Historic Courthouse Celebrates 100th Anniversary

The old courthouse that graces the downtown Waynesville square is marking its 100th anniversary this year. Built upon the ashes of a post Civil War courthouse, the venerable '03 courthouse, which actually was completed in early 1904, now houses the Pulaski County Historical Society Museum and displays many pictures and artifacts from the county's past. This remains the most enduring of all the courthouses built to serve Pulaski County.

The first place where court proceedings for these parts were held was the log cabin home of Judge James Harrison. This house was located near the artesian well at the old Stony Dell site west of the Little Piney community of Arlington. As Pulaski County hadn't been organized yet, this whole area was included in a huge Crawford County, which itself had been carved out of an enormous Gasconade County. Even earlier, this region was contained in the vastness of an enormous St. Louis County.

Pulaski County's organization by the state legislature in 1833 necessitated the selection of another site for court proceedings. Several private homes were used and included those belonging to Green B. Williams on Bear Creek, Jesse Ballew, James A. Bates, and William Moore.

Along about 1837, Moore donated an acre of land that encompassed the current Courthouse Square in Waynesville. On this site, a temporary two-story, one-window log courthouse was constructed. Just three years later, it was replaced by a two-story structure that was built of bricks from a kiln located in what is now the City Park. It was said to have been well built, but was deemed a bit "pretentious" by some residents. In May 1843, the state made Waynesville the permanent county seat of Pulaski County.

This second courthouse was destined to be short-lived, however. At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, county sympathies ran heavily on the side of the Confederacy. In fact, Abraham Lincoln was said to have received only seven votes in the county in the 1860 election.

The arrival of news about the fall of Fort Sumter touched off a firestorm of reaction in Pulaski County. Circuit Court was in session at the time and a mass meeting was hastily arranged. After many fiery speeches, a vote was taken in which an overwhelming number of residents cast their lots with the Confederacy. Several men erected a pole on the southwest corner of the Courthouse Square in Waynesville and raised the Confederate flag, the Stars and Bars.

More mass meetings followed and resulted in the formation of two companies of Confederate soldiers, who began drilling on the Courthouse Square under the direction of Captain V. B. Hill and a Captain Stuart. Before the recruits received much training, news arrived with the disturbing information that a company of Union soldiers had reached Rolla and were headed toward Waynesville on their way to Springfield. Their commander, Colonel Franz Sigel, warned locals that the Confederate flag must be brought down by the time his soldiers reached Waynesville.

Greatly agitated by this threat, residents of the community arranged a mass meeting in the courthouse to discuss how to respond to Colonel Sigel's order.

"Some wanted to take the flag down, fearing the Federals would burn the town if it was left flying in defiance," Mottaz wrote in her book, Lest We Forget. "The arguments for and against were hot and feeling ran high. One man threatened to shoot the man who dared to take it down. A vote was taken, thinking to let the majority rule. There was a majority of two in favor of taking it down. Finally, when the attention of the crowd was elsewhere, a man mounted his horse and riding at full speed cut the rope and brought down the Stars and Bars."

Even with this flagrant symbol of rebellion temporarily removed, the soldiers under Colonel Sigel's command weren't so easily fooled regarding the true loyalties of Pulaski County residents. Nor were other Union soldiers who subsequently marched through the town.

One Union soldier on January 26, 1862, wrote, "Waynesville...contains a brick courthouse and perhaps a score

BANK of CROCKER

Since 1911

Member FDIC

We Have Time For You,
At All Four Convenient Locations

CROCKER
Hwy. 17 South
(573) 736-2223

WAYNESVILLE
200 Ichord Ave.
(573) 774-6000

RICHLAND
502 Washington
(573) 765-5627

NOW ST. ROBERT
139 St. Robert Blvd
(573) 336-7588

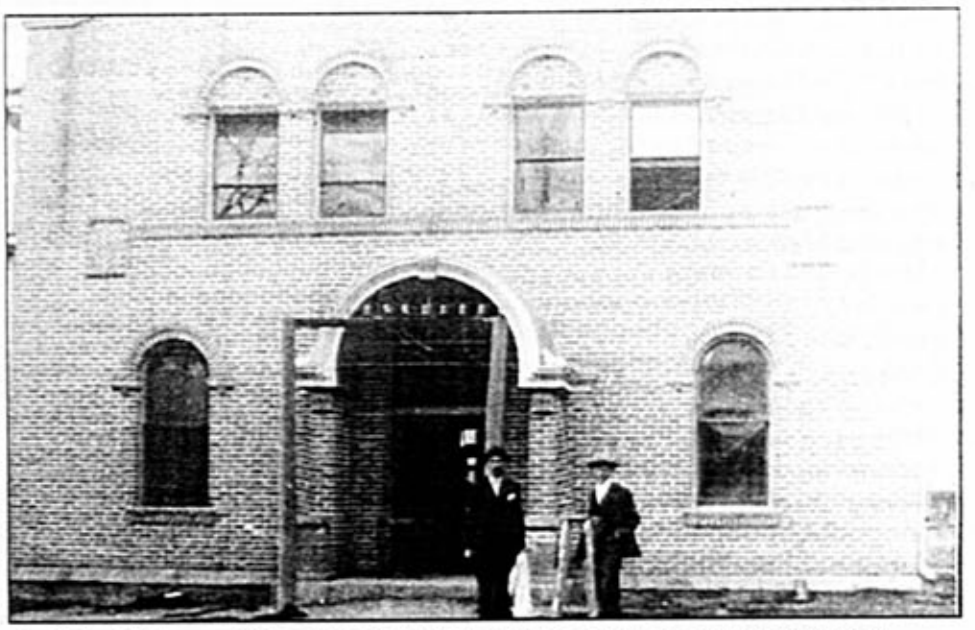
of painted houses, including one or two mercantile establishments where the 'country folks' of this rough region repair once or twice a year, to lay in supplies of the well-known staples, tar, salt, and whiskey. The luxuries they produce at home or find them at the 'mill,' where all the men folks in these parts seem to have gone, according to the tell of the women and children. Some of us are so uncharitable however, as to conjecture that they are at Springfield preparing for the 'mill' we hope to treat them to before they return home."

