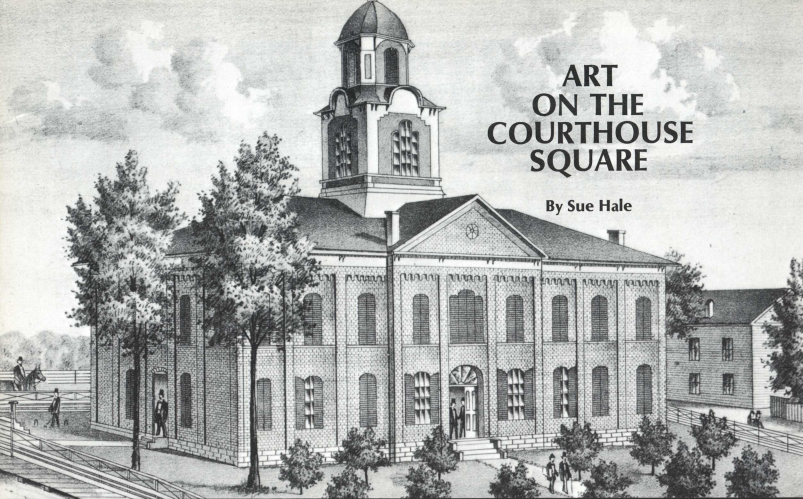


ART ON THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE

By Sue Hale



Atypical in the sense of not being located on the square, the Gasnade Courthouse at Hermann has a picturesque, hilltop setting.



Osmund Overby, art history professor, (at left), and Glen Hartley, student, survey the courthouse at Jefferson City.

The students gathered outside the entrance to the Cole County Courthouse. They examined the textured stone masonry, commented on the carved ornaments and took notes about the windows, walls, towers and arches. Inside, they stood in the middle of the courtroom, critically eyeing the lowered ceiling, discussing the lighting, and speculating on the ages of the wooden door frames. The field trip was one of the last meetings of a graduate seminar in American architecture under the direction of Dr. Osmund

Overby, associate professor of art history on the Columbia Campus. The members of the seminar, all art history majors, had spent the winter semester studying more than 100 Missouri courthouses.

Art history is moving more and more in the direction of monument conservation, Dr. Edzard Baumann, chairman of the art history and archaeology department, says. It is another field open to graduates besides teaching, museum work, or archaeology.

The art history and archaeology department, generally considered to have one of the better doctoral programs on Campus, is sponsoring three excavations in Europe this year. The digs are located in Tel Anafa, Israel, Phlius, Greece, and Titelberg, Luxemburg. The department also offers a museum training program in cooperation with the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, and has sent students to study at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the American School of Classical Studies in Athens.

In the conservation field, the American Architecture seminar this past semester offered exposure to fundamental methods of monument preservation, Overby says. "The students were fortunate to be able to work closely with the Missouri State Park Board Historical Survey Office in Columbia."

"First the students researched the basic facts on each courthouse, the building date, architect, later physical alterations, etc. We then categorized the buildings according to styles and the architectural movements that influenced them."

For example, he adds, the Cole County courthouse, built in Jefferson City in 1896, is typical of the old Richardsonian Romanesque Revival style. There are approximately 12 Missouri courthouses of this type. But, the Cole County building, dating from the middle of the period, is perhaps as good an example of this style as there is in the state.



*Cole County
Courthouse,
Jefferson
City*

There has been little architectural history compiled in the past about Missouri courthouses, Overby says. So, in addition to providing a lot of information about the courthouses, the seminar has enabled the students to interpret the buildings themselves, not rely on what others have done.

The material collected by the students, will be used to a large extent by the Historical Survey Office. The Survey Office is conducting its own study of Missouri courthouses as part of the National Register program.

The National Register of Historic Places was authorized by an act of Congress in 1966. It was designed to list "Districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture." The government also made funds available to the states for the purpose of preparing comprehensive statewide historical surveys.

Missouri's survey is structured around various themes, according to Patricia Holmes, chief architectural historian for the office. The themes include agriculture, civic buildings, industry, military, residential, government—which includes courthouses—and some other areas.

"The information gathered by the art history seminar at the University will aid us in deciding



*City of St. Louis Courthouse,
A National Monument*

*Dent County
Courthouse,
Salem*



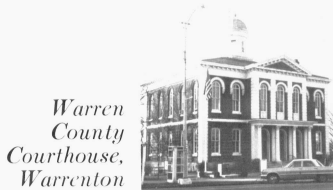
*Old Johnson
County
Courthouse,
Warrensburg*



which courthouses are worthy of nomination to the Register," she says. "Missouri already has eight courthouses listed." Those listed are historically significant because of their architectural styles, their association with some historic event or person, or a combination of both.

The Dent County courthouse at Salem, for example, is the earliest surviving mansard-roofed Victorian courthouse in the state, while Moniteau County courthouse at California is an interesting example of the Classic Revival style. Its setting on the courthouse square remains little changed from the late 1860s. The commercial buildings on the square as well as the courthouse date from that period. There are several Missouri courthouses that deviate from the traditional square plan, however. The Hermann courthouse, for example, sits on a hill.

The courthouse at Lexington is a dignified example of antebellum Classic Revival architecture



*Warren
County
Courthouse,
Warrenton*



*Moniteau
County
Courthouse,
California*

and is one of the oldest continually used courthouses in the state. It also is well known for the cannon ball that was lodged in one of its columns during the battle of Lexington in 1861.

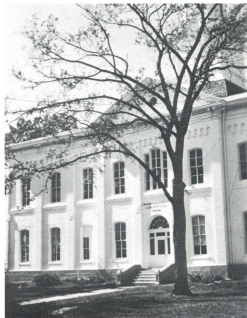
The Chariton County courthouse is strongly associated with a historic event, the secessionist struggle in middle Missouri. Guerrilla activities were intense in the Keytesville area and the courthouse



*Caldwell
County
Courthouse,
Kingston*



*Lafayette County Courthouse,
Lexington*



*Chariton County
Courthouse, Keytesville*

was burned during a raid. After the war, a new building was financed with surtaxes levied against the county's Southern sympathizers.

At Warrensburg, the Old Johnson County courthouse is one of the few surviving 19th century Federal style courthouses in the state. It also was the scene of the unusual Burden vs. Hornsby trial. Charles Burden's favorite dog, Old Drum, had been shot by a neighbor Leonidas Hornsby. Sen. George Vest won the case for Burden when he appealed to all dog lovers with a tribute to the dog in his closing argument. Burden was awarded \$50 for the loss of his dog and the eulogy became a classic.

The Caldwell County courthouse at Kingston and the Warren County courthouse at Warrenton are also on the National Register. The Gasconade County courthouse at Hermann, is part of the Hermann Historic District. The St. Louis courthouse, included in the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial dis-

trict, is the only Missouri courthouse listed as a National Landmark.

Missouri has 156 sites now on the National Register. They range from the Executive Mansion at Jefferson City to an iron furnace stack in Moselle. They also include archaeological sites, caves, residences and office buildings.

"Our historic heritage is something that should be saved," Overby explains. "Our research in this seminar has shown that the courthouse served a myriad of purposes for the citizens of a county. The courthouse square was a major meeting place. The building sometimes housed religious services, high school graduations, plays or other social functions, and the trials were a major source of entertainment."

"The people took great pride in their courthouses," Mrs. Holmes adds, "Often the courthouse was the most prominent example of building art in the county." □