

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## ST. CHARLES COUNTY

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**S**t. Charles County was organized in 1812, but present boundaries were not established until 1818. For several years the county rented quarters. Among them were rooms in Peck's Row, provided by Charles and Ruluff Peck, the same space the brothers rented to Missouri's first state government when officials met in St. Charles, from 1821 to 1825.

In 1833 the county bought a house and lot from William Pettus for \$800, on which officials planned to build a courthouse and jail. This became the site for the 1846-49 courthouse designed by Solomon Jenkins (Fig. 1). Little is known of Jenkins, who built three other courthouses in Missouri: Warren, 1838, Scotland and Callaway, 1856. Born in Virginia in 1808, he was active in St. Louis in the 1830s. In the census of 1850 he is identified as a house builder. The same census also recorded two carpenters living at Jenkins' address, one from Virginia, the other from Ireland, and a stone cutter from Scotland, bringing to Missouri several possible sources of influence.

The one-story courthouse, built between 1846-49 for about \$9,000, featured a handsome Doric portico with fluted shafts on the six columns and pilasters between shuttered windows on the sides. Grouped pilasters at the corners trimmed both stages of the cupola; the traditional ball and arrow topped the domical roof.

Clerk's offices were housed in small, one-story, fireproof buildings near the courthouse. William L. Overall supervised construction, which was completed in 1849. This courthouse was located at the northwest corner of Main and Madison streets. Sustaining extensive damage after a storm on February 26,



Fig. 1. St. Charles County Courthouse, 1846-1903.  
Architect: Solomon Jenkins  
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

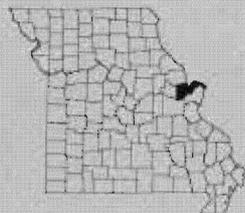
1876, the building continued in use until razed in 1903, when the court moved to its new location.

The county purchased a spacious site for the next and present courthouse in 1851 from the city of St. Charles for \$223.87½. The county and circuit clerks' offices constructed on the site caused it to be referred to as "Clerks' Hill."

**S**pecial elections to authorize a new courthouse failed in 1888 and 1894. Three years later a petition presented to the court again called for a new courthouse. The court then appointed Jerome B. Legg architect in July 1898 to prepare plans, but an appropriation of \$25,000, made in August 1898, put county funds in such a precarious state that the county feared it could not conduct its business. The court then reconsidered Legg's plans, which would have cost an estimated \$60,000-\$90,000 to build; the court rescinded the appropriation and decided to defer construction.

It was not until December 1900 that the court commenced construction, using Legg's design of 1898 for

County . . . . . St. Charles  
Organized . . . . . Oct. 1, 1812  
Named After . . . Charles V of  
France  
County Seat . . . St. Charles



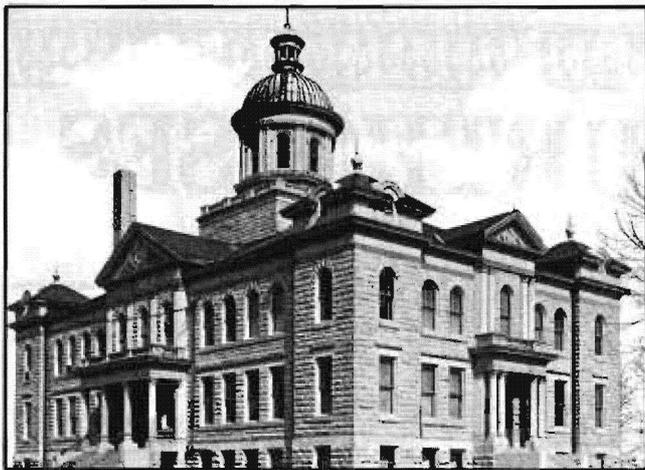


Fig. 2. St. Charles County Courthouse, 1901.  
 Architect: Jerome B. Legg  
 (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

the new courthouse on "Clerks' Hill" (Fig. 2). Due to the slope of the hill, grading was necessary. In January 1901 J. W. Thompson received the contract for foundation, walls and roof for \$37,349; the work was to be completed within a year. Cornerstone ceremonies took place June 12, 1901. Contract for completing the building was awarded Nicholas Pelligreen of St. Louis for \$57,000.

The County Court room, 30 by 26 feet, and several offices were on the first floor; the Circuit Court room, 42 by 46 feet, probate court and jury rooms were on the second floor. The new courthouse was occupied in April 1903. Serious flooding in June 1903 interfered with the planned dedication ceremonies.

Other related Missouri courthouses by Legg were constructed of brick in Gasconade County, built in 1896-98, and Mississippi County, 1899-1901, but the St. Charles stone building is the finest example of Legg's turn of the century courthouse design.



Fig. 3. Aerial view of present courthouse, photo ca. 1935. (From: W.P.A., Historical Records Survey)

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