

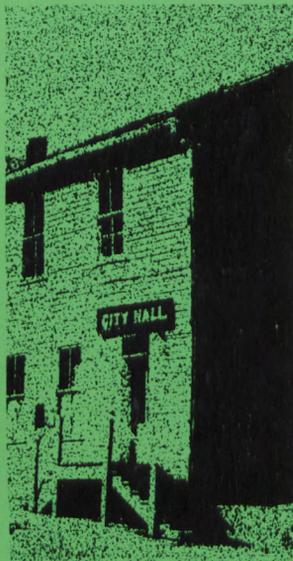
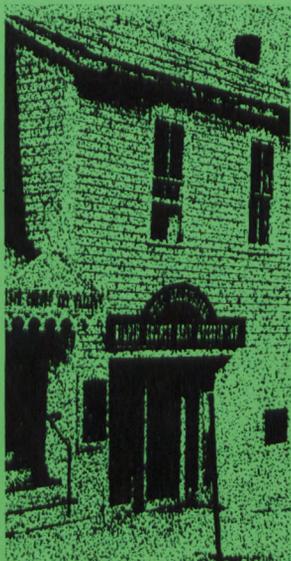
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# WASHINGTON HALL

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" WASHINGTON HALL:  
GILPIN COUNTY'S OLDEST COURTHOUSE "

by  
Liston E. Leyendecker  
Associate Professor  
Department of History  
Colorado State University

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service  
Historical Bulletin Number 1

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# WASHINGTON HALL

Some say (and they may be right) that Central City's town hall, once called Washington Hall, is the oldest building in the community. This dignified pioneer, once the county courthouse, has stoically endured and silently witnessed numerous booms and busts in Central City and Gilpin County. Its unobtrusive clapboard covering (added about 1864) belies the structure's great age, while it conceals the hand-hewn, square logs that once formed its exterior. Many sightseers saunter past it; art lovers walk through what was the jail and climb the stairs to the former courtroom, now an art gallery, to observe the latest works of Colorado artists.

Tourists and others will pause, push open the east door and step into the old Clerk and Recorder's office to seek information from the City Manager. Very few know the history of this structure or its close association with the area's glittering past.

On November 1, 1861, William Gilpin, first Governor of Colorado Territory, approved the creation of Gilpin County and the establishment of Central City as its county seat.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks later he appointed George W. Jacobs, Galen G. Norton and Archibald J. Van Deren as the first Board of County Commissioners.<sup>2</sup> Previously, mining district officers managed the affairs of the various camps or communities scattered throughout the county.

After seeing to it that their successors and other county officials were elected on December 6, 1861,<sup>3</sup> the appointed Commissioners leased a suite of offices on the second floor of the post office, a wooden structure at the south end of Central City's Main Street.

The lessors, Edward H. Brown and James P. Henry, received \$45.83 per month. By the terms of the contract, which ran for a year, the county obtained exclusive use of the front offices and, when the need arose, could commandeer the larger, main room for "court or county purposes." When not in use by the county, Brown and Henry reserved the right to utilize the room for "concerts, lectures and other purposes except for dancing parties."<sup>4</sup>

At a meeting on January 8, 1862, the newly elected commissioners, D. C. Reed, John Thomas and Hiram Foreman, directed the clerk, Bela S. Buell, to

purchase 12 arm chairs for use in his office and the courtroom. Since the Sheriff, Jesse L. Pritchard, controlled the courtroom, the Board requested him to carpet the alley and the inside of the bar with gunny sacks. They asked the County Treasurer, Columbus Nuckolls, to purchase a safe which he would keep in his office and they authorized County Clerk Buell, to purchase "suitable" index books as prescribed by law, along with a reception book.<sup>5</sup>

The county officers headquartered in the post office until 1864, although D. T. Beals and D. W. Tilton became their landlords and their rent increased to \$46.00 per month. The Sheriff and Clerk of the District Court took over the southwest office while the northwest room became the domain of the Probate Judge and County Attorney. The two most active county officials, the Clerk and Treasurer, shared a third room after 1863.<sup>6</sup>

The chambers in the post office were only temporary and would be vacated once the officials located more suitable space. Meanwhile, they continued to look for the appropriate spot. On one occasion, the county surveyor inspected a plot of ground immediately north of and in back of the Verandah House, a leading hotel on Lawrence Street. The land fronted on High Street and measured 137 feet in width by 150 feet in depth and the Commissioners who were curious to see if it would be suitable for a courthouse and other county buildings spent an afternoon examining the lot. While they were at it, they layed out streets which would run to it, envisioning a courthouse square. Finally, they decided to appropriate the land for county purposes, but did not use it for a main square.<sup>7</sup>

### **Jail Of Importance**

A satisfactory jail had prime importance for the dwellers of Gilpin County. The one erected in 1860 on Spring Street proved inadequate for county purposes. Therefore, on January 7, 1862, the Commissioners accepted a plan for a jail submitted by William Cozens, a county deputy sheriff.<sup>8</sup>

The new jail site was 40 feet wide and 100 feet deep fronting on the street (later called Eureka) that ran along the north side of Eureka Gulch west of Main Street. A house stood on the lot and both were purchased by Cozens from Henry C. Dickinson on December 9, 1861 for \$150.<sup>9</sup>

Cozens, a trained carpenter, set about constructing the jail under the supervision of D. C. Reed, Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners.<sup>10</sup> The county officials agreed to lease the building for \$35 per month and were to assume possession on February 15, 1862, although they probably did not take over the structure until March 1, the day they began paying rent.<sup>11</sup> When completed, the log building furnished the county with a good jail near the center of its principal community.

