

JACKSON COUNTY



Figs. 1-5. Jackson County Courthouse, Independence. (Left to right) built in 1836. Remodeled in 1852; 1872; 1905 (above), architect: William E. Brown; and 1932 (below), architects: Keene and Simpson, D. F. Wallace, associate. (From: [Fig. 1] *The United States Illustrated*, ca. 1854; [Figs. 2, 3] *Courthouses of Jackson County, Missouri*, 1934; [Figs. 4, 5] postcards, Trenton Boyd collection)

Commissioners chose Independence for the name of the county seat of Jackson County in 1827. First courts met in private homes.

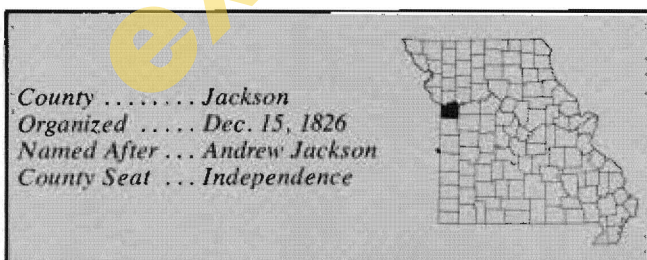
Lilburn W. Boggs, who became governor in 1837, was appointed superintendent in September 1827 to oversee construction of a temporary log courthouse. The court appropriated \$175, then received seven bids in February 1828, accepting the low bid of \$150 from Daniel P. Lewis. Lewis completed the two-room, 15-by-36-foot, log building by late summer 1828. The log structure was moved to a new location in 1916 and restored.

Boggs, who also acted as superintendent for the permanent courthouse, presented a plan to the courts in November 1827 for a brick and stone building with a

cost estimate of \$1,500. In February 1828 the court called for bids, which came to about \$1,900. James King became the contractor, with several subcontractors who were compensated with lots in Independence. Work did not progress well or quickly; the building apparently was completed in 1831.

Only five years later grand jurors reported the courthouse erected 1827-31 was in deplorable condition; the court ordered construction of a new courthouse and appropriated \$5,000. Henry Chiles, who was to superintend construction, presented a plan and estimate of \$4,000. Daniel King contracted to do the brick and stone work for \$3,500. The cupola evidently was not put on until 1846 when \$150 was appropriated for erecting a cupola (Fig. 1).

The court undertook the first major remodeling of this courthouse at the June term in 1852, when they appointed Jacob C. Hovey and John McCoy as commissioners to provide a plan for enlarging and improving the courthouse. The following month the court accepted the low bid from the firm of Leonard and Stewart for \$12,500. Early in 1853 parts of the building were ready; by May the work was completed (Fig. 2).



In 1872 a new east wing with tall clock tower was added; porches and balconies were placed on the north and south entries. The exterior was covered with red brick, and urns were placed at intervals along the roof line (Fig. 3). Funds from general revenue financed the \$48,000 project. In 1887 a west annex added space.

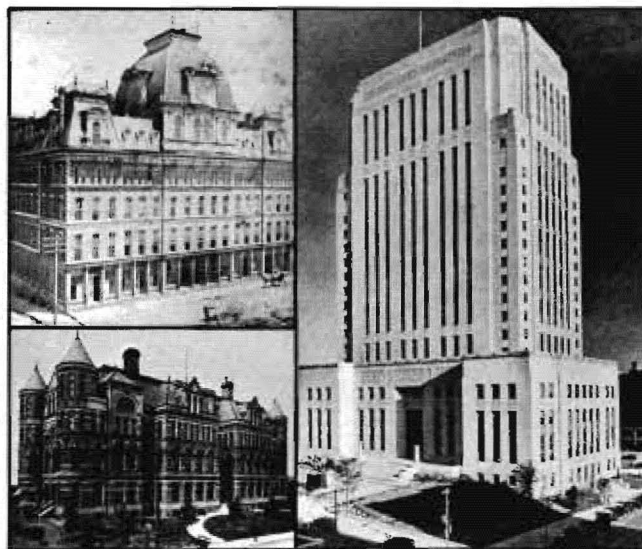
The next major alteration began in 1905 when a new division of Circuit Court was established in Independence. In March 1906 the court accepted the plan of William E. Brown that provided a courtroom by enclosing the balconies. The court also veneered with buff-colored brick. In May 1906 the court contracted with Chris Yetter. Work was completed in 1907. The records are confusing, but costs have been estimated at \$100,000 (Fig. 4).

Jackson County appropriated \$200,000 for the last and most extensive remodeling, designed in 1932 by David Frederick Wallace, architect with the Kansas City firm of Keene and Simpson (Fig. 5). Low bidder was Weeks Construction Co., whose bid of \$145,351 was accepted in October. Completed in the following year, the dedication took place on September 6, 1933.

All accretions to the 1836 courthouse were removed, but portions of the original building have been retained in the present structure, visible in a second-floor courtroom and the attic. The square configuration is evident in plans. Harry Truman was presiding judge during this period of construction. The courthouse is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Kansas City quickly outgrew Independence and needed a courthouse to efficiently conduct court business and Circuit Court. For \$20,000 the county purchased an unfinished five-story hotel at Second and Main. A. B. Cross, commissioned as supervising architect, prepared plans for the county to complete the building; W. B. Everhart was contractor. Work was completed in 1872 for about \$90,000 (Fig. 6).

A tornado seriously damaged the building in 1886. A new \$200,000 site was purchased at Fifth and Oak in 1887 for the next courthouse, which opened in April 1892. According to the *Kansas City Times*, September 21, 1888, Leo Canman (or Canmann) won \$1,000 for his



Figs. 6-8. Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City. 1871-1892 (upper left). 1888-1935 (lower left): architect: Leo Canman, or Canmann (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri). 1933- (right); architects: Wight and Wight, Keene and Simpson (From: *Architectural Record*, December 1936)

courthouse design, which the county selected. Only four architects competed; second prize of \$500 went to a Kansas City firm, Schrage and Nichols. Asa B. Cross, often thought to be the architect, was appointed supervising architect for the \$500,000 courthouse (Fig. 7).

A bond election was passed in 1931 that supported a 10-year plan for improvements in Kansas City, which included \$4 million assigned for a new courthouse at Twelfth and Oak. The site for the building cost \$1 million.

Plans were approved May 15, 1933. Architects included: Wight and Wight, exterior; Keene and Simpson, plans; Edward F. Neild, consulting architect-engineer, Shreveport, Louisiana; and Frederick C. Gunn, supervising architect (Fig. 8). Swenson Construction Co. received the contract for more than \$2,145,000 in July 1933. Harry Truman presided at the dedication of the 28-story courthouse December 27, 1934.

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