

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## GRUNDY COUNTY

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First courts of Grundy County met in homes, and then for more than a year they met in a log church. Grundy County has built only two courthouses. The first, which dates from 1840, was a popular type. It was an almost square, two-story, brick building, 40 by 45 feet with hip roof and central cupola (Fig. 1). A complete description can be found in the 1842 County Court Record.

The walls of the Trenton courthouse were laid in Flemish bond, that is, with alternating headers (the short end of the brick) and stretchers (the long side) in each course. Four fireplaces were planned. There were two doors and 21 windows.

The cupola was to measure 21 feet to the top of the dome from the 13-foot-square base. Specifications called for a shuttered drum to be 11 feet tall on an 8-foot-square base. The dome was to be covered with tin topped by a rod with gold-leafed ball and dart. The walnut shingles were painted a Spanish brown, the body of the courthouse painted a rock color; doors, sashes, cornices and the cupola were to be white. No known photographs exist that show the cupola.

Andrew J. Walker was superintendent; contractors for the \$6,000 courthouse were William Collier, Larkin Richardson and Joseph Thompson, all from Howard County. The contract was awarded in March 1842; construction was to be completed by July 1844. After many years of service, this courthouse was finally abandoned and sold in 1902 to an individual who planned to reuse the brick.

After securing a \$60,000 bond commitment for courthouse and jail in December 1901, Grundy County officials had proposals from 30 architects. It was a year

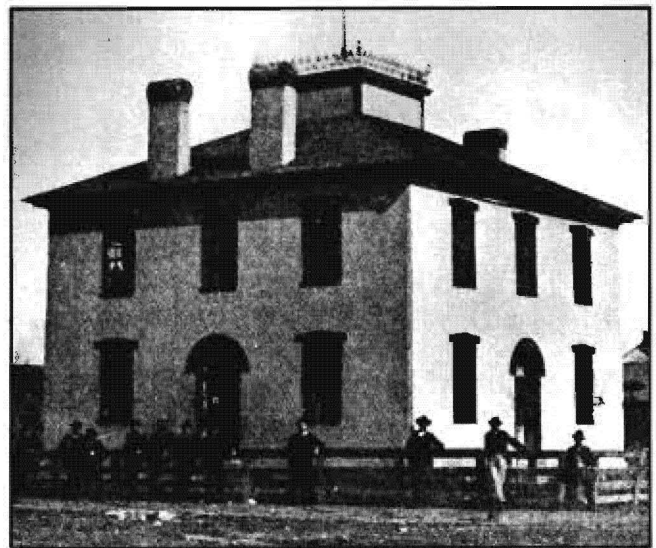


Fig. 1. Grundy County Courthouse, 1842-1902.  
(From: *Centennial History of Grundy County*, 1939)

before officials found a plan that could be built within the appropriation. In addition to examining plans which came to them, the court officials visited Kirksville, Palmyra, Hannibal, Macon, Jefferson City, Warrensburg, Butler and Nevada in Missouri; Ottawa, Topeka, Clay Center, Beloit and Garnet, Kansas; and Thayer and Beatrice, Nebraska.

Plans by the Topeka, Kansas, firm of Holland and Squires, and those from architect R. G. Kirsch ran to as much as \$10,000 over the estimated costs when put out for bid. George A. Berlinghoff, Beatrice, Nebraska, then offered a proposal that was also first bid above the limit, but Berlinghoff put the court in touch with contractor John H. Sparks, who received the contract for his bid of \$57,000. Cornerstone ceremonies took place in December 1903, and the building was dedicated October 25, 1905.

The courthouse, which still serves as the Grundy County temple of justice, is on the same block as the

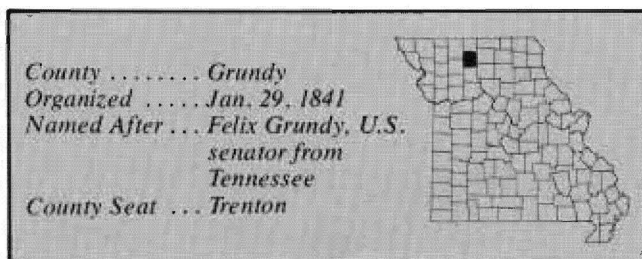




Fig. 2. Grundy County Courthouse, 1903-  
Architect: George A. Berlinghoff  
(From: *Standard Atlas of Grundy County, Missouri*, 1915)

first courthouse (Fig. 2). Constructed of Bedford stone, the building measures 79 by 84 feet. Height to the cornice is 45 feet and to the top of the tower, 106 feet. There are alternating courses of rough and smooth stones; the rough courses extend inward, becoming an integral part of the wall. There are three stories and four entrances. The Circuit Court room is 31 by 52 feet. Although the task was difficult, court officials managed to keep costs very close to the \$60,000 figure.

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