



Photo credit: Stephen Tillman Photography

The building standing today is little changed from the one built over one hundred years ago. Designed in the Beaux-Arts style, it features neoclassical detailing including two-story recessed Ionic colonnades on the north and south elevations, architectural quoining at the corners and a cupola modeled after Brunelleschi's dome in Florence, Italy. Constructed of pale yellow brick in the monochromatic color scheme typical of the Beaux-Arts, its dome, columns and exterior metal trim were originally painted "lime stone color, of sand blast finish" to match the Indiana Limestone columns originally specified. This is verified in the earliest known photographs taken while under construction.



About Hentz and Reid

Hentz and Reid are recognized by architectural historian and author, William Mitchell, as the founders of the Georgia School of Classicism. Quincy native Hal Hentz met his future partner, Neel Reid, in Atlanta, Georgia and in 1905 the two aspiring architects studied under Charles McKim at New York's Columbia University. McKim, principal of the renowned firm McKim, Mead & White, urged the students to travel to Paris where both studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the most significant architectural school of its day. Following studies, the partners traveled through-out Europe before returning to Atlanta and opening their firm in 1909. Job # 99, the Gadsden County Court House, is actually the 25th job designed by the young firm who numbered their first commission Job #75.

Hentz and Reid, and later variations of the firm, had a profound influence on south-eastern architec-



ture through-out the first half of the twentieth century. Society architects, they designed whole swaths of Atlanta including residences in the neighborhoods of Druid Hills, Ansley Park and Buckhead. Landmark projects include Rich's Department Store, Atlanta's Peachtree (Amtrak) Station, the Paramount Theatre, the Piedmont Driving Club and Swan House, headquarters of the Atlanta History Center. Historian William Mitchell identified several talented designers working at Hentz and Reid beginning with Neel Reid, and later Philip Shutze and Edward Vason Jones, architect for the Nixon White House and designer of the State Department's Diplomatic Reception Rooms in Washington, DC. Their example inspired other architects of the Georgia School of Classicism including James Means and William Frank McCall and together the partners mentored the new School of Architecture (1908) at Georgia Tech. The original courthouse plans remain in the school's archives.

The firm's work is highly regarded and the Gadsden County Court House remains an outstanding example of one of their earliest governmental commissions in the Beaux-Arts style.



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History of the Courthouses of Gadsden County

QUINCY, FLORIDA

1824-1913



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By Joseph F. Munroe

The First Log Cabin Courthouse - 1824

Gadsden County, Florida's fifth county, was created on June 24, 1823 under Florida's first civilian Governor, William Pope Duval. Named for James Gadsden, its borders stretched from the Apalachicola River to the Suwanee and from the Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. Also known as Middle Florida, Gadsden County was the destination for commissioners tasked with finding a suitable site for Florida's new Capitol. Interestingly, Gadsden's first territorial judge, Jonathan Robinson, participated in the building of a crude log cabin governmental complex in Tallahassee the same month he presided over court in the Gadsden County wilderness some 20 miles to the northwest.

Court opened on April 5, 1824, on property owned by Gadsden's first sheriff, Robert Forbes, near Quincy's historic Bruce House, one mile west of the current courthouse. Early court minutes from July 1824 clearly state a structure was being used to conduct county business. Other minutes reference both a "Court House" and "Jury Room" and indicate that Gadsden County's first courthouse was likely to have been a governmental complex of at least two log cabins built between April 5, 1824 and April 12, 1825. The similarities shared with Florida's territorial Capitol, built by Judge Robinson and Gadsden planter Sherod McCall, are noteworthy. By the end of 1824 two governmental entities, the new Capitol and the county courthouse, existed in Gadsden's wilderness.



Replica of Florida's first log Capitol building. It is likely that Gadsden County's first courthouse was similar in style.



