MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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Pinckney, located on the Missouri River, was laid out in 1819 for Montgomery County's first county seat. Court met in a rented frame house. Pinckney proved to be an inconvenient location and gave way to Lewiston in 1824 as the second county seat. In Lewiston a 16- or 18-foot-square, log building, erected by Charles Allen, became the first planned courthouse. It had a puncheon floor and clapboard roof, held firm with weight poles.

Warren County separated from Montgomery County in 1834, and the county seat moved to Danville. There the court built a brick structure on the square; although occupied by county offices, the interior remained unfinished. Damaged by fire in the Civil War, the building was later razed in preparation for the 1860s courthouse.

Gustave Bachmann, architect of the third courthouse, prepared plans in 1865 (Fig. 1). On October 12, 1865, the court awarded the contract to James Getty, of St. Louis, for $27,700. He completed the building in August 1867. This courthouse burned April 12, 1901, destroying many county records. There was no insurance, since no company had been willing to take the risk. The county could spend no more than $3,000 for repairs without a bond issue, and the strong vote in Montgomery City would not support repairing the Danville courthouse.

Montgomery City had been laid out in 1853. After the North Missouri Railroad reached Montgomery City in 1857, the town became the principal trading center in Montgomery County. The townspeople wanted the county seat in Montgomery City, but for years Danville withstood the pressure. Acts passed by
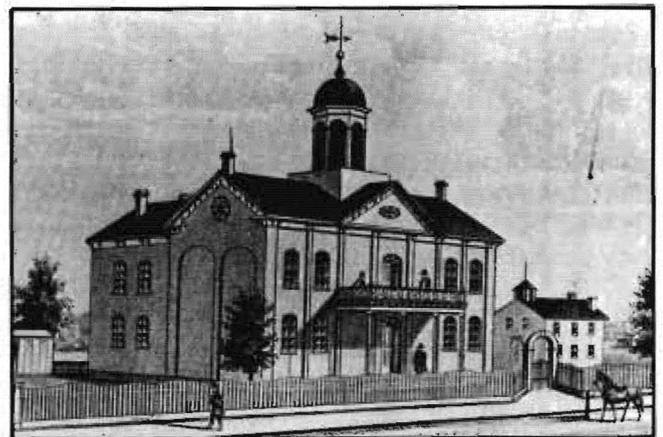

Fig. 1. Montgomery County Courthouse, Danville, 1865-1901. Architect: Gustave Bachmann
(From: *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Montgomery County Missouri,* 1878)

Fig. 2. Montgomery County Courthouse, Montgomery City, 1889-1953.
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

the legislature in 1889 provided legal justification for sessions of circuit and probate courts to be held in Montgomery City. Enterprising Montgomery City residents, anxious to have a courthouse, raised about
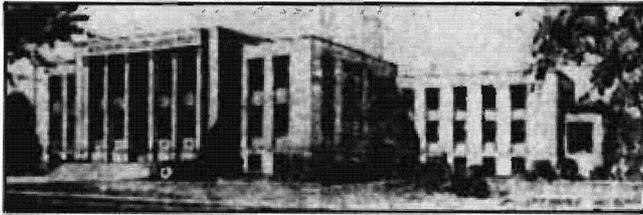
County .... Montgomery
Organized ..... Dec. 14, 1818
Named After .. Gen. Richard
Montgomery of
the Revolution
County Seat ... Montgomery City

Fig. 3. Architect's drawing of Montgomery County Courthouse, 1953-.

Architect: Ernest T. Friton
(From: *Montgomery Standard*, April 9, 1953)

Fig. 4. Montgomery County Courthouse, 1953-.

$20,000 by subscription to build a two-story, brick courthouse, which they donated to the county (Fig. 2).

The court awarded the contract to four men: R. A. Sharp, C. P. and John Evered, and August Stanhardt, on September 27, 1889. Although interior finishing remained incomplete, the first session of court convened in the courthouse in mid February 1890, less than five months after construction began. The 60-foot-square building featured a corner tower, which contained the iron staircase. Building material for the foundation was cut stone with brick walls and a slate roof. The lower floor contained six rooms; the upper floor held the courtroom and three offices. Costs were between $18,000 and $20,000.

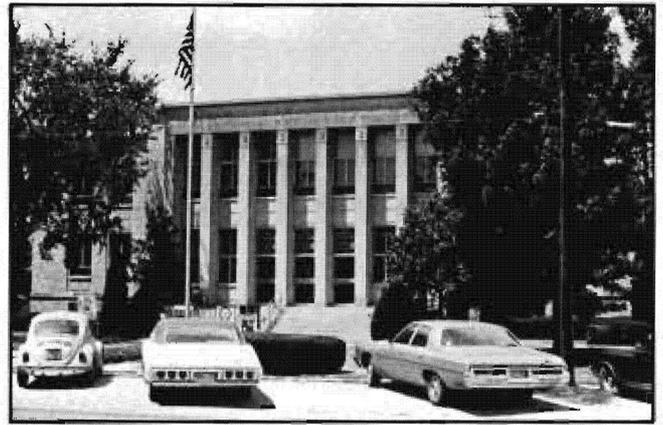**K**nowing the county would not authorize construction of another courthouse, the officials conceded and moved the county seat to Montgomery City, occupying the recently built courthouse.

In 1953, after the 19th century building was condemned, citizens voted $400,000 in bonds June 4 to finance a new courthouse. The court selected architect Ernest T. Friton to plan the 20th century Montgomery County courthouse (Fig. 3). Friton had previously designed the Work Projects Administration Dunklin County courthouse in 1940. Brockmeyer Construction Co., St. Louis, received the contract in November for $383,599. Cornerstone ceremonies took place in April 1954; one year later construction was completed (Fig. 4).

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