Indeed, many men in the county had moved south as surmised. The two companies that had formed in Waynesville the previous year marched in that direction to join up with Price's Army. They had correctly concluded that they couldn't have successfully defended their community in the event of an occupation attempt by Federal forces, which eventually did come to pass.

"On the evening of June 7, 1862," reads Goodspeed's account of this momentous event, "the Federals under Col. Albert Sigel came in on the Rolla road, entering from the east. Some of the citizens had gone to the western bluff overlooking Waynesville, and watched the army, but Col. Sigel sent a cavalry company over and captured them. The soldiers first cut down the rebel flagpole, chopped it up, and threw it in the creek; then they rifled the stores and McCormick's Saloon. They had practiced on a store owned by G. W. Colley, near the California House, then owned by a strong Union man named Hugh McCain."

Modern historian J. B. King, who has done extensive research on the subject, takes exception to one point in Goodspeed's account. He believes that, if the federal forces practiced at Colley's Store, the invading troops had to have entered town from that direction, from the west. Instead, it was Colonel Franz Sigel's soldiers the year earlier that had marched through town from the east.

In his book, The Tilley Treasure, King wrote, "History can be confusing. You may recall the advance of General Lyon upon Jefferson City, Missouri, on June 14, 1861. At the same time he advanced on Jefferson City, Lyon order Colonel Franz Sigel to take 900 Home Guards and follow the St. Louis to Springfield Road through Pulaski County. Colonel Franz Sigel's troops were to stop at Springfield. Sigel's advance reached Springfield on June 23, 1861. Colonel Franz Sigel's men had to enter Waynesville from the east side."



Architect Hohenschild and assistant check the progress on the new courthouse construction. Courtesy of the Pulaski County Historical Society

Before Colonel Albert Sigel's soldiers occupied Waynesville in 1862, most of the residents had fled in haste, leaving their businesses, homes, and belongings to the caprice of the occupation force. One of the occupiers' first task was the construction of a military fort on a small bluff overlooking the community from the south.

An Iowa soldier who assisted in the occupation later wrote:

"The town is situated in a deep mountain gorge, with high rocky bluffs on either side.

"It has been taken possession of by the army. I wandered through the

ARROW MART

[redacted]

'Where the Savings Are'

$ 10 OFF
Any Purchase
over $100.00

ARROW MART

[redacted]

'Where the Savings Are'
• FURNITURE • APPLIANCES
• CATALOG SERVICE •

OR $ 20 OFF
Any Purchase
over $200.00

• ASHLEY • MAYTAG • MAGIC CHEF • HILLCRAFT •
Name Brands at DISCOUNTED PRICES
Apply for your Arrow Mart Charge Card Today
Most Major Credit Cards Accepted
155 N. HWY 5, CAMDENTON, MO 346-1975
MISSOURI AVE., ST. ROBERT, MO 336-5000

