

COUNTY
COURT



**HISTORIC OZAUKEE
COUNTY COURT HOUSE
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN
HISTORIC CONDITION
ASSESSMENT**

MARCH, 2005

HISTORIC CONDITION ASSESSMENT
FOR THE HISTORIC OZAUKEE COUNTY COURT HOUSE
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN

PREPARED FOR:

Ozaukee County Court House Restoration Task Force
Main Contact: Tom Meaux
121 West Main Street
Port Washington, WI 53074-0994
Ph. 262/ 284.8202

PREPARED BY:

Donna Weiss-Priebe, Project Manager
The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc. (TKWA)
W61 N617 Mequon Avenue
Cedarburg, WI 53012
Ph. 262/ 377.6039
Fx. 262/ 377.2954

Consultants:

Anthony Kartsonas
EverGreene Painting Studios
711 South Boulevard
Oak Park, IL 60302
708/ 358.1642

Neal A. Vogel
Restoric, LLC
1604 Chicago Avenue, Suite 11
Evanston, IL 60201
847/ 492.0416

Robert J. Bucci, PE
Affiliated Engineers, Inc.
P.O. Box 44991
Madison, WI 53744-4991
608/ 236.1226

Bob Gilomen, PE
Harwood Engineering Consultants, Ltd.
7420 West State Street
Milwaukee, WI 53213
414/ 475.5554

***Ozaukee County Court House
Restoration Task Force Members***

*Kristin Bablitch
Leroy Bley
Ann Flierl
Jeremy Hartline
Lou Herro
Judy Jepson
Al Kletti
Tom Meaux
Karen Morris
Paul Roback
Mary Sayner
Katie Smith
Holly Spaeth
Walter Swietlik
Randy Tetzlaff
Peter Waldkrich
Andy Weber
Doreen Wirth
Gus Wirth*

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Ozaukee Press
Milwaukee County Historical Society
Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel

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PART ONE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The Ozaukee County Court House (court house) is an important edifice to Port Washington, Ozaukee County, and the State of Wisconsin due to its historical significance and architectural merit. The Restoration Task Force (RTF) has taken an important first step towards assertive measures to ensure the future viability and the building's place in the region. The historic court house has potential to be not only a place for civic administration but also play a more active role in the community by hosting events, meetings, and tours.

Generally, the court house is in good condition. The exterior walls and roof are sound and there are no apparent structural issues. Refer to the *Code Compliance, Safety, Security, and Hazardous Conditions* sections of *Part Three* for items requiring immediate attention.

\$3,430,920 worth of improvements are recommended to return the building to "excellent" condition and improve accessibility and aesthetics. A much smaller campaign of **\$401,160** could focus on essential repairs such as life/safety issues, accessibility, water infiltration, and interior aesthetics; see *Part Six: Implementing Restoration, Opinions of Cost* for further details.

The restoration target date established by the RTF is 1902-1930. This time span allows for the building to be interpreted as a living piece of history and intact stenciling and furniture from this period can be utilized in the building restoration.

The overall goals of the court house restoration are to:

1. Increase the prominence of the building in Ozaukee County.
2. Restore the public corridors and County Board room (historic court room) to their historic appearance.
3. Mitigate interior and exterior deterioration.
4. Increase building usage by the general public.
5. Restore key interior features throughout for historic continuity.

Several building maintenance and administrative practices could be improved for the long-term benefit of the court house.

1. Use: A use analysis should be undertaken to determine effective space utilization, proper use adjacencies, and possible increased access by the public. This study should include furnishing and equipment necessities. For instance, County Board members should be interviewed to determine the bare essentials necessary for board meetings to allow for more flexibility in the space and greater utilization.
2. Contracting: Several inappropriate repairs have been made to the court house over the years resulting in unnecessary expenditures. Preservation-sensitive architects or consultants should develop bid documents for substantial or critical work to ensure that all contractor's bids are based upon the same accurate description of the work and the desired results. Mock-ups should be required and reviewed by a trained professional prior to hiring a contractor. All contractors should be asked for a minimum of three references for recently completed work on like-type National Register projects. These minimal standards will help ensure that work is completed in the necessary manner, bids are more competitive, and the level of work is held to the highest standard.
3. Archival Materials: A fireproof storage area should be designated for archival storage of all artifacts, drawings, images, data, etc. related to the historic court house. In addition, a display area should be created. Two good options for this area are within the first floor corridors or the second floor elevator lobby (historic judge's chamber). The small office currently in place at this location (A212) should be removed as it is used primarily for storage. Copies of critical archival pieces such as drawings and specifications, should be made and kept off-site.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4. Conditions: A full walk through inspection of the building should be completed every 6 months to note any changes in conditions. Roofs, drainage, and subsequent areas of significant plaster damage should be observed after each significant rain or snow melt until repairs to these areas are completed. It is very beneficial to employ the same individual(s) to perform these walk-through inspections.

