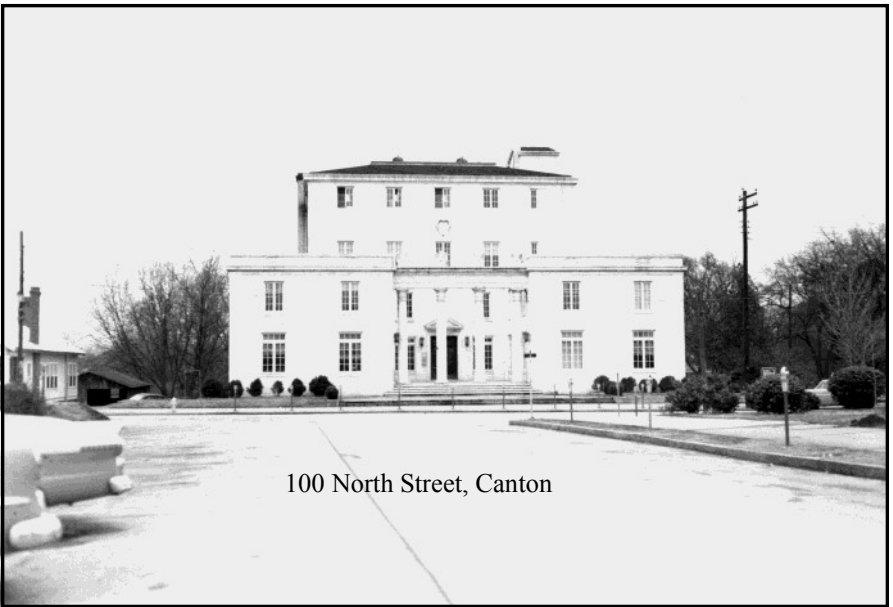


Cherokee County Historic Courthouse and Jail



100 North Street, Canton



HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Cherokee County Historic Courthouse located on North Street in Downtown Canton was built between 1927-1929 of Georgia white marble to replace the fourth courthouse that was destroyed by fire. The



Cherokee County Courthouse, 1924
Located on the square in Canton, this courthouse was destroyed by fire in 1927.

original courthouse of Cherokee County was located in an old log cabin on Cumming St., that was originally meant to be a residence. The second courthouse was built in Canton's central park around 1840 and stood until 1865 when it caught fire. It was widely supposed that the second courthouse was burned on the orders of General Sherman during the Civil War. After the second courthouse was destroyed, the business of the county was conducted in the old Presbyterian church that was located near the Canton school. The next courthouse was rebuilt on the same spot as the one that Sherman burned and was completed in 1874. It stood for 54 years until it also caught fire and was destroyed around 1927.

The historic marble courthouse is remembered in many ways, not the least of which were the trials conducted during "Court Week", that twice-yearly festive occasion when residents of the county came to every small-town county seat -- in this case, Canton, Georgia -- to conduct business and enjoy the punishment being meted out to criminals.



Historic Cherokee
County Courthouse
1928

Invariably, this meant that not only would one enjoy an interesting tale, but possibly the antics of a colorful "detainee" or two in the jail or about the courtroom, too. Longtime Cherokee residents recall that in earlier days, Court Week was an event closely akin to a county fair.

Some of the most interesting stories about the courthouse relate to the jail, which operated from the completion of the courthouse until 1989, when new facilities were available. The location of

the jail on the fourth floor -- directly over the courtroom-- was a bad decision from the very start. During Court Week, the prisoners not only banged on the pipes to disrupt court procedures, but also plugged up the commodes to flood the courtroom below. On a few occasions, they even set fire to mattresses to smoke up the place. The jail was originally built to hold about fifty people, however, former sheriffs have stated that it usually held closer to eighty prisoners. The windows of the jail were double-barred, so that one set of windows could open to allow air circulation, because the building was not air-conditioned until 1982.



Jaycees' Poultry Festival, 1958

The cells that line the front of the courthouse building look out on the open plaza and the rear of the marble eagles. This led to a popular Cherokee County euphemism for incarceration: A family was not in jail, but "behind the eagles."

Today, the heavy metal door at the jail stands open, but in bygone days, it would have been securely locked to hold prisoners. Viewing the area one can see the old cells -- now cleaned and painted -- and the metal furniture upon which the prisoners slept, sat and took their meals. And if one tries really hard, he or she might imagine the shenanigans which once took place in this area when the prisoners of yesteryear were confined, tried and punished at the Cherokee County Courthouse.

The Historical Society has over 100 historic photos and maps on display in the restored jail, located on the 4th floor of the historic courthouse.

For more information on the history of Cherokee County and it's cities, please visit the office of the Cherokee County Historical Society, located on the 3rd floor of the historic courthouse or our website at www.rockbarn.org.