

Old Custom House (Cairo, Illinois)

The **Old Custom House** is a historic government building in downtown Cairo, Illinois. Built from 1869 to 1872, the building served as a customs house, post office, and courthouse. Alfred B. Mullett, the U.S. Supervising Architect at the time, designed the building in the *Italianate* style, a rarity among federal buildings; his design features a *bracketed cornice* and rounded windows. When Cairo built a new post office in 1942, the building became the town's police station. The building is one of the few surviving U.S. custom houses and one of the largest federal buildings of its era in the Mid-Mississippi Valley region. The site for the custom house was chosen in 1859 by Illinois Senator (and Abraham Lincoln's opponent in the 1860 presidential campaign) Stephen A. Douglas. In 1866, John A. Logan returned to Congress and lobbied successfully for fifty thousand dollars to start construction, with fifty thousand dollars allocated each following year until construction was completed. Construction began in 1867, and the building opened to the public on the evening of June 16, 1872. The original purpose of the Custom House was to house the offices which dealt with collecting duties and tariffs on international imports which had not been offloaded before they reached Cairo on their way up the Mississippi River.^[2]

The custom house was added to the *National Register of Historic Places* on July 24, 1973.^[1] It now serves as a history museum.^[3]

In celebration of the 2018 Illinois Bicentennial, Cairo Custom House was selected as one of the Illinois 200 Great Places ^[4] by the *American Institute of Architects* Illinois component (AIA Illinois).



Old Custom House (Cairo, Illinois) 1907. Now - Cairo Custom House Museum, 1400 Washington Avenue, Cairo, IL

Custom House" (<http://gis.hpa.state.il.us/pdfs/100533.pdf>) (PDF). *National Park Service*. Retrieved October 3, 2013.

References

- "National Register Information System" (<https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP>). *National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service. July 9, 2010.
- Sprague, Paul E. (May 29, 1973). "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Old

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U.S. National Register of Historic Places



Location	1400 Washington Ave., Cairo, Illinois
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