a central glass portion within a polished bronze frame. The side transoms have a central bronze divider and a wave-motif bronze detail at the top. There is a corrugated bronze band across the top of the doors and sidelights, separating them from the transom above. The polished bronze grilles above the doors feature two rows of three cast bronze plumage motif squares, spaced vertically within polished bronze bars. The handles on these doors are composed of rosettes in a circular vine motif that is evocative of rinceau. On the side of the doors facing the lobby, there is a cast bronze anthemion centered over each of the three double doors. (Photograph 0024).

The lobby, also referred to as The Hall of Justice, has a 16'0" tall ceiling and is 32'0" square. (Photographs 0019, 0020, 0022). The walls are covered in Tennessee Roseat marble. The floor is a richly patterned combination of Tennessee Cedar, Cardiff Green, and Rose Grey marble. (Photograph 0025). There is a six-foot diameter plaque of the Supreme Court seal in the center of the lobby floor. (Photograph 0023) This plaque is composed of bronze and features a center casting with the name of the court and a figure of justice. Around this bronze central portion is a marble border—alternating triangles of Tennessee Cardiff Green and Cedar marble. Around the marble border is a terrazzo circle with brass letters, spelling "FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CAELUM" ("LET JUSTICE BE DONE THOUGH THE HEAVENS MAY FALL"). At the bottom of this portion is a central cast bronze rosette flanked by cast bronze bay leaf banding. This area is then surrounded by another marble border that is identical in pattern to the one around the center, but larger in scale. On the ceiling, centered above the seal, is an original large Art Deco style chandelier. (Photograph 0021). At the top of the chandelier is a plaster starburst with a bronze leaf finish attached to the ceiling. From this, the main bronze fixture hangs down, featuring a bronze central portion, with nine bronze rods that lead into a can shaped light with bronze decoration in the Art Deco style, similar to the lights in the vestibule. This portion then leads into a large saucer shaped opaque white opal glass dome with bronze strapping and a central bronze three-level decoration that hangs down from the center of the glass portion. The ceiling in the lobby is coffered, composed of plaster, with acoustic tile at the center of the coffers, while Roseat marble covers the beams. There is a cornice above the marble walls that covers the perimeter of the room. This plaster cornice features an egg and dart molding. Below this molding on the marble are evenly spaced bronze paterae with cast rosettes. These are equally spaced around the perimeter of the lobby, with 30 paterae in total. Around the lobby are sets of Roseat marble pilasters. There are sets of a grouping of three pilasters on the north and south walls, these sets have one central pilaster flanked by a recessed pilaster on each side. In each corner of the lobby are a set of two abutting pilasters. On the east and west walls, larger simpler pilasters (no grooved banding) flank the opening on the west wall and separate the three entry doors on the east elevation. There are also decorative bronze air returns on the walls of the lobby. (Photographs 0020, 0027).

The lobby has wood double doors on the south and north elevations. These doors feature Tennessee walnut and recessed panels. The other sides of these doors are different, with a raised panel design. (Photograph 0037). All doors have decorative hardware and knobs that feature the seals of the Tennessee Supreme Court and the State of Tennessee. (Photograph 0026). On the center of the west elevation is an opening framed by a set of single Roseat marble pilasters that leads to a vestibule which contains the main public elevator and stairway. (Photograph 0027).

The main elevator lobby and stair hall is finished as dramatically as the main lobby. The walls are Roseat marble, the floors are a combination of Rose Grey, Cedar, Cardiff Green, and Roseat marble, with decorative details similar to those on the floor of the main lobby. On the north elevation is a polished bronze elevator door that has eight circular reliefs of pairs of four judicial symbols. These symbols from top to bottom are: the scales of justice; fasces, which stand for authority; a sword, which is a historical symbol of authority; and a scroll, which symbolizes judgment or law. (Photograph 0028). On the north of the elevator lobby is the main public staircase which includes marble treads, bronze balustrade and turned newel, and a bronze hand railing attached to the marble on the west wall. (Photograph 0029). Surrounding this stair hall are book-matched Tennessee Roseat marble wall panels. (Photograph 0030). Although book-matched marble is seen throughout the building, it is particularly striking in this stair hall. There is a simple recessed two panel wood door to the east of the staircase, which leads to a men's bathroom. The west elevation of the elevator and stair vestibule leads to a public corridor off of which there are a variety of rooms. This area is 56'4" by 10'2" and is finished in the same materials as the lobby, but is not as greatly ornamented. For instance, the corridor only has 6'0" tall marble wainscots with painted plaster above. (Photographs 0031, 0033, 0034, 0035). There is an original cast bronze letterbox in the public corridor. (Photograph 0032). Off this hall are a variety of rooms including: flanking work and file rooms, two back stairways, two offices, the Clerk of Court area, a janitor's closet, two small elevators, and corridors that lead to the court room and the library/museum. Also in this area are three original bathrooms that feature original terrazzo flooring, 7'0" Rose Grey marble paneled walls, and marble stall dividers and vanities. All doors leading to the rooms in this area feature the bronze door hardware and knobs that have the Supreme Court and State of Tennessee seals.

On the north elevation of the lobby there is a set of wooden recessed panel walnut double doors. These doors feature the original bronze hardware and knobs that illustrate the seals of the Tennessee Supreme Court and the State of Tennessee. (Photograph 0026). Above these double doors on the marble wall are bronze letters that say SUPREME COURT. Above these words is a cast bronze disk with the seal of the Tennessee Supreme Court at Nashville, and flanking this medallion are cast bronze fasces. (Photograph 0036). This door on the north wall leads to a vestibule. The floors in this space are covered in heavy carpeting. The walls are Tennessee Roseat marble. The ceiling is plaster and a single opal glass and bronze rectangular pendant light hangs from its center. This light has a simple Art Deco style fretwork pattern etched in the glass near the top on each side, and on the bottom of the fixture. This fretwork pattern is balanced with floral motifs, flowers in the four corners of the bottom, and three straight lines out of a starburst shape on the sides. (Photograph 0039). There is a door to an office space on the east wall. The room off the east wall is currently used for visiting attorneys; this room is of note because it retains an original hanging light fixture. Identical fixtures originally hung in all offices but have been mostly replaced with fluorescent lights. (Photograph 0038). There are double wooden doors leading to the court room on the north wall. (Photographs 0037, 0038). These doors also feature the bronze door hardware and knobs that have the Tennessee Supreme Court and State of Tennessee seals.

What is now the courtroom was originally designed as "Court Room #2". This room is 38'2" x 48'8" with a main ceiling height of 16'0". (Photographs 0040, 0041, 0042, 0043, 0044, 0045, 0046, 0047). In opposition to the Art Deco style lobby, the courtroom is more clearly Classical in design. The walls are comprised of Tennessee Fantasia Rose marble, plaster, and walnut panels. The floors are concrete covered in heavy red-on-red patterned wall-to-wall carpeting. The original plans called for a resilient tile floor, as seen in the library; however the photographs of the building just after construction show a heavy wool carpet similar to that currently installed. (Figures 2, 3). The carpeting has only been changed two times in the building's lifetime, and each time it was replaced with an in-kind, nearly identical carpet. The bench area is surrounded

by walnut wall paneling, with painted plaster panels above carved walnut wainscots on the south elevation and portions of the east and west walls. Above the Chief Justice's chair, on the south elevation, is a carved walnut wood panel that features the Tennessee Supreme Court seal. (Photograph 0073). On the south, east, and west walls are fluted Fantasia Rose marble pilasters, each with three small bronze stars on the top. Between the marble pilasters are raised panel walnut wood wainscots, with plaster above housing original portraits hanging from the top, in the original configuration. There are bronze air-returns throughout, placed in the walnut wainscot, clearly meant to be decorative as well as functional. A cornice runs around the entire room and features a dentil molding throughout, with evenly spaced rosettes below on the north and south elevations. (Photograph 0049). The ceiling is coffered plaster with acoustical tile panels recessed inside the raised plaster. There are eight Art Deco style chandeliers that incorporate glass and bronze, each displaying a symbol of law. (Photograph 0050). There is a pair comprising each of the following symbols: scroll, scales of justice, dagger of authority, and book of judgment or law.

The furniture in this room is all original, aside from the Judges' chairs, and was designed specifically for the building. The draperies in the building are reproductions of the original draperies.[3] The heavy carpeting, wood paneling, and heavy drapes were designed to, and continue to, help dampen noise the in the courtroom. The only major change to this room is that in 1997 the northwest corner of the room was altered to accommodate a justice who was in a wheelchair. The steps leading to the bench were removed and replaced with a flat floor that leads from the door on the west wall to the Justices' chairs. (Photograph 0048). At the same time a wheelchair lift was added to the area to the west of the west door in the courtroom. (Photograph 0051). Additionally at this time a door was added to enclose this room from the northern private stair and elevator hall. This door is obviously not original as it does not feature the original door hardware. (Photograph 0053). Off the west wall of this enclosed hallway is a door to what is now the "Robing Room." This room features original walnut wainscots and plaster walls with a simple plaster cornice. The floor is carpeted and the ceiling has rectangular fluorescent lights. This room also features much of the furniture that was specifically designed and produced for the building when it opened in 1937, such as walnut wardrobes and green leather and walnut chairs. (Photograph 0052).

Off the south elevation of the main lobby are double walnut recessed panel doors that lead to the library vestibule. (Photograph 0054). The library vestibule features 12" square blue and yellow rubber tile flooring in a checkerboard pattern with a black border. The walls are wood paneled. (Photograph 0055). Off the north elevation of the vestibule is a door that leads to an office. On the south elevation of the library vestibule are two raised panel walnut double doors that lead to the library/museum. Above these doors on the wood paneling is a bronze decorative medallion featuring the seal of the State of Tennessee; this is not original. The doors in this vestibule also feature all original bronze hardware and knobs with the cast Supreme Court and State of Tennessee seals. The ceiling in this vestibule is plaster and there is a square bronze and etched glass pendant light that is identical to the pendant light in the courtroom vestibule.

[3] In 1984, the drapes in the courtroom were updated, courtesy of the Dino De Laurentis Company, when scenes from the movie *Marie*, based on the Peter Maas book, starring Sissy Spacek, were filmed there. The filmmakers thought the existing drapes were too worn, so they commissioned production of new, identical drapes that remained in the courtroom after filming was concluded. Two other movies were also filmed in the building. In 1995, several scenes for the Bruce Beresford film, *Last Dance*, starring Sharon Stone and Rob Morrow, were filmed in the building's library. *Billy, the Early Years*, a film chronicling the life of evangelist, Billy Graham, was filmed in and around the building in 2008. [Bennett, 20; *Internet Movie Database*. Accessed 2 December, 2013, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0116827/, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1213672/, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0089555/].

The space the law library occupies was originally designed to be "Court Room #1", however this was always a library space as evidenced from 1938 photographs of the room. (Figures 4 and 5). (Photograph 0056). This space has been partially turned into the Tennessee Judiciary Museum. The museum opened on December 4, 2012. The space is still one room and the museum has kept the layout of the library, with exhibits located between original library stack partitions, preserving the room's integrity of feeling. (Photographs 0057, 0058) On the western half of the room the law library is still extant. It is also still extant on the second story mezzanine loft that covers the perimeter of the room with stacks of books. There is a wrought iron railing that runs continuously around the length of the mezzanine level. (Photograph 0059). The mezzanine level is accessed by staircases on the southeast and west walls. (Photograph 0060). The eastern end of the room is where the museum is housed. The floors of this room are 12" square resilient tile with an alternating color checkerboard pattern. (Photograph 0058). The color schemes of the tile are different in the main portion of the room (blue and yellow check with a red and black border) and in the book alcoves (red and yellow laid in a diamond pattern with a black border). The shelving in the library is paneled walnut, while many of the shelves are metal painted to look like wood. The ceiling is acoustical tile. As seen from a 1938 photograph, there were originally Art Deco disk-shaped light fixtures that were hung approximately two feet from the ceiling (figures, 4,5). Currently there are pairs of flat rectangular fluorescent lights that run the length of the room. There is simple recessed walnut paneling on the portions of the walls not covered by shelving, and recessed panel wainscots in the areas where there are windows on the south elevation. (Photograph 0059).

