

## **Pike County**

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Pike County, one of Indiana's smallest counties in population, is home to one of the few classical county courthouses built during the twentieth century. When county commissioners decided to replace the 1868 courthouse with a new building in 1920, two controversies immediately arose. First, the citizens of nearby Winslow petitioned to relocate the county seat to their town, a request which was ultimately ignored. Next, the county realized it did not have sufficient funds to build a new courthouse. To save money, county officials constructed the courthouse in phases and persuaded designer Elmer Dunlap, a Columbus, Indiana-born architect who worked on five Indiana county courthouses during his career, to simplify his plans and eliminate exterior decoration to fit the smaller budget.

The Pike County Courthouse, the last of Dunlap's courthouse designs to be built, is the architect's plainest. Unlike Dunlap's other courthouses, Pike County's is made of tan brick, making its heavy, almost-square mass appear quite understated, especially when compared to the elaborate, late nineteenth-century Second Empire or Romanesque Revival designs found elsewhere in Indiana. The courthouse's simplicity continues on its interior, which is the least-elaborate of the three, almost-identical, Classical Revival courthouses done by Dunlap during the 1910s and 1920s. While the Carroll and Spencer County Courthouses use marble detailing and columns through their centrally-placed rotundas, the Petersburg courthouse has painted plaster walls with colored chair moldings as the only decoration. All three of Dunlap's courthouses sport stained glass domes which are almost invisible from the buildings' exteriors. Pike County's yellow window with a green floral design around its perimeter adds a sense of elegance to the otherwise stark interior.

The Pike County Courthouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. While the interior was repaired and redecorated during a 1956 renovation, the building's exterior maintains its historic, 1922 appearance.