

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

CLARK COUNTY

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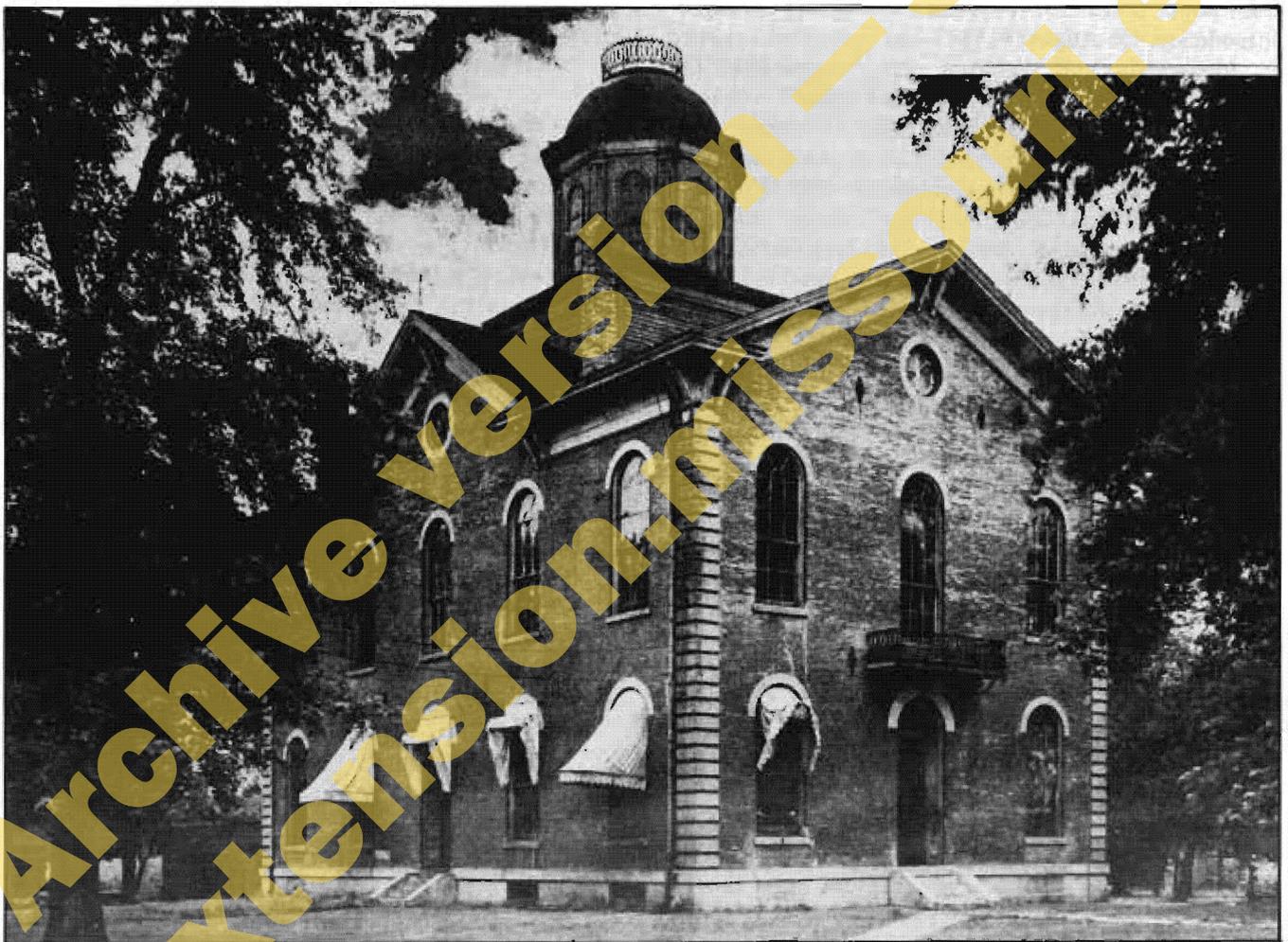
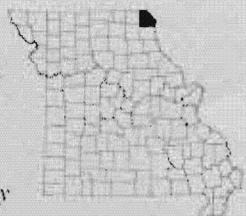


Fig. 1. Clark County Courthouse, 1870-. Architect: W.B. Larkworthy (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri)

County Clark
Organized Dec. 15, 1818
Reorganized Dec. 16, 1836
Named After William Clark of
Lewis and Clark
Expedition and
governor of
Missouri territory
County Seat Kahoka



Clark County moved its county seat three times before permanently establishing it. For the first 10 years the county seat was in Waterloo, an interior location. In 1847 county officials tried a river site at Alexandria, but repeated flooding prompted a move back to Waterloo in 1854. Finally, officials settled permanently at centrally located Kahoka in 1865.

In Waterloo, the first county seat for Clark County, the court authorized the first courthouse. Joseph McCoy served as treasurer of Clark County, 1837-40, and apparently was the same Joseph McCoy who provided the plan for the first courthouse October 11, 1837. The court rescinded the order due to a minor legal technicality December 12, 1837, but immediately reappointed McCoy commissioner, who again presented a plan. In all probability some minor procedure was not handled properly.

McCoy's plan of October 11, 1837, for a brick, 43-foot-square building with a stone foundation may be the same as that approved by the court in December. The courtroom was on the first floor, offices on the second. For this construction the court appropriated \$4,700 in December. The court accepted the completed courthouse March 13, 1839, and paid McCoy for superintendence. On August 6, 1847, the county seat moved to Alexandria, and Waterloo citizens converted the courthouse for use as a church and school. While at Alexandria, the court appointed Ephraim Warner commissioner to superintend construction of a courthouse donated by citizens of the community. The *History of Lewis, Clark, Knox and Scotland Counties*, 1887, described it as a plain, inexpensive, two-story, brick building, with county offices on the first floor, the courtroom on the second. Court first convened in the new courthouse June 11, 1849.

Repeated floods in Alexandria after 1851 caused apprehension about its use as a permanent site. Petitions for moving resulted in an 1854 vote to shift back to the original site at Waterloo. Repairs made by Whiting Johnson on the Waterloo courthouse indicate its revived use on November 5, 1855.

After a decade, once again the seat of justice was

moved. An act of the legislature relocated the county seat on February 20, 1865, in Kahoka, apparently at the instigation of vested real estate interests. Donations of \$12,000, supplemented by a court appropriation of \$15,000 authorized in 1870, provided funds for a new courthouse.

In November 1870 the court appointed Peter S. Washburn to act as superintendent. Although the architect has not been identified in Clark County sources, an article in a Sedalia, Missouri, newspaper credited W. B. Larkworthy as architect of the Clark County courthouse. Larkworthy, born in England, is known to have lived in Quincy, Illinois, and Kansas City, Missouri. Plans, with variations A through G filed with the county clerk, were approved December 6, 1870. The court made selections and accepted a bid of \$18,985 made by the firm of J. G. Orr and P. H. Conner, Quincy, Illinois, on December 22, 1870.

The two-story, brick building measures 45 by 72 feet (Fig. 1). Specifications in the County Court Record called for 9-by-4½-by-2½-inch brick. The floor of the courtroom was to be "deafened with sawdust on mortar." The shingle roof was to be laid in fireproof composition paint. An octagonal cupola was to stand at the crossing of the gable roofs. The cupola was chosen from plan "B," the cornice from "A."

Court met in this courthouse January 15, 1872. A Public Works Administration project in 1934 stuccoed the exterior white; repair and maintenance work was done in 1976. Today, the building retains its original form, one of Missouri's few examples of a courthouse from the 1870s.

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