

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

PIKE COUNTY

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Pike County, one of Missouri's older counties, has had six courthouses, five in the 19th century. The first was in Louisiana, Missouri, Pike County's first county seat. It has been described as a two-story, small, brick building; the first brick building erected in Pike County, built 1819-20. Owners donated the site, but complications arose about the deed. Apparently all courts continued meeting in Louisiana throughout 1824, although the county seat officially moved to Bowling Green in 1822. The county authorized the sale of the building in February 1826. Michael J. Noyes bought it for \$450. The 1875 Atlas reported the building had recently been torn down.

Nathaniel Montgomery built the first courthouse in Bowling Green of logs in 1823; costs were first estimated to be about \$75, but finally amounted to \$114. Planned as a temporary building, it was located on the northeast corner of the square. Apparently the building was razed in about 1831.

Levi Pettibone superintended the next courthouse, the second in Bowling Green; Walter and John Crow built it in 1829. It, too, was a temporary building, located off the square. Citizens guaranteed \$600 to be matched by \$600 from the county with the understanding the county seat would not be moved for two years. Built of brick with chimneys in each corner, it remained standing at the edge of the square while the 1844 house, the first permanent courthouse, was being erected in the center of the square.

Early in 1843 the court appropriated \$6,000 toward construction of the permanent building. By one account the final cost was \$11,200. The Rev. J. W. Campbell superintended the construction done by W. W.

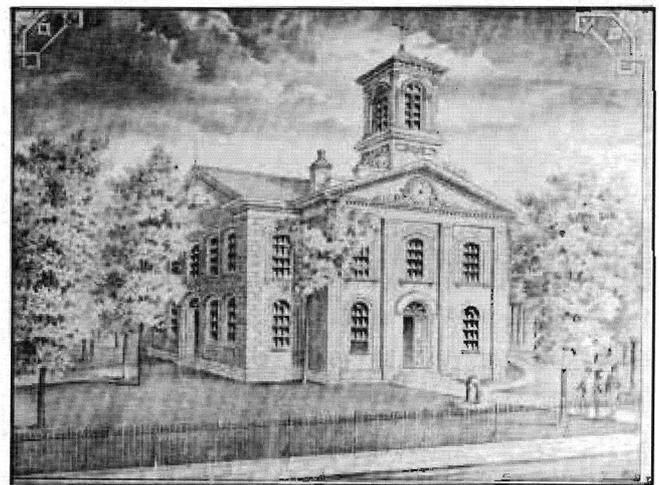


Fig. 1. Pike County Courthouse, 1865-1915.
Architects: George I. Barnett and A. H. Piquenard
(From: *Illustrated Atlas Map of Pike County, Missouri*, 1875)

Blain and Samuel Kem. The brick building measured 44 by 50 feet, faced south, and had two stories and a balcony. One half of the lower floor was a hall or lobby. Doors from the east, west and south opened into the lobby. Winding stairs from the southeast and southwest corners led to the courtroom above on the north side. Space below the courtroom on the first floor held four offices. Topping the square cupola was a bell and arrow, the arrow bearing the date 1844. I. W. Basye's contemporary account reported the floor of the balcony to be made of lead. Fire destroyed this building in March 1864. After the fire the court used the jail for temporary quarters.

Architects George I. Barnett and A. H. Piquenard, St. Louis, developed plans in 1865 for the fourth courthouse in Pike County from sketches presented by Conrad Smith, who acted as both superintendent and contractor. Costs were approximately \$70,000 (Fig. 1). The building suffered damage from a severe storm in November 1866 while under construction. Considerable delay resulted while those involved determined

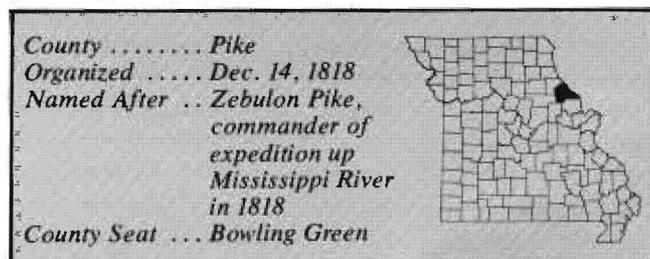




Fig. 2. Pike County Courthouse, 1917-. Architect: Henry H. Hohenschild (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

who should pay. It was completed in September 1867. Fire destroyed this building October 16, 1915.

It is surprising there are no known photographs of this building, considering the reputation of the architects, the costliness of the project, and the fact that it lasted well into the 20th century. Rosalyn Smith, Conrad Smith's granddaughter, gave the plans of the 1865-67 courthouse to the Pike Historical Club in 1967.

After the fire the possibility of two courthouses was considered, one in Bowling Green, the other in Louisiana. Although voters supported the proposition in 1915, the election was declared invalid when submitted to the Missouri Supreme Court, because the electorate had not been offered the option of one or the other. When resubmitted in November 1916, the voters reconsidered and rejected the courthouse for Louisiana. The court selected Henry H. Hohenschild as architect for the Bowling Green courthouse. The 85-foot-square building is constructed of Bedford stone and gray Georgia granite. Cornerstone ceremonies were held September 13, 1917; the court first occupied the completed \$100,000 building in January 1919 and has been meeting there ever since (Fig. 2).

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