

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

CLINTON COUNTY

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Clinton County used three different names for its county seat between 1833-35. Concord was chosen first in November 1833, then was changed to Springfield in January 1834. Another Missouri town claimed that name, so a year later the name was changed again, this time to Plattsburg. The Clinton County Court requested that Plattsburg be laid off upon the same plan as Liberty, in adjacent Clay County, which had been organized during the preceding decade.

Early courts met in private homes, according to the 1881 *History of Clinton County*. The County Court Record of January 1834 called for a two-room, hewn-log courthouse with centrally placed chimney of stone or brick to be built south of the square. Counties often built a simple structure near the square to serve as a temporary courthouse while construction of the permanent building proceeded on the square; this may have been the intent of the court.

James Riley, a prominent Clinton resident, claimed in 1876 that the court reconsidered its decision and contracted instead for a larger brick building in June 1834. Helen Russell, who wrote on the history of Clinton County courthouses, agreed and noted there was no evidence in the court record to indicate the building ordered in January was built.

Again, plans for a brick courthouse were initiated at the May term in 1834. The original specifications called for two stories, 32 feet square and 20 feet high, on rock foundation, two fireplaces in each story, four chimneys, three doors, 25 windows, "two good and neat pillars in each story," covered with a shingle gable roof. There was one large room on the first floor, three rooms

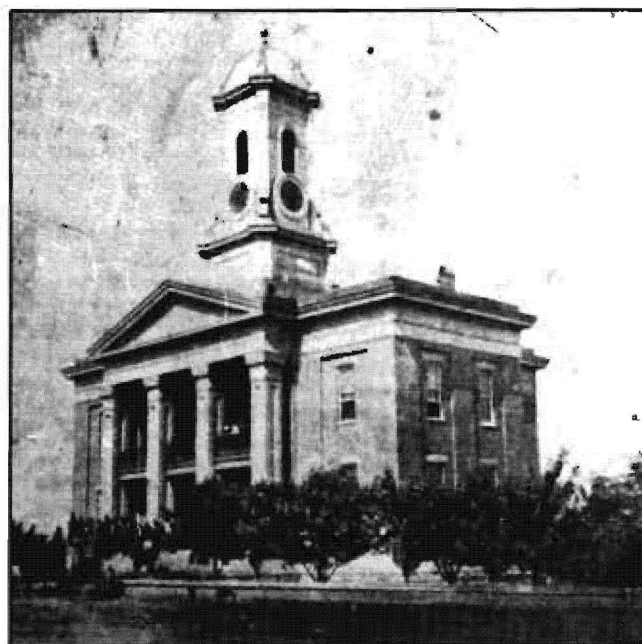


Fig. 1. Clinton County Courthouse, 1860-1895.
Architect: Peter McDuff
(From: *Plattsburg Leader*, Jan. 27, 1967)

on the second. The contractor was Solomon Fry.

Extensive repairs were ordered in June 1848: a new pine shingle roof, two coats of plastering on the lower room, brick repair, new closed stairway in the northeast corner and other minor work. Winslow Turner, clerk, also served as superintendent. The court awarded the contract to Dobbs and Young for \$450. This building was used until it was razed in 1858.

In September 1859 the county justices appropriated \$25,000 for a new courthouse. Hervey [sic] Whittington served as superintendent. Peter McDuff earned \$60 for drawing the plan. McDuff also drew plans for the Platte County courthouse, 1866, and the Clay County courthouse, 1857. Low bidder was William C. Black, who was given the contract for \$27,050 (Fig. 1).

