

# MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

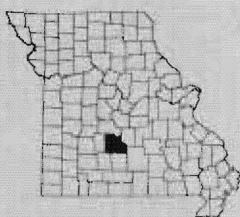
## LACLEDE COUNTY

*Marian M. Ohman  
Coordinator, Art History Programs*



Fig. 1. Laclede County Courthouse, 1894-1920. Architect: William F. Schrage (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

County ..... Laclede  
Organized ..... Feb. 24, 1849  
Named After .. Pierre Laclede,  
founder of St.  
Louis  
County Seat ... Lebanon



When Laclede County was organized in 1849, first courts met in private homes, but the following year the court decided to build a courthouse and appointed John J. Thrailkill superintendent of buildings. In May 1850 the court let the contract for building a 1½-story, frame courthouse to A. S. Cherry. Construction was completed in 1851. The courtroom occupied the first floor; the clerk's office was on the second. Laclede County



Fig. 2. Laclede County Courthouse, 1924-. Architect: Earl Hawkins

used this courthouse for almost 20 years.

In the 1870s a controversy over an attempt to move the county seat led to a disruptive period that left Laclede County without a courthouse for over 20 years. The controversy began when the railroad came to Lebanon in 1868, stopping about a mile from the courthouse in the county seat at Lebanon. A new business district developed, and the county moved its records to new town and sold the old courthouse for \$50. Opponents of the move claimed that the new location was not legally a part of the county seat. It was not until the 1890s that a courthouse was built in new Lebanon.

William F. Schrage was architect of this courthouse, built by S. J. Hyde and Co., Kansas City, for about \$20,000 (Fig. 1). Cornerstone ceremonies took place June 23, 1894. The two-story building with basement had four entrances and wide transverse halls. The first floor had 16 rooms; the courtroom was on the second floor with jury, witness and consulting rooms. This building burned February 28, 1920. Schrage did

other Missouri courthouses similar to this: Howard County, 1887, Morgan County, 1889, and Ripley County, 1898.

In a June 1920 election, voters defeated a \$100,000 bond issue to finance a new courthouse. Many considered \$100,000 too much to pay. Considerable enthusiasm was generated for the \$80,000 bond issue that came later, however, and voters responded with a resounding yes in May 1924. Three architects were considered: H. H. Hohenschild, W. E. Hulse, and the one the court chose, Earl Hawkins of Springfield. Hawkins' plan was for a 100-by-63-foot, three-story, brick structure with Carthage stone trim. The tall courtroom spanned the second and third stories, with a third-story balcony.

The contract was let to M. E. Gillioz of Monett for \$72,428. Cornerstone day was October 2, 1924. The court accepted the completed building in June 1925 (Fig. 2).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

- Gleason, Frances Ethel. *The First Hundred Years*. Lebanon: Laclede County Centennial, Inc. 1949.  
*History of Laclede, Camden, Dallas, Webster, Wright, Texas, Pulaski, Phelps, and Dent Counties*. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889.  
 Nyberg, Leo. *A History of Laclede County, Missouri, from 1820 to 1926*. Lebanon, Missouri, 1926.

### Articles

- Fuller, Michael J. and Doris W. Ewing. "Community History of the Old Town District of Lebanon, Missouri." *Missouri Geographer*, Spring 1976.

### Newspapers

- (Lebanon) *Laclede Republican*. April 18, 25, May 9, 23, June 13, July 4, 25, Sept. 26, Oct. 3, 1924; June 5, 26, 1925.

### Manuscript Collections

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

### Maps

- Plat Book of Laclede County, Missouri*. Chicago: Western Publishing Company, 1912.