



PROJECT PROFILE

Edgar County Courthouse

Investigation and Design Services for Bell Tower Restoration | Paris, IL



CLIENT

Edgar County Board

BACKGROUND

The Romanesque Revival-style Edgar County Courthouse was designed by architect Henry Eliot of Chicago and was constructed in Paris, Illinois, from 1891 to 1893. Rising 150 feet above grade from the center of the Ohio sandstone building is a galvanized steel and zinc sheet metal-clad, tiered bell and clock tower topped with a copper-clad dome. The tower and dome are capped by a zinc sheet metal statue referred to as "Lady Justice." The tower is the focal point of downtown Paris and is visible for miles around Edgar County. The building has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1981.

Edgar County contacted WJE in 2005 to evaluate the stability of Lady Justice, as well as the building in general, due to reports of the statue leaning. WJE's investigation determined that the timber support framing for the statue was severely deteriorated due to long-term exposure to moisture. Temporary stabilization was installed until funding for repairs could be procured. The goal of the evaluation was to develop repair documents to restore the tower, dome, and statue.



SOLUTION

WJE's repairs to the exterior sheet metal cladding included complete removal of existing coatings, in-kind replacement of the copper roofing on the dome, in-kind replacement of significantly deteriorated sheet metal decorative cladding components, supplemental anchorage of the existing sheet metal cladding to remain, patching of deteriorated but salvageable elements with lead sheets molded to the desired shape, epoxy patching of small holes in the metal cladding, and recoating of the tower and dome with a high-performance coating system. The severely deteriorated statue support framing was replaced in-kind, and the bell room floor framing was strengthened. Lady Justice was removed from the building and shipped offsite for complete restoration that included disassembly, removal and replacement of existing coatings, and the installation of a new internal support system. Missing and severely deteriorated components of the statue were replaced.



During construction, WJE performed site observation visits at critical stages in the work, while County staff experienced in construction acted as WJE's "eyes and ears" full time at the project site. This collaborative process reduced professional fees, enabling more funding to be directed toward the restoration itself. The restoration was completed in 2011 and received the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Preservation Award for Restoration from Landmarks Illinois in 2012.