METHODOLOGY

The Kubala Washatko Architects, Inc. generated this Historic Condition Assessment from inspections of the Ozaukee County court house in June through August of 2004. This document is an abbreviated version of a Historic Structures Report and thereby has been termed an Historic Condition Assessment to avoid misinterpretation by those familiar with typical Historic Structures Reports. This work documents the historic 1901-2 court house only. The 1967 addition is referred to as the “annex.”

The assessment was performed at the request of the RTF. Anthony Kartsonas of EverGreene Studios, Inc. provided limited decorative painting investigation in the County Board room (historically known as the court room) and public corridors. Neal Vogel of Restoric, LLC provided supplementary assistance with the exterior assessment and editorial review. Robert Bucci, PE of Affiliated Engineers provided an evaluation of the fire protection, electrical, and HVAC systems as related to the removal of the suspended ceiling in the County Board room. Bob Gilomen of Harwood Engineering Consultants executed a walk-through structural evaluation.

Primary sources for this report include: original court house specifications (1901), original architectural drawings by Frederick A. Graf, and Court House Building Committee meeting minutes (1913-1993). A comprehensive information location database and bibliography are located in *Appendix D*.

A thorough overview was conducted of the court house. The assessment was performed by looking at exposed conditions only, no destructive probes were taken (with the exception of paint analysis). This report provides objective information on the court house to assist decisions regarding the building’s on-going operation, maintenance, and restoration. This report is intended to establish the current baseline conditions of the building and define projects to be completed now and in the future.

For the purposes of this report, the 1992 Eppstein, Keller and Uhen, Inc. architectural drawings are used as the basis for room configurations and room numbers. Refer to *Appendix A* for reduced copies of pertinent drawings. The 1901 architectural drawings are included as a reference.

Any specific product line named in this report is for reference only and should not be considered an endorsement.

The following document deals with the history of the building fabric post-completion of the original construction.



PART TWO: HISTORY, DESCRIPTION, AND UTILIZATION

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, the significance of the Ozaukee County court house (1902) is based upon its Romanesque Revival design and its rich interior trim work and ornamentation which result in a structure that greatly contributes to the architectural heritage of Port Washington and Wisconsin. Although modifications have been made to the building over the years, many of the original materials, details, configurations, and finishes remain intact, albeit covered over in areas.

Culturally, the building has played a vital roll in county government for over 100 years. The building has seen a rich history filled with court cases, public events, and speeches. The court house played a role in the daily lives of Ozaukee County citizens as the place where all would go to pay taxes, obtain permits, birth certificates, marriages licenses, and death certificates. The building was a central part of the community and regional civic anchor.

BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

Much debate was raised over the court house location, this information is thoroughly documented in other sources; see *Appendix D* for further details. The Ozaukee County Court House was designed by Milwaukee architect Frederick A. Graf (1859-1938). Graf, born in Germantown, Wisconsin, was predominately known for his work in residential design. The 29,227 (includes basement and attic) square foot court house was his first large public commission; prior to this, all of Graf's commissions had been residential in scale and/or use. Construction of the court house began in 1901. The cornerstone was laid on June 29th, 1901 with great celebration, **Figure 1**. The general contractor, Wurthman and Vollmer of Cedarburg, **Figure 2**, completed the building on March 19, 1902 for a cost of \$58,014.¹ This exact date and cost are subject to speculation as multiple dates and costs are reported. Another source cites the date as March 29, 1902 for a cost of \$55,637.² Adjusted for inflation, this construction cost would roughly amount to 23 million dollars today. The picturesque court house has been extensively photographed on the exterior, **Figures 3** and **4**.



Figure 2: Wurthman with the painting crew, 1902.



Figure 3: Industrial Parade, July 6, 1908.



Figure 1: Laying of the court house cornerstone, 1901.

Other commissions by Graf included the Wiesler Hotel, Cedarburg (1885),³ the Waubeka Public Schoolhouse, Waubeka (1895),⁴ and several private residences predominately in the Milwaukee area. Graf formed the Fred Graf Building Co. in 1937,⁵ which specialized in designing modest-sized-homes.

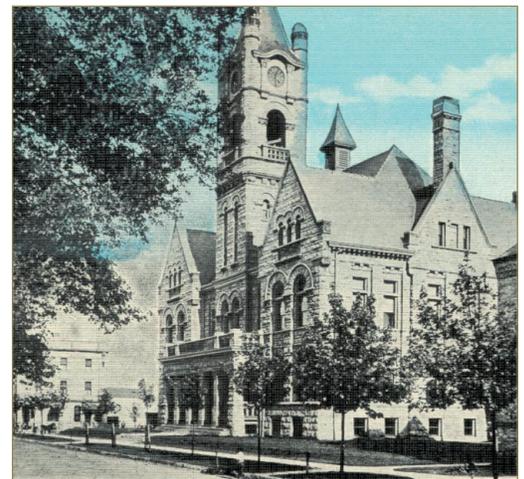


Figure 4: Court House image from postcard, circa, 1910.

HISTORY, DESCRIPTION, AND UTILIZATION

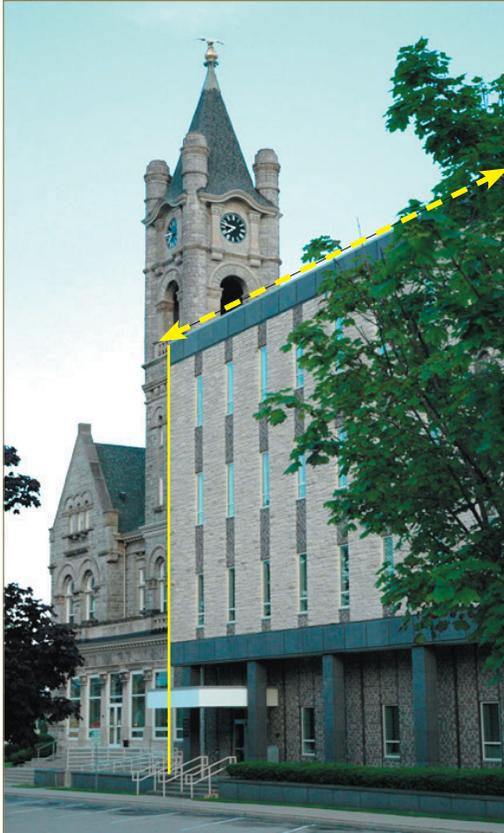


Figure 5: 1967 addition.

The court house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 12, 1976. A State of Wisconsin Historical Society statewide inventory of court houses initiated the nomination process, which was heavily championed by local residents Viola and Anna Ubbink.⁶

As typical with public buildings, change was constant at the court house. Paint colors were updated, lighting fixtures added and removed, and furniture purchased. With the exception of the dropped ceilings, many of these small changes were subtle and continued through the mid-1960s. Refer to the Building Committee Meeting Minutes data base in *Appendix C* for further information.

The Late 1960s

In 1967, Edgar A. Stubenrauch and Associates, Sheboygan designed a 67,200 square foot annex to the west, **Figure 5**. This addition marked the beginning of widespread changes to the historic court house and its setting. Pertinent building modifications include the following:

General

- Removal and/or in-filling of all exterior windows on the west elevation.
- Storage room in southwest corner subdivided to allow for new stair connection to the addition.
- Removal of west elevation double-door entry.
- Granite capped retaining wall added along north sidewalk.
- Carpeting with vinyl baseboards installed in most offices.
- Walls painted throughout the building.
- Acoustic tile ceilings installed throughout with the exception of the public corridors. Acoustic tiles applied to the recesses of the coffered ceiling on the first floor.
- Small storage addition and concrete retaining wall added on south elevation, west end.

Basement

- Office suites created in two east end offices.

First Floor

- Entrance portico enclosed with aluminum storefronts, **Figure 6**.
- Removal of the original north entry doors.
- Removal of existing west wall entry door in southeast corner Vault (A125).
- Enclosed connection created between 1902 and 1967 portions at north elevation, **Figure 7**. This one-story addition resulted in the covering of two original 1902 windows on the north elevation, (A113 and A115).
- Historic limestone steps and portico floor removed on the north elevation.
- Office suites created in two east end offices (A100-2 /A104-6).
- Southeast corner vault converted to nurse's office and storage room (A125/A126).
- Addition of a glass and aluminum frame reception area in corridor, west end (A123B).
- Subdivision of two offices on the buildings west end into a social services area.
- Two abutting closets at southwest end, north of vault, connected to create an internal corridor (A124B).

