

Orange County

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Many of America's early nineteenth-century public buildings used Greek Revival designs to invoke the sense of classicism and recall the democratic ideals of the Greeks. One of the few pre-Civil War courthouses still standing in Indiana, the Orange County Courthouse in Paoli sits in a *Lancaster Square* plan and showcases the Greek Revival style and the talents of local, nineteenth-century craftsmen.

Completed in 1850, Orange County's courthouse is the third-oldest courthouse in the state, built only a few years after Ohio County's (1845) and Fayette County's (1849) courthouses. The building's tall Doric columns, entrance portico, and square cupola were a drastic departure from the simple wood and brick courthouses that served the county since its 1816 organization. While the basic Greek Revival plan used for the courthouse was probably borrowed from a pattern book, the building is specifically designed to fit the courthouse square's topography. By incorporating the square's incline, the southern-facing entrance includes an exposed lower story and requires visitors to climb a whole set of stairs to reach the main floor. The back, northern entrance, however, only has three steps leading up to the door.

The Orange County Courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. It is also part of the Paoli Historic District, designated by the National Register in 1994. Unfortunately a November 2010 fire destroyed six buildings on the courthouse square that were part of the historic district including the Old National Bank, but the courthouse, which was only a short distance away, was left undamaged.