The courthouse sustained great damage in a fire

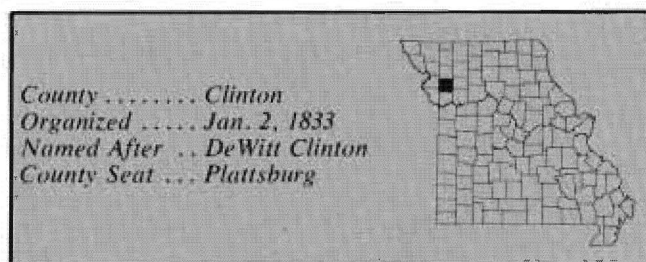




Fig. 2. Clinton County Courthouse, 1895-1974.
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

April 15, 1895, but the walls remained standing. In spite of newspaper reports that the walls would be torn

down, apparently they were incorporated in the rebuilding. C. P. Schmidt drew the plans and John T. Neil contracted for \$12,985 to rebuild and enclose the courthouse (Fig. 2). Stephen Collins acted as superintendent. The appearance of the building was considerably altered after it was stuccoed and painted white in 1958. Fire again damaged the building June 14, 1974, this time beyond repair.

Demolition began in September, and the following month the court approved plans for a courthouse and jail building, drawn by Homer Williams of the Kansas City firm Reed and Williams (Fig. 3). A bond issue in the amount of \$700,000 was passed in November. Bids for construction were opened in April 1975, and the court signed a contract with Pool and Canfield, a Kansas City construction company, for \$827,235 in June 1975, with work to be completed within a year.

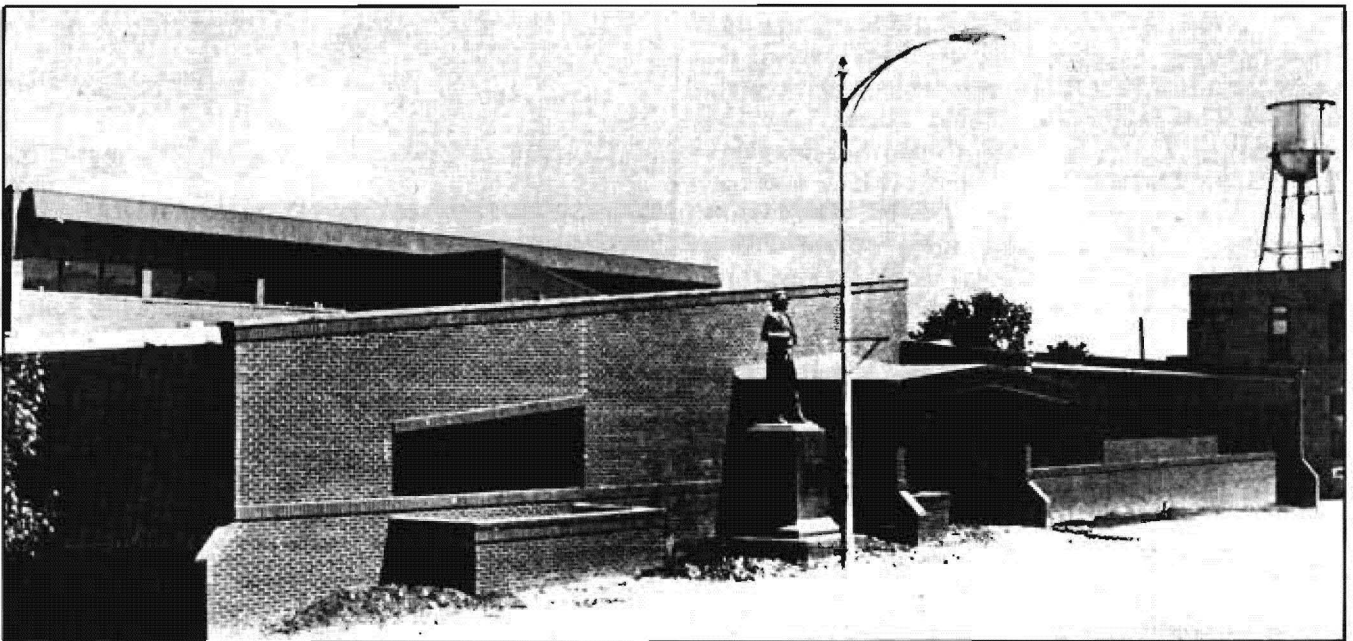


Fig. 3. Clinton County Courthouse, 1975-. Architect: Reed and Williams (Homer Williams) (From: *Plattsburg Leader*, Bicentennial Supplement, July 2, 1976.)

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