

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

LACLEDE COUNTY

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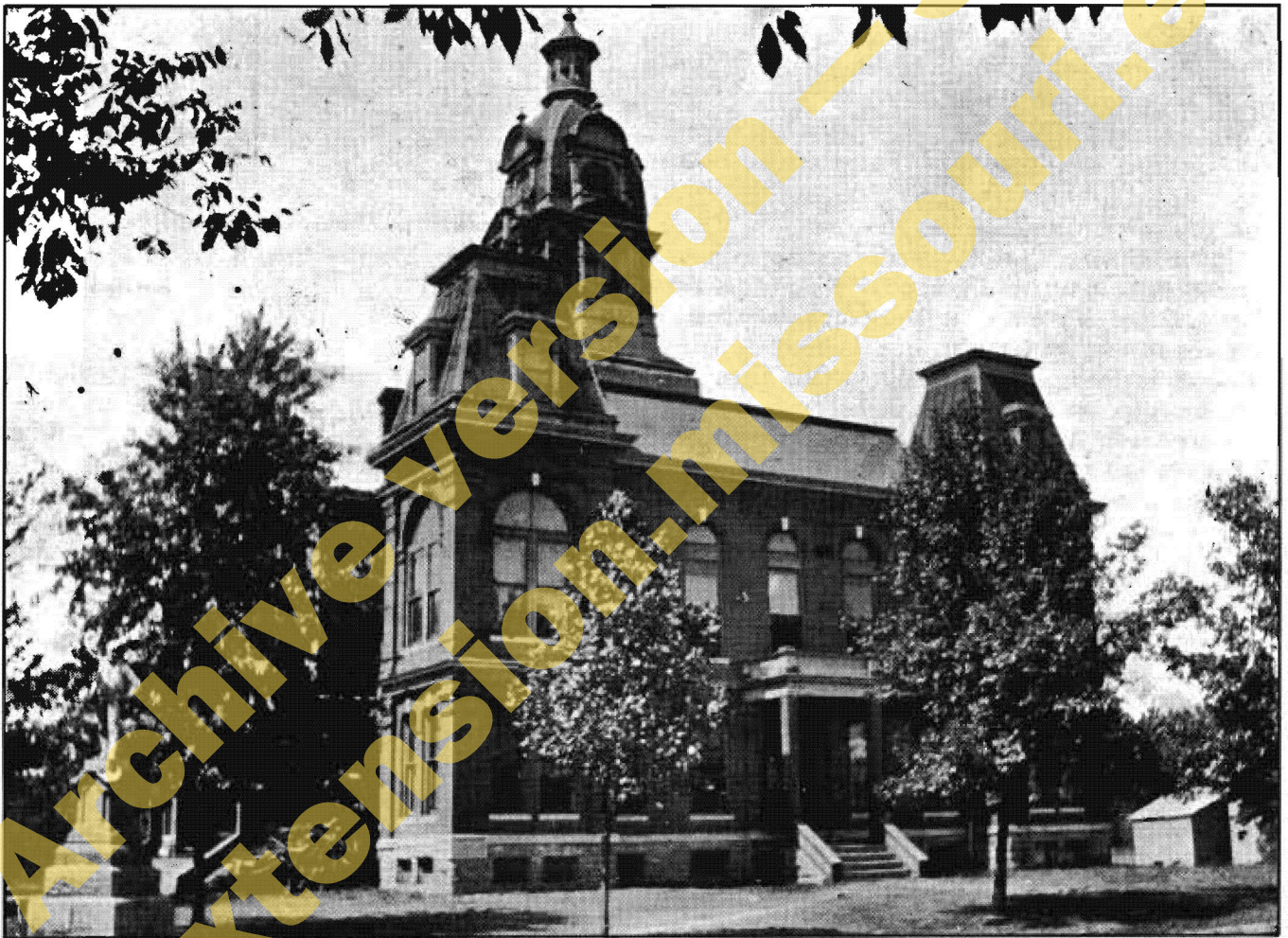
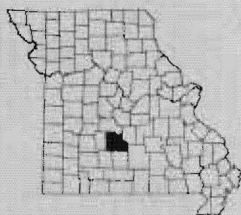


Fig. 1. Laclède County Courthouse, 1894-1920. Architect: William F. Schrage (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

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



When Laclède 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. Laclède 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).

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