Several months later, Cozens increased his holdings by purchasing a narrow lot (6 feet by 15 feet) which lay immediately west of the jail from John and Sara Blackwood. The deputy now owned approximately 46 feet of frontage on the north side of Eureka Street which extended back to High Street.<sup>12</sup> Although the land was not in the core of Central's business district, its ready accessibility to

that section and its lower rent probably enhanced its appeal to the budget-minded authorities.

Cozens became Jailor on March 1, 1862, and received \$600 per year for taking care of prisoners (it cost 80 cents a day to board a prisoner) and for keeping the jail tidy, "clean and wholesome." The \$600 also covered any other costs connected with the prisoners. The Clerk of the Board paid for the wood and expenses incurred in furnishing the structure with necessary items and for the support of the prisoners then in jail.<sup>13</sup>

The following November, the Grand Jury recommended that the upper floor of the jail be laid, and in January, 1863, the Commissioners ordered Cozens, who was Sheriff by then, to do so in order to make the building more secure.<sup>14</sup>

On February 9, 1864, The Daily Miner's Register reported that the new building Cozens was constructing for a courtroom and county offices was being finished as fast as possible.<sup>15</sup> Cozens also added on to the existing jail, for on March 11, 1864, the same paper reported that "the new and large room of W. Z. Cozens over the jail was so near completion that the Baptist congregation had decided to hold their regular services in it. This addition had been "dubbed Washington Hall."<sup>16</sup>

The County Clerk and Recorder moved his office into the new building and occupied a ground-floor room that was more convenient than his previous quarters.<sup>17</sup> During August and September, the commissioners devoted much of their attention to constructing the vault located at the rear of the Recorder's office. They resolved that suitable flooring and shelving would be put in along with a fireproof door, so that Buell could deposit the county records in the room at the end of each working day.<sup>18</sup> By now, the Clerk possessed all the land ownership records of the districts throughout Gilpin County, and their safekeeping was imperative.<sup>19</sup>

The Commissioners paid Ira Austin \$84.15 for 1,800 pounds of boiler iron which went into the vault door. T. T. Stokes, a blacksmith, made the door and charged the county \$27 for doing it. Other bills included one for \$222.75 from J. B. Ashard, a carpenter, who made desks and repaired the vault.<sup>20</sup>

At the beginning of October, the Commissioners turned their attention to other parts of the building and ordered Sheriff Cozens not to admit any prisoners to the county jail until it was made more tenable. The privy, cause of the trouble, had to be filled and flooring laid over it. The Commissioners also instructed the lawman to procure "two pairs of blankets, sufficient ticking and hay for two beds and two pots or chambers with covers for same for use of county prisoners." They directed Cozens to use his judgment when it came to setting up two cots or bedsteads in the cells. These comforts were to be added only if the Sheriff believed that the "security and safekeeping of the prisoners [would] not thereby be endangered."<sup>21</sup>

Cozens purchased two sheet iron chamber pots in October for \$9 and two more in December for \$10. He supplied the jail with other necessities such as a half-dozen plates which cost \$3 and the same number of cups for \$3. One set of knives and forks cost \$2.50. Then, in December, he acquired two pairs of shackles which cost the county \$24. The Little Kingdom of Gilpin also paid its Sheriff \$10 for repairing the jail door. Perhaps that charge explained the need for the shackles.<sup>22</sup>

## Further Improvements

Next, the Commissioners resolved that the two jury rooms at the back of the courtroom were not suitable and that Cozens should put them in proper condition immediately as specified by the lease, either by plastering or ceiling. If Cozens neglected to do this, the County Clerk should have the work done and deduct the cost from the quarterly rent payment.<sup>23</sup>

Further improvements were authorized in 1866, when the Commissioners paid Grant and Hilton \$18 for iron work on the vault door in the Recorder's office and an additional \$8 to M. K. Moon for repairing the vault roof, on May 22, 1866. In July, they paid Wesley Critchett \$52.25 and Stokes and Grant \$53.30 for work on the jail. In August, Barnaby and Ware received \$10.40 for building a cupboard for books in the Recorder's office.<sup>24</sup>

Repairs were not the only expenses connected with the jail operations and those of the courthouse. These charges continued to increase as the town grew. In 1863 it cost 80 cents a day to board a prisoner; by 1864 Cozens charged \$1.25 for the same service and such costs mounted in a hurry.<sup>25</sup> For example, on one occasion, Cozens submitted the following bill to the County Commissioners:

John Overton, 59 days	\$73.75
Charles Leed, 26 days	\$32.50
James H. Foster, 33 days	\$41.25
David Jackson, 40 days	\$50.00
Mary Wells 40 days	\$50.00
Molly Gregor 16 days	\$20.00
Total	<u>\$267.50</u> <sup>26</sup>

Thus, a never ending list of items kept the county authorities busy maintaining an operating budget.

Washington Hall was built to serve the county as a courtroom and many early Colorado legal cases were heard within its walls. The most famous of the district judges who sat on its bench was James B. Belford nicknamed "the Red-headed Rooster of the Rockies." But, Gilpin County residents used the Hall for other purposes.

In 1865, Nelson Bowen started a singing school, and Mrs. A. J. Bowen instructed children between the ages of seven and 16 in the basic concepts of music.<sup>27</sup>

The Methodists rented the courtroom for their Sunday services and Wednesday evening prayer meetings. In January, 1867, Reverend Mr. Amburg, the Methodist pastor, approached the Commissioners and requested a reduction of their rent. Times were tough in 1867 and Mr. Amburg asked that the congregation be permitted to repair the seats in the Hall in order to have the costs deducted from their rent. The Commissioners agreed and the rent was reduced to \$50 per quarter while the Methodists could deduct reasonable charges from that amount for having repaired the seats.<sup>28</sup>

Later, in 1867, the Methodists held a festival in Washington Hall at which the Bowens furnished the music and the Methodist ladies sold their cakes for a total profit of some \$600, which went to the city treasury.<sup>29</sup>

