

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

SALINE COUNTY

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Saline County organized in 1820, and Jefferson (later Cambridge) was designated the first county seat. In 1831 Jonesboro became the seat and the court met in rented facilities. A third move of the county seat took the court to Arrow Rock in 1839. Now restored, the building where the court met is part of historic Arrow Rock (Fig. 1). George Caleb Bingham depicted the building used as a courthouse in his painting *County Election*, 1852 (Fig. 2). In 1839 commissioners determined that the most appropriate site, closest to the center of the county, for permanently locating the county seat would be Marshall. The court started meeting there during 1840.

Henry Hook submitted plans for the first courthouse built by the county in 1841; the court appropriated \$12,000 and awarded the building contract to William Hook for \$9,000. It was a 45-by-40-foot, two-story, brick building with a cupola. In August 1864 the courthouse burned as a result of Civil War activity.

The second courthouse dates from 1868. It was a brick building with round arched windows, brick pilasters, bracketed cornices and eaves, and a small cupola (Fig. 3). J. D. McGowan was appointed superintendent. The contract for the \$40,000 building was awarded to Buckner and Walker. The court accepted the completed building in 1868.

Less than 10 years later, in 1877, the County Court decided the needed repairs would be a waste of money and closed the courthouse in 1879. This suggests extremely poor workmanship or perhaps unwise construction upon previous remains of the burned courthouse. This courthouse burned on April 3, 1881. Slater was competing for the county seat, and each commu-



Fig. 1. Restored building used as Saline County Courthouse in Arrow Rock, the model for George Caleb Bingham's painting, *County Election*.

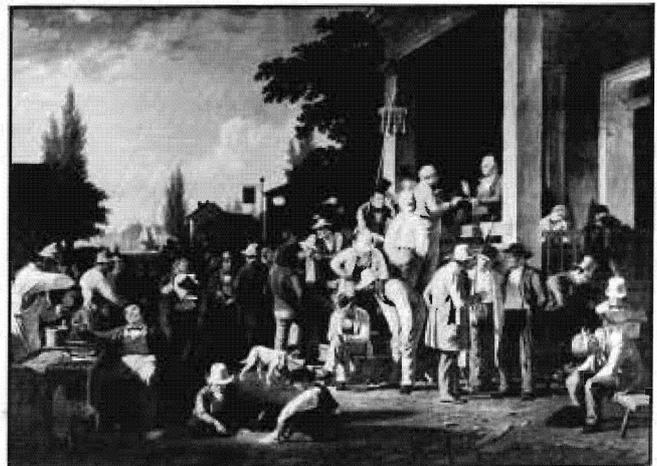
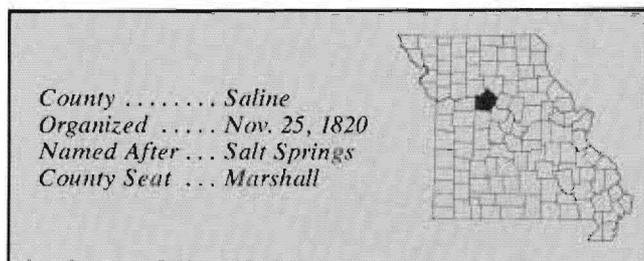


Fig. 2. George Caleb Bingham, *The County Election*, 1851-52. (From: Collection of Boatmen's National Bank of St. Louis)

nity accused the other of arson.

At an October 1881 election voters agreed to incur \$51,800 indebtedness for a new courthouse. Several architects submitted proposals. The court selected the crossed gable plan with central tower from John C. Cochrane of Chicago, Illinois. Cochrane previously used this same design for a courthouse in Lake County, Indiana, which the court traveled to see.



