

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## SHANNON COUNTY

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When first organized in 1841, Shannon County embraced a much larger area. When Texas, Reynolds and Carter counties organized, they absorbed parts of Shannon County.

For the first courthouse, officials picked a site near the center of the county, across the Current River near Round Spring. Built in 1845, the 16-by-20 foot, hewn-log courthouse cost \$75. Fire caused by Civil War activities destroyed this early Shannon County courthouse along with all county records.

After the war, county officials again looked for a location near the center of the county for a new courthouse. Thomas J. Chilton deeded 50 acres, one of the few sites with clear title, upon which Eminence was laid out in 1868. Within a year, builders completed a 30-foot-square, weatherboarded courthouse. Contract price was \$3,000 bid by William Orchard and T. B. Dunvas of Thomasville, Oregon County. Fire destroyed the building December 31, 1871.

For the next courthouse, a two-story frame with offices on the first floor and a courtroom on the second was built. In time the county outgrew this courthouse; the county and circuit clerks' offices moved to other quarters. An arsonist set fire to the courthouse and both clerks' offices in March of 1895. The courthouse was not seriously damaged, although all county records were destroyed. The building was later moved to the north side of the square and used for several years as a commercial building. No known photographs of these early courthouses exist.

County citizens voted November 10, 1898, to finance the next courthouse by a direct tax. In March 1899 the court invited architects and builders to submit

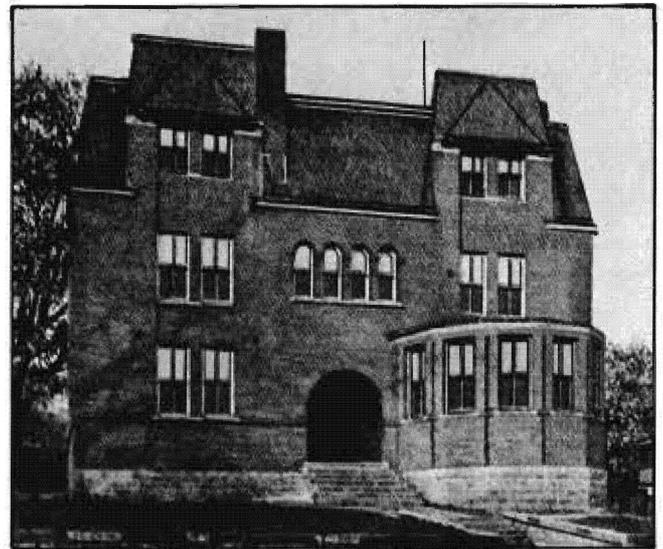


Fig. 1. Shannon County Courthouse, 1899-1938.  
Architect: Henry H. Hohenschild  
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

plans. County Court officials selected the plans of Henry H. Hohenschild. Hohenschild's first plans provided for a building costing about \$9,000, almost twice the sum Shannon County could commit. The court contemplated possible changes and asked the architect to draw plans for a building costing not more than \$5,000.

Partial funding came from the Odd Fellows for the attic story, which was used for their lodge. This probably explains the unusual roof configuration. The first story was arranged for office space; the courtroom, measuring  $34\frac{1}{2}$  by  $38\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and two jury rooms were on the second floor.

R. M. Beatty, contractor, was supervised by George Mathews [sic] of West Plains. Henry Cardz acted as county superintendent. Cornerstone ceremonies took place on August 11, 1899 (Fig. 1). On May 23, 1938, fire destroyed this courthouse, which was insured for \$23,500.

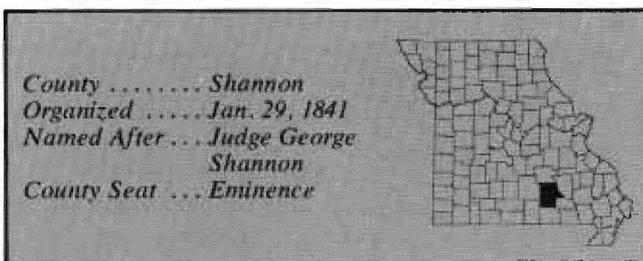




Fig. 2. Shannon County Courthouse, 1939-. Architect: Dan R. Sanford (Courtesy: Ozark Graphic, Doniphan, Missouri)

After the courthouse burned, an election to remove the county seat to Winona failed. A project submitted to the Work Projects Administration was rejected in June 1939, but after architect Dan R. Sanford, Springfield, conferred with the court in August regarding plans for a new courthouse, the proposal was resubmitted and approved in November 1939. The two-story plus basement building, built of reinforced concrete, concrete blocks and structural steel, has brick veneer with white stone entry (Fig. 2). It was completed in the summer of 1941 and dedicated August 2, 1941. G. A. Norton of Springfield was the foreman, a contractor of wide experience. Shannon County's present courthouse has 27 rooms and cost \$77,500. W.P.A. approved financing for \$52,000; the county paid the remainder, \$25,500.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

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### Articles

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### Newspapers

*The Current Wave*, Oct. 20, 1892; March 7, 14, 1895; Nov. 10, 1898; March 23-Aug. 24, 1899; Jan. 11, 1900; May 26-Nov. 10, 1938; Nov. 16-Dec. 21, 1939; May 22-Aug. 7, 1941.

### Manuscript Collections

Work Projects Administration, Historical Records Survey, Missouri, 1935-1942, Shannon County. Located in Joint Collection: University of Missouri, Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia and State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts.

Valuable references for Shannon County's courthouse came from a manuscript "History of Shannon County" by Maida Thomas, written for the W.P.A., and including information from descendants of early settlers.