The Second and Third Floors

The main entrance to the second floor is through the elevator on the southern portion of the center of the floor. The elevator is located within a rectangular block along with an office and a copy/supplies room. The stairway is in an identical block across a corridor to the north, with a large ladies bathroom and a smaller men's bathroom. The glass and bronze doors in front of the stairway, directly across from the elevator, are a recent addition, installed in about 2005. (Photograph 0062). Completely surrounding these central blocks are corridors. Floors of these corridors are 12" square black and green resilient tile laid in a checkerboard pattern with green and grey faux marble resilient bordering. The walls of the corridors are composed of 6'0" tall Roseat marble wainscots with painted plaster above. (Photograph 0061). Off these corridors to the outside walls are two reception areas and ten main Judges' offices with six attached "Secretary" offices. The doors leading to the offices off the corridors are original, featuring recessed wood panels on the bottom and recessed frosted glass on the top. The Judges' offices vary somewhat in size, but the layout and finishes remain constant. (Photographs 0064, 0065). Every Judge's office has its own small ceramic tiled bathroom attached, and some feature closets. The Judges' offices are connected to the "Secretary" offices. These offices are smaller than the Judges' offices, but contain nearly identical finishes. (Photograph 0063). The walls are plaster with simple wood wainscots with a heavy molding at the base. The ceilings are plaster with a central plaster covered beam. Office floors are covered in carpet, but the original resilient tile flooring remains underneath. The original hanging lights (seen in Figure 6) have been replaced with rectangular fluorescent light boxes. Typical office spaces include original furniture, comprising desks, shelving, and cabinets, produced for the building when it opened. The furniture produced for the Judges' offices is more highly ornamented with Greek key patterning than is the simpler secretarial office furniture. On the west wall of this floor are mirror image sets of a small elevator to the outside of a stairway.

The third floor is nearly identical in layout and finishes to the second floor. The office spaces on this level are similar to those on the second floor, with carpeted floors, walnut wainscots, simple recessed panel walnut doors, plaster walls, and ceilings with rectangular fluorescent light boxes. (Photograph 0067). The main

substantive difference on this level is that the windows are smaller in height than on the second floor, and the central main stair across from the public elevator does not go past the second floor; on this level an office occupies the space that is a stair hall on the second floor. In the main elevator block there is a small office and a large conference room. There is also a conference room located off the western corridor. The conference rooms are similar to office spaces, and have simple wood wainscots, plaster walls and ceilings, carpeted floors, and rectangular fluorescent lights. (Photograph 0068). Doors on these floors all feature the seal of the Supreme Court and the seal of the State of Tennessee on the exterior, and simple smooth bronze hardware on the interior of the doors.

The Fourth Floor/Attic

The attic floor is the only level that has had the floor plan substantially changed. Originally this floor had a different layout because it housed archives, stacks, and supplies. It was reconfigured in 1965 to hold 26 offices, two restrooms, and a kitchen; a change necessitated by a 1963 legislative act that created the position of Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court. At this time the windows on this level were covered with a false wall in order to hide new ductwork for the space. The finishes on this level are different, not as richly ornamented, reflecting the mid-1960s era rather than the 1930s era seen throughout the other floors of the building. The fourth floor's layout incorporates a rectangular interior corridor, the floor of which is black and cream colored 12" square resilient tile flooring in a checkerboard pattern, with a black resilient border. The walls are drywall; no marble is seen on this floor. The doors leading to the offices on this level are much simpler than the doors elsewhere in the building—they are flat slab doors, devoid of any paneling, and the wood is not walnut but a lighter stained wood dating to the 1965 renovation. (Photograph 0069). The offices feature dry wall walls with a 40" tall wood recessed panel wainscot in the same wood finish as the doors. There are no windows in any offices on the fourth floor. The floors in the offices are carpet. (Photograph 0070). Where there were doors originally in 1937, these paneled doors remain, such as the doors to the stairway. (Photograph 0071). The original bronze mail chute is also seen on this level. This level is typical of mid-1960s office design.

The Basement

The basement level houses parking areas and mechanical rooms. The space is primarily composed of concrete and has no decorative elements; it simply was designed and continues to be a utilitarian space. (Photograph 0072). The basement is accessed by the two small private elevators and stairways on the west elevation. Between the elevator/stair sets are two utility rooms that were designed as the "coal room" and the "boiler room" and are now both mechanical rooms, since coal is no longer used to heat the building. The main elevator also goes down to the basement, and this elevator opens up to a corridor that leads to "car storage." In the center of the room is a large block that houses mechanical equipment for the building. The layout of this floor is the same as when it was built, the only change is that in the 2000s, on the south wall, the three windows to the east were closed up.

Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

[X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

[X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

[ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations N/A

Property is:

[ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] B removed from its original location.

[ ] C a birthplace or grave.

[ ] D a cemetery.

[ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

[ ] F a commemorative property.

[ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE
LAW
GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1936-1965

Significant Dates

1937

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Architect: Marr and Holman
Builder: Rock City Construction Company

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building, located in Nashville (Davidson County), Tennessee, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for Criteria A and C in the areas of Law, Government, and Architecture at the State and Local levels of significance. From its construction to the present, the Tennessee Supreme Court Building has been important to the Nashville community and the State of Tennessee, both civically and architecturally. Under Criterion A, the building is significant in the area of Law and Government. Decades of important rulings and legal precedents occurred at the Tennessee Supreme Court Building, which was the first building in Tennessee specifically constructed to house the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. Also under this Criterion, the building is significant as a New Deal-era project, partially funded by the Public Works Administration (PWA). Under Criterion C, the building is architecturally significant as a prime example of Stripped Classicism, and representative of the work of the Nashville based architectural firm, Marr and Holman. The building retains an exceptionally high level of integrity on the interior and exterior. The period of significance begins in 1936 with the beginning of construction, and ends in 1965, when the fourth floor was reconfigured to accommodate the need for office space related to the newly established position of Secretary of the Supreme Court and associated staff.

Historical Overview

Tennessee's first constitution in 1796 called for the election of justices to the courts by the legislature.[4] The judiciary provided for in this document specified: "The judicial power of the state shall be vested in such superior and inferior courts of law and equity, as the legislature shall, from time to time, direct and establish."[5] At the inception of this system, three judges were stipulated, the first of whom were John McNairy, Archibald Roane, and Willie Blount. Turnover of judges was high due to the hardships of extensive travel, so many different men served as justices, including Andrew Jackson, who became a Superior Court Justice in 1798 and served until 1804. This system of judges, presiding in different parts of the state, meant that decisions, often on issues of importance to the whole state, might be decided differently in different jurisdictions. As advocates of reforming the judicial system (such as Thomas Hart Benton) insisted, a higher court—a Supreme Court—would eliminate this problem. In 1809, the Act of November 16th established a Supreme Court consisting of two justices to be elected by the legislature, assisted by a circuit judge. Hugh Lawson White and George W. Campbell, both of whom subsequently achieved national renown, were the first Justices of the newly created Tennessee Supreme Court. In 1830, the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was established and filled by John Catron, bringing the total number of justices to three. In 1834, a new Constitution addressed the issue of the court being under the control of the legislature, rather than an independent entity immune from the exigencies of politics. This document established the court as a constitutional entity, a department of government that could not be altered or abolished by the legislature, with justices elected by the people. After the Civil War a new Constitution was

[4] Judge Horace H. Lurton's address to the Tennessee Historical Society on June 18, 1888.
[5] Charles N. Burch, Address at the Dedication of Tennessee's New Supreme Court Building. *American Bar Association Journal*, 24, No. 1 (January 1938), 25-29

drawn up in 1870 increasing the number of Justices of the Supreme Court to five, no more than two of whom may come from the same Grand Division of the state.[6]

The 1834 Constitution limited the meetings of the Supreme Court to one in each division, Knoxville, Nashville, and Jackson, thereby consolidating operations, reducing the amount of travel, and making it easier for justices to access law books.[7] The Court convened in available space in each jurisdiction rather than having a building dedicated to the needs of the court, its officers, and employees.[8] In Nashville, which was established as the permanent capital of Tennessee in 1843, the Supreme Court convened in the Nashville Market House, located on the west side of the public square; subsequently moving to more appropriate quarters in the Capitol Building in 1853, prior to that building's completion in 1859.[9] Space in the Capitol was limited, however, preventing the Court from consolidating its courtrooms, judges, clerks, offices, and library under one roof. Governor James B. Frazier noted the court's space problem in 1905, urging the legislature to consider autho
rizing a new building for the court and the Attorney General "on some part of Capitol Square."[10] In 1935, Chief Justice Grafton Green initiated efforts to erect such a dedicated building to house the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals, along with all operations and offices related to court business. This effort referenced the example of the Federal government's construction of a dedicated United States Supreme Court Building in Washington D.C. that same year, also recognizing the opportunity for funding of the project via the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works instituted by the Roosevelt administration. The purpose of the Public Works Administration (PWA) was to provide jobs as well as to provide support for the ailing construction industry, giving loans for construction of local infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and courthouses.[11]

In July, 1935 C.K. Colley, a well-known Nashville architect, followed up on the Chief Justice's idea, presenting a building concept to the court, presumably also proposing a budget. Colley suggested they could qualify for a federal grant to cover 40% of the building's cost.[12] Colley envisioned a structure of "Greek Doric design, with an exterior of white stone and a foundation of granite," housing archives and a library, as well as courtrooms, chambers, and offices. In a special session of the General Assembly that year, Governor Hill McAlister's agenda included discussion of a dedicated Supreme Court Building, after which Senator Elmer D. Davies and Representative James H. Cummings sponsored legislation to underwrite it.[13] In response, the Legislature issued "Chapter 35" declaring the immediate need for both the building and the federal money to underwrite its construction. They established a Tennessee Supreme Court Building

[6] Burch; Judge Andy D Bennett, "Building Justice: For 75 Years, the Supreme Court Building in Nashville Has Been Tennessee's Center of Justice." *Tennessee Bar Journal* 48, no. 1, 12; Theodore Brown, Jr., *A History of the Tennessee Supreme Court*, Ed. James W. Ely (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 1-60.
[7] Bennett, 13
[8] Charles W. Warterfield, *Tennessee Supreme Court Building at Nashville Historic Structure Report,* 1992, 3-4
[9] HSR 5
[10] Robert H. White, comp., *Messages of the Governors of Tennessee*, Volume 8: 1899-1907 (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Commission, 1972), 304; Bennett, 13.
[11] Carroll Van West. *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape: A Guidebook* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 15-16
[12] HSR 5
[13] Letter from Grafton Green to Joseph W. Holman, October 14, 1936 found in the Supreme Court Building Commission files, Tennessee State Library Archives; W.P. Hoffman "New Building for the Supreme Court Sought," *The Nashville Tennessean*, July 12, 1935. Bennett, 13

Commission, which they authorized to choose a site for the building "from any property now owned by the State of Tennessee."[14] This commission was composed of three members: Governor McAllister, Chief Justice Green, and Attorney General Roy Beeler, who were charged with preparing, issuing, and selling bonds to generate $450,000 for the project. The commission was also authorized to select a location, an architect, and plans for the building, as well as specifying all necessary equipment, systems, and furnishings.[15]

Although there had never been a master plan for the development of the State Capitol area, the Commission was able to consider two possible locations for the new building, thanks to the foresight of the Tennessee State Capitol Association which undertook efforts to preserve the land adjacent to the State Capitol that had previously been residential. Beginning in 1916 this group began raising funds, and was eventually able to purchase properties along Cedar Street (now Charlotte Avenue) at the corners of both Sixth and Seventh Avenues.[16] The Building Commission chose the parcel at Seventh Avenue for the new court building, overruling Colley, who preferred the intersection of Cedar at Sixth. Colley was given the task of applying for federal aid. He was instructed to request the 40% participation he had proposed—a request that was rebuffed. The Building Committee originally concluded that this was a final decision and the project could not obtain the federal funds needed to go forward with construction. They were then approached by Joseph Holman of the architectural firm Marr and Holman who thought the application had been too ambitious and that a request for a smaller amount of federal funding would be approved. Authorized, as Colley had been, to request funding with no guarantee of being given the commission to design the building, Holman filed a request for a federal grant of 30% which was approved in December, 1935. The Federal Emergency Authority of Public Works allocated $192,857 for the project, and the Commission formally approved acceptance of this on February 3, 1936.[17]