The Methodists experienced unusual difficulties in finishing their church (today's St. James which stands at the corner of County Road and Eureka streets), and continued to use Washington Hall for their regular services "at 10½ a.m. and 7½ p.m." during 1868. Their piety did not go unobserved, and on Sunday evening, June 8, the four prisoners in the jail below paid careful attention to the service. Someone had given them an iron bar that they used to pry off a solid iron grating which had been fitted over a hole bored through the timbers by a former group of prisoners who had escaped. The sounds of the worshipers drowned out those made by the four felons (two murderers and two horse thieves) as they made their way out of jail and took to their heels in all directions. Their freedom was short-lived, however, since all were apprehended and back in jail before the week was over.<sup>30</sup>

### **The Eventful Meeting**

During the first decade-and-a-half of its existence, Central City did not have a hall (other than Montana Theater and Turner Hall) large enough to permit its citizens to meet en masse. Washington Hall served as a substitute where groups of residents decided the matter of a proposed mint in Central City (that never materialized) and the construction of the Teller House (which became the city's leading hotel).<sup>31</sup> Several of these occasions were political gatherings and one in particular furnished its participants with more than the usual amount of excitement.

It occurred on Saturday night, March 18, 1871, while the Central City Republicans gathered to nominate party members for several city offices. Henry M. Teller, a leading lawyer-politician, was chosen Chairman and D. C. Collier, the local newspaper editor, served as secretary. Accounts differ, but somewhere between 300 and 400 men were packed into the upper story of the county office building. Andrews N. Rogers, the county's leading mining engineer, was acclaimed their mayoral candidate and Frank C. Young was chosen as the man for City Treasurer.

The officials had just finished counting the ballots for City Treasurer, and since it was of great interest to the group, some 250 men had clustered about the Chairman's table. This stood within the railing in an area 24-by-30 feet. Once they learned the outcome of their votes, the delegates prepared to choose their candidate for street commissioner.

Cozens never intended the floor to sustain the weight of so many men and the floor joists snapped simultaneously. A cry arose that the floor was sinking. Those who were packed about the Chairman's table were pitched to the center along with the furniture and the lighted lamps. The section of the floor that served as a roof for the jail did not collapse, but the other half did, "folding down like a door," as it settled on the Clerk and Recorder's Office. More than 200 men suddenly found themselves struggling for their lives while they tried to breathe in a dense cloud of dust.

The lamp on the Chairman's table started a fire when oil and flame struck the floor. Teller, Collier and T. H. Potter attempted to stifle it with carpet matting, but were forced to use coats and hats to smother it. Another fire was started by a broken lamp that had been burning in the Clerk's office, but was extinguished by one George Brewer who crawled under the collapsed flooring to reach it.

Men began to escape from their predicament almost immediately as some kicked out bottom floor windows and scrambled through them. Others climbed the perpendicular part of the floor to the second story and escaped through the door while some scaled the wall and reached the outdoors by means of a hall window "which opened out upon the roof of the Recorder's office fire proof." One man jumped from a second-story window to the street below. Collier and another, once free, ran the few feet down Eureka Street to the Register office to obtain its two fire extinguishers. Fortunately, they were not needed.

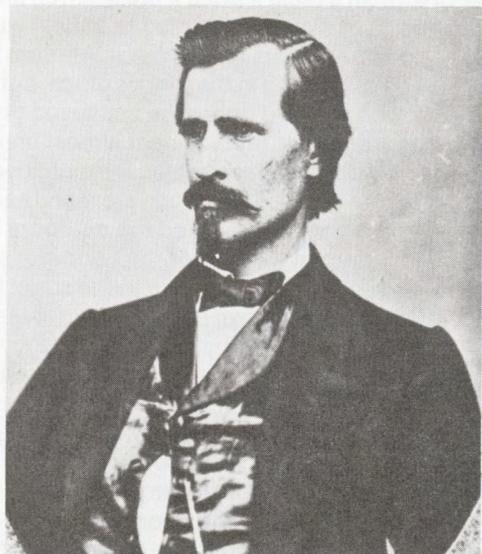
The local hook and ladder company arrived on the scene and helped remove the litter to be certain that no one was buried under the debris. Many citizens helped them and, in the end, while some suffered cuts and bruises, the worst injury seemed to be a man who suffered from minor internal injuries. Apparently, very few persons panicked, and those who did were safe from harm because they were standing on the floor over the jail.<sup>32</sup>

Many anecdotes were exchanged during the succeeding days as men joshed one another about their actions at the time of the collapse. The Register noted this banter and reported, "All have their laugh now the thing is over, but no money would hire a single man of them to take such a chance again."<sup>33</sup>

The County Commissioners announced that they would put in a new floor. This time it would be supported by "a girder of 8-by-8 timber with two 8-by-8 posts under it, the girder being securely laid upon the wall." The joists would be 8-by-9 inches, which would make a floor capable of holding twice as many people as could stand upon it. The city stated that it would bear half the expense of the repairs. The mess was cleared away by the county prisoners, whose Saturday night slumbers doubtless had been disturbed by the Republican collapse.<sup>34</sup>

The county leased the building from Cozens as a courthouse, Recorder's office, and jail (the probate judge's offices remained in the post office building) from 1864 until 1866. In April, 1866, they renewed their lease for two years and drew up an agreement by which Cozens gave Gilpin County the option to purchase Washington Hall and the large new building to its rear along with the land on which they stood, which extended from Eureka to High Street. The agreement was subject to the vote of the people at the September, 1866, election. The amount to be paid was \$10,000.<sup>35</sup>

Before the election the commissioners discussed the feasibility of constructing a courthouse and the propriety of raising money for such a purpose by issuing bonds; however, this never got beyond the talking stage.<sup>36</sup> Gilpin County was in the throes of a depression which had begun in 1864. The Board continued to rent the probate courtroom over the post office for \$25 a month for the next year.<sup>37</sup>



