

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

CAMDEN COUNTY

Marian M. Ohman
Coordinator, Art History Programs

Kinderhook, the name of President Martin Van Buren's residence, was the original name of Camden County. The legislation that changed the name to Camden in 1843 also directed commissioners to locate the county seat on the Osage River. The first location, Oregon, also underwent a name change to become Erie in 1843.

Orders made for a courthouse in 1841 never materialized, but in 1846 the first courthouse was built in Erie. S. R. Roberts superintended and William C. Young contracted for the two-story, 40-foot-square, brick building for \$4,046. The courtroom was located on the first floor, county offices on the second. After removal of the county seat to Linn Creek, this courthouse sold at public auction for about \$175.

Fire destroyed county records in 1902; fortunately, Goodspeed's *History of Laclède, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps, and Dent Counties* of 1889 appears to have used the County Court records for resource material.

After the move to Linn Creek in 1855, temporary quarters sufficed until 1867, when the court appropriated \$6,500 for a courthouse on the square. In June 1867 the contract was let to G. B. Shubert and James H. Waldron for \$4,975. Thomas Selby superintended the work. The 32-by-40-foot, plain, two-story, brick building had a courtroom on the first floor and county offices on the second.

By 1902 county needs outgrew the courthouse. The courtroom had become too small, and the offices were inadequate. Fire severely damaged the building and destroyed the contents January 28, 1902. Several quar-

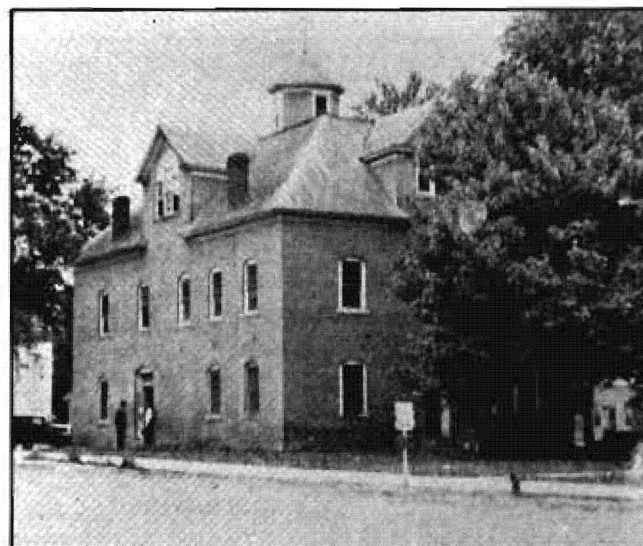
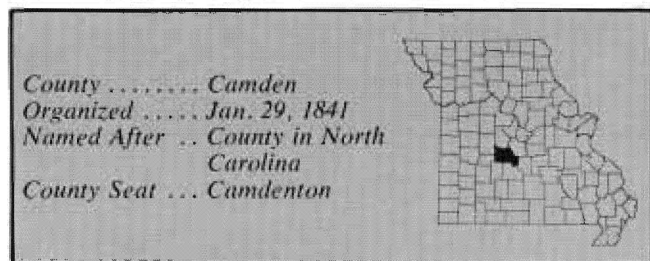


Fig. 1. Camden County Courthouse, 1906-1930.
(From: *Before the Dam Water*, 1974)

ters served as temporary locations for county functions and business until August 10, 1905, when a committee petitioned the court to rebuild the courthouse, using the standing brick walls. The court agreed that if the town of Linn Creek would spend \$1,500, then the court would supplement the amount, provided it did not exceed \$1,000. Total costs came to several thousand dollars above this figure. The additional money was raised by popular subscription, but there is no record of a final accounting.

The court resumed use of the enlarged building in February 1906 (Fig. 1). The building measured approximately 40 by 60 feet, two stories, with a large attic room used as a jury room. The courtroom was on the second floor, the county offices on the first floor.

In 1930 the Lake of the Ozarks, impounded by Bagnell Dam, inundated the site of Linn Creek. In November of that year the county formally voted for removal to a newly created town, Camdenton, which became the county seat. A temporary courthouse,



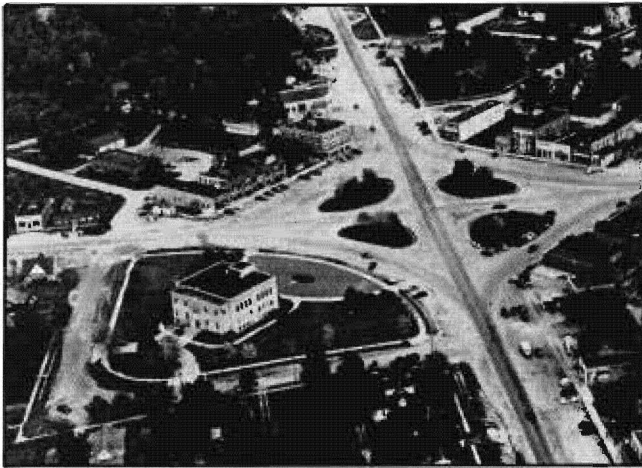


Fig. 2. Aerial view of 1931 courthouse (lower left).
(From: *Lake of the Ozarks Country of Missouri*)

which cost about \$4,000, was built by W. J. Cochran and Sons of Boonville.

The permanent courthouse site was at the junction of two highways, occupying a triangular plot (Fig. 2). Union Electric compensated Camden County \$60,000 for loss of the old courthouse. Architect Victor J. DeFoe designed the new courthouse. B. O. Short, Pierce City, received the construction contract for about \$50,000 in August 1931. Cornerstone ceremonies were conducted November 3, 1931 (Fig. 3).

The building was completed in July 1932. The yellow brick and tile building measures 76 by 76 by 32 feet and is trimmed with stone. A public assembly hall was planned for the half basement. County offices are on the first floor and the courtroom on the second floor. It was the first Missouri courthouse built in a modern style.



Fig. 3. Camden County Courthouse, 1931-. Architect: Victor DeFoe (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

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