

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The New Haven County Courthouse is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Elm and Church Streets, facing the New Haven Green across Elm Street to the south. (Photograph 9) The courthouse is bordered on the east by Church Street, on the west by the Free Library of New Haven, and on the north by a parking lot, which is owned by the State of Connecticut.

### Exterior

#### General

The courthouse plan is based on a large rectangle (approximately 105 feet wide by 250 feet long oriented south to north) with rectangular projections centered on each of its sides. (see plans in Appendix C) The building, clad in coursed, dressed ashlar of white Vermont marble, rises three stories above a raised basement set on a projecting granite plinth. The walls of the building's central mass are articulated to form seven bays in the short direction and seventeen bays in the long direction. A five-bay pedimented portico projecting to the south (15 feet deep) is echoed by a projection of similar width but lesser depth (4 feet) to the north, and the nine-bay shallow projection to the east (5 feet deep) corresponds to a projection of similar width but greater depth (16 feet) to the west. (Photograph 10) Horizontal bands at bottom (the plinth and the base, dado, and cap of the basement) and top (extended pilaster necking and entablature) visibly unite the building's masses. Broad staircases lead from Elm and Church Streets to the major entrances on the south and east.

The exposed portion of the basement, extending approximately a half-story above grade, has a single-fascia base resting on the plinth, a broad dado, a single-fascia cap serving as a water table, and a broad fascia serving as a plinth for the stories above. Pilasters on the building's central mass articulate and unite the three stories above and support an entablature—serving both these pilasters and the Ionic columns of the south, east, and west porticos—that extends around the entire structure. (Photographs 11 & 12) The entablature has a tripartite architrave, a plain frieze, and a cornice—ornamented with lion masks and acroteria (Photograph 13)—which conceals a built-in gutter. Above the walls of the building's central mass, the entablature is topped by a single course of stone in line with the frieze below. Above the

walls of the masses extending to the east, west, and north, taller parapets (formed with a base, a dado, and a cap) rise to the height of the south pediment's apex. The pediment and the higher walls on the other projections emphasize the building's main and cross axes. A three-bay-wide, nine-bay-long, marble-clad penthouse with pediments on the south and north rises a full story from the center of the roof to house the laylight over the interior atrium. The structure's walls are topped by an entablature with a cornice ornamented with lion masks and acroteria, and its entire hipped roof serves as a skylight for the laylight below.

The windows, most of which are recessed one foot behind the wall plane, generally have wood frames and sash with clear glass panes. Typically, basement windows, protected by ornamental window grilles, have single-pane, horizontal pivot sash; first floor windows have paired vertical pivot sash topped by a single wide awning (top-hinged, outswinging) transom sash; second floor windows have paired vertical pivot sash topped by paired awning transom sash; and third floor windows have vertical pivot sash—single sash on the main block and on the west projection, paired sash topped by vertical pivot transom sash on the south façade, and taller paired sash without transoms on the west and north projections. (Photographs 14, 15 & 16) Many of the first floor windows are framed by an architrave, and many of the second floor windows are framed by an architrave supporting a frieze and cornice topped by a pediment. (Photograph 16) Generally, a broad projecting stringcourse, with ornamented moldings including a fascia with a Greek key, separates the windows on the first floor from those on the second. Some transoms have been modified to accept window air conditioners.

The roof of the south portico slopes down from the center to the east and west, following the lines of the pediment. The remaining roof areas are flat with projecting skylight penthouses.

#### South Elevation

The south elevation, seven bays wide with a central, full-height, five-bay, projecting, pedimented Ionic portico, is the building's principal façade. (Photograph 17) Three broad flights of granite steps with concrete landings rise from the sidewalk on Elm Street and from the pavement to the east and west of the building to the level of the main entrance. Tall marble plinths supporting marble



Photograph 9: View from southeast, 2002. Photograph by Whitney Cox.

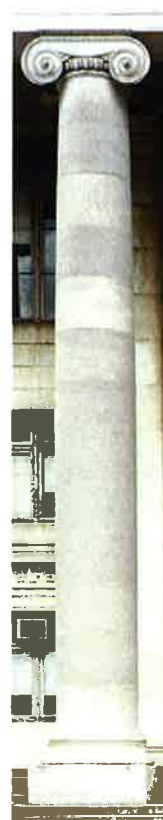


Photograph 10: South elevation showing portico, published in *Architectural Record*, April 1916.