1. William Z. Cozens, builder of the old county courthouse also called Washington Hall (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



2. Early Central City (probably 1860) showing the cabin and lot purchased from Henry C. Dickinson in December, 1861. The structure stands by itself across Eureka street and three cabins west of the little, white Teller Law office (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



3. This photograph was made after Cozens completed his house in October, 1863. Some construction is going on immediately south of Cozens' house which probably were the additions to the jail made in January and February, 1864 (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



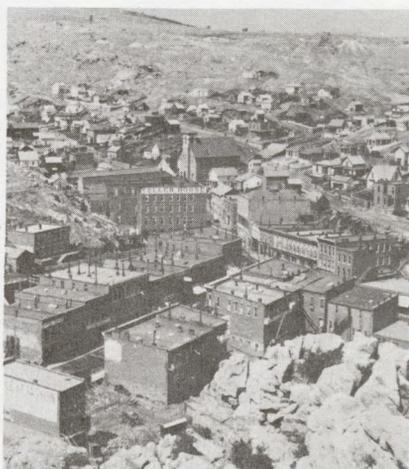
4. Central City in late 1864 or early 1865. The third story is being completed on the Register Block and work has begun on what would become St. James Methodist Church at the corner of County Line Road and Eureka streets. The siding has been put on the Gilpin County courthouse (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



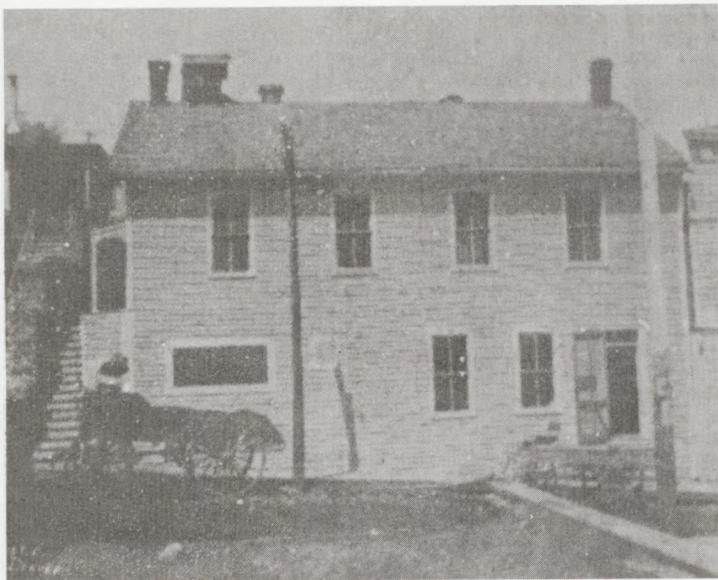
5. The second story of Washington Hall appears in the picture taken at the last part of 1869 or at the beginning of 1870. Henry M. Teller's home (the site of the present Gilpin County courthouse) is the large white house, with two wings, west of St. James Methodist church. Note the construction of the tower on St. James (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



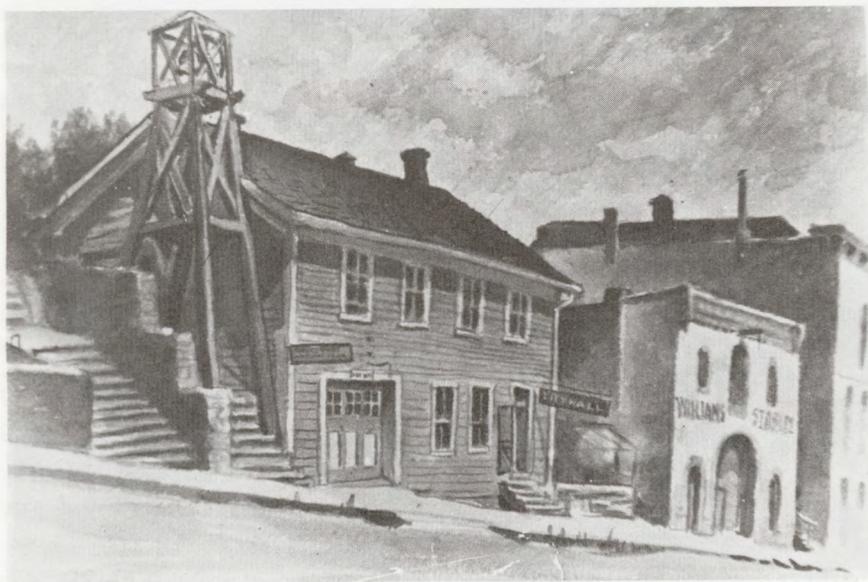
6. This picture was taken prior to July, 1871, when work was started on the Teller House. It shows how Washington Hall fitted into its surroundings and provides another view of Henry M. Teller's home (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



7. This picture of Central City in the 1880s, shows Washington Hall becoming dwarfed by the newer buildings erected in the business district, after the great fire of May, 1874 (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



