

# CARTER COUNTY

The Work Projects Administration inventory record described Carter County's first courthouse, dated 1837, as a frame, two-story, four-room building put together with wooden pins. The fireplace and chimney were built of native sandstone. This early courthouse was located on the west bank of the Current River, one-half mile west and across the river from the present county seat. It was used while Carter County was a part of Ripley County, before separating in 1859. A commission voted to retain Van Buren as the county seat. The log courthouse also continued in use, but was supplemented with space in the Coleman Hotel.

Court officials authorized a temporary courthouse to be built in 1867, west of the present square. Specifications called for a hewn-log house, 18 by 24 feet. They appointed James Snider superintendent.

The court appropriated \$3,000 in March 1871 to build a courthouse on the square (Fig. 1). William Dawson, superintendent of public buildings, presented a plan and specifications, apparently provided by Peter Ake, who built the courthouse in December 1871. The court paid Ake \$10 for providing a "diagram" of the courthouse. W. P. A. records describe it as a 40-by-40-foot, two-story building made of hand-planed pine lumber, on rock foundation, with six rooms.

Early in the 20th century several proposals to build a new courthouse were defeated. Instead, the 1871 courthouse was remodeled, expanded, and covered with native cobblestones. The architectural firm of Heckenlively and Mark, Springfield, Missouri,

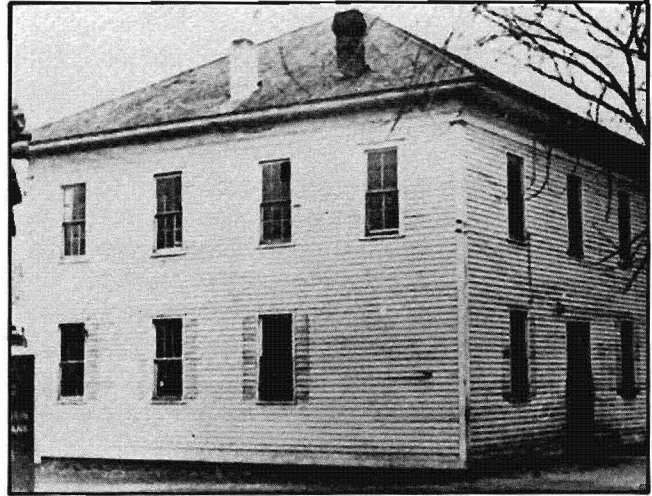


Fig. 1. Carter County Courthouse, 1871-, extensively remodeled in 1936.

(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri, gift of Townsend Godsey)

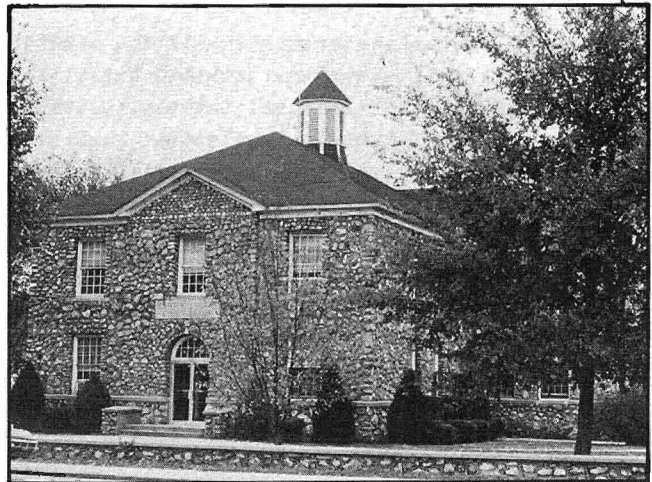


Fig. 2. Carter County Courthouse, after 1936 remodeling. Architects: Heckenlively and Mark

planned the remodeling for a Public Works Administration project from 1935-37 (Fig. 2). The original plan called for 13 rooms and a jail. The courtroom seated 350. This is the only courthouse in Missouri known to have been built with cobblestones.

County . . . . .	Carter	
Organized . . . . .	Mar. 10, 1859	
Named After . . .	Zimri Carter, a local pioneer	
County Seat . . .	Van Buren	

The architects put a 30-by-70-foot addition on the east of the old square building. Interior remodeling placed the courtroom in the new addition on the second floor. Cost of the building was about \$30,000. A P. W. A. grant provided \$25,000; county funds paid the remain-

der. No bond issue was necessary. Cornerstone ceremonies were conducted January 21, 1936, and the building, which is still the Carter County courthouse, was dedicated in August of the same year.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

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### Public Documents

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### Newspapers

*The Current Local,* (Van Buren) June 20, Aug. 22, 29, 1935; Jan. 23, Aug. 13, Sept. 24, 1936.

### Manuscript Collections

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