Once the federal funding was approved, the Commission chose the architectural firm of Marr and Holman over Colley, architect Donald W. Southgate, and the architectural firm of Hart and Russell.[18] Marr and Holman's experience overseeing construction of commercial buildings and civic structures similar to the project proposed by the Building Commission, as well as their reasoned--and successful--approach to obtaining federal funding, likely influenced their selection. The firm of Marr (1866-1936) and Holman (1891-1952) was founded by Thomas Marr in 1897. His personal story of overcoming deafness is inspiring. Having been rendered deaf by complications of scarlet fever at the age of three, Marr attended the Tennessee School for the Deaf in Knoxville, subsequently graduating in 1889 from Gallaudet College, at that time the only university for the deaf in the world. He began a job as a draftsman with architect, George Thompson, leaving two years later to study architecture at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Returning to Tennessee in 1892, Marr was hired by the architectural firm of Thompson, Gibel where he worked until opening his own firm in 1897. In 1904, Marr hired Joseph Holman, a thirteen year old boy who delivered his newspaper, to work in his office. Marr trained and mentored Holman, who subsequently attended Vanderbilt University,

[14] Governor's Proclamation of July 15, 1935, 1935 House Journal, 29; 1935 Public Chapter 35; Bennett, 14
[15] Bennett, 14
[16] Hoffman, "New Building," July 12, 1935; Kem G. Hinton, Hinton, *A Long Path: The Search for a Tennessee Bicentennial*. (Franklin TN: Hillsboro Press, 1997), 30,177; HSR 10
[17] HSR, 10
[18] Bennett, 14

eventually integrating him into the business as a full partner, principally responsible for the bidding process and contracts.[19] Marr's instinct about this young man turned out to be excellent; essential to the firm's impressive growth and success.

Marr launched his Nashville firm with residential contracts, but the business grew exponentially in the 1910s and 1920s, becoming known for designing commercial buildings. Working with his protégé, Holman, whose business acumen helped increase the firm's contracts and capital, they built the firm into a major power, aggressively pursuing both public and private projects. Among the earliest clients courted by the firm was Tony Sudekum's Crescent Amusement Company, for which the firm designed numerous theaters, including the art deco Sudekum/Tennessee Theater Building on Church Street (demolished 1989-92).[20] In the 1920s Marr and Holman developed a close relationship with Nashville's financial powerhouse, Caldwell and Company. Caldwell financed numerous Marr and Holman commissions, including the Andrew Jackson Hotel, the Harry Nichol Building, and the Cotton State Life Building. Holman also brokered access to project financing to other firms in Georgia, Florida, and North and South Carolina, in exchange for making Marr and Holman a partner in their projects. These financial relationships helped account for the firm's tremendous growth during the 1920s, placing it in a very advantageous position over its competitors until the demise of the Caldwell financial empire in 1932.[21] Among the most notable projects completed by Marr and Holman in the years prior to taking the commission for the Tennessee Supreme Court Building were: The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (NR-listed 10 October 1984), the Noel Hotel (NR-listed 10 October 1984), the Belle Meade Theater (partially demolished), the Rich-Schwartz Building, in the Fifth Avenue Historic District (NR-listed 5 December 1983), the Nashville Post Office, now the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (NR-listed 15 November 1984), as well as courthouses in Bedford and Pickett (NR-listed 30 March 1995) counties.[22]

The development of the Marr and Holman firm epitomized the "American Dream," leading the way for the evolution of other architectural firms in the United States. Marr began as a draftsman and went on to become one of Tennessee's first technically trained architects, subsequently building a successful, much-admired business of his own. His association with Holman, whom he hired based on potential, trained, mentored, and then accepted as a full partner, reflected a movement within larger firms toward divisions of responsibilities according to individual strengths. Marr assumed responsibility for project design and office supervision, while Holman's personal connections and business acumen enhanced the firm's growth.[23]

Thomas Marr died of a stroke on March 24, 1936, shortly after completing his design for the Tennessee Supreme Court Building. Using his drawings, the Building Commission put the project out to bid and chose Rock City Construction Company, whose bid of $472,753 was the lowest. With a contractor on board, the

[19] HSR, 15-19; West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*, 35
[20] "Nashville History": Tennessee Theater and the Sudekum Building. http://nashvillehistory.blogspot.com/2013/06/tennessee-theater-and-sudekum-building.html.
[21] James Draeger. "Marr and Holman Architectural Firm." *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Accessed 17 November 2013, http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=838
[22] HSR, 19; Bennett, 15; "Rich-Schwartz Building." *Archiplanet*. Accessed 17 November 2013, http://www.archiplanet.org/wiki/Rich-Schwartz_Building
[23] Carroll Van West, Ed. *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*

Commission approved the sale of bonds to cover the state's portion of the cost, setting the date of April 23, 1936 for the start of construction.[24]

Rock City Construction was founded in 1913 by W.N. Lee II who was, by 1918, its sole proprietor. Launching the operation with residential and small commercial projects, the firm branched out into larger projects during the 1920s and 1930s, constructing buildings at Southwestern University, now Rhodes College (NR-listed 20 July 1978), Scarritt College (NR-listed 26 August 1982), Vanderbilt University, and Fisk University (NR-listed 13 February 1978). They were the second firm to be awarded a Tennessee state contractor's license.[25] Rock City Construction is the oldest licensed construction firm still in existence in Tennessee.

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building is one of several post-Depression era governmental structures designed and built in Nashville in the 1930s. Reflecting the dignity, order, and substance of their purpose--intended to convey a sense of permanence to inspire confidence in the future--the architecture of these buildings combined popular and classical styles. Among these iconic buildings, in addition to the Tennessee Supreme Court Building, are: the Nashville Post Office (Marr and Holman, 1934), Davidson County Courthouse (Emmons H. Woolwine and Hirons & Dennison, 1937), and the Tennessee State Office Building, now called the Sevier Building (Emmons H. Woolwine, 1939), all of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. At the time the Tennessee Supreme Court Building was commissioned, architectural trends were moving away from the neo-Classical and Beaux-Arts toward modernism, presenting architects with the challenge of designing buildings faithful to classical principles, retaining dignity and substance, while also incorporating contemporaneous trends. This transitional period produced many awkward hybrids, but Marr and Holman's experience with both Classical and Art Deco design enabled them to gracefully combine the two in the Tennessee Supreme Court Building.[26] With columns associated with Classicism replaced by squared piers, and cornice details streamlined and modernized, Marr and Holman's design conveys the authority of the Court while also reflecting contemporary elegance and sophistication. The quality of Marr's design was translated exceptionally, reflecting remarkable accuracy and attention to detail. The sophistication of the draftsmen, builders, and artisans has been commended for clearly communicating the architect's requirements, producing and working from plans drawn at 1/8"=1' with only major details enlarged.[27] (Figures 36-37).

Attention to contemporary trends carried through to technical details and building systems as well. The Supreme Court Building was constructed to be fireproof. It was the first in Nashville to incorporate a central air conditioning system. Other contemporaneous structures, including Loew's and Paramount theaters, the B&W Cafeteria, the Rich Schwartz and Joseph buildings, were cooled using technology transitioned from cold storage buildings. For the Supreme Court Building, Nashville Machine and Supply Company developed a new system that delivered cooled air to individual spaces within the building. [28]

[24] Building Commission Minutes, Mar.24, 1936 and Apr. 2, 1936; Bennett 15
[25] Joe April, "Almost a Century of Service: Rock City Construction Now the State's Oldest Contractor," *The Williamson Herald*, January 9, 2009; "History." *Rock City Construction*. Accessed 20 November 2013, http://www.rockcity-gc.com/history.htm; "Yesteryear." *Rock City Construction*. Accessed 20 November 2013, http://www.rockcity-gc.com/yesteryear
[26] HSR, 21
[27] HSR, 21
[28] HSR, 22

Construction was scheduled to begin on or before April 23, 1936.[29] The process was not without controversy, but work proceeded, and by November structural concrete was in place, ductwork and plumbing lines were installed, and stonework on the exterior was underway. By January 1937 window frames were in place, and work on interior walls began. By the end of April stonework on the exterior was completed and windows were installed, and work began on paving stones for the front plaza. In October, construction began on the granite retaining wall at the corner of Cedar Street, now Charlotte Avenue. In May 1937, interior work proceeded and contracts were awarded for furniture and fixtures, all of which had been carefully specified and designed to suit the space. Marshall and Bruce Company was chosen to produce furniture, Meyers Manufacturing to provide library and storage shelving, and Building Specialties Company was awarded the contract to provide and install window shades.[30] (Figures 7-28).

By early November the building's first occupants moved in, with judges occupying the third floor. In December the Attorney General's Office was installed on the second floor. The building was officially opened and dedicated on December 4, 1937 at a ceremony that was attended by a distinguished group of jurists from all over the state, including George H. Armistead, Jr. president of the Tennessee Bar Association who commented: "the new building afforded the first adequate quarters for the appellate courts of the state…"[31]

Significance of the Building

Under Criterion A, the Tennessee Supreme Court Building is significant in the areas of Government and Law. This State building is noteworthy as a New Deal-era project, partially funded by the Public Works Administration (PWA). In 1935, the year the United States Supreme Court Building was constructed in Washington D.C., long-serving Tennessee Chief Justice Grafton Green initiated efforts to erect a similarly dedicated building to house the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals of the State of Tennessee, centralizing all operations and offices related to court business. Justice Green saw the Federal government as a source of funding, as well as inspiration, recognizing the opportunity for partial underwriting of the project via the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works instituted by the Roosevelt administration. The purpose of the Public Works Administration (PWA) was to provide jobs as well as giving loans for construction of local infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and courthouses.[32] The Tennessee legislature issued "Chapter 35" declaring an immediate need for the building and the Federal money to underwrite it.[33] After an abortive attempt to secure federal funding of 40% of the building's construction costs, the PWA agreed to a contribution of 30%. They allocated $192,857 for the project, which was formally approved on February 3, 1936. The balance of funding came from the local issuance and selling of bonds, generating $450,000. The building was completed in just over a year at a total cost of $616,261.60.[34]

[29] Bennett, 15; History Rock City Construction, Yesteryear, Rock City Construction.
[30] Bennett, 15
[31] Bennett, 15; "Homage is Paid to Judiciary as Court Building Dedicated." *Nashville Banner*, Dec. 4, 1937
[32] West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*, 15-16
[33] Governor's Proclamation of July 15, 1935, 1935 House Journal, 29; 1935 Public Chapter 35; Bennett, 14.
[34] HSR, 15

As a result of subsequent redevelopment of Capitol Hill, the Tennessee Supreme Court Building is now part of a complex of State buildings, including the Tennessee State Capitol (NHL, 11 November 1971). Tennessee State Library and Archives (1953; NR-listed 17 November 2003), the Tennessee State Office Building (1939-40; NR-listed 13 July 2011), and the Cordell Hull Building (1954).

