

FEDERAL COURTHOUSE MEETS NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

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COOKEVILLE – It's a building that stands out among the others in the heart of Cookeville, one that has seen a lot of history and growth since it was completed in 1916. And now it has met the criteria to be on the National Register of Historic Places.

But it almost didn't come to fruition.



“The United States Post Office and Court House reflects the growth and prosperity of Cookeville in the first decade of the 20th Century,” Beth Savage, Federal Preservation Officer and director for the Center for Historic Buildings, said in a letter dated Sept. 10 to Ken young at the City of Cookeville. “Completed in 1916, the United States Post Office and Court House is a

well-designed example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, a style otherwise unrepresented in Cookeville.”



And there's certainly a lot of history behind it.

According to the construction history, the building was authorized by the Public Building Act passed June 25, 1910, with the cost of the site and building limited to +\$100,000.

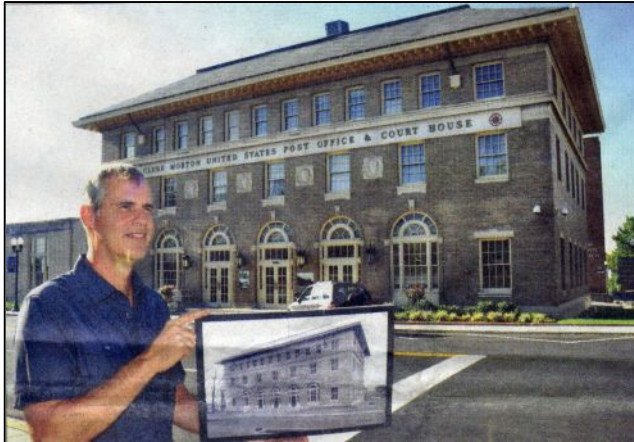
Proposals for the location of the building were sought, with the Walnut and Broad Street location

being well-located in relation to the center of population and close to the county courthouse, deport and town square.

It was also noted that there was some rivalry between those favoring the west side and east side of town, but estimated that “60 percent of the citizenry supported the recommended location.”

The property was originally offered for \$7,000, but the price paid for the lot when acquired on Sept. 12, 1911, is unknown.

Construction did not begin until the spring of 1915.



Arguments were made as to whether or not the building was needed came about, along with the price possibly resulting in an “unsatisfactory building.”

(Pictured: Putnam County Archivist Glenn Jones holds a photo donated by Todd Borgki of the L Clure Morton United States Post Office and Court House as it was nearing completion in late 1915. The building has met the

criteria to be placed on the National register of Historic Places).

However, Congressional representatives sponsored multiple years for the construction of the building prior to the construction, and went as far as Cordell Hull visiting the Treasury Department in the late November 1912 to question the delay.

Interestingly, the building that was constructed was of higher quality than that typical for the size and type. The exterior facing walls from grade to first floor line are stone, stucco above with terra cotta trimmings with granite steps. The public lobby has ceramic tile floor, marble base, wood wainscot and plaster cornice. The courtroom was similar to the lobby, with a wood base instead.

The building was built as fully fireproof and exterior was instead built with pressed brick with limestone and terra cotta trim.

The construction contract was advertised, with a New York City-based construction firm winning the bid at a price of \$82,107. The building was completed months ahead of time – Feb. 10, 1916.

A loading dock was added to the rear of the building in 1956 and again in 1965 to the east.

Alterations to the courtroom were made in 1964 and 1986. But despite those alterations, the exterior of the 1916 building remains substantially unaltered, with the additions now more than 50 years old.

Once the Office and General Services Administration Public Building Services finish reviewing the documents, a final copy of the nomination will be available through the National Register of Historic Places.

*Read more about Putnam Co., TN & surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>