

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

HICKORY COUNTY

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Fig. 1. Hickory County Courthouse, 1860-1881. (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri, gift of Mrs. Nannie Jenkins)

Fire took a tragic toll in Hickory County during the 19th century, destroying two courthouses and many records. First courts met in homes. The history of the early courthouses is not clear. Goodspeed's *History of Hickory, Polk, Cedar, Dade and Barton Counties*, 1889, describes the first courthouse a 1½-story build-

ing built during 1847 at the southeast corner of the square. Fire destroyed the courthouse in 1852.

Goodspeed says the county was without a courthouse until 1860. F. Marion Wilson, writing in 1907 on Hickory County history, described the courthouse as a two-story, frame structure with a school occupying the lower floor. This may have been space rented by the court after the fire. Fire destroyed this building, too. Wilson interviewed elderly citizens regarding the date of the fire. Answers varied by four years, but the fire evidently occurred about 1860.

The brick, two-story 1860 courthouse, measuring 40 by 42 feet, occupied a site on the square south of the present courthouse (Fig. 1). A north-south hall divided the lower floor. There were four rooms on the first

County Hickory
Organized Feb. 14, 1845
Named After President Andrew
Jackson's nick-
name "Old
Hickory"
County Seat Hermitage





Fig. 2. Hickory County Courthouse, 1896-. (From: *Wilson's History of Hickory County*, 1907)

floor; the courtroom was on the second story with two jury rooms. A storm damaged part of the roof and upper story in April 1879; fire destroyed the building January 8, 1881.

From 1881 until 1896 Hickory County managed without a courthouse. Continued talk for removal of the county seat to a different location failed to gain suffi-

cient support.

The present two-story, brick courthouse with hip roof was completed in 1896; cost came to \$5,350 which was paid by subscription (Fig. 2). In plan it resembles the 1860 design. Offices are on the first floor, courtroom on the second. An open belfry above the gable marks the front of the building.

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