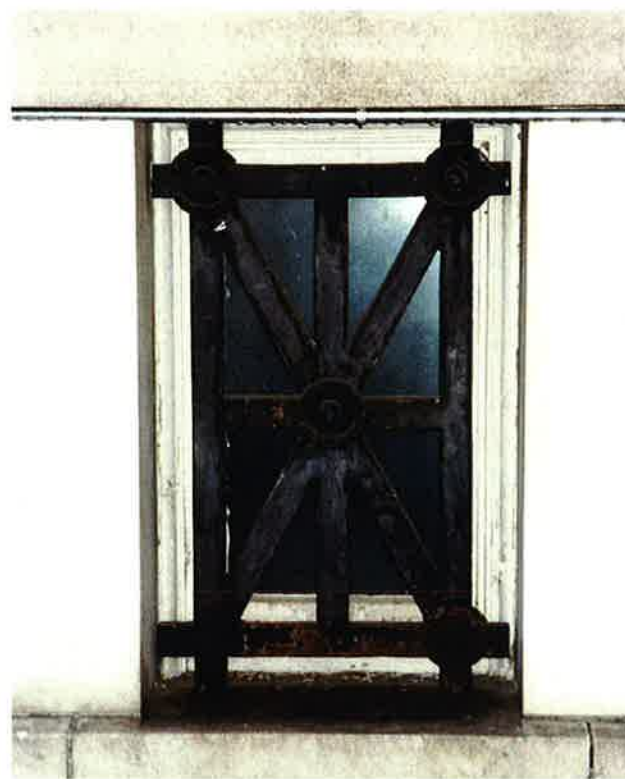
Photograph 11: Pilaster, south elevation, 2002.



Photograph 12: Ionic column, south elevation, 2002.



Photograph 13: Cornice from the east elevation ornamented with a lion mask and an acroterion, 2002.



Photograph 14: Single-pane, horizontal pivot sash basement window protected by an ornamental cast iron window grille, 2002.



Photograph 15: Paired vertical pivot sash topped by a wide awning transom sash typical for the first floor, 2002.



Photograph 16: Paired vertical pivot sash topped by paired awning transom sash framed by an architrave supporting a frieze and cornice surmounted by a pediment, typical for the second floor, 2002.



Photograph 17: South elevation, 2002. Photograph by Whitney Cox.



pedestals bearing massive seated marble figures interrupt the second flight of stairs in front of the second and sixth bays. The figure on the west represents the Lawmaker, and that on the east, the Advocate. (Photographs 18 & 19)

The portico's six-column Greek Ionic order rests on high plinths, and its entablature is continuous with that of the rest of the building. The pediment's raking cornice bears large acroteria at the apex and at the ends. Sculptural figures in the tympanum represent Justice, Victory, Precedence, Accuracy, Common Law, Statutory Law, Progress, and Commerce. (Photograph 20) The central figure is a large draped female representing the Goddess of Justice seated on a Greek throne. Her right hand rests on the hilt of a large sword, while her left supports a sphere resting on the throne. On the throne is mounted a miniature figure of the Greek winged Victory. To her right stands a boy holding a shield decorated with the national seal. Seated on the right of the boy is an old man representing Precedence, while further to the right are a reclining male figure and two youths. A boy representing Statutory Law, standing to the left of Justice, is supported by a seated male figure representing Progress. A reclining male figure and two boys to his left complete the sculpture. The portico's soffit has ornamented coffers. (Photograph 21)

The wall of the south façade is articulated with pilasters. The central bay has bronze kalamein double doors surmounted by bronze kalamein panels at the first floor and a large window with three vertical pivot sash at the second floor. The doors, panels, and window are unified by an architrave and frieze topped by a cornice supported on consoles. The doors, the panels above, and the enframing moldings are all heavily ornamented. The three bays to either side of the entrance have typical first-floor windows. At the second floor, the bays to either side of the center have bronze sconces, and the two bays to the east and two bays to the west have typical second-floor windows with those in the end bays framed by an architrave surmounted by a frieze and cornice supporting a pediment. (Photograph 22) At the third floor, the end bays have large windows with single pane vertical pivot sash; remaining bays have tall windows with paired vertical pivot sash and paired vertical pivot transoms.