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building was the first building dedicated to serve the needs of the highest courts in the state of Tennessee. It was, and continues to be, a locus of high level legal cases, essential to the justice system in the state. Many important cases have been heard in the courtroom of the Tennessee Supreme Court Building, impacting state and local issues, even including decisions related to the Supreme Court Building itself. On February 7, 1938, the first case was heard in the new Supreme Court Building. That case, *Wauldaur v. Britton*, dealt with the constitutionality of "a legislative act concerning the membership of the state election board," and the act was upheld in March of that year. [35] Another example of an important case that was heard and decided in the building was *Harden v. State (1948)*, which pitted the power of the state police to protect public health and welfare against the rights of members of the Holiness Church to handle snakes as part of their worship service. The court ruled that "It shall be unlawful for any person, or persons, to display, exhibit, handle or use any poisonous or dangerous snake or reptile in such a manner as to endanger the life or health of any person."[36] In another case in 1948, *Hooten v. Carson*, the court ruled to uphold the 1947 State sales tax of 2%.[37] *Nashville Housing Authority v. City of Nashville* (1951) was heard and decided in the building. In this ruling the Court upheld a slum clearing ordinance that eventually reshaped the appearance of the area surrounding the Capitol.[38] This decision even impacted some of the changes to the Supreme Court Building itself during this time, when what had been Cedar Street was widened to make way for what is now Charlotte Avenue, and the granite walls around the Supreme Court were moved closer to the building. In *Dunn v. Palermo* (1975) the court ruled that a woman did not have to take her husband's surname after marriage.[39] Recently, Tennessee's system for funding secondary and elementary education was found to be unconstitutional in the case of *Tennessee Small Schools Systems v. McWherter* (2002).[40] Scores of other important rulings were decided—and continue to be decided-- in the Tennessee Supreme Court Building in Nashville. On October 17 of this year (2013), *City of Memphis, Tennessee et al. v. Trey Hargett, Secretary of State et al* upheld the law requiring proof of identity for voting in elections.

Under Criterion C, the Tennessee Supreme Court Building is significant for its Architecture. The design for the Supreme Court building reflected a sophisticated interpretation of the Stripped Classical style. Also referred to as "austere Neo-Classic" "Starved Classicism," "streamlined Classical" or "modified Classic," this iconic architectural style was popular during the New Deal era, and preferred by the Office of the Architect of the Treasury for federally funded public buildings.[41] The Stripped Classical style is symmetrical,

[35] Bennett, 19
[36] John R. Vile, *A History of the Tennessee Supreme Court*, James W. Ely, ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 257
[37] Ibid, 241
[38] Ibid, 240
[39] Carl A. Pierce, *A History of the Tennessee Supreme Court*, James W. Ely, ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 285
[40] Ibid, 316
[41] Bennett, 16

strong-looking and formal; it references the classical history of our Republic, but also has elements of Art Deco, and incorporates the simplicity of modernism, speaking to the United States' progress and its future.

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building is dramatic in its simplicity, but also characterized by meticulous detailing and symbolism throughout. It is one of the finest examples of 1930s era Classicism in Nashville; a building that was formal, classically proportioned and simple: strong yet elegant, with high quality materials and details. The *Nashville Banner* celebrated the building's arrival, calling it a "modified classic."[42] With squared piers replacing the circular columns associated with Classicism, and cornice details streamlined and modernized, Marr's design conveys strength and power--the authority of the Court--while also reflecting contemporary elegance and sophistication. This building is a visual representation of its purpose: the exterior architecture is symbolic of what occurs inside the building. The stoic grand exterior stands in contradistinction to the richly detailed interior of marble, rich wood elements, and exacting details. The Supreme Court Building was among six of Marr and Holman's finest works in downtown Nashville to be nominated in "Marr and Holman Buildings in Downtown Nashville (1922-1936) Thematic Resources."[43]

The interior of the building is more highly detailed than the exterior. The dramatic entry hall or "Hall of Justice" is characterized by extensive use of marble and bronze. Every detail was carefully chosen to complement and enhance the overall design of the building. This meticulous approach is typified by the door hardware which was specially designed for the building to display the Tennessee Supreme Court and the State of Tennessee seals. Every detail of this building was planned exactingly for both form and function. The light fixtures in the courtroom feature the four symbols of law (scroll, scales of justice, dagger of authority, book of judgment or law), also depicted in pairs on the bronze elevator doors; the three stars mounted on the pilasters in the courtroom signify the three divisions of the state of Tennessee; matching furniture and light fixtures were made specifically for the building. The extensive use of marble was painstaking: book-matched throughout the building and used in intricate decorative patterns. The building is an excellent example of its style and evocative of its time. The Tennessee Supreme Court Building retrains high levels of integrity in all areas on the interior and exterior, and continues to serve the purpose for which it was created.

The graceful transitional design of the Tennessee Supreme Court Building is seen in later constructed courthouses throughout the state. These include: Polk County Courthouse (1937) in Benton; McNairy Courthouse (1948-49) in Selmer; Obion County Courthouse (1939-40) in Union City (NR-listed 30 March 1995), and the Sumner County Courthouse (1940) in Gallatin which is most similar to the Tennessee Supreme Court Building in Nashville.[44] The 1953 Tennessee Supreme Court Building in Knoxville (United States Post Office and Courthouse, NR-listed 15 April 2008), designed by Baumann and Baumann, also shares some similar characteristics. [45]

[42] *"Homage Is Paid to Judiciary as Court Building Dedicated." Nashville Banner, December 4, 1937*
[43] The Supreme Court Building was nominated with the "Marr and Holman Buildings in Downtown Nashville (1922-1936) Thematic Resources" (NR listed 10 October 1984), but it was sent back and not listed at that time, because the building was not yet 50 years old in 1984.
[44] West, *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*, 42-44
[45] John R. Vile, *A History of the Tennessee Supreme Court*, James W. Ely, ed., 237

The Supreme Court Building is iconic as an historic structure, and continues to be important in both form and function to the city of Nashville and the state of Tennessee.

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Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	X	State Historic Preservation Office
	previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency
	previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency
	designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government
	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University
	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other
	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3 acres **USGS Quadrangle** Nashville West 308-NE

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:

1. Latitude: 36.164929 Longitude: -86.784833

Verbal Boundary Description

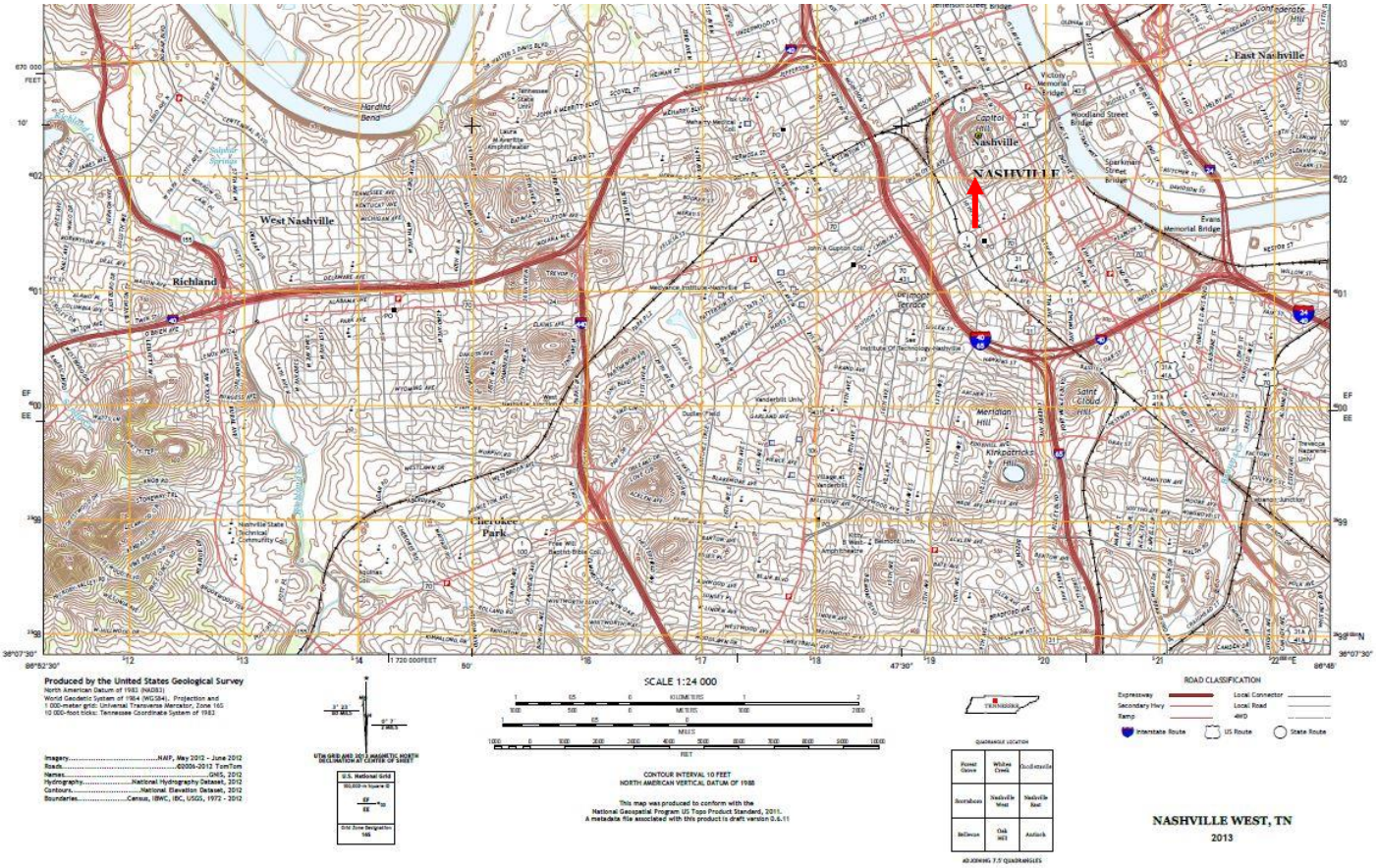
The boundary for this nomination is a nearly rectangular polygon that runs along Charlotte Avenue for 204' feet from the Corner of Seventh Avenue North, it runs along across Seventh Avenue North from the corner of Charlotte Avenue for 170' then includes the area of the driveway alongside the building to the back wall of the property which is 186' and turns to encompass the rear of the parcel 174' along the back of the parking lot and ends at Charlotte Avenue.

Boundary Justification

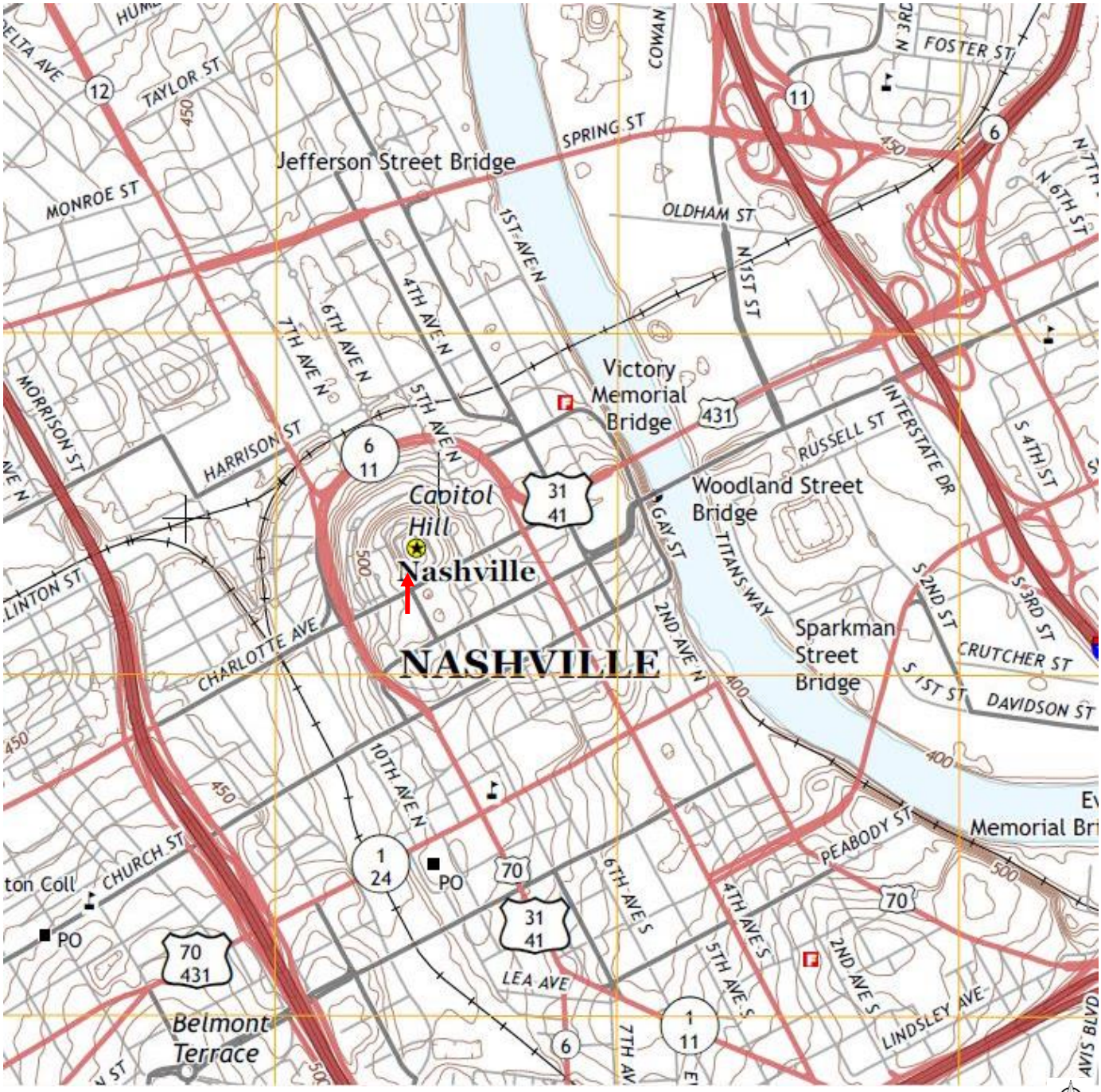
This is the property currently associated with the Supreme Court Building. It encompasses the granite wall surrounding the building and the sidewalk and stone details at the front of the property, as well as the driveway and the parking area behind the building. It consists of the boundaries created after circa 1960, when Charlotte Avenue was widened at Seventh Avenue North and the granite walls to the north and south sides of the Tennessee Supreme Court Building were relocated closer to the building.