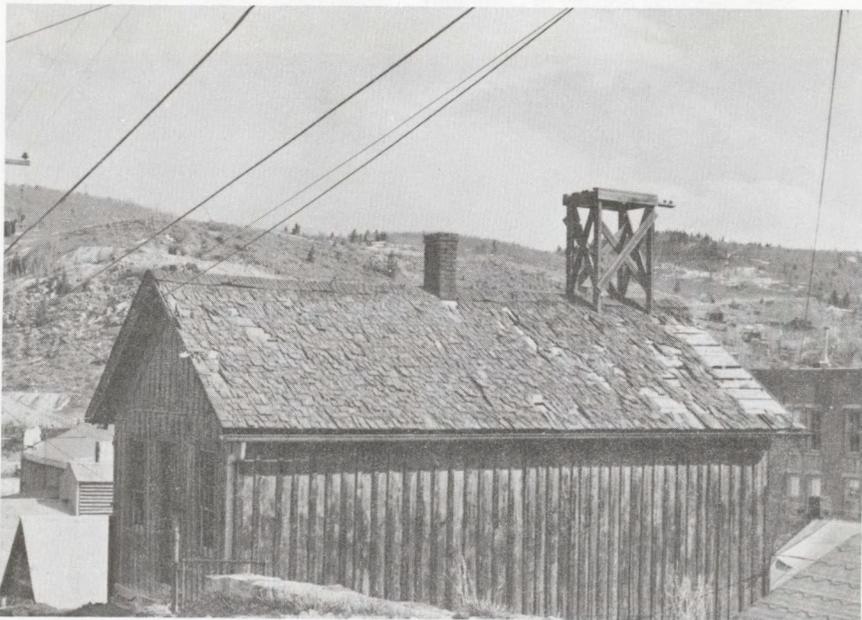
8. This photograph obtained from the Denver Times, July 25, 1900, portrays Washington Hall at the time it was sold to Central City for use as a town hall. The garage door had not been cut in the west end of the building and the bell and tower had not been moved to their present location (The State Historical Society of Colorado).



9. Denver artist, Herndon Davis portrayed Washington Hall as it appeared during its days as a fire station (Denver Public Library, Western History Department).



10. Washington Hall as it looked in April, 1975 (Edward D. White, Jr. Collection).



11. William Z. Cozens' residence at the rear of Washington Hall as it appeared in April, 1975 (Edward D. White, Jr. Collection).

## The County Buys

Preliminary negotiations were delayed until April 8, 1868, (probably because of the depression which lasted until early in that year), when Cozens signed a title bond and gave the county possession of the following described property: "Beginning at a point on the North side of Eureka Street in Central City and the North line of said Eureka Street Seventy Nine feet and four tenths of a foot westerly from the Southwest corner of the Register Block, thence westerly along the North side of said lot forty nine feet, thence Northerly to the Northwest corner of the home now occupied by said William Z. Cozens on the South side of High Street; thence Easterly along the South side of said High Street to the North East corner of the stone fireproof built by said Cozens, which is also the North West Corner of a lot owned by Sayr and Parmelee, thence Southerly along said Sayr and Parmelees [sic.] West line to the place of beginning."<sup>38</sup>

The \$10,000 was to be paid in installments, the first, together with an interest rate of ten per cent per annum was due March 15, 1869; the second payment along with interest of two-thirds of \$10,000 per annum was due March 15, 1870; the final third, with the interest of one-third of \$10,000 per annum was due March 15, 1871. The County was excused from paying further rent unless it defaulted. Until that time it had paid Cozens \$2,500 per year rent.<sup>39</sup> At last the county had a permanent seat on land that was worth every dime of the money. Cozens moved his family up County Road Street to his new residence now called the Kimball-Cozens house.

Although Gilpin County began its financial comeback in 1868, several years passed before its income was plentiful. The Commissioners, in July 1869, reflected this problem when they stated that the current revenue of the county was insufficient to retire the indebtedness to Cozens. They submitted the proposal of a loan for the purpose of paying off the courthouse to the county voters on September 14, 1869.<sup>40</sup> On January 5, 1870, they resolved that a five-year special tax (one-and-one-half mills on the dollar) had to be levied for five years in order to purchase, erect and repair the county buildings.<sup>41</sup>

This enabled them to continue their payments to Cozens and on January 16, 1872, they gave him \$2,500,<sup>42</sup> and two years later on January 6, 1874, they made the final payment of \$2,157.12 (principal and interest).<sup>43</sup> The former sheriff, who was establishing himself on a ranch in Middle Park, delivered a warranty deed for the property to the Commissioners. Cozens' deed was reinforced in November, 1876, when Central City's Mayor Benjamin W. Wisebart delivered a Mayor's deed to the property for \$6.25.<sup>44</sup> Such deeds were given all property holders in Central City following the destructive fire of May, 1874, which wiped out most of Central City's main business district. Fortunately, that conflagration did not reach up Eureka Street as far as Washington Hall.

Once the County owned its offices and jail, agitation began for better quarters. An article in the Daily Central City Register dated November 6, 1875, stated that the county was in dire need of "better quarters for county officers and for prisoners. The courthouse should be two stories high as now, with an

iron jail in the basement....These iron jails are made cheaply and are as near absolutely unbreakable as can be....

"The present jail is abominable, and but for the extreme purity of the atmosphere, would be a perfect pest house.

"The health of the prisoners often suffers from the unpure air within."<sup>45</sup>

In September, 1879, the County Commissioners resolved to submit the question of a new courthouse, jail and site to the voters at a general election set for October 7, 1879. They would be asked to approve a \$20,000 county debt at interest not to exceed eight per cent per annum.<sup>46</sup>

Such deliberations continued until December 13, 1881, when the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners received authorization to confer with a competent architect in order to secure a report and estimate of the cost of remodeling the Gilpin County Opera House into a courthouse and jail.<sup>47</sup> A week later, the Clerk was instructed to write Senator Henry M. Teller and inquire upon what terms the county might obtain 10 feet of ground, owned by the Senator, which adjoined the Opera House on the East.<sup>48</sup>

### **Converting The Opera House**

The Board had been corresponding with Henry R. Wolcott, the owner of the Opera House, who offered it to them for \$8,000. Wolcott stated further that he would accept payment in full or take part of it in warrants from the county. He continued by saying that he would keep the offer open for sixty days, which was long enough to permit the Board to submit the question of purchasing the property to the people. The Commissioners accepted his offer unanimously.<sup>49</sup>

