

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## DENT COUNTY

*Marian M. Ohman*  
Coordinator, Art History Programs

The original area of Dent County was formed from parts of Crawford and Shannon counties; the southwest portion of the county was added later. Present-day boundaries were established by the Revised Statutes of 1879. Commissioners first met in May 1851 to locate the county seat. First courts met in homes, but in 1853 county business was transacted in Salem, the county seat.

In 1852-53 a two-story, brick building was built south of the present courthouse. It measured about 20 by 40 feet; the county offices were downstairs, the courtroom and circuit clerk's office, upstairs. This building, built by J. T. Garvin for \$800, was burned in the Civil War.

The next courthouse, built in 1864, also fell victim to fire in May 1866. This one-story, plank, 26-by-36-foot building, was located on the square. The fire destroyed county records.

By 1870 the county had recovered sufficiently to begin a new courthouse. In March the court accepted a plan from a St. Louis firm, Randolph Brothers, probably the work of Mahlon Randolph. A. E. Dye, who also built Dallas and Crawford County courthouses, contracted the 42-by-78-foot, brick building for \$15,500 (Fig. 1). An additional appropriation of \$1,700 came later. A square tower with mansard roof topped by cresting and opened with dormer windows rises through the center of the facade. The round, arched, open base of the tower provides a foyer to double doors, which lead to a central hall. The courtroom is on the second floor.

In 1896-97 a one-story addition was made on the

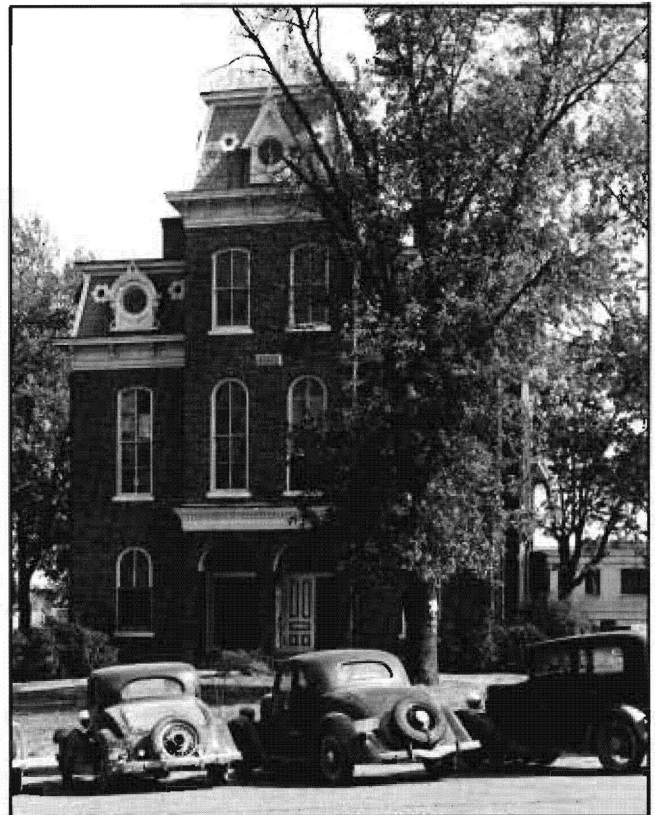
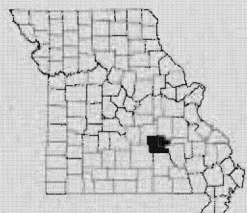


Fig. 1. Dent County Courthouse, 1870.  
Architect: Randolph Brothers.  
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

east; a 1911 project increased the addition to two-stories. Originally, there were two stairways, one on either side of the entry. About 1933 the north stairway was removed, and the space was converted to the treasurer's office. At the same time, the court authorized boxing in an area next to the south stairway to provide an additional office; the handmade walnut stair railing and walnut and cherry courtroom benches were painted yellow. Renovation in 1976 included new windows, paneling, suspended ceilings, remodeled restrooms and restoration of the building's trim. The Dent County courthouse is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

County . . . . . Dent  
Organized . . . . . Feb. 10, 1851  
Named After . . Lewis Dent, an  
early settler and  
first state  
representative  
County Seat . . . Salem



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