

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

KNOX COUNTY

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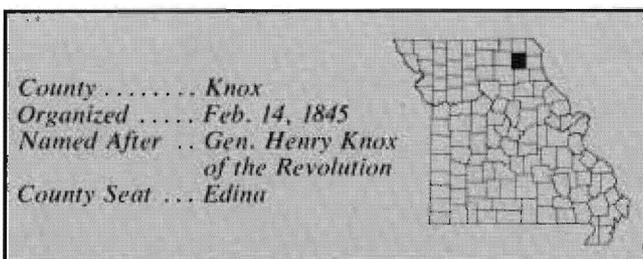
Fig. 1. Knox County Courthouse (right), 1848-1885. (From: *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Knox County, Missouri*, 1876)

During the 19th century Knox County had only one courthouse. Edina became the county seat in May 1845, and for the first two years the county rented facilities. On November 9, 1847, the county appropriated \$1,600, which was borrowed from the internal improvement fund, for a 40-by-30-foot, two-story building to be built in the center of the square.

Apparently, the court drew the first plan, which was then elaborated by Martin Baker, Jr., who had been appointed commissioner in 1846. In May 1848 a \$1,650 contract was given to James W. Baker (Fig. 1). The building had been unoccupied for some time and in deplorable condition when fire destroyed it on Christ-

mas Eve 1885; although arson was suspected, a contemporary report claimed that the county was not too concerned about apprehending the offenders.

Knox County continued without a courthouse, renting facilities for county business until 1934 when the county collector proposed the idea for building a new one; the court encouraged him to investigate grant possibilities. For several months a small informal committee worked surreptitiously making preparations (the county collector was accustomed to this; a few months later he was indicted after almost \$30,000 was missing from county funds). The committee contacted an architect for preliminary sketches, which they submitted with a grant request to the Public Works Administration before making their actions publicly known in Knox County. The grant was approved, providing that the county pass a bond issue, which they did in August 1934. The grant was for \$80,000; 70 percent of it was for a government loan. The court then formally approved architect William B. Ittner's design, which had accompanied the initial request for a two-story, brick building with stone trim. The courtroom and jail were on the second floor.



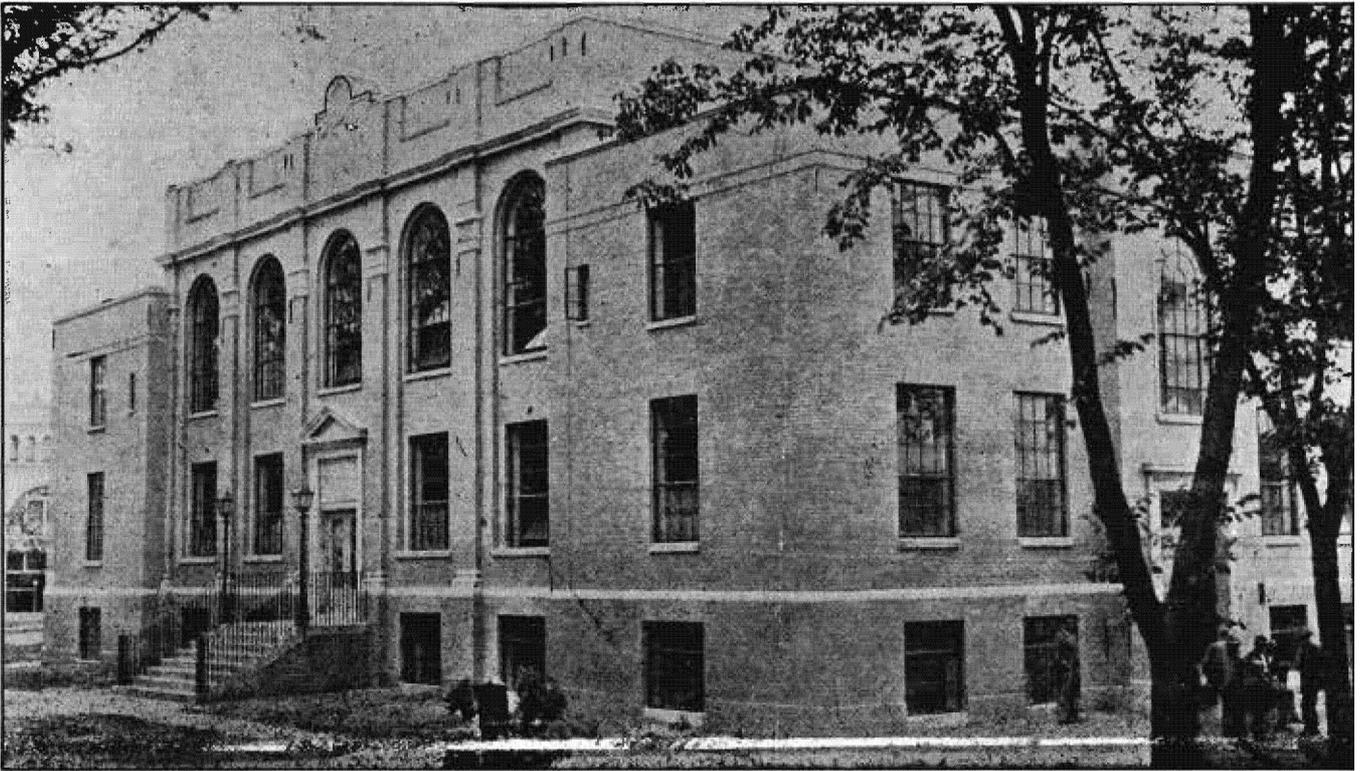


Fig. 2. Knox County Courthouse, 1934-. Architect: William B. Ittner (From: W.P.A., Western Historical Manuscript Collection)

The building contract was let to J. E. Williams, St. Louis, for \$61,882 in November 1934, and ground breaking took place December 18, 1934; cornerstone ceremonies were conducted April 6, 1935; the building was dedicated September 13, 1935 (Fig. 2). Total costs came to about \$80,000. Ittner was a respected St. Louis architect known principally for his school buildings. This is his only courthouse work in Missouri.

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