On January 16, 1882, the Clerk was ordered to draw warrants in favor of Mr. Wolcott to the amount of \$8,000, each bearing eight per cent interest per annum, and to register them immediately. They were issued for full payment of the Gilpin County Opera House.<sup>50</sup>

The attempt to convert the Opera House into county offices and a jail led to a protest by the citizens who launched a campaign to buy back the structure from the county. They succeeded and the county continued to use its old courthouse and jail although it no longer accommodated all the officials.<sup>51</sup>

The County Courtroom and the Office of the Clerk of the District Court had been housed in the Masonic Block since 1875. The County Treasurer's office was in the front room on the second floor of the First National Bank building on the corner of Main and Eureka Streets. The County Superintendent of Schools occupied space in the Edmundson Building on the north side of Eureka Street. Thus, persons who sought to do business with several county officers often had to visit different places.<sup>52</sup>

Henry M. Teller, Colorado's senior senator, built a house on Eureka Street during the early 1860's, but once he went to Washington to represent Colorado's political interests he used it less and less. By 1896, mining activity had slowed considerably and the Senator, when in Colorado, spent most of his time in Denver, although he visited his old home every summer. He began meeting with the Board of County Commissioners and offered them the house and lot for \$8,000. The Board agreed to purchase it on December 7, 1896.<sup>53</sup>

On February 1, 1897, the Commissioners moved that the County issue bonds to the amount of \$30,000 payable ten years after issuance and bearing an interest rate of five per cent per annum.<sup>54</sup> A month later, Peter C. Hansen was hired as "Foreman of Grading on the Court House lot at a salary of \$3 per day."<sup>55</sup> During the first week in April the Board drew two warrants in favor of Henry M. Teller. One for \$3,000 was to be paid to him in cash, and the other which contained the balance of the \$8,000 (\$5,000) was to be delivered to him.<sup>56</sup> The following week, the Board listened to explanations of bids on jail work and vault doors and then measured the courthouse lot to determine what further grading was required.<sup>57</sup> They spent April 14 and 15 examining bids on their new structure.<sup>58</sup> The Board met again on May 12 and opened bids for the retaining wall at the site of the new building. The winner was Nate Sears who was hired to construct it at \$1.50 per perch using rock on the grounds and other stone which he would furnish.<sup>59</sup> After that, little was done for the next two years, although Newton D. Owen was hired to prepare a set of plans for the new courthouse.

### The "New" Courthouse

Owen's plans were approved and adopted on May 1, 1899, and he was "authorized to advertise in the usual form for bids for the building of the New Court House according to said plans."<sup>60</sup> By May 17, 18 bids were received and opened. They ranged from \$21,757 to \$31,500. The Board spent the remainder of the day considering the various offers. It took all the following day to decide and, at its end, finally accepted the bid of Lamont and Ballard for \$21,757.<sup>61</sup>

On June 1, 1899, the Board considered bids for the new jail and accepted the one tendered by Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company. The Commissioners authorized their Chairman to contract with that firm for construction of "two doors and six window gratings, four cells and corridor all complete, two proof steel for \$3,128."<sup>62</sup>

To pay for this the County issued a series of thirty-nine bonds for \$500 each which amounted to \$19,500. The bonds were for twenty years at six per cent per annum until paid. The interest was payable semi-annually on the first of April and the first of October. Both interest and principal were payable, when due at the office of the Gilpin County Treasurer or at the Chemical National Bank of New York, at the option of the holder.<sup>63</sup>

On May 18, 1899, the Board contracted formally with Messrs. William J. Lamont and Manfred W. Ballard by which the builders agreed to furnish, at their own cost and expense, all the labor and material for the grading and the building and the furnishing of the Courthouse. The structure was to be ready for occupancy on January 1, 1900.<sup>64</sup> Actually, it was not completed until February 20, 1900, when it was inspected and accepted by the Board.<sup>65</sup> On March 28, 1900, the contractors received their final payment and Gilpin County was the proud owner of a new courthouse.<sup>66</sup>

The completion of such an edifice called for a celebration, and on February 22, 1900, the Gilpin County Pioneers hosted a ball and banquet:

The building was brilliantly lighted with over 125 electric light bulbs, and the white wall of handsomely carved and varnished wood work presented a most cheerful appearance. The crowd began arriving at 8:30, but the grand march did not take place until 9:30, the people spending the time intervening in making an inspection of the building from basement to roof, and many were the expressions of delight made at the fact that Gilpin, the oldest county and mining region of the state should possess such a handsome structure. The dancing took place in the district court room which is 57x38 feet, and the supper was served by the Ladies Relief corps in the county court room downstairs, where tables were spread for forty-five couples at a sitting. Promptly the grand march was formed at 9:30 headed by Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Hawley of Denver and to the music of the opera house orchestra more than sixty couples followed the leaders in many intricate figures. Once started dancing was kept up until an early hour in the morning. At 11 o'clock supper was announced for the pioneers and invited guests.<sup>67</sup>

The Little Kingdom's residents had not forgotten how to celebrate such an auspicious occasion properly.

## New Uses

And what of Washington Hall once its services were no longer officially required by the county it had served for nearly forty years? After much checking and discussion, the Council of the City of Central moved that the community purchase the "county buildings and lots known as the Old Court House for \$2,500 dollars or as cheap as they can be got for."<sup>68</sup> The bargain as struck, and on July 21, 1900, Gilpin County quitclaimed the aging edifice to the City of Central for \$2,500.<sup>69</sup>

For years, in fact since its incorporation in 1864, Central's town hall consisted of rented space in various buildings in the town. Now, it had not only a permanent home, but rental property as well; for shortly after acquiring its new real estate, the City Council decided that "the rent for dwelling house in rear of City Hall be fixed at \$6.50 per month including water."<sup>70</sup> At the next meeting the authorities instructed Alderman Lamont to repair it.<sup>71</sup>

By 1903, the area which had formerly housed the jail had been converted into the City Hall Fire House. It was used in that capacity for many years, until 1961. Apparently, it was the main fire house and, during the summer of 1903, the fire bell and tower were removed to the structure's west side, from their former place at the intersection of Main and Nevada streets.<sup>72</sup>

In the summer of 1948, the second floor (Washington Hall) was taken over by the Gilpin County Arts Association as its gallery. Once again, people crowded into the area where several judges, assorted ministers and various local politicians had once held forth. With time, the Arts Association gallery expanded its quarters, until today it stretches up the hill to Billy Cozens' old house. Under the direction of Joe Wheeler, the Gilpin County Arts Association

gallery continues to permit the old courtroom to play a significant part in Central City, Gilpin County and Colorado affairs.

