

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## DALLAS COUNTY

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**N**iangua was the name chosen for this county when it was first organized in 1841; after boundaries were slightly changed in December 1844, officials renamed the county Dallas because Niangua was hard to spell, write and pronounce. First courts met in a log schoolhouse, according to recollections of settlers.

Levi Beckner built the first courthouse during 1846-47, a small two-story building with the courtroom on the first floor and county offices on the second. The site was on the present square. Confederate troops burned the building October 18, 1863. Fire also destroyed two subsequent emergency quarters during 1864 and 1867, consuming most county records.

During the February term of 1868 the court appointed Eleazer Hovey, a dentist, superintendent of a new courthouse to be built upon the square and appropriated \$15,000. Plans which Hovey presented to the court for a 44-by-60-foot, two-story, brick building were approved in November 1868. The court awarded the contract to A. E. Dye in February 1869. Dye, who also built Dent and Crawford County courthouses, requested and received an additional sum of \$1,000 for his proposed cupola and door shutter in February 1870. The court accepted the completed building in June 1870. Final costs came to about \$17,500 (Fig. 1).

**T**his building was renovated in 1937 and the cupola was removed in 1951, but it continued in use until destroyed by fire March 2, 1955. Thomas Hart Benton immortalized this Dallas County courthouse in a painting done in the 1950s. Figure 2 shows a 1973 lithograph



Fig. 1. Dallas County Courthouse, 1868-1955.  
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri, gift of Martin Eichenlaub)

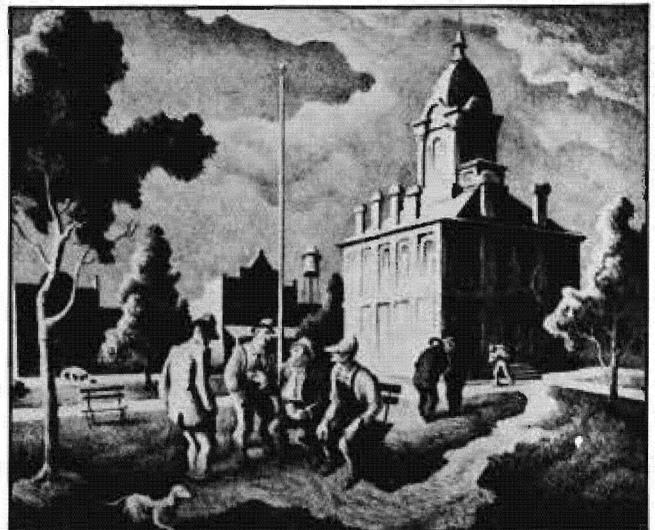


Fig. 2. "County Politics," 1973, Thomas Hart Benton's lithograph of his painting.  
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

County . . . . .	Dallas
Organized . . . . .	Jan. 29, 1841
Named After . . .	1844 vice presidential candidate George M. Dallas
County Seat . . .	Buffalo



Fig. 3. Dallas County Courthouse, 1956-. Architect: Eugene F. Johnson

taken from the painting entitled "County Politics."

Voters approved a courthouse bond for \$250,000 in September 1955; the court selected Eugene F. Johnson architect, and on March 16, 1956, awarded the building contract to Rex A. Kinser for \$241,114. The one-story, 121-foot-square building has a partial basement con-

forming to the site slope. Occupying the center area in the square plan is the Circuit Court room. Completed in February 1958, the dedication ceremonies for Dallas County's present courthouse took place March 5, 1958 (Fig. 3).

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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