Second Floor

- Court room becomes County Board room (A204).
- Balustrade designating the court room gallery was removed from its original location and reinstalled approximately 10'-0" to the east.



Figure 6: Aluminum storefront enclosure at historic portico.



Figure 7: One-story addition connecting the 1902 and 1967 buildings.

HISTORY, DESCRIPTION, AND UTILIZATION

- Balustrade at the jury box and court clerk area removed from court room (A204).
- Significant portions of the judge's bench and platform removed. New counter installed.
- Removal of existing jury box on north side of court room.
- Two offices in the northwest corner (original judge's chamber, A212 and attorney's office/library, A211) converted to committee meeting rooms. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases were completely removed from the judge's chamber (A212). A corridor cutting through to the addition decreased the size of these rooms. Some of these designed changes were not implemented until 1992-3.

Roof

- Top 18'-0" of the stone chimney at west elevation removed.
- Roof covering the air space between the 1902 and 1967 buildings consists of copper roofing and flashing.

The 1990s

In 1992, Eppstein, Keller, Uhen Architects, Inc. executed plans to remodel what was then termed the Ozaukee Administrative Center. This work focused mainly on the 1967 building. Portions of the work impacting the 1902 original building included the following:⁷

General

- Installation of an elevator with access to both 1902 and 1967 buildings; the shaft was constructed in 1967. Wall partitions were removed on the first and second floors to accommodate elevator lobbies, **Figure 8**.
- New suspended ceiling tiles installed below the header of the interior and exterior windows in all first and second floor offices with the exception of room A207. New tiles were also installed in basement rooms A13 and A14. 2' x 4' recessed parabolic lighting fixtures were installed throughout these areas.
- New exterior windows manufactured by Milco.
- New concrete ramp at north entrance.
- Numerous offices painted.
- New HVAC unit installed in attic and associated ductwork as required. Two 64" x 20" openings made in belfry roof to accommodate air intake.
- All existing electrical wiring and associated outlets, switches, exit lights, telephone jacks, and wiremold were replaced.

Basement

- Ceiling-mounted radiators and associated thermostats removed at east end offices (A00-2 and A13-14).

First Floor

- Removal of aluminum and glass framed partition reception area in the main Corridor (A123B)
- Updating of finishes in first floor office located in historic vault (A122).

Second Floor

- Removal of a separate private office in the County Board chair's office (A200).
- New carpeting installed in County Board room (A204).
- Current pendant mounted lighting and ceiling fans added in County Board room (A204), **Figure 9**.
- Chase installed in County Board office (A209).



Figure 8: Second floor elevator lobby in historic judge's chamber.



Figure 9: New lighting and ceiling fans added to the County Board room in 1992-3.

HISTORY, DESCRIPTION, AND UTILIZATION

UTILIZATION

Currently, the court house contains county offices. In 1967, the court room and many of its auxiliary functions were relocated to the annex. In 1991, a new Justice Center was constructed in Port Washington and the county jail, Sheriff's department, Clerk of Court's office, three (3) court branches and thirty-one Supervisor's offices were moved to that building.

The historic court room is now utilized as the County Board chamber. Thirty-one (31) county board members meet once per month, leaving this significant space underutilized. A priority goal of the RTF's efforts is to restore the County Board room to a more historic period in time and allow for utilization of the room for additional community and civic activities.

County offices such as the Administrative Coordinator, Human Resources, County Finance Director, and Public Defender utilize rooms throughout the building. The Building Maintenance Supervisor, storage, and a University of Wisconsin Extension office are also located within the building.

The following rooms are utilized part-time or less:

First Floor – *The northeast corner office suite is currently unoccupied, A104-107. Vaults A03, A04, A06, A15, and A17 are utilized for storage ranging from heavy to very light.*

Second Floor – *Two northwest end offices are utilized as an occasional meeting room (A211) and a workspace/storage (A212). The southeast corner office (A200) is utilized by the County Board Chair and doubles as a meeting room. A204, the County Board room is utilized once per month and for sporadic meetings.*

A space planning and programming analysis should be executed to develop a plan for the building that expands the current intermittent use by the general public. For instance, a meeting room could be designated as a space a community organization can sign-up to use periodically. This would be particularly effective in a post-restoration office space given the ambiance and appeal of historic spaces.