

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

RAY COUNTY

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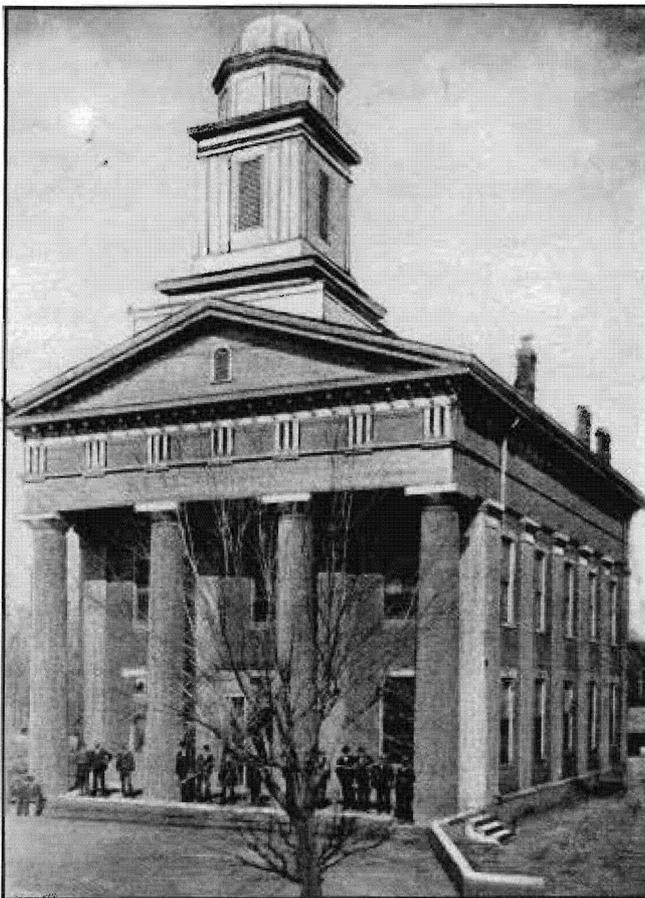


Fig. 1. Ray County Courthouse, 1856-1914, moved in 1915.
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

Following six years of controversy, commissioners chose the site of Richmond in 1827 as the permanent location for the county seat of Ray County. It was a primitive site at the time and required more development before it could adequately function. Until that time, Bluffton, the first and temporary location, continued to serve as the county seat.

Money from the sale of lots funded the first courthouse in Richmond, which was completed in 1829. The hewn log structure was chinked with mulberry blocks, and the interior finished with oak. The fireplace at one of the gable ends was constructed of stone, but reportedly had a delicate wooden chimney.

The second courthouse (Fig. 1), a temple-type design with Doric order, was copied after the one in nearby Lafayette County. The county commissioners appointed George W. Dunn as superintendent in July 1856. They instructed him to work out the plan and submit a cost estimate, making such suitable variations as

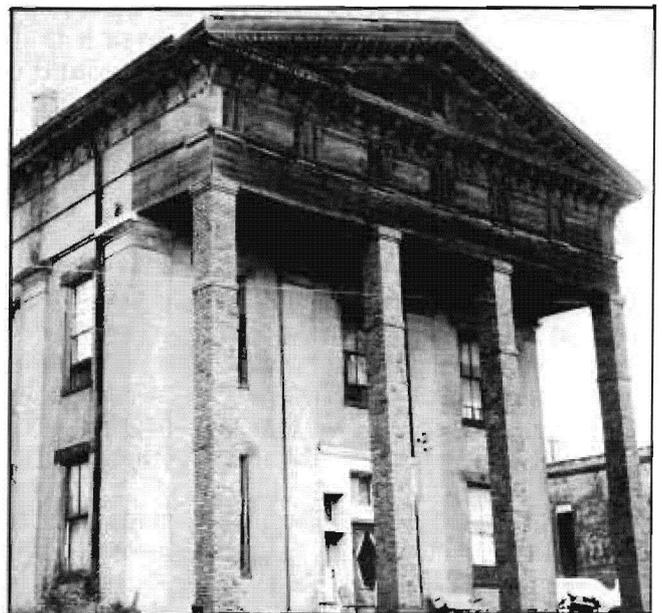


Fig. 2. Ray County Courthouse, after removed from square in 1914.
Round columns replaced with square brick. Razed in 1960s.
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

County Ray
Organized Nov. 16, 1820
Named After . . . John Ray, a
member of the
Constitutional
Convention of 1820
County Seat . . . Richmond

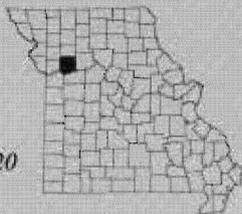




Fig. 3. Ray County Courthouse 1914-. Architect: R. Warren Roberts (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

the commissioners might suggest.

The court appropriated \$25,000 for construction and asked that the work be completed by January 1, 1858. The court paid George A. Kice \$40 for drafting plans and specifications, which originally called for a shingle roof and copper-covered dome. Specifications were changed in October 1857, calling for the roof and dome to be covered with tin instead.

A severe storm tore off the roof and weakened the cupola on June 1, 1878. Early in 1914 the United Mine Workers bought the courthouse and moved it to the corner of Franklin and College streets as construction began on the present courthouse (Fig. 2). The 1856-58 courthouse was razed in the 1960s.

In the 20th century Ray County needed a new courthouse, better suited for a progressive, growing community. Voters authorized bonds totaling \$100,000 in December 1913. The court traveled to several counties to inspect recently built courthouses. They narrowed the selection of potential architects to five before selecting R. Warren Roberts, whom they had visited in Chillicothe when they inspected Livingston County's courthouse.

L. W. Dumas was the successful bidder for contracting the Bedford-stone building at about \$98,000. Cornerstone ceremonies took place September 24, 1914, and the building, which is still the Ray County courthouse, was dedicated Nov. 20, 1915 (Fig. 3). Specifications for the three-story, 75-by-100-foot building may be found in the County Court Record (Book W,

pp. 602, 631).

James Oliver Hogg, an eminent Kansas City architect, had submitted a handsome design with a low dome and Doric portico. An extraordinary feature was the accompanying landscape plan with the columns from the previous courthouse integrated into a graceful pattern of walks leading from the four corners of the courthouse block.

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