

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

NEWTON COUNTY

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During the 19th century Newton County had four courthouses. In December 1840 the court ordered the first, a hewn-log building, 18 by 20 feet, with wooden chimney, one door and one window. The clerk recorded a complete description of the building in the County Court minutes. Cost was between \$150 and \$300.

The second courthouse built in the center of the square came in 1847, when the court appropriated \$3,000. A succession of men acted as superintendent; John Plummer was the builder. The structure was reported as a two-story brick building with cupola. The court accepted the building during October 1849. It was destroyed in Civil War activity. Neosho citizens landscaped the square, planted trees, and treated the square as a park.

In May 1867 the court purchased the lot north of the courthouse square. J. C. Herms built a two-story, frame house, 22 by 80 feet. Costs are uncertain. Reports have varied between \$2,500 and \$4,600. This courthouse continued in use until 1878 when the fourth courthouse was completed on the square. For the fourth courthouse St. Louis architect C. B. Clarke was paid \$360 for producing plans and specifications for the elaborate design (Fig. 1). E. W. Bray contracted for building in May 1877. The state had compensated Newton County \$2,000 for loss of the courthouse during the war; Neosho residents contributed \$6,000, and the court appropriated \$10,000. The grounds were fenced in 1887, and landscaping, with walks and a fountain, was added later in the century. During the 20th century, portions of the towers were removed

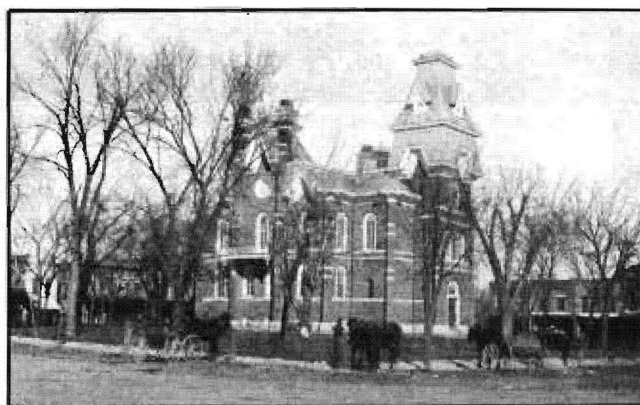


Fig. 1. Newton County Courthouse, 1877-1935.
Architect: C. B. Clarke
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)



Fig. 2. Newton County Courthouse, after tower removal ca. 1920.
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri, gift of Charles Allonby)

County	Newton
Organized	Dec. 31, 1838
Named After . . .	Sgt. John Newton, Revolutionary War soldier with the "Swamp Fox," Gen. Francis Marion
County Seat . . .	Neosho

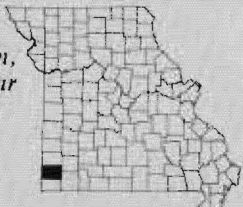




Fig. 3. Newton County Courthouse, 1936-. Architect: Neal Davis (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

(Fig. 2), but the building continued in use until it was razed in December 1935 as construction began on the present courthouse.

Newton County chose St. Louis architect Neal C. Davis to design the fifth courthouse, funded by the Work Projects Administration. Other plans came from firms in Kansas City and Joplin, but the committee favored Davis, who originally came from Newton County. The court approved his plan in October 1935. The courthouse contract was let for \$162,687, and the jail contract for \$11,150. The jail was on top of the building.

Construction began in April 1936. A memorial tablet replaced the traditional cornerstone, which was no longer a construction component, and ceremonies took place July 30, 1936. U.S. Senator Harry Truman, Grand Steward of the Grand Lodge of Missouri, was the speaker.

Built of Carthage stone, the building consisted of four stories: basement, first floor for general offices, second floor for the Circuit Court room, and top floor for the jail (Figs. 3 and 4). The building measured about



Fig. 4. Newton County Courthouse, 1936-. (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

112 by 90 feet. Appropriate inscriptions were carved in the frieze, and the court accepted the building in February 1937. M. V. Woodward was landscape architect.

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