

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Marian M. Ohman
Coordinator, Art History Programs

When Crawford County's boundaries extended to include most of Phelps and part of Dent counties, the county seat was located at the mouth of the Little Piney River. The court met in the two-story, hewn-log house of James Harrison.

After a reduction in county size, a meeting to organize Crawford County took place on February 23, 1834. Liberty Hill served as a temporary county seat until the commissioners located the permanent seat at Steelville in 1835.

The County Court Records indicate no attempt at construction of a courthouse until May 1837. At that time M. W. Trask, superintendent of the courthouse, provided a plan for a brick, 1½-story courthouse that would measure about 26 by 30 feet. The court approved the plan, but apparently building did not immediately proceed in spite of an \$800 appropriation.

In August 1837 a clerk's office was being built, which the court intended to use, but in November the court was paying Simeon Frost rent for a house in which to hold court. In November of 1837 the court authorized purchase of land for the public square. Simeon Frost acted as commissioner and paid \$80 for the lot.

By May of the next year, 1838, the court authorized Trask to prepare a new plan for a 29-foot-square courthouse. In the spring of 1839 the two-story structure, built by Obadiah Ferguson, was completed; courts met there in May, although finishing continued for some time. The courtroom was completed in 1843-44.

The second courthouse, built in 1857 on the same site, was two stories, brick, 36 by 48 feet, with stone



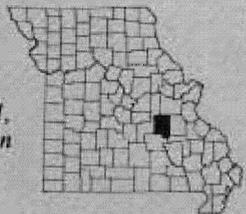
Fig. 1. Crawford County Courthouse, 1885-
Architect: J.J. Upchurch
(Courtesy: Leroy Pinnell)

foundation. The court appropriated \$6,000 for this structure. Fire destroyed the building February 15, 1873.

The following month the court appropriated \$10,000 for the third courthouse. Joe Davis superintended the work. The two contractors with the lowest bids would not provide bond, so A. E. Dye and Sons were awarded the contract for \$9,775. This building, too, was consumed by fire, which began in the cupola, January 5, 1884. The court carried \$9,000 insurance on this courthouse.

J. J. Upchurch designed the fourth and present courthouse, which was built in 1885-86 (Fig. 1). Hollow and Salzer received the contract for construction of the 71-by-36-foot, two-story, brick building which cost about \$7,500. An addition made in 1974 was designed by Dan Mullen and built by Cyrus Dace.

County Crawford
Organized Jan. 23, 1829
Named After . . . Wm. H. Crawford,
Georgia statesman
County Seat . . . Steelville



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Breuer, James Ira. *Crawford County and Cuba, Missouri*. Cape Girardeau: The Ramfre Press, 1972.
- Conard, Howard L., ed. *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri*, vol. II. New York: The Southern History Company, 1901.
- History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford and Gasconade Counties*. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888. Reprinted, Ramfre Press, 1958.

Newspapers

Rolla Express, Feb. 23, 1873.

Rolla Weekly Herald, Jan. 10, 1884.

Salem Monitor, Jan. 10, 1884.

(Steelville) *Crawford Mirror*, Aug. 1, 8, 1974.

(Vienna) *Banner of Liberty*, Feb. 28, 1873.

Manuscript Collections

Work Projects Administration, Historical Records Survey, Missouri, 1935-1942, Crawford County. Located in Joint Collection: University of Missouri, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia and State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts.