

Arlington County's First Courthouse

Arlington's first courthouse, constructed in 1898, was designed by architect Albert Goenner. The historic courthouse was a three-story Richardsonian Romanesque style building featuring an impressive 75-foot-tall central tower at the façade. The surrounding neighborhood, which became known as "Courthouse", developed into the County's government center with the police department, county jail, and legal professionals all constructing facilities and offices on the adjacent blocks.

Prior to the courthouse's construction, Arlington County's legal matters were handled in Alexandria City at their 1872 courthouse. As interest grew for a more centrally located courthouse within the then rural and sparsely populated Arlington County, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation allowing Arlington County citizens to vote on a new courthouse location. On May 28, 1896, the new subdivision of Fort Myers Heights was selected by a total of 561 votes. Designed by architect A. Goenner, Joseph H. Hobson began construction that winter on Block 8 of the subdivision which was donated to the county by the Fort Myer Heights Land Company. The new courthouse was ready for a dedication ceremony in November 1898.

Over the next several decades, Arlington County experienced rapid population growth largely due to the increase in the federal workforce during both World Wars. In response, the courthouse was enlarged with a south wing addition to accommodate the Clerk's Office in 1929, which was expanded with a second floor in 1936, and a north wing in 1950 that contained the county's jail on its third floor. Temporary buildings were also added to the site in 1946 to house the draft board and press room and in 1948 to provide space for the Surveys Division, Personnel Director, Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Finance. In 1960, following a vote by county citizens, the original 1898 wing of the building was demolished and in 1961 it was replaced with a new seven-story tower designed by architects John M. Walton and Associates and Albert D. Lueders. The 1960s-era building and its previous additions served the County until 1995, when a Courthouse building was constructed at 1425 North Courthouse Road, and was eventually demolished in 1997.

Lawyer's Row

Between 1927 and 1941, a row of five office buildings was erected on the north side of Sherman Avenue, now North Courthouse Road. Known as "Lawyer's Row", the small-scale buildings were primarily occupied by realtors and lawyers, including some of Arlington's most prominent members of the legal profession who shaped the early political history of Arlington. A small-town atmosphere was associated with this collection of tightly arranged buildings that provided closeness among the many attorneys, judges, and clerks of court, while it offered a sense of accessibility to clients. All five buildings were demolished in 1990 to make way for the new county jail.

Lawyer's Row consisted of the following five buildings:

1. Ball Building (circa 1935-1941)
2. Jesse Building (circa 1927)
3. Jesse-Hosmer Building (circa 1934-1940)
4. Moncure Building (circa 1936)
5. Rucker Building (circa 1936)