The City Manager occupies the old Clerk and Recorder's offices as does the City Council, which uses the same room as its meeting place. These offices entitle the old structure to maintain its title as the oldest continually used public building in Colorado.

# EXHIBITS

*[The following text is extremely faint and largely illegible. It appears to be a list of exhibits or a detailed description of the building's history, but the specific words are difficult to discern.]*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>O. L. Baskin, Ed., History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys, Colorado (1880; reprinted, Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic, Inc., 1971), 246.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado (Chicago: The Blakely Printing Company, 1891), III: 412.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 413. Rocky Mountain News, December 5, 1861, 2.

<sup>4</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book "A," 30.

<sup>5</sup>Colorado State Archives and Records Service. Secretary of State—W. P. A. Gilpin County, Public Records Inventory, 1940. Frank McGrath Transcription, File II, Box I, First Volume, County Commissioners' Meeting, January 8, 1862, 21-23. Hereafter referred to as "County Commissioners' Meeting."

<sup>6</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, January 8, 1863, 61.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., April 17, 1863, 69. Apparently this land became the site of the schoolhouse erected between 1869 and 1870, and occupied today by the Gilpin County Historical Society as a museum.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., January 7, 1862, 20.

<sup>9</sup>Gilpin County Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book "A," 3.

<sup>10</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, January 7, 1862, 20-21. Baskin, History of Clear Creek and Boulder Valleys, Colorado, 447.

<sup>11</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, January 7, 1862, 20-21 and April 11, 1862, 33.

<sup>12</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book 2, 98.

<sup>13</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, April 10, 1862, 31, April 12, 1862, and April 15, 1863, 66.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., December 1, 1862, 57; January 9, 1863, 62. Jesse L. Pritchard, William Z. Cozens' immediate predecessor, resigned on December 10, 1862, upon which date Cozens assumed the office. County Commissioners' Meeting, December 1, 1862, 57; Frank Hall, History of the State of Colorado, III, 413.

<sup>15</sup>Daily Miners' Register, February 9, 1864, 3.

- <sup>16</sup>ibid., March 11, 1864, 3 and January 22, 1864, e.
- <sup>17</sup>ibid., April 2, 1864, 3; The Daily Mining Journal (Black Hawk), April 4, 1864, 3.
- <sup>18</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, August 6, 1864, 126.
- <sup>19</sup>Lynn I. Perrigo, "A Social History of Central City, Colorado, 1859-1900" (Ph.D. Diss. University of Colorado, 1936), 74-75.
- <sup>20</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, August 11, 1864, 131 and September 7, 1864, 141.
- <sup>21</sup>ibid., October 7, 1864, 152.
- <sup>22</sup>ibid., January 3, 1865, 162.
- <sup>23</sup>ibid., October 7, 1864, 155.
- <sup>24</sup>ibid., May 22, 1866, 224; July 12, 1866, 236; and August 28, 1866, 242.
- <sup>25</sup>ibid., April 15, 1863, 67 and January 16, 1865, 161.
- <sup>26</sup>ibid., January 16, 1865, 161.
- <sup>27</sup>Perrigo, "Social History," 31. See also, Lynn I. Perrigo, "Life in Central City, 1862-1872" (M. A. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1934), 76.
- <sup>28</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, January 7, 1867, 256.
- <sup>29</sup>Perrigo, "Social History," 318.
- <sup>30</sup>Daily Miners' Register, June 9, 1868, 4; June 10, 1868, 4; June 11, 1868, 4; June 12, 1868, 4.
- <sup>31</sup>Daily Central City Register, March 11, 1870, 4; April 30, 1871, 4; and May 5, 1871, 4.
- <sup>32</sup>ibid., March 19, 1871, 1 and 4.
- <sup>33</sup>ibid., March 21, 1871, 4.
- <sup>34</sup>ibid.
- <sup>35</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, April 4, 1866, 221.
- <sup>36</sup>ibid., March 14, 1866, 216; July 11, 1866, 235.
- <sup>37</sup>ibid., October 10, 1866, 248.
- <sup>38</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book 41, 155-156. The house mentioned in the deed still stands. It was built in 1863. Daily Miner's Register, October 9, 1863, 3.
- <sup>39</sup>Daily Miner's Register, April 10, 1868, 4.
- <sup>40</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, July 12, 1869, 362.
- <sup>41</sup>ibid., January 5, 1870, 382.
- <sup>42</sup>ibid., January 6, 1872, 509.
- <sup>43</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book 48, 457. County Commissioners' Meeting, Vol. II, January 6, 1874, 70.
- <sup>44</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book 61, 11.
- <sup>45</sup>Daily Central City Register, November 6, 1865, 3.
- <sup>46</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, Vol. III, September 6, 1879, 80.
- <sup>47</sup>ibid., December 13, 1881, 192.
- <sup>48</sup>ibid., December 21, 1881, 193.
- <sup>49</sup>ibid., January 13, 1882, 195.
- <sup>50</sup>ibid., January 16, 1882, 196.
- <sup>51</sup>H. William Axford, "Gilpin County Gold: The Life and Career of Peter B. McFarlane" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Denver, 1967), 226-227.

