

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## CALLAWAY COUNTY

Marian M. Ohman  
Coordinator, Art History Programs

The first county seat of Callaway County was at Elizabeth, about six miles south of Fulton, the present county seat. The court issued orders for a jail to be built, but no courthouse. After changing the county seat to Fulton in 1825, the court appointed three commissioners to submit a plan and cost estimate for a courthouse on the square. The court initially appropriated \$550. Apparently, subsequent appropriations raised the final cost to about \$1,300. A portion of the funding came from a forfeited bond.

S. J. Ferguson built the two-story, 36-foot-square, brick courthouse, described as a "model of neatness, comfort, and convenience." It was finished early in 1827. The courtroom seems to have been on the first floor. Sold for \$400, the building was razed in 1856.

On August 24, 1854, the court directed George W. Braley, the commissioner, to prepare plans and submit estimates for a new building. Apparently, Braley submitted the temple-type design of Solomon Jenkins, which the court approved on May 25, 1855. The following day the court awarded the contract for \$17,850 to Alfred Moore, who reported the building completed in 1856 (Fig. 1).

Grading the yard about the square and repairing the stone wall completed the project in May 1858. The gable ran east-west with a large clock tower on the west. This courthouse and an 1847-49 St. Charles example by Jenkins each had six columns; most Missouri examples had four.

No known photographs exist of the Callaway County courthouse before remodeling. There are photographs of the St. Charles courthouse, however, show-

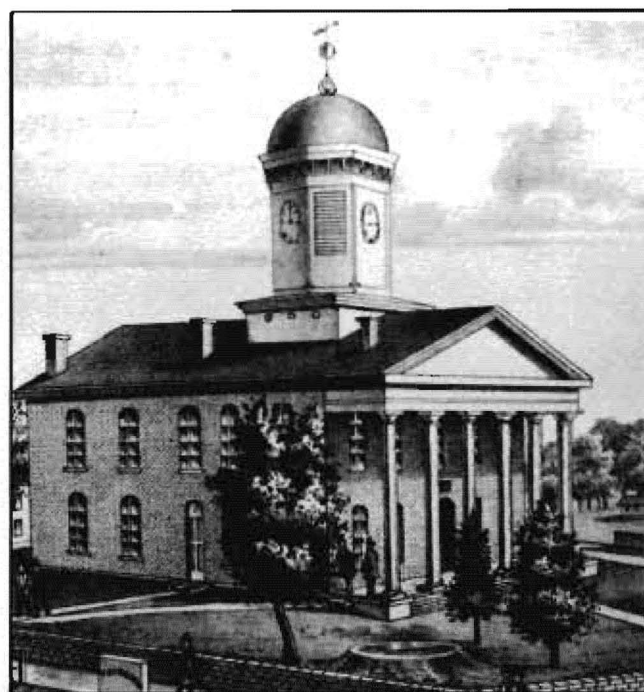
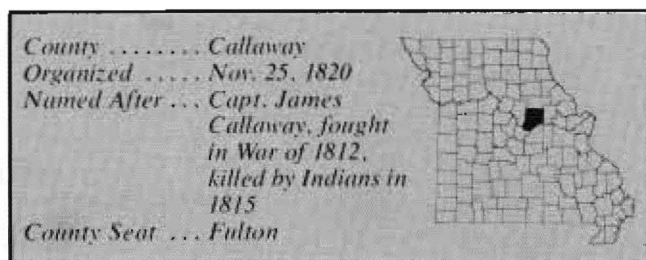


Fig. 1. Callaway County Courthouse, 1856-1938.  
Architect: Solomon Jenkins  
(From: *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Callaway County*, 1876.)

ing it to be a building with handsome proportions. This evidence, as well as other examples of Jenkins' work, suggests that perhaps the unflattering illustration (Fig. 1) of the Callaway County Courthouse is a result of an inaccurate drawing.

Unfortunate remodeling in 1885 added a mansard roof at the cornice line. The remodeled design preserved the clock tower, but reshaped the dome. Local architect M. F. Bell drew plans and superintended the work (Fig. 2). Builder W. A. Gregory of Fulton received the contract for \$4,875. The building was demolished in 1938; Governor Lloyd C. Stark bought the lumber from the building presumably, the *Daily Sun Gazette* reported, for use in Stark's nursery.



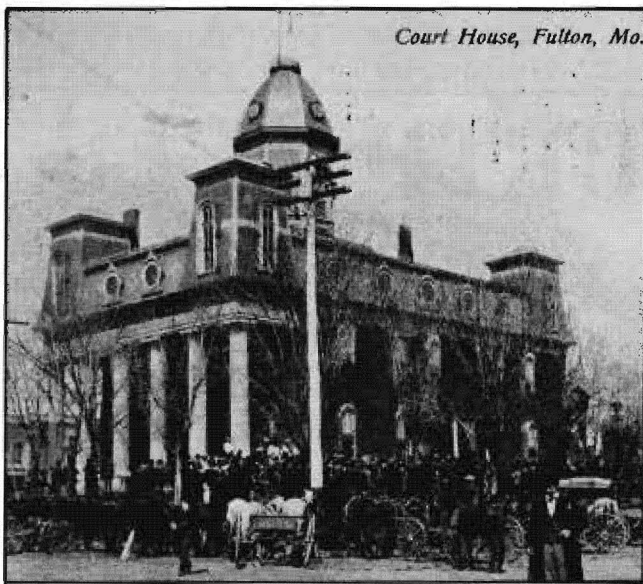


Fig. 2. Callaway County Courthouse, after remodeling in 1885.  
 Architect of remodeling: M. F. Bell  
 (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

As early as 1919 citizens realized the growing population needed a larger building, but it was not until 1938 that the remodeled structure gave way to a new courthouse.

Callaway began earnestly considering a new courthouse in 1938 when they learned federal funds would be available. The court looked at courthouses in Pike, Marion and Knox counties and talked with representatives from many state firms before employing architects E. C. Henderson, Jr. and Paul Elsner, who prepared the plans for a three-story building with a jail. Bonds were voted for \$125,000 in June 1938. Federal contribution was \$102,273, and final figures ran close to \$250,000. J. E. Hathman contracted and built the 134-by-80-foot, three-story, brick and stone structure, with the principal entrance facing north (Fig. 3). The court accepted the completed building in December 1939. Dedication of the courthouse that still houses county officials took place March 18, 1940.



Fig. 3. Callaway County Courthouse, 1938-. Architects: E.C. Henderson, Jr. and Paul Elsner, Fulton: Clark Merrick, Boston. (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

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