Maps

Nashville West US Topo Revision 2013



USGS Nashville West US Topo Revision 2013, Detail



Parcel Map

Davidson County, Parcel: 09301007900

Tennessee Supreme Court Building | Davidson County, TN
Name of Property | County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name	Christine Mathieson		
Organization	Tennessee Historical Commission		
Street & Number	2941 Lebanon Road	Date	November 15, 2013
City or Town	Nashville	Telephone	(615) 532-1549 x 125
E-mail	Christine.Mathieson@tn.gov	State TN	Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs (**refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints**)**
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Tennessee Supreme Court Building
City or Vicinity: Nashville
County: Davidson State: TN
Photographer: Christine Mathieson
Date Photographed: October 21 and 31, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

0001. Façade (east elevation). Photographer facing west.

0002. South elevation. Photographer facing north.

0003. West elevation. Photographer facing east.

0004. Southwest oblique. Photographer facing northeast.

0005. North Elevation. Photographer facing southwest.

0006. North Elevation. Photographer facing south.

0007. Detail of the windows, piers and cornice on the façade. Photographer facing west.

0008. Detail of the doors and entry plaza on the façade. Photographer facing west.

0009. Detail of the entry plaza. Photographer facing north

0010. Detail of one of the two light standards in front of the façade. Photographer facing west.

0011. Detail of one of the cast bronze medallions on the façade. Photographer facing west.

0012. Granite wall running along Charlotte Avenue (south elevation). Photographer facing west.

0013. Detail of the cornice on the façade. Photographer facing west.

0014. Southwest oblique. Photographer facing northeast.

0015. West elevation. Photographer facing east.

0016. North elevation. Photographer facing northeast.

0017. Detail of the granite piers and wall on the south side of the east elevation. Photographer facing northwest.

0018. Entry Hall. Photographer facing north.

0019. Southwest oblique view of the lobby (Hall of Justice). Photographer facing southwest.

0020. Northwest oblique view of the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0021. Detail of the central chandelier in the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0022. View of the east wall in the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0023. Detail of the central Supreme Court seal in the floor of the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0024. Detail of the entry doors on the east wall of the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0025. Detail of the marble floor in the lobby (Hall of Justice).

0026. Detail of the door hardware on one of the doors on the north wall of the lobby leading to the Court Room. This hardware is seen on nearly all doors throughout the building, except on in the attic and basement.

0027. View of the west wall of the lobby leading to the stair and elevator lobby and corridor beyond.

0028. Detail view of the bronze main elevator on the south wall of the stair and elevator lobby. Note the four symbols of law on each door.

0029. North wall of the stair and elevator lobby showing the stair hall and the door to the men's bathroom.

0030. Detail of the main stair and book-matched marble walls. Photographer facing northwest.

0031. View of the Clerk's office. Photographer facing west.

0032. Cast bronze post office box on the east wall of the rear corridor.

0033. View of the rear corridor showing the door to the women's bathroom, a typical walnut and frosted glass door. Photographer facing northeast.

0034. North/northwest view of the back corridor

0035. South/southwest view of the back corridor.

0036. Detail of the entry doors to the Court Room vestibule, off north wall of the main lobby (Hall of Justice)

0037. Detail of the south wall of the Court Room vestibule. Note the difference in paneling on the front and back of the doors.

0038. Meeting room off the east wall of the Court Room vestibule. Note the original light fixture.

0039. Detail of the pendant light in the center of the ceiling of the Court Room vestibule.

0040. North wall of the Court Room, showing the bench.

0041. Northwest oblique of the Court Room.

0042. West wall of the Court Room.

0043. Southwest oblique view of the Court Room.

0044. South wall of the Court Room, showing the entry doors.

0045. Southeast oblique of the Court Room.

0046. East wall of the Court Room

0047. Northeast oblique of the Court Room

0048. Detail of the northwest corner that leads to the robing room corridor, this area was raised to a ramp in 1997.

0049. Detail of the south wall of the court room. Photographer facing southwest.

0050. Detail of one of the light fixtures in the Court Room. This light depicts scales of justice.

0051. The room off the northwest wall of the courtroom showing the lift added in 1997. Photographer facing north.

0052. Northeast corner of the robing room.

0053. Hallway off the Court Room showing the door on the south wall that was added in 1997.

0054. Doorway off the south wall of the lobby (Hall of Justice) to the library vestibule and library

0055. Entry to the library. Photographer facing south.

0056. View of the library from the mezzanine level. Photographer facing northwest.

0057. View of the “Scopes Exhibit” on the south wall of the museum portion of the library.

0058. East wall of the original library, now the museum space.

0059. Southwest oblique view of the library.

0060. Detail of the paneling around the southeastern stairway to the mezzanine level.

0061. Corridor 201. Typical hallway on the second floor. Photographer facing north.

0062. View of the bronze doors to the stair hall on the second floor that were added about 2005. Photographer facing northwest.

0063. Office 218, a typical secretary's office on the second floor. Photographer facing southeast.

0064. Office 219, northwest oblique view. A typical office on the second floor.

0065. Office 219, northeast oblique view. A typical office on the second floor.

0066. Corridor 301. A typical corridor on the third floor. Photographer facing east.

0067. Judge's Office 316, northeast oblique view. A typical judge's office on the third floor. Photographer facing northeast.

0068. Conference Room 324, northwest oblique view.

0069. Typical corridor on the fourth floor, photographer facing north.

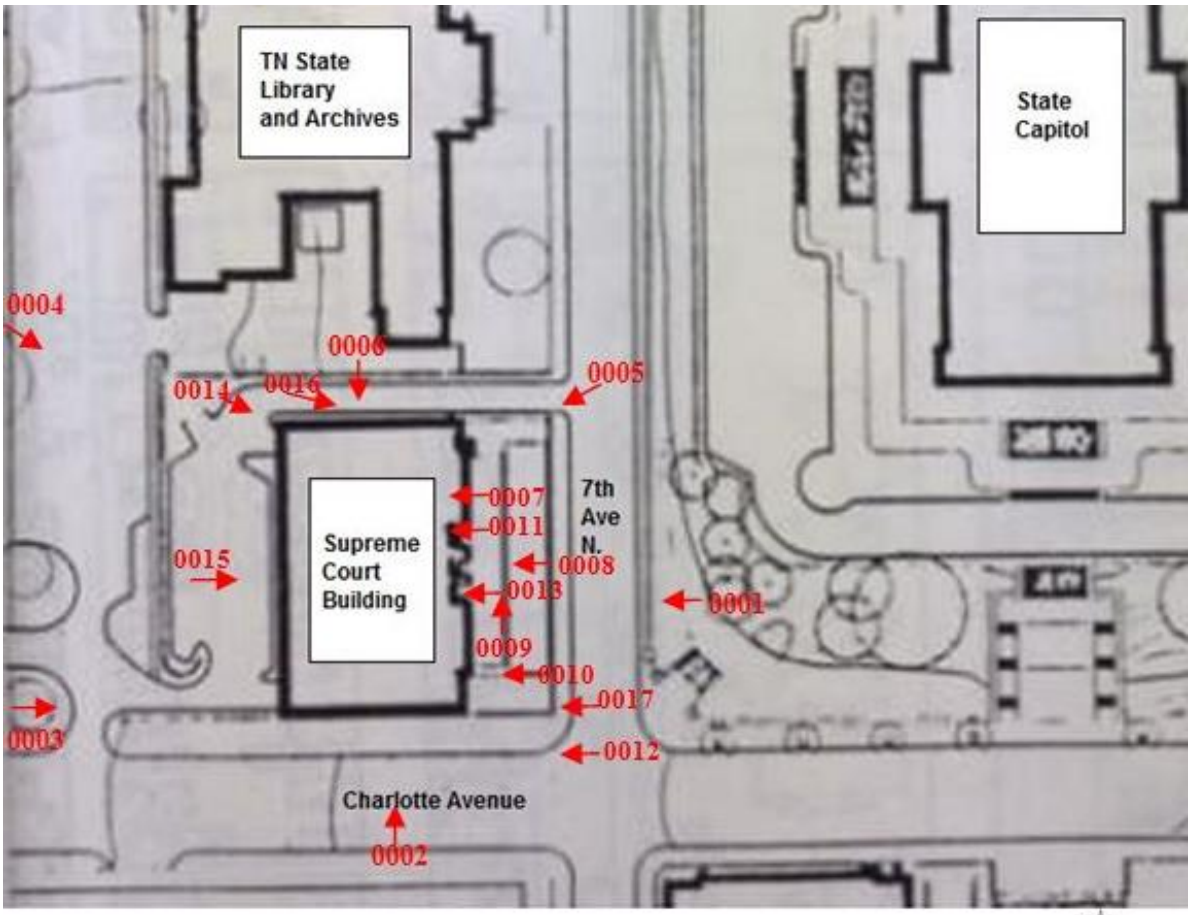
0070. Typical office space on the fourth floor. Photographer facing southeast,

0071. View of the north corridor on the fourth floor, note 1930s private elevator door. Photographer facing west.

0072. Northwest oblique view of basement level "Parking B-4" area. Finishes typical of the basement level.

0073. Detail of the carved walnut panel of the Supreme Court seal, on the wall behind the bench on the north wall in the Court Room.

