

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

BARRY COUNTY

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Mount Pleasant served as Barry County's first county seat. A County Court Record description of the 1837 courthouse suggests a log or frame building with one door and one window.

As continued county division reduced Barry County's boundaries, Mount Pleasant was no longer centrally located. In 1839 commissioners were ordered to locate the county seat within six miles of the new geographic center. First, they selected McDonald (later called McDowell), where the site was ordered surveyed and laid out in September 1840. But county residents were dissatisfied with the choice. After several more abortive attempts, the seat was finally permanently located in Cassville during June 1845.

The house of William Kerr served as the meeting place for the first courts in Cassville, and the town was laid out soon after by Nathan Richardson, surveyor. Kerr's plan for the first courthouse in Cassville was filed in December 1845, and the court appropriated \$510 for construction.

John O. Burton was appointed superintendent in March 1846. After permitting several time extensions, the court finally accepted the building in September 1847. It, too, was either a log or frame courthouse. A decision in the county record concerning altering the upper story by moving the partitions to create a room for rent indicate that the building was either one and one-half or two stories. Originally on the square, the courthouse was later removed; it was burned in the Civil War.

Arrangements for the second courthouse, a two-story brick, began in June 1854. W. G. Townsend, M. L. Wyrick and L. J. Blankenship comprised the com-

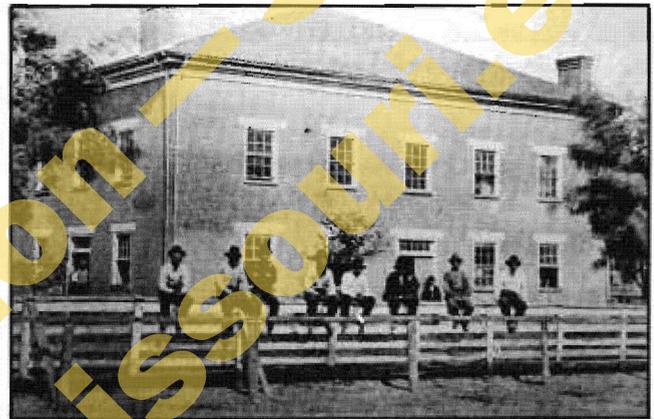


Fig. 1. Barry County Courthouse, 1855-1907, repaired in 1872.
(Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri, B.J. George Sr. collection)

mittee responsible for obtaining a plan and estimates. A year later the plan was filed and \$5,500 appropriated. The contract was given to William Young and Abner Neely for \$4,995 in September 1855. The new building was to be on the square, upon a good foundation, with two brick stories and a tin roof. While construction was in progress, the court gave qualified permission for a civic group, the Sons of Temperance, to add a third story, but, apparently, the group did not proceed. Workers completed the building, and the court accepted it September 8, 1858 (Fig. 1).

Within a few years this courthouse figured prominently in the Civil War as a group of Missourians considered secession. On July 9, 1896, G. C. Vest, who after the Civil War served as U.S. senator from Missouri, recounted the early Civil War events in the *Cassville Republican*:

"The Ordinance of Secession passed by the Missouri Legislature in 1861 was drawn by me and adopted at Neosho. [The] Legislature adjourned from Neosho, after passing the Act of Secession, to Cassville. In the northeast room of the courthouse at the latter place, we elected delegates to the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy."

County	Barry
Organized	Jan. 5, 1835
Named After . . .	William T. Barry from Kentucky, a member of Andrew Jackson's cabinet, or John Barry, of the Revolution
County Seat . . .	Cassville

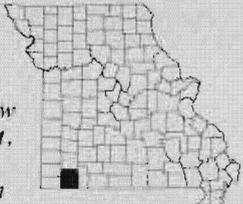




Fig. 2. Barry County Courthouse, after remodeling in 1884; razed in 1910.
(From: *Cassville Republican* Historical Edition, July 9, 1896)

Federal troops occupied the courthouse during the Civil War, inflicting extensive damage. The court ordered repairs in 1872, for which the county later received government compensation of more than \$1,800. County Court records describe a two-story building with a courtroom on the second floor. The only known photograph which has been identified as this courthouse (Fig. 1) was probably made after the 1872 repair. The third story dates from an extensive 1884 remodeling (Fig. 2).

The county vacated the three-storied courthouse in 1907 when it was condemned. County officials moved to other quarters, and the building was razed in 1910. The county held numerous elections before one succeeded on July 6, 1912, when Barry County residents voted for a \$40,000 bond issue. Cassville residents do-

nated \$10,000 toward the \$50,000 goal to help keep the county seat in Cassville; Monett had hoped to secure the site.

The judges traveled to inspect courthouses in other counties, and in November, gave the contract for plans and specifications to C. E. Hair and Co. of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. One judge voted disapproval, and citizens complained that the construction contract had not been sufficiently advertised; the judges rescinded the order, but the following month readopted the Hair plan. Disagreements continued until the court appointed a new superintendent, who selected another architect, Henry H. Hohenschild. Hambley and Hanson of St. Louis contracted to build the reinforced concrete, stone-veneer structure for \$45,720. Cornerstone ceremonies were conducted in August 1913.

The building measures 84 by 100 feet. Ionic columns flank the main entrance on the south. The courtroom is on the first floor, with entry from the lobby. The courtroom, which seats 380 on the lower floor and 200 in the gallery, features an inclined floor; it originally measured 35 by 55 feet, extending outward on the north with a five-window bay. Now almost 70 years old, the courthouse continues to serve Barry County.



Fig. 3. Barry County Courthouse, 1913.
Architect: Henry H. Hohenschild
(From: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Nov. 15, 1925)

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