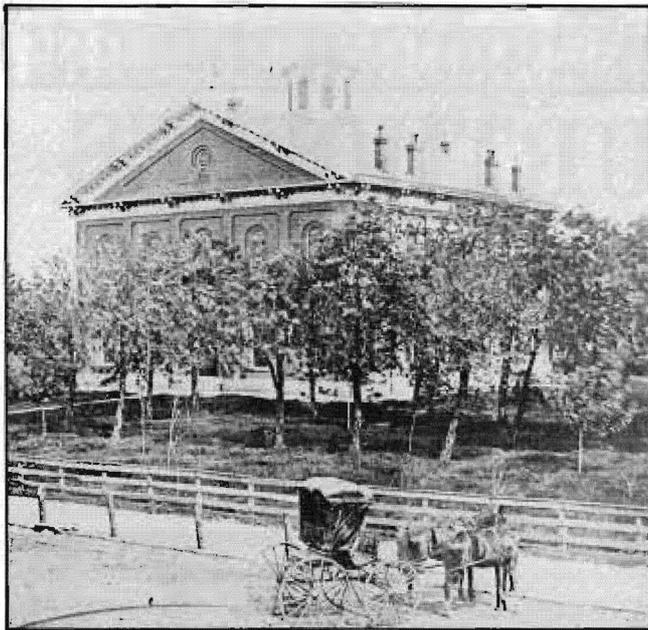


Fig. 3. Saline County Courthouse, 1868-1881.
(From: W.P.A., Historical Records Survey, Photo ca. 1875)

C. G. Page acted as superintendent for Saline County. The building contract was awarded to John Volk and Co., Rock Island, Illinois, March 2, 1882, for their bid of \$51,762. The two-story, 100-by-110-foot building of red pressed brick has limestone trim (Fig. 4). Originally, local brick was to be used, but later the contractor found it necessary to ship in brick, which added \$5,000 to the cost.

Offices are on the first floor, Circuit and County Court rooms on the second. For years the courthouse

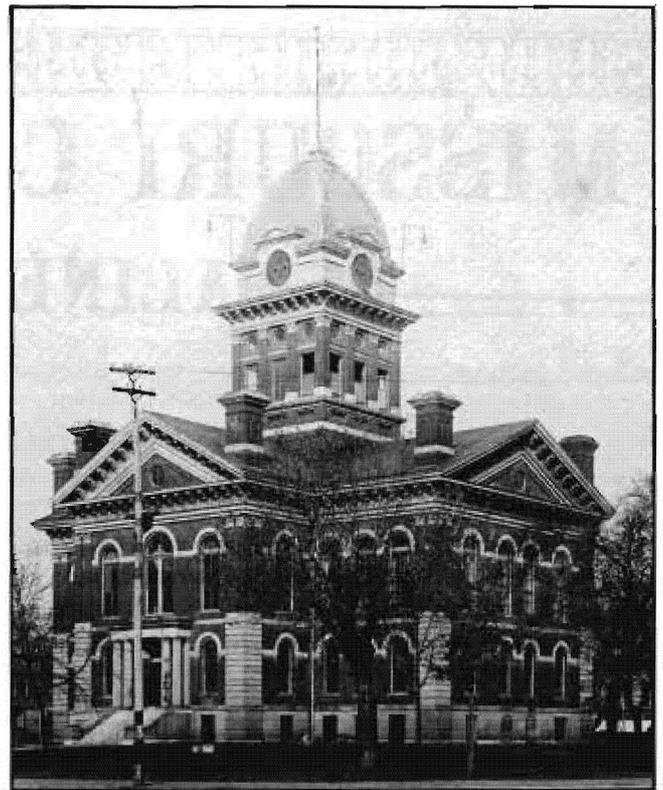


Fig. 4. Saline County Courthouse, 1882-
Architect: John C. Cochrane
(From: W.P.A., Historical Records Survey)

trim was painted white, but architect Philip Cotton, who planned the restoration in 1973, returned to the original trim colors of buff, maroon and blue-green. This courthouse building, still serving as the Saline County courthouse, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

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Courthouse Restoration Committee and Nancy B. Breme, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Historic Preservation, Jefferson City, Missouri.

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