

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

SULLIVAN COUNTY

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Sullivan County, first known as Highland County, had its boundaries defined in 1843; county organization became official in 1845. First courts in Sullivan County met at the home of Armstead C. Hill in May 1845.

In 1846 the court appropriated \$800 to build a brick courthouse in the center of the square in Milan, but a year later these ambitious plans were superseded by orders to build a more modest 1½-story, hewn-log structure south of the public square. The building measured 20 by 24 feet; the lower floor had one room, the second floor had two. The upper rooms served as jury rooms when needed; one doubled as a clerk's office, the other for probate court.

William Putnam contracted to build the modest structure, and the court appropriated \$300. Ira Sears superintended the work. Putnam had the courthouse ready for occupancy by October 1847.

The courthouse square of Sullivan County originally was the site of a curious V-shaped mound, pointing to the northwest, elevated about 15 feet at the highest point. When leveling the mound, excavators found three Indian skeletons. Stones which had been placed around the skeletons were used as foundation stones for the jail.

The second courthouse for Sullivan County occupied the site of this mound. Major John McCullough constructed the building in 1857-58 at a cost of \$5,000. The cupola was added later. The 1877 *Atlas* indicates a small octagonal cupola (Fig. 1), but a photograph shows a square, lower cupola (Fig. 2). The roof slope was not as steeply pitched as indicated in the *Atlas*. This was the first brick structure in Milan.

By 1891 the courthouse had deteriorated, and the

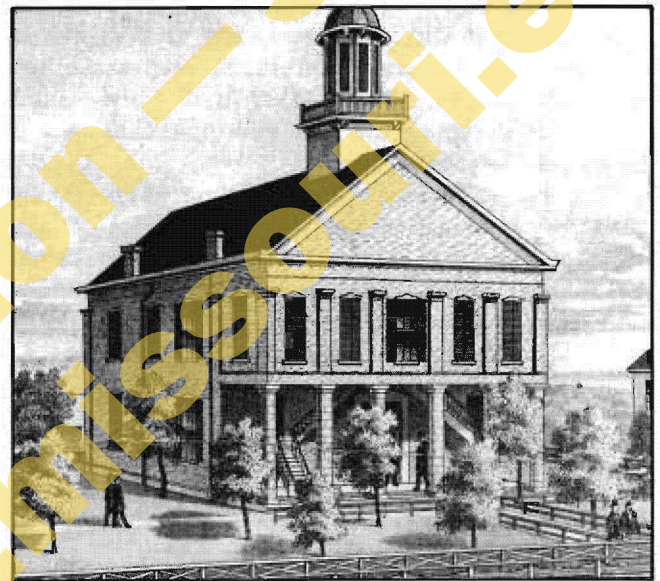
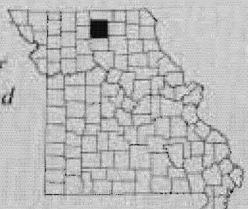


Fig. 1. Sullivan County Courthouse, 1857-1908.
(From: *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Sullivan County, Missouri*, 1877)



Fig. 2. Sullivan County Courthouse, 1857-1908.
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

County	Sullivan
Organized	Feb. 14, 1845
Named After . . .	James Sullivan of the Revolution and member of Continental Congress
County Seat . . .	Milan



court asked for an examination by architect Adriaance Van Brunt from Kansas City. Van Brunt recommended building a new courthouse, but the court chose to repair the old building. Kerns and Shearer did carpentry and roofing work.

Fire destroyed the building June 26, 1908. For a temporary courthouse, the county purchased a two-story, brick building erected by the O. K. Railroad Company. Purchase price was \$6,000, the sum the county received from fire insurance on the courthouse.

Sullivan County existed without a courthouse for 30 years until the federal government made financial assistance available. In June 1938 county residents voted support for the project.

Milan had a favorite son architect, Lyle V. DeWitt, raised in Green City. At an early age, DeWitt showed interest in architecture. Upon graduation from a school of architecture in Illinois, DeWitt was the natural choice for designing the 1938 courthouse, in spite of being only 23 years of age.

The Public Works Administration approved the plans for courthouse and jail in June (Fig. 3). Contracts were let in October 1938 to Walter Barenfanger, Vandalia, Illinois, for the three-story, 110-by-66-foot building constructed of buff brick with Indiana limestone entrances.

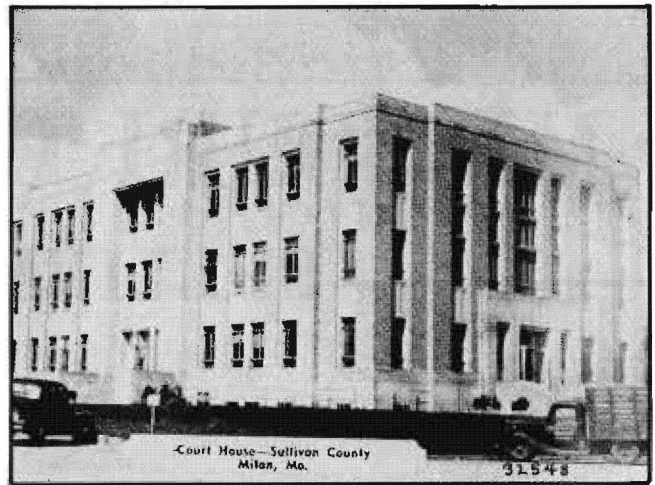


Fig. 3. Sullivan County Courthouse, 1939.
Architect: Lyle V. DeWitt
(From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

Anticipating elevators at a later date, DeWitt left shafts for them in his plans. A community room in the basement is still an asset to Milan; a well-maintained, carefully preserved courtroom occupies the second floor. The initial request estimated costs to come to \$136,500; construction contracts totaled about \$125,500.

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