#### **North Elevation**

The five central bays of the seven-bay north façade, project slightly from the end bays, which are articulated with pilasters and have

typical window configurations. Sections of the projecting bays (the bays at both ends and the two portions separating the windows in the middle three bays) project slightly with cavettos at the bottoms suggesting pilasters, although they are not ornamented as such. The entablature across the top of the façade is continuous with that on the rest of the building.

Each of the façade's three central bays has a broad basement window with metal grilles, a tall window with paired vertical pivot sash and vertical pivot transoms extending from the middle of the first floor to the middle of the second floor, and another window with paired vertical pivot sash at the third floor level extending to the bottom of the entablature. Low-relief marble panels between the second and third floor windows depict a balanced scale with serpents (center panel), symbolizing Justice, and a shield and crossed swords (flanking panels), symbolizing Authority. (Photographs 23 & 24)

In the east and west bays of the projection, single-door basement entrances surmounted by transoms are framed by battered, eared architraves topped by cornices supporting low marble roofs formed with a fillet surmounted by a large cavetto. Above each entrance is a single-light window with ornamental metal grilles. At both the second and third floors, there are small windows with single vertical pivot sash.

#### **East Elevation**

The east façade is seventeen bays long with a nine-bay projection in the center. (refer to Photograph 9) The four bays of the main wall at either end of the façade, articulated with pilasters, have typical window configurations. The entablature above the pilasters continues across the central projecting portion of the building. Here, six freestanding Greek Ionic columns articulate the seven recessed central bays. Stairs, flanked by cheek walls, lead from the Church Street sidewalk to a landing at the three middle bays. Each of these bays has paired bronze kalamein entrance doors surmounted by paired bronze kalamein panels framed by an architrave, which is surmounted by a frieze and cornice. Above the cornice, a window with paired vertical pivot sash and paired awning transoms is surmounted by a carved marble panel. The panels depict the seals of Justice and Authority. The window and panel are framed by an architrave surmounted by a frieze and cornice topped by a pediment. The window above in the third floor and the windows in the two recessed bays on the south and north



Photograph 18: The Lawmaker, 2002.



Photograph 19: The Advocate, 2002.





Photograph 20: Sculptural group in the tympanum, south elevation, depicting (from left to right) Progress, Statutory Law, the Goddess of Justice, Common Law, Precedence, and Accuracy, 2002.



Photograph 21: Ornamented coffered plaster soffit of the portico, south elevation, 2002.



Photograph 22: Bronze sconces flanking the main entrance at the south elevation, 2002.



Photograph 24: Relief marble panel with the symbol for Authority on the west elevation, 2002.



Photograph 23: Relief marble panel with the symbol for Justice on the west elevation, 2002.



ends of the portico have typical configurations. The windows in the center three bays have leaded stained glass. (Photograph 25) The broad single bays at either end of the projecting mass have typical basement windows, first floor windows with three vertically pivoting sash and an awning transom, and second floor windows with three vertically pivoting sash and three awning transoms. The first and second floor windows are enframed by an eared architrave surmounted by a frieze and cornice supported by consoles. At the third floor there are blind horizontal panels.

The check walls at the stairs and six similar walls, detailed as pedestals, support tall bronze light standards. (Photograph 26)

### **West Elevation**

The west façade is seventeen bays long with a nine-bay projecting portico in the center. The four bays of the main wall at either end of the façade, articulated with pilasters, have typical window configurations. The two bays to either side of the portico have additional small windows with paired vertical pivot sash in the frieze of the entablature, which is continuous across the façade.