- <sup>52</sup>The Denver Times, February 25, 1900, 19.
- <sup>53</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, "County Commissioners' Journal," Vol. 4, 423.
- <sup>54</sup>County Commissioners' Meeting, February 1, 1897, 435.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1897, 441.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid., April 6, 1897, 446.
- <sup>57</sup>Ibid., April 13, 1897, 447.
- <sup>58</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>59</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1897, 452.
- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., May 1, 1899, 546.
- <sup>61</sup>Ibid., May 18, 1899, 547.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., June 1, 1899, 547.
- <sup>63</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1899, 555.
- <sup>64</sup>Ibid., May 18, 1899,. n.p. This resolution appears on sheets 66-71 of the McGrath Transcript.
- <sup>65</sup>Ibid., February 20, 1900, 585. The delay was caused when certain materials did not arrive on schedule. The Denver Times, February 25, 1900, 19.
- <sup>66</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, "County Commissioners' Journal," Vol. 4, 589.
- <sup>67</sup>Rocky Mountain News, February 23, 1900, 5.
- <sup>68</sup>City of Central. Council Journal. Council Meetings, Vol. 10-13-1898—9-6-1910, 97, 101, and 103.
- <sup>69</sup>Gilpin County, Colorado. Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Property Book 135, 449.
- <sup>70</sup>City of Central. Council Journal. Council Meetings, Vol. 10-13- 1898—9-6-1910, 108.
- <sup>71</sup>Ibid., 111.
- <sup>72</sup>Ibid., 208 and 210.

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Rocky Mountain News, December 8, 1881 & February 23, 1900.  
 Daily Mining Journal (Black Hawk), April 4, 1884.

# APPENDIX

## WASHINGTON HALL

Location: Lot 2-A, Block 5, Central City, Colorado

Present Owner: City of Central, Colorado

Present Occupant: City of Central, Colorado and The Gilpin County Arts Association

Present Use: City Hall and Art Gallery

Statement of Significance: Built during the early 1860's, this clapboard-over-log structure is the oldest operating public building in Colorado.

### Historical Information:

Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is the Office of the County Clerk and Recorder, Gilpin County, Central City, Colorado.

1861: Quitclaim Deed dated December 9, 1861 recorded in Book A, page 3 (a house and lot situated on the north side of Eureka Gulch, bounded on the easterly side by a lot owned by George Cooper and forty feet fronting on street running back 100 feet, and generally known as the Hoover property).  
Consideration: \$150.00.

Henry C. Dickinson  
to  
William Z. Cozens.

1862: Deed dated September 22, 1862 recorded in Book 2, page 98 (a piece of property commencing at a point one foot west of the building now used as the Gilpin County jail at the southwest corner of said building and running thence in a westerly direction or up the Eureka Gulch from Central City 6 feet, and thence running back in a

northerly direction 100 feet and from thence in an easterly direction 6 feet; and from thence 100 feet to the place of beginning containing 6 by 100 feet of ground).

Consideration: \$15.00.

John and Sara Blackwood  
to  
William Z. Cozens

- 1868: Title Bond dated April 8, 1868 recorded in Book 41, pages 155-156 (certain premises described as: Beginning at a point on the North side of Eureka Street in Central City and the North line of said Eureka Street Seventy Nine feet and four tenths of a foot westerly from the Southwest Corner of the Register Block, thence westerly along the North side of said lot forty nine feet, thence northerly to the Northwest corner of the home now occupied by said William Z. Cozens on the South side of High Street; thence easterly along the South side of said High Street to the Northeast corner of the stone fireproof built by said Cozens, which is also the Northwest corner of a lot owned by Sayr and Parmelee, thence southerly along said Sayr and Parmelees West line to the place of beginning).  
Consideration: \$10,000.00.

William Z. Cozens  
to  
The Board of County Commissioners of Gilpin County

- 1874: Warranty Deed dated January 6, 1874 recorded in Book 48, page 457 (certain premises described as: Beginning at a point on the North side of Eureka Street in Central City in said County on the North line of said Eureka Street seventy nine and four tenths feet west from the Southwest corner of the building known as the Register Block, thence westerly along the North line of said Eureka Street forty-nine feet thence North to the Northwest corner of the house formerly occupied by . . . Cozens on the South side of High Street in said City, thence easterly along the South line of High Street to the Northeast corner of the stone fire proof built by said Cozens, thence southerly on a direct line from the said Northeast corner of said fire proof to the place of beginning).  
Consideration: \$10,000.00.

William Z. Cozens  
to  
The Board of County Commissioners of Gilpin County.

- 1876: Mayor's Deed dated November 3, 1876 recorded in Book 61, page 11 (Lot Three(3) in Block Five (5) of Bradford H. Locke's and Tho. H.

Lowe's survey of the City of Central, said lot is situated on the North side of Eureka Street, and being 49.5 feet fronting on said Eureka Street back of said lot being 52.47 feet fronting on High Street, Said lot in depth from Eureka to High Streets).  
Consideration: \$6.25.

Benjamin W. Wisebart, Mayor the City of Central  
to  
The County Commissioners of Gilpin County.

1900: Quitclaim Deed dated July 21, 1900 recorded in Book 135, page 449 (Lot. no. three (3) in Block no. five (5) in the City of Central in said County according to the survey of said city by Locke and Lowe, said lot situate on the North side of Eureka Street in said City and fronts forty-nine and 5/10 (49.5) feet on said Eureka Street the back or north line of said lot is fifty two and 47/100 (52.47) feet on High Street, in depth said lot extends from Eureka Street to High Street and all buildings and improvements thereon, being the same property conveyed by W. Z. Cozens to said County).  
Consideration: \$2,500.00.

County of Gilpin  
to  
City of Central

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