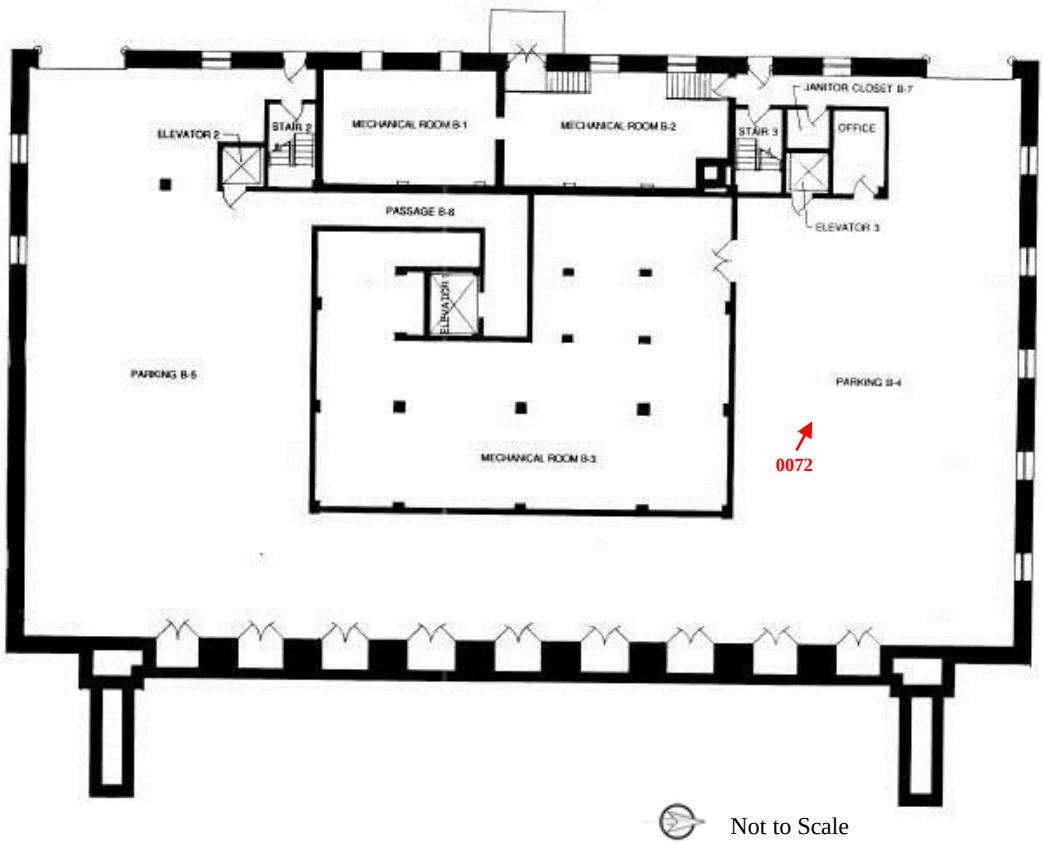
Site Plan with Photo Locations



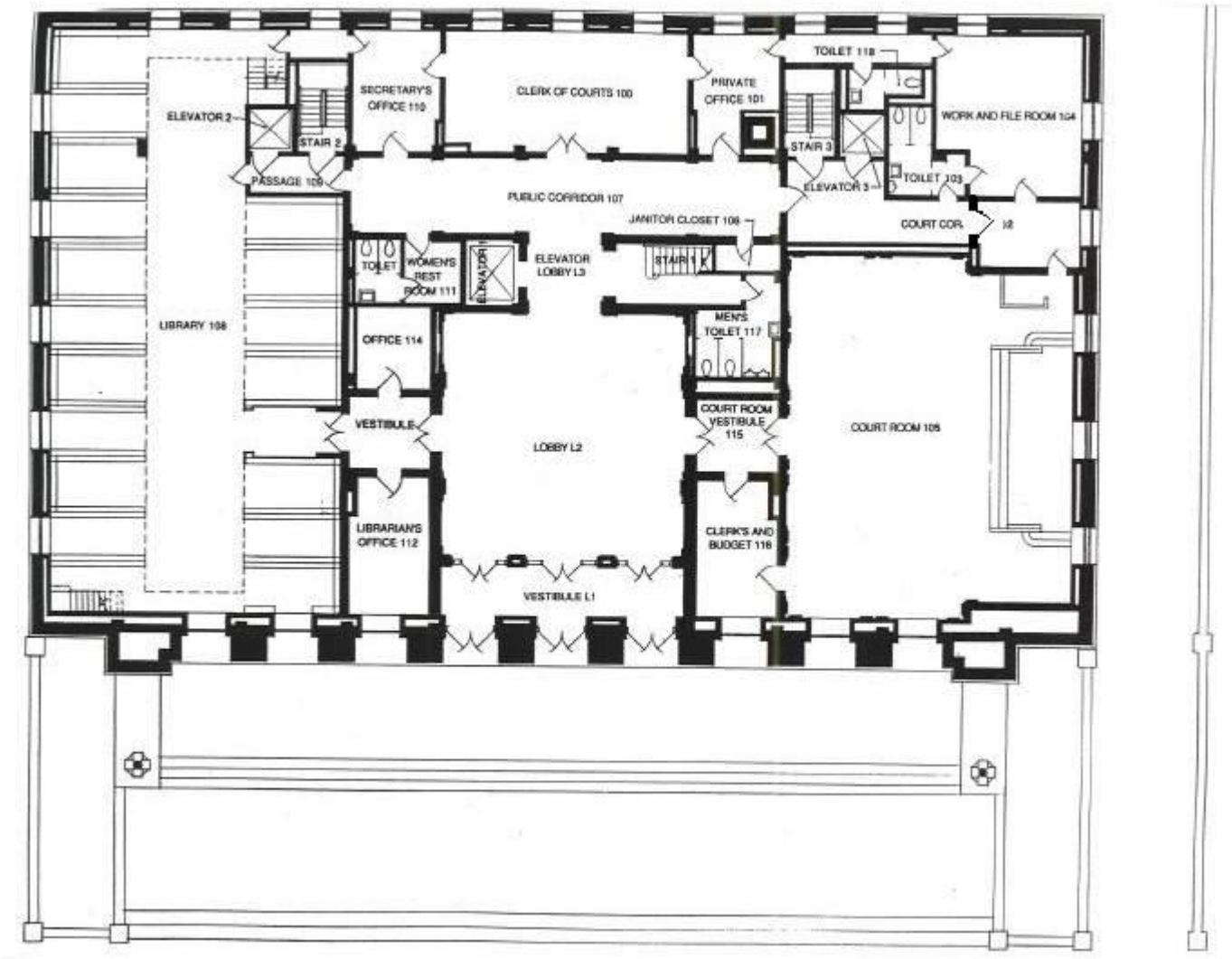
Not to Scale

Floor Plans

Basement Plan with Photo Locations



First Floor Plan



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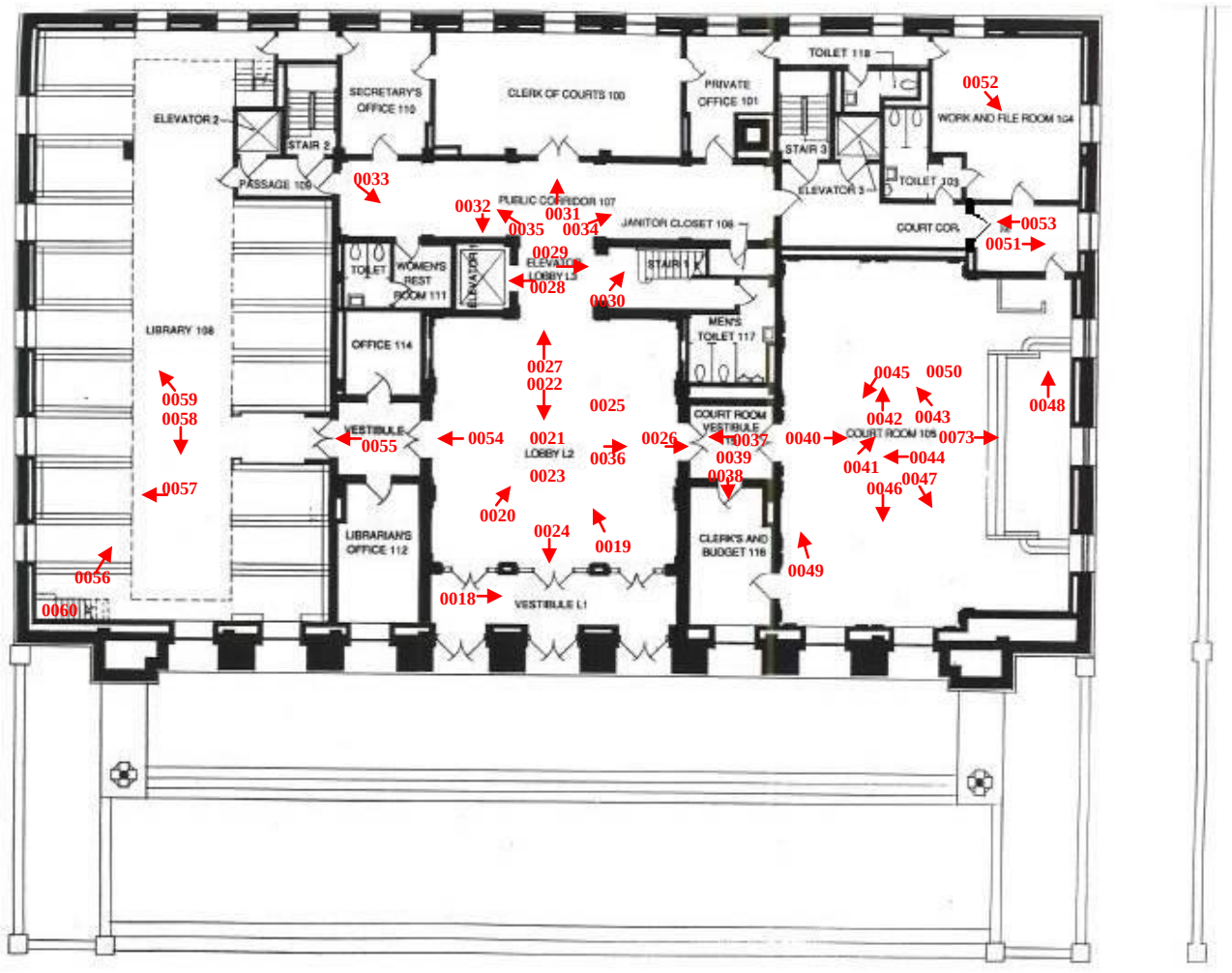
First Floor Plan with Photo Locations



