

The Third Courthouse: A Real Palace of Justice

According to the Hoosier Democrat of Flora, Indiana, Thursday, September, 1960 sequence of articles on the three courthouses, a movement was started for a new courthouse when the grand jury in session June fourth, 1915 reported that the old court house was not sufficient in size and that the records of the county were in a bad state of preservation for want of proper storage facilities. A petition was circulated among the tax payers of the county asking that the court house be improved and this petition was presented to the board of commissioners at the July session, 1915.

Special session of the board of commissioners was called July twenty-second, 1915 to employ an architect to make plans for remodeling the courthouse and Elmer Dunlap was engaged.

The county council in session this same date appropriated \$500 to pay the architect. On January third, 1916, it was decided that it would cost no more to replace the old courthouse than it would to renovate the

former structure. The County Council voted to appropriate \$171,000 for the new structure.

At their February session the commissioners employed Elmer E. Dunlap as their architect and advertised bids would be received April twenty-fourth.

In my point of view Dunlap was the Michelangelo of courthouses and other public facilities, having already been responsible for a number of well-known items in the State of Indiana, including the Kokomo High School, the Pike County Courthouse, the Ralph Waldo Emerson Indianapolis Public School, and the Shelbyville High School. He also served as the architect for the Rockfield Presbyterian Church in Carroll County. Dunlap was born May sixth, 1874, the son of Jerastus Dunlap and Ella (Evans) Dunlap. He was educated in the Columbus schools and was graduated from high school in 1892, matriculating at Franklin College in the same year. He was graduated from Franklin College in 1897 and practiced at St. Louis for a short time. In 1912 he organized the firm of Elmer E. Dunlap. His other accolades involved serving as director of Ashland Savings and Loan, National Sign Corporation of Kokomo, Indiana,

membership in the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks, The Exchange Club, the Indianapolis Athletic Club, the American Institute of Architecture, the Indiana Society of Architects, the Indiana Society of Engineers, the Architects Association of Indianapolis, and the Artist's Club. His death came on July second, 1936, and he was laid to rest in the Garland Brook Cemetery at Columbus.

Now that I have described the architect, I shall attempt to describe Dunlap's masterpiece as simply as possible.

Its style is Classical Revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and its building material is Bedford limestone.

Some of the architectural facets of this real gem include limestone parapets, decorative wreaths, pilasters, and wreath

Ornamentation. The rather stately exterior is complemented by its grand marble staircases, Kokomo Opalescent glass dome on the top of the interior, and to complement this there is an intricate mosaic on the main floor. In conversation with a Dunlap grandson, John, from

Columbus he shared Dunlap's characteristic grand staircases as being a hallmark of his grandfather's style.

As an aside to this writing, a visit to the basement reveals the nails still protruding from the molded concrete ceiling—1916 nails.