The projecting portico has seven recessed bays articulated by six engaged Greek Ionic half columns flanked by broad bays that are not recessed. Projecting pedestals in front of the central bay and the end bays support massive seated marble figures symbolizing Wisdom (the center figure), the Goddess of Truth, and Self Denial. (Photographs 27, 28 & 29) Similar projecting pedestals at each end of the building support bronze light standards. The central bay has blind panels at the first and third stories, and the three bays to either side have tall windows with paired vertical pivot sash topped by paired horizontal transoms extending from the middle of the first floor to the middle of the second floor and tall windows with paired vertical pivot sash at the third floor. Each of these bays has a carved marble panel separating the two windows, and there is a similar panel in the center bay. The panels depict the seals of Justice and Authority.

The broad bays at the ends of the projecting portico each have a blind masonry opening framed by an eared architrave and battered frieze topped by a cornice with a pediment supported by consoles and ornamented by acroteria. In the wall above, a small window with a vertical pivot sash is set within four receding frames. The returns at the ends of the projection each have win-

dows in line with the floor levels of the building, an additional window in the frieze, and five small windows placed irregularly to light a staircase.

Access for the handicapped is provided by a concrete ramp that descends from street level to a modern painted flush steel door in the third bay from the south at the basement level. A modern fabric canopy protects this entrance.

### **Site**

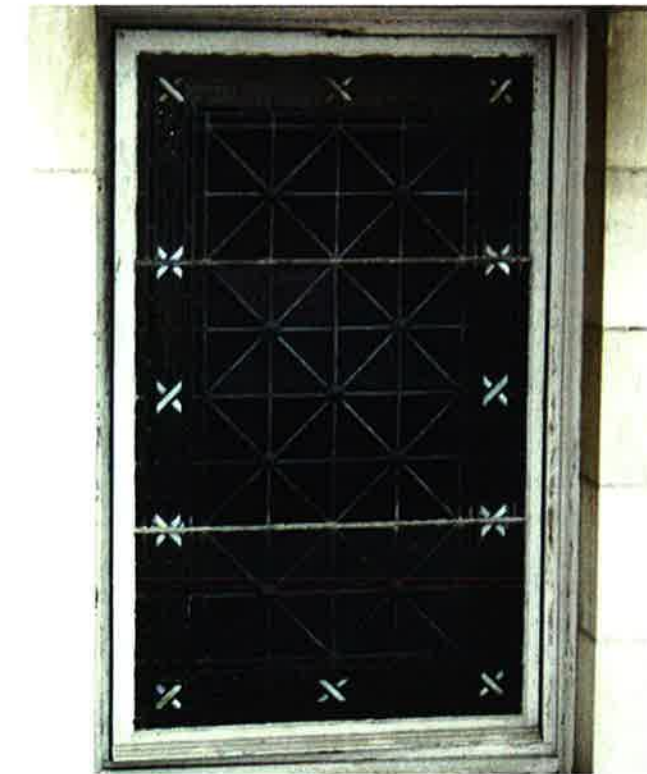
A 2-foot-wide wall, clad with stone similar to that on the building, extends along the north portion of the west edge of the site and along the entire north edge of the site. The wall has a tall projecting granite base, a broad marble dado, a projecting marble stringcourse, and a marble cap in line with the dado below. (Photograph 30) The wall is anchored by three projecting piers: one at the south end, one at the northwest corner, and one at the east end, which is aligned with a thin pier of similar articulation projecting from the north façade of the building below its easternmost pilaster. A wide iron gate once mounted between the eastern pier and the thin pier against the building is now lying on the ground in the midst of extensive vegetation. (Photograph 31) The granite base continues east of the eastern pier.

A driveway between the north wall of the building and the wall at the edge of the site, once entered through the gate noted above, leads to a sally port constructed with a metal frame covered with metal mesh, which secures the entrance near the west end of the north wall. To the north of the wall is a parking lot, which is owned by the State of Connecticut. North of the parking lot, a building faced with gold-colored reflective glass is an inconsiderate neighbor, throwing intense psychedelic gray and gold patterns against the north wall of the courthouse—patterns that are incompatible with the refined classical qualities of the building. (Photograph 32)

### **Interior**

#### **General**

The interior of the New Haven County Courthouse, organized around two strong axes anchored by the building's entrances on Elm Street and Church Street, contains several of the city's grandest interior spaces as well as recoverable remains of additional



Photograph 25: Exterior view of one of the three leaded stained glass windows at the east elevation, 2002.



Photograph 26: Tall bronze light standard, 2002.