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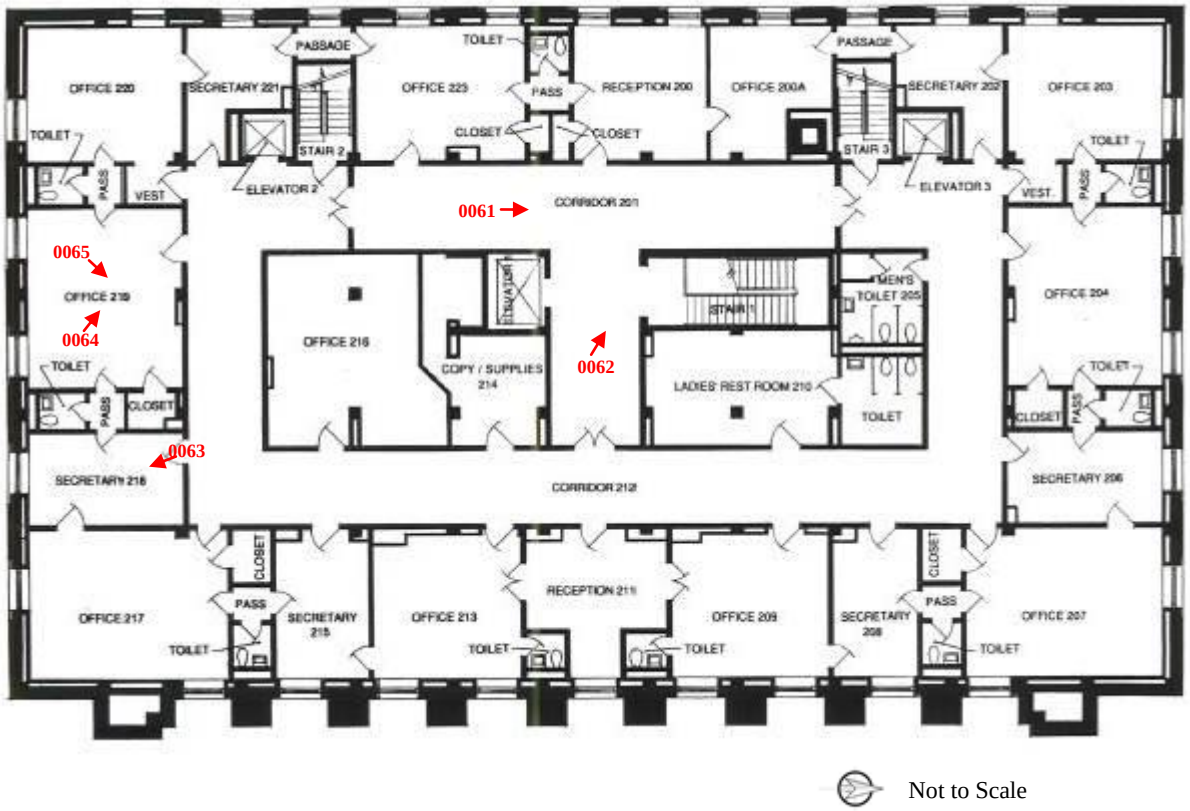
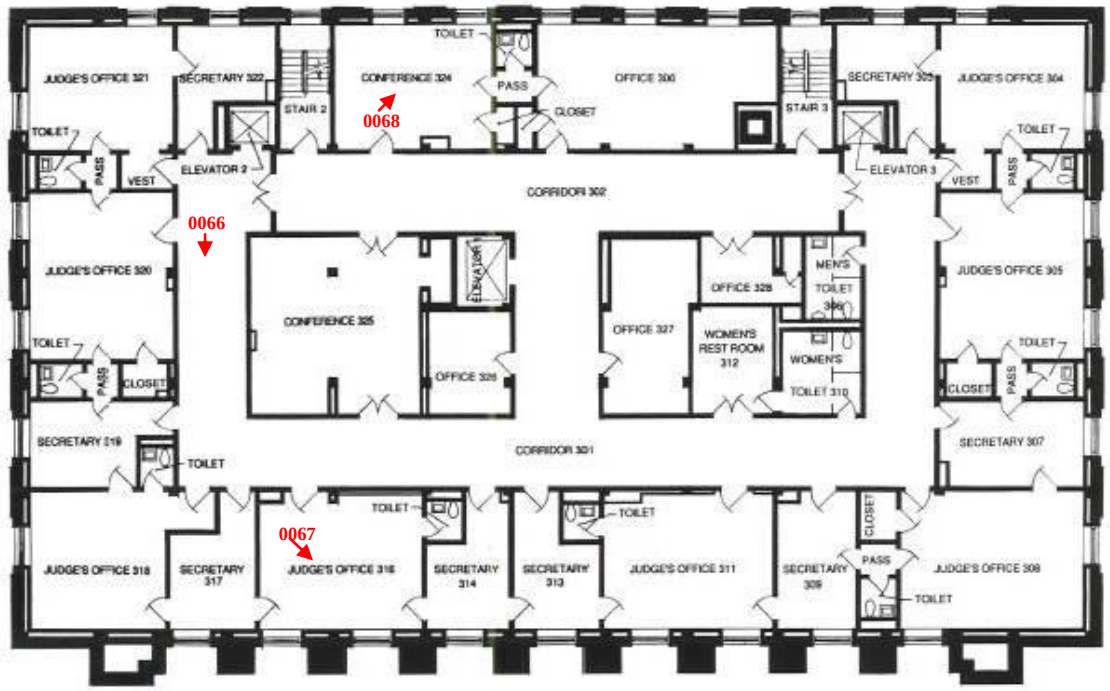
Second Floor Plan with Photo Locations



Third Floor Plan with Photo Locations



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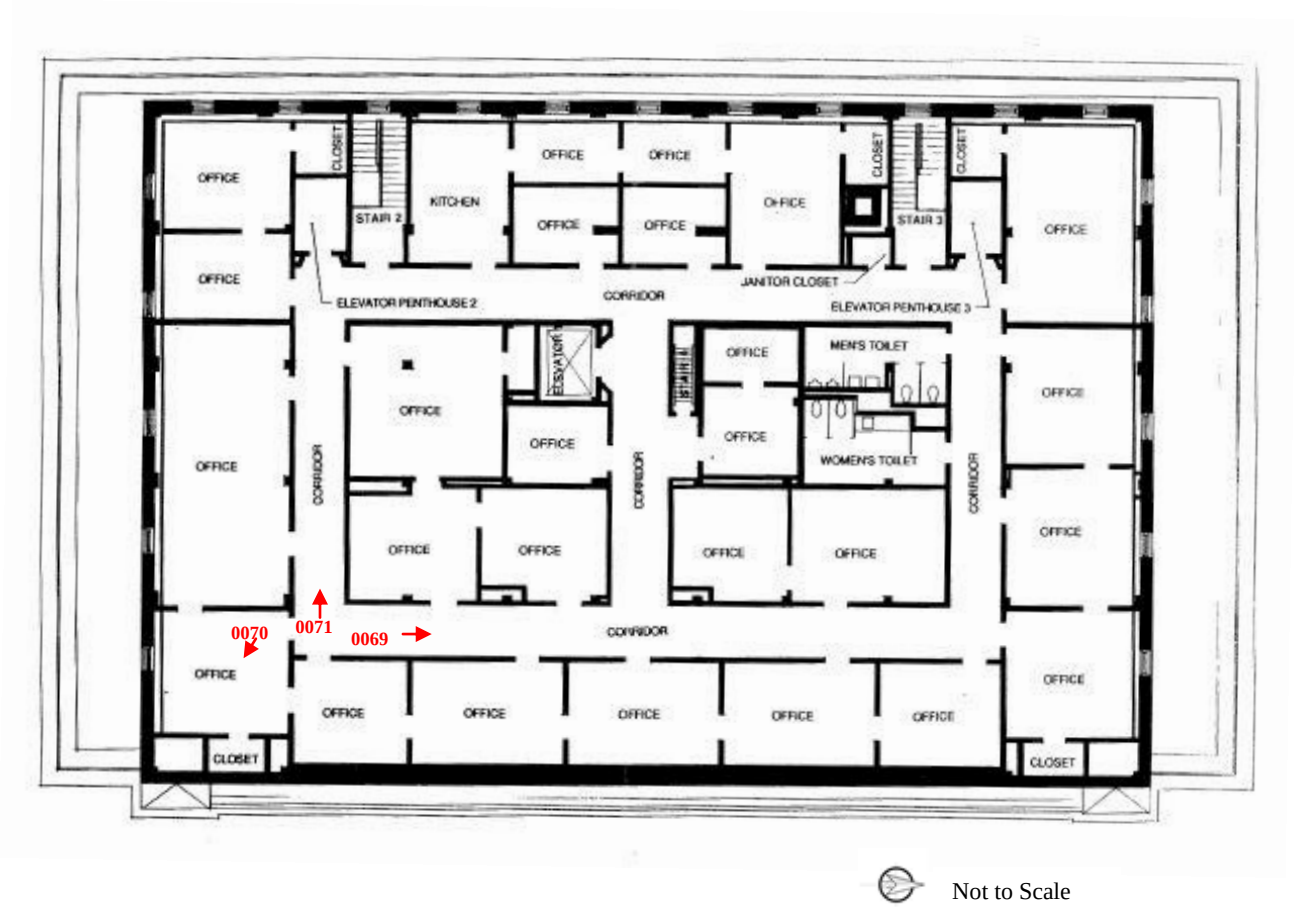
4th Floor Attic Floor Plan with Photo Locations



Not to Scale

Figure 1. Lobby of the Tennessee Supreme Court Building, looking northeast 1937
(Tennessee State Library and Archives)

Figure 2. The Courtroom 1938
(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 3. The Court Room in 1938
Note original Justices' chairs and reconfiguration in northwest corner of the room.
(Tennessee State Library and Archives).

Figure 4. Law Library in 1938
(Tennessee State Library and Archives)

Figure 5. Library in 1938, view looking east. Note original light fixtures.
(Tennessee State Library and Archives)

Figure 6. A Second Floor Office in 1938, this office is the same as office 319 in current photos 0064 and 0065. Note the original light fixtures which have been replaced with rectangular fluorescent lights, and the flooring which has been covered with carpet.
(Tennessee State Library and Archives).

Figure 7. Construction progress June 2, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 8. Construction progress July 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 50

Tennessee Supreme Court Building
Name of Property
Davidson County, Tennessee
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 9. Construction progress August 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 10. Construction progress September 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

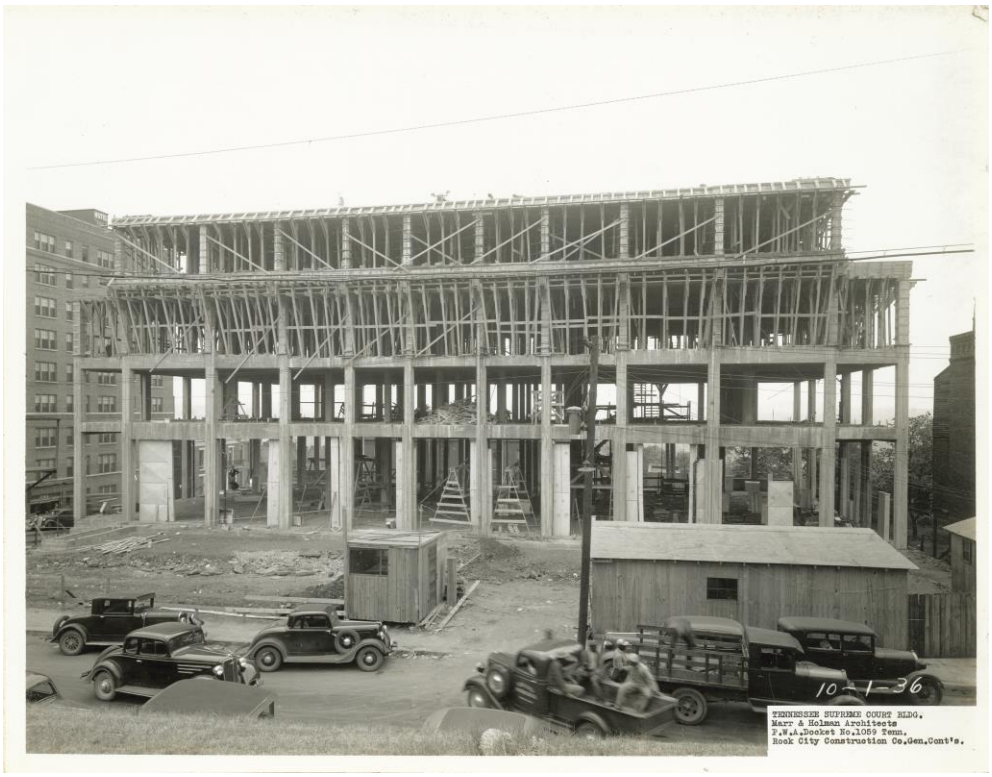


Figure 11. Construction progress October 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