The Second Courthouse - 1827

The site for the county seat, Quincy, was determined in May 1825 when the town was gridded around a central block designated for the second courthouse. Again, it was a complex of separate buildings and court records from April-May 1826 reference the jail as the first building completed. Construction of the courthouse by Joseph Yonge continued through the year and on March 14, 1827, Judge Robinson ordered it, the jail and the public square delivered to the sheriff's control. It is assumed these buildings were little more than log cabins.

The Third Courthouse - 1837

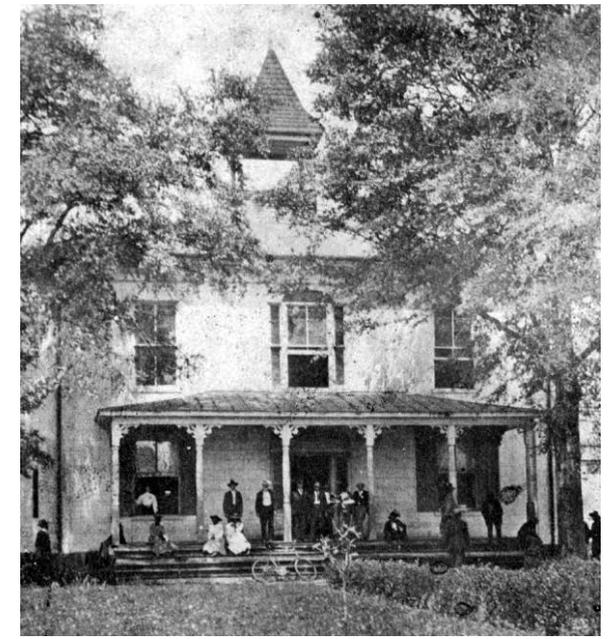
By March 1835, plans were underway for a third courthouse. In court records dated March 2, a committee was established to "draft the most suitable plan for building a courthouse and report thereon..." In subsequent meetings, this committee was authorized to solicit construction contracts and by the end of 1836 the new building was substantially completed. Apparently it was built as a simple two-story wood building with offices housing the court clerk and sheriff and a courtroom above. Plans

were made in late 1845 to renovate the courthouse with the addition of a south-facing portico and entries to both offices. Other buildings on the site served separate purposes such as probate court. Completed in 1837 and remodeled in 1846, Gadsden's third courthouse burned to the ground during the early morning hours of November 12, 1849, the result of probable arson.

The Fourth Courthouse - 1851

As the courthouse lay in ruins, a Grand Jury convened and on January 5, 1850, the County Board of Commissioners heard its recommendation to pursue "...the speedy erection of a suitable court house and offices for the county." A building committee was created and on February 9, 1850 plans were presented and approved. Eventually Tallahassee contractor R.A. Shine was selected and on March 15, 1851, the County Board instructed the Sheriff "...to take charge of the courthouse...", Gadsden County's fourth.

The result was a two-story brick structure, almost square surmounted by a cupola with exterior walls covered in stucco scored to look like stone blocks. The



Gadsden County's fourth Courthouse, built in 1851, was stucco-covered brick, scored to look like stone blocks. Surmounted by a cupola, it originally featured Greek Revival porticos and flanking one story wings.

earliest photograph indicates one-story Greek Revival porticos at the north and south entrances and flanking one-story wings on the east and west elevations. Contemporary accounts describe the wings as fire-proofed for record keeping with county offices on the first floor and court and jury rooms on the second.

The Fifth Courthouse - 1913

The fourth Court House was in use for some 60 years. Through the decades it was remodeled, but with the explosive growth of the county in the early years of the twentieth century, it was deemed inadequate and on November 7, 1910 the County Board of Commissioners formally resolved to erect a new structure. A building committee was formed, bids were solicited and on August 6, 1911, acting Chairman A.L. Wilson signed-off on three penciled floor plans submitted by the Atlanta firm of Hentz and Reid. Atlanta contractor J. A. Apperson was awarded the building contract and ground-breaking commenced on November 11, 1912 led by Quincy native, Governor Albert Gilchrist. Despite change orders and the contractor's bankruptcy, county officials began moving into Gadsden County's fifth Court House on October 7, 1913.