

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

ANDREW COUNTY

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Savannah is one of the few county seats in Missouri that chose not to use the entire public square for county business. County authorities designated a public square when they laid out Savannah in July 1841. But the following month the county clerk recorded this court transaction:

“Ordered . . . there shall be no public square, and the same left for that purpose by the surveyor and commissioner on the platt [sic] here-with filed, shall, as soon as practicable, be laid out in lots as the other blocks in said town.”

The north half of block 24 was reserved for county business, and a 60-foot street, considerably wider than the other standard alleys, divided the block into two equal rectangles (Fig. 1).

During the July term of 1841 the court approved plans and specifications and appropriated \$600 for a wood and stone courthouse in Savannah. Gallant Rains, in whose home first courts met, acted as superintendent; James Herring served as builder. The court met in the 1½-story, wooden-frame courthouse November 15, 1841.

The building's description quoted in the Work Projects Administration transcription of the County Court Record was so explicit one could accurately reconstruct the 20-by-26-foot courthouse. This 1841 building, on the corner of Sixth and Market, was described as a primitive structure, poorly adapted for public use. The court abandoned it after a brief period, but later others used it as a church.

The next courthouse, built on the square in 1844, was a rectangular, brick building with gable roof and



Fig. 1. Plan of Savannah, Andrew County, Missouri. (From: *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Andrew County*, 1877)

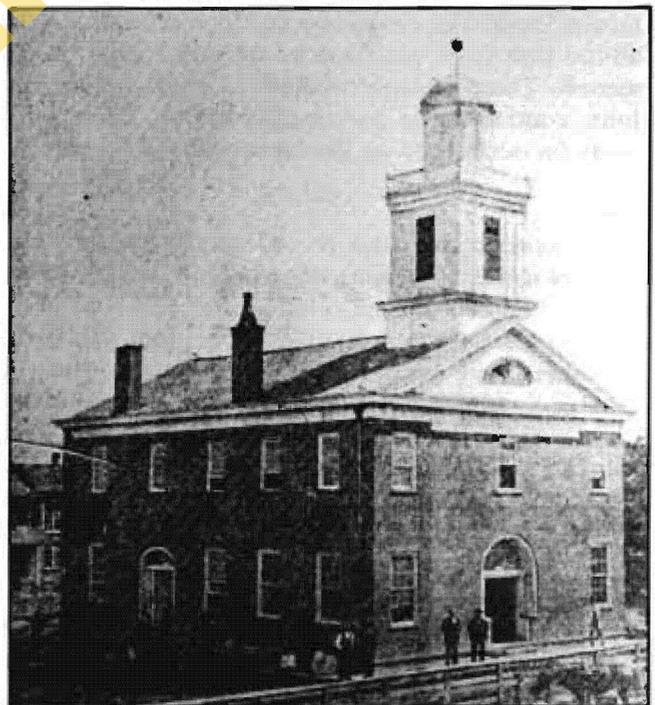


Fig. 2. Andrew County Courthouse, 1844-1899.
Architect: Samuel Knight
(From: *Savannah Reporter*, historical edition, 1941)

County Andrew
Organized Jan. 29, 1841
Named After . . . Andrew Jackson
Davis, early
resident, or
President Andrew
Jackson
County Seat . . . Savannah





Fig. 3. Andrew County Courthouse, 1899-. Architect: George E. McDonald (From: W.P.A., Historical Records Survey)

cupola (Fig. 2). Samuel Knight drew plans and specifications for the 40-by-50-foot, two-story building. The 1877 *Atlas* gave measurements of 46 by 60 feet and identified the superintendent as Elijah W. Ballard. But the *History of Andrew and DeKalb Counties* credited Edwin Toole. The courtroom and sheriff's office were on the first floor, petit and grand jury rooms on the second. Three Nelson brothers, Samuel, James and John, contracted the building for \$6,280. They had it ready for occupancy on December 17, 1845.

Fifty years of use took its toll on the building, and by 1899 it was condemned and razed. To finance the \$48,000 new courthouse, voters passed a 27-cent direct tax in a special election April 30, 1898. From eight plans presented, the judges selected one submitted by George E. McDonald. Alfred Meier, from St. Joseph, acted as supervising architect for builder J. A. Nason of Northern Building Co., Minneapolis, Minnesota, who submitted the low bid of \$37,500. Cornerstone ceremonies took place on January 14, 1899; one year later the building was completed (Fig. 3). Officials of Andrew County still use this building as the courthouse. The courthouse measures 84 by 104 feet and 120 feet from the ground to the top of the tower. The 42-by-60-foot courtroom on the second floor could seat about 500. Built of hydraulic pressed brick, the building has a

slate roof and sandstone ornamental trim.

Three other courthouses designed by architect McDonald in Johnson, Lawrence, and Bates counties are similar, although the choice of brick, rather than stone in Andrew County creates a remarkably different appearance.

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