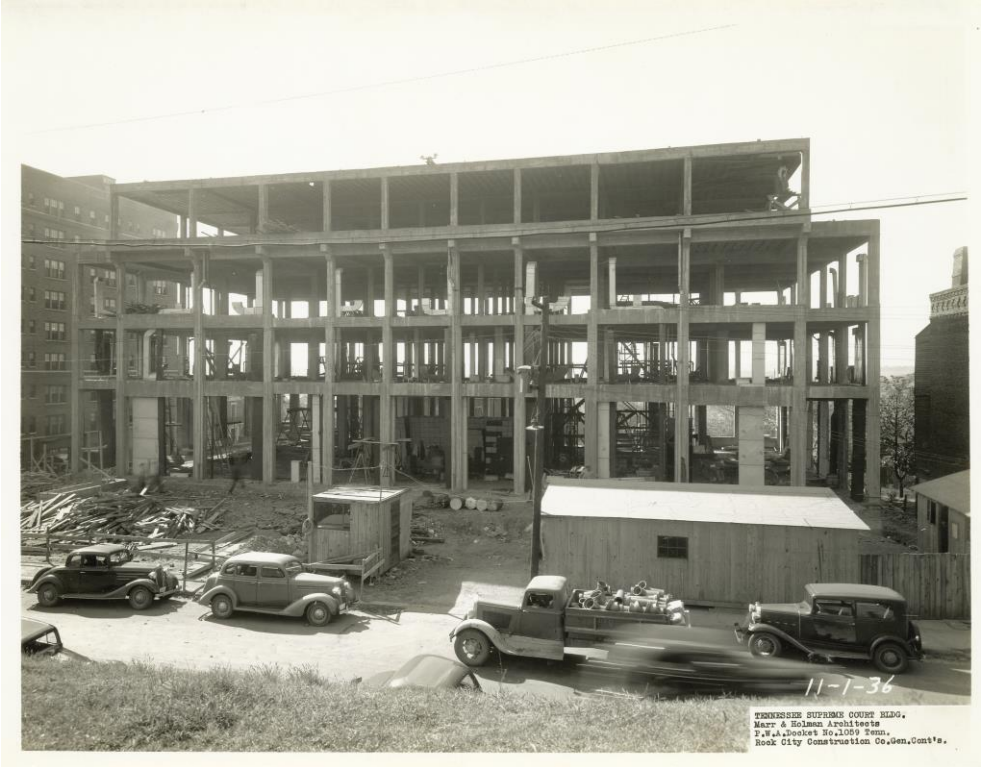


Figure 12. Construction progress November 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 13. Construction progress December 1, 1936.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 14. Construction progress January 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 15. Construction progress February 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 16. Construction progress March 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 17. Construction progress April 15, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 18. Construction progress May 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 19. Construction progress June 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 20. Construction progress July 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 21. Construction progress August 2, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 22. Construction progress September 15, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 23. Construction progress October 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 24. Construction progress November 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 25. Construction progress December 1, 1937.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 26. Building on February 1, 1938.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 27. Lobby (Hall of Justice) on February 1, 1938.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 28. Court Room on February 1, 1938.
(Courtesy of Rock City Construction and the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 30. 1942 Swearing-In of the Justices, Members of the Court: Chief Justice Grafton Green, Alex W. Chambliss, D.W. DeHaven, A.B. Neil and Alan M. Prewitt. Note the Court Room in the background. *(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)*

Figure 31. 1945 Supreme Court
(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 32. 1948 Supreme Court.
(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 33. 1958 Swearing-In Ceremony
(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)

Figure 34. 1958 Swearing-In Ceremony, Governor Clements at Podium.
(Courtesy of the Tennessee Supreme Court)

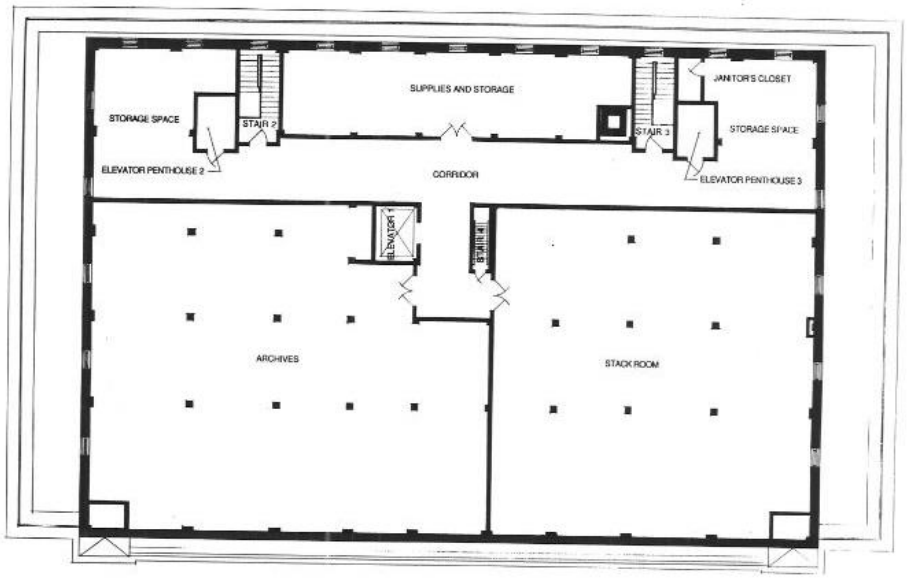


Figure 35. Fourth Floor Attic As-Built Floor Plan, prior to 1965 renovation.

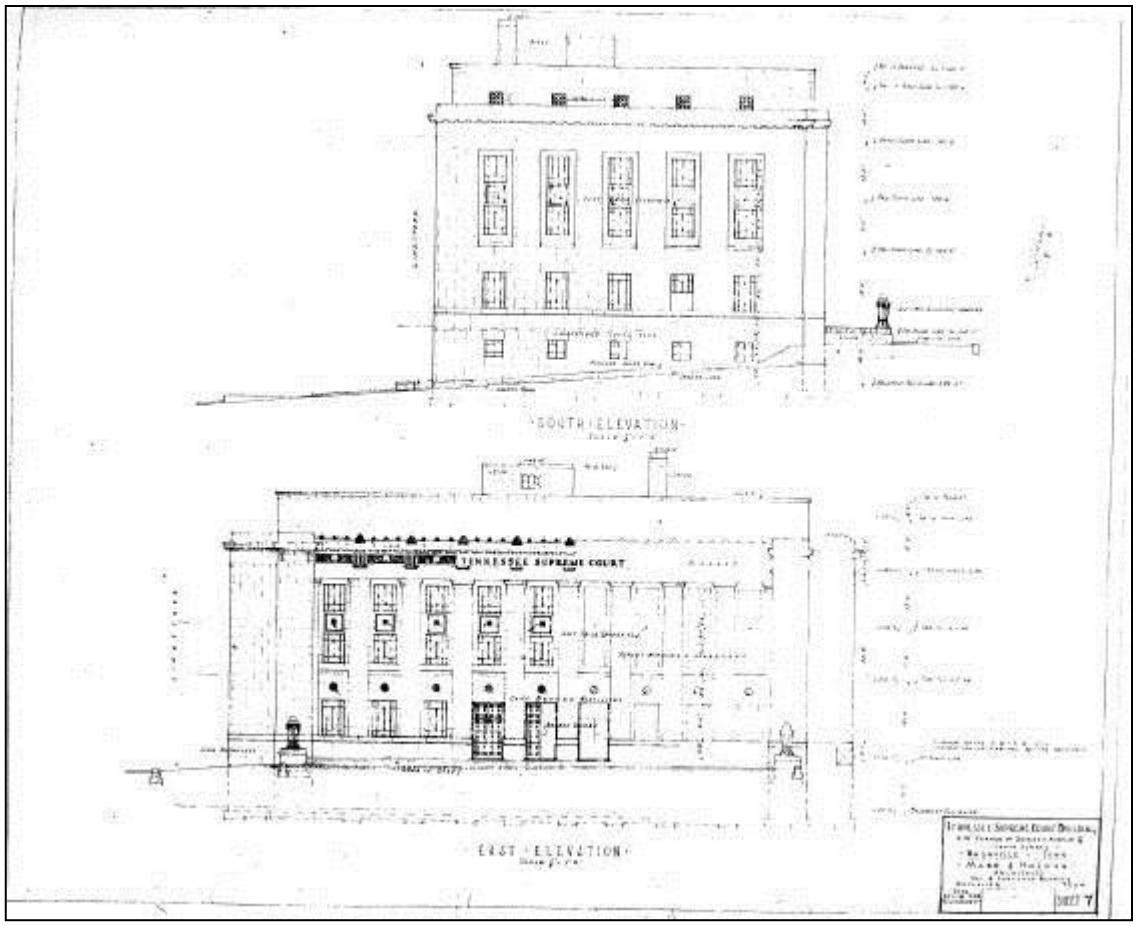


Figure 36. Original Plans for the south and east elevations.
(*Image from Marr and Holman Architects reproduced in the Tennessee Supreme Court at Nashville Historic Structure Report, 1992, by Charles W. Warterfield, Architect*.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Figures Page 75

Tennessee Supreme Court Building
Name of Property
Davidson County, Tennessee
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

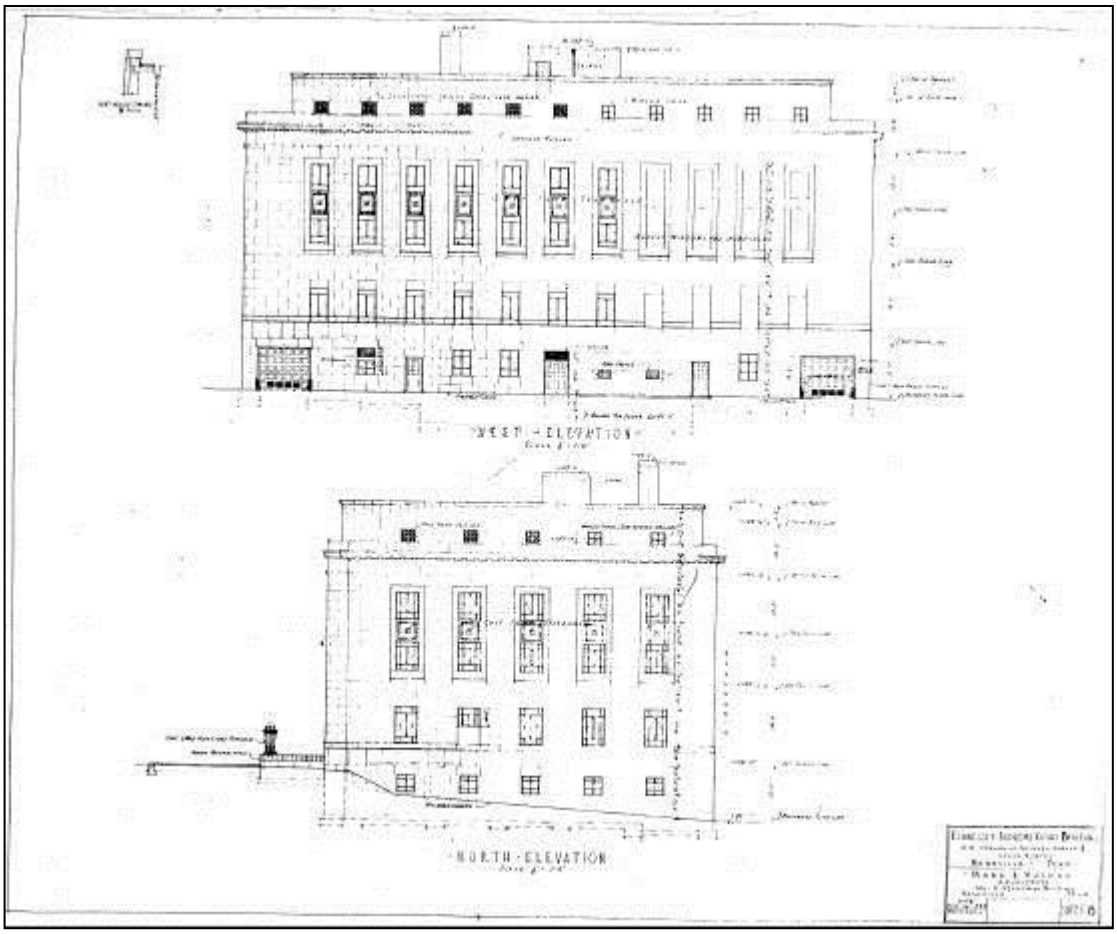


Figure 37. Original Plans for the west and north elevations.
(*Image from Marr and Holman Architects reproduced in the Tennessee Supreme Court at Nashville Historic Structure Report, 1992, by Charles W. Warterfield, Architect*.)

Figure 38. Aerial view of the Tennessee Supreme Court Building, July 1, 1957. (*Photo courtesy of Nashville Public Library Digital Collections*).

Property Owner:

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name	State of Tennessee, Department of Finance and Administration, Office of the State Architect c/o J. Alan Robertson, Interim State Architect State of Tennessee Real Estate Asset Management, Tennessee Department of General Services, c/o Tami Robison, Deputy Commissioner		
Street & Number	312 Rosa Parks Blvd., William Snodgrass Tennessee Tower	Telephone	(615) 741-2388
City or Town	Nashville	State/Zip	TN 37243