

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Forsyth County Courthouse

Local Historic Landmark #127

11 West Third Street

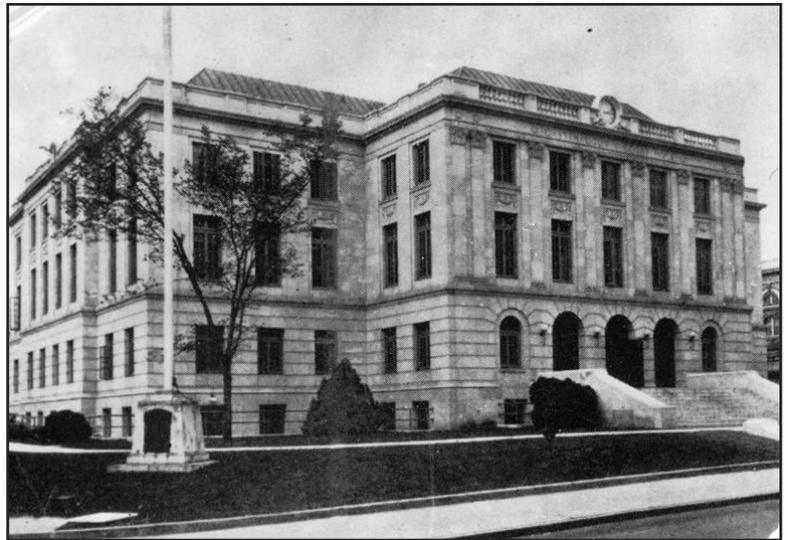
Construction Date(s): 1926, 1960

Landmark Designation Date: 04/01/2013

The Forsyth County Courthouse was built in 1926 by the prominent architectural firm, Northup & O'Brien. It gains its significance for its role as a county seat of power in local government and for its architecture. Since the colonial period, North Carolina's counties have served as the base of political power and law; the county courthouse, is the single most significant governmental building in each of the state's 100 counties. The Forsyth County Courthouse demonstrates the Beaux Arts style, prominent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There have been three physical courthouse structures on the site of the current one, not including two additions constructed in 1960. In 1851, the first courthouse was built to serve the newly created county. It was reputedly designed by the Moravian industrialist, Francis Fries, and built in the Greek Revival style. As time passed and Forsyth County continued to grow, demand for more services created the need for a larger courthouse. The second courthouse was built in 1896 and was designed by the noted southern architect, Frank P. Milburn. It included a five-story rectangular bell tower, an open entrance porch, and a three-story round tower on the southwest corner. Still greater growth demanded an even larger courthouse, and Northup & O'Brien was commissioned to design a new courthouse in 1926; it was to be the only courthouse that the firm designed. In 1959-1960, Northup & O'Brien's successor firm, Lashmit, James, Brown and Pollock, was selected to design additions to the building. These additions were simple appendages to the northern and southern ends of the building, covering previous entrances but leaving the eastern and western exterior walls exposed.

The 1926 courthouse was essentially constructed around the existing foundation of the 1896 courthouse and retained the lower portion of its bell tower. Evidence of the Beaux Arts architectural style includes a smooth, light-colored masonry exterior, Corinthian capped pilasters, rusticated



Forsyth County Courthouse without wings

first level and decorative garlands on the exterior. Interior features of the new courthouse include marble floors and walls, and elaborate moldings and friezes. The courthouse is an imposing three-story structure occupying an entire city block in downtown Winston-Salem. In 1974 the interior was subdivided into County offices until 2004 when the County discontinued use of the building. The building remained vacant until 2014. Today the courthouse is being redeveloped into residential units.



Photo courtesy of Digital Forsyth, Forsyth County Courthouse, with additions



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>