The Building With Style

Like a grand old dame, the historic building stands magnificently against the sky. Bricks colored a beautiful red and faces made of stone decorate the front of the building. Articulate designs surround the flat scrolled plaque on which is carved "A.D. 1905" with two large scrolled brackets on either side. The Grim Building, completed in 1905, is an important architectural landmark to our area. Located in Kirksville at 113 E. Washington, this building is recognized by many as a prominent feature of the city.

The Grim Building was constructed in the Jacobethan Revival style of architecture, which was popular in England during the 1600s. This style is not usually found in Missouri, other than in major cities, because smaller towns, like Kirksville, "didn't have architects. Instead they had builders and construction contractors who used plans that were readily available," reports Dr. Ruth Towne, professor of history at Northeast Missouri State University. The characteristics of this style are details sculptured in English Gothic and Italian Renaissance-Baroque design. Dr. Edward A. and Dr. Ezra C. Grim contracted the services of Weber and Groves, an architectural firm from St. Louis, to design a building that included offices, operating rooms, and examination rooms. They then engaged Albert L. Holmes, a local contractor, to construct the building, which, when completed in October of 1905, cost a total of $11,248.

The exterior of the building is red brick accentuated with yellowish-tan white limestone faces of a man and a woman on either side of the time plate and a perched eagle atop the head of a lion directly above the scrolled plaque. The parapet, the stone railing along the edge of the roof, is adorned with elaborate...
The fireplaces in the building are bordered by beautiful green tile. The surrounding woodwork is original. The fireplace cover is decorated with intricate designs, evidence of the classic nature of the building. (Photo courtesy of David March)

Not much has changed inside the two-story building since it was built in 1905, other than the tenants. Carpets, tile, and rugs cover the original yellow pine floors. The first floor has oak woodwork and the hallway floor is still its original Tennessee marble. The building contains four old fireplaces surrounded by bright green glazed tiles with elaborately decorated cast metal screens. These are located in the front two offices of the first floor as well as in the front two offices on the second floor.

According to Michael W. Mulford, attorney at law and part-owner of the Grim Building, it was “one of the first buildings in Kirksville to use structural steel” to support the second floor. The original heating system was a steam-generated coal furnace and gas fireplaces. The building is now heated with steam generated by a natural gas furnace. The original lighting system was electric with a Delco system providing the power as well as the use of gas light. Fluorescent lighting fixtures are used today. The offices are a group of suites, which have remained in their original condition.

The Grim Building was put on the National Register of Historic Places on July 27, 1979. Dr. David D. March, a member of the State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, was, states Mr. Mulford, “interested in historical buildings in Kirksville and active in placing some of the buildings on the historical register. He, basically, with minimal help from me, got the building put on the Register.” This process took several years, but according to Mr. Mulford, it was because it was all volunteer labor. When the process began, the Grim Building “was slated for demolition to become one of Kirkville’s famous parking lots.” After it was listed on the Register, federal money could no longer be used to tear down the building.

The Grim Building is a unique and unusual architectural structure to our area. Thanks to the work of several people, the building stands proud for generations to come.

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