

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

## HENRY COUNTY

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Henry County has had two courthouses. The first dates from 1837 when the county was called Rives. The court appropriated \$2,500, and commissioners presented a plan for a brick courthouse in December 1837. John Mercer received a contract for the work, which he completed in 1839 (Fig. 1). Final cost of the building was \$2,565.

In 1853 the court appropriated \$1,500 to improve and complete the structure. By the 1880s this courthouse was considered unsafe; it was condemned in 1884

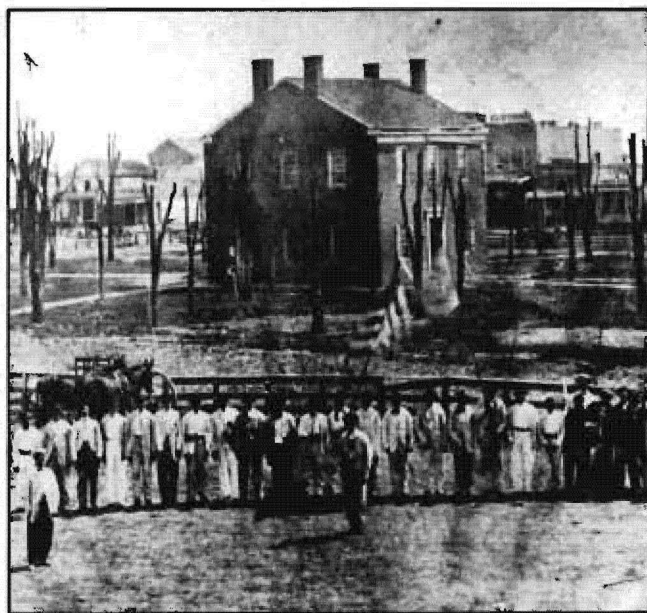


Fig. 1. Henry County Courthouse, 1837-1887, photo ca. 1884.  
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

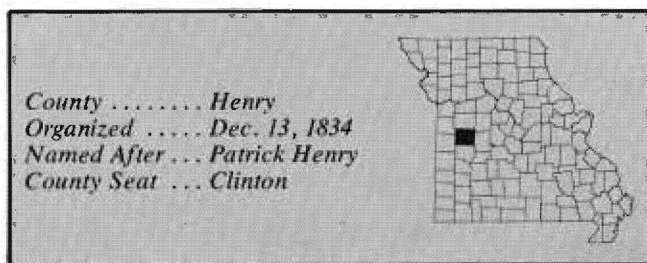


Fig. 2. Henry County Courthouse, 1891-  
Architects: Frederick C. Gunn and Louis S. Curtiss  
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

and razed in 1887.

After several unsuccessful attempts, residents of Henry County passed a \$50,000 bond issue in 1891 for construction of a new courthouse. The court accepted plans of Kansas City architects Frederick C. Gunn and Louis S. Curtiss, and gave the contract to D. J. Hyde (or Hayde) and Co. of Sedalia for \$47,221 in February 1892. Cornerstone ceremonies for Henry County's present courthouse took place June 24, 1892 (Fig. 2).

The three-story building, constructed of Warrensburg sandstone, measures 96 by 71 feet. The tower, originally 127 feet tall, was made with impermanent material; the steel framework was covered with copper and a stucco shell. It began leaking a few months after it was completed in June 1893; architect Gunn was recalled in 1896 to make repairs.



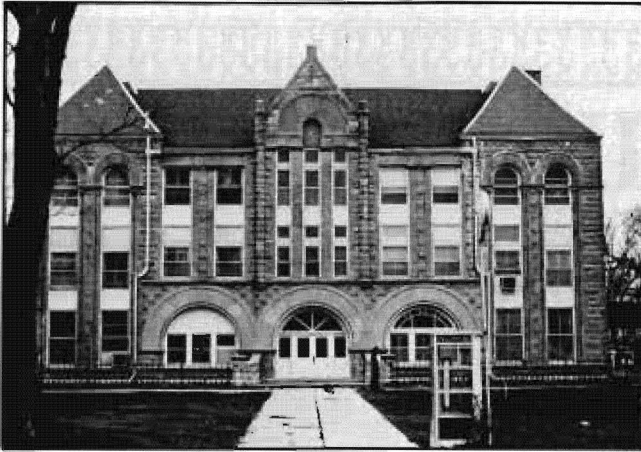


Fig. 3. Henry County Courthouse, after tower removal, photo 1973.

Repairs on the tower plagued 20th century courts. Finally, in 1969 the judges suggested removal and sought the county's opinion in a straw vote. Of 20,000 residents, 532 cast ballots; 425 voted for removal of the tower, 107 favored restoration. The judges voted unani-

mously to remove it on February 21, 1969, amidst the protests of historic preservationists (Fig. 3).

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