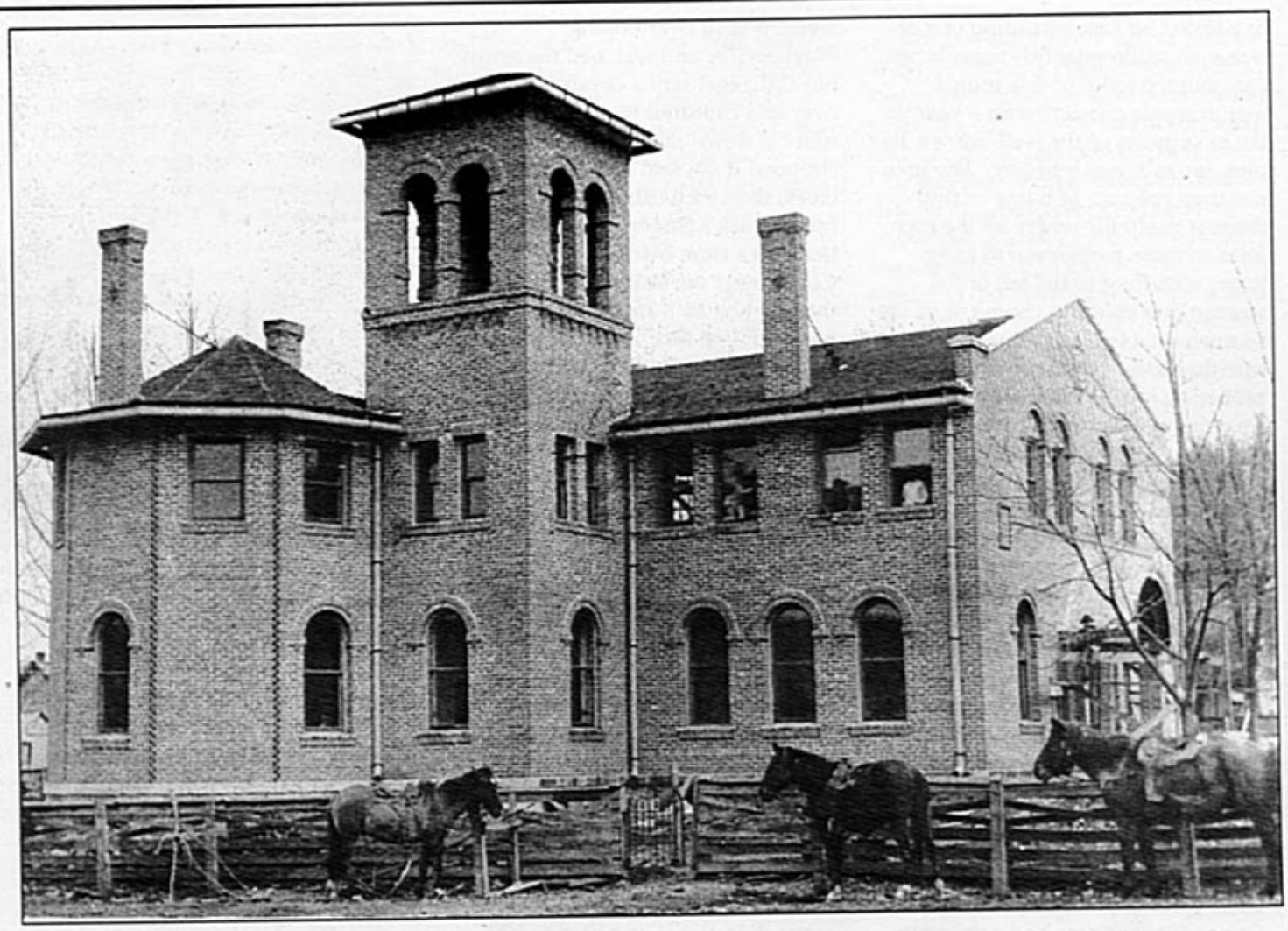
COMPLETE
AUTO SERVICE

MISSOURI AVENUE, ST. ROBERT, MO
336-5000
HOURS:
Monday - Friday 8AM - 7AM
Saturday 9AM - 5:30 PM

town, and could find no private residence. The former inhabitants were Secesh, and have skedaddled. The houses were occupied by the quartermaster, sutler, hospital, and commissary store rooms. The place is defended by eight companies of the 13th Mo. Cavalry under Col. Sigel. They have a small fort or bastion erected here on a high hill overlooking the town. There is no cannon mounted. It is used for infantry protection, and was built by the labor of Secesh prisoners, a few of whom were still at work under guard in digging a trench outside the fort. They were a hard looking crowd--a man would feel for his money at the first sight of them."

Only one of the county's Civil War structures remains standing today. An old stagecoach stop in Waynesville at the time, it was used by the occupation forces as a hospital. The building later became the Black Hotel. Today it is the Old Stagecoach Stop, which was restored and is being preserved by a non-profit organization known as the Old Stagecoach Stop Foundation.

Union soldiers during their occupation so damaged the county courthouse, built in 1843, that members of the county court decided to condemn



The venerable Pulaski County Courthouse in earlier days. Courtesy of the Pulaski County Historical Society

RICHLAND CARE CENTER, INC.

"A Nursing Facility Dedicated To Quality Care For Over 25 Years"

Available Services Include:

• 24 Hour Nursing Care By Trained Staff • 3 Meals & 2 Snacks Daily • Laundry Services In House • Housekeeping Services • Activities • Social Services • Beauty & Barber Services • Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy • Diets Approved By Registered Dietician • Physician Services • Podiatry Services • Registered Pharmacist Medication Review •Eye Exams By Optometrist • Hearing Evaluations & Screening Available • Medicare & Medicaid Certified

573-765-3243

Cheryl Kay Smith

Administrator

Consider Richland Care Center "Your Home Away From Home" Alternative.

it in 1872. Circuit Court Judge Elijah Perry entered an order on record that described the rickety structure as being in a "dilapidated and dangerous condition, and beyond repairs and no longer safe as a place for holding court." With $2000 appropriated by the state general assembly, county officials razed the old building and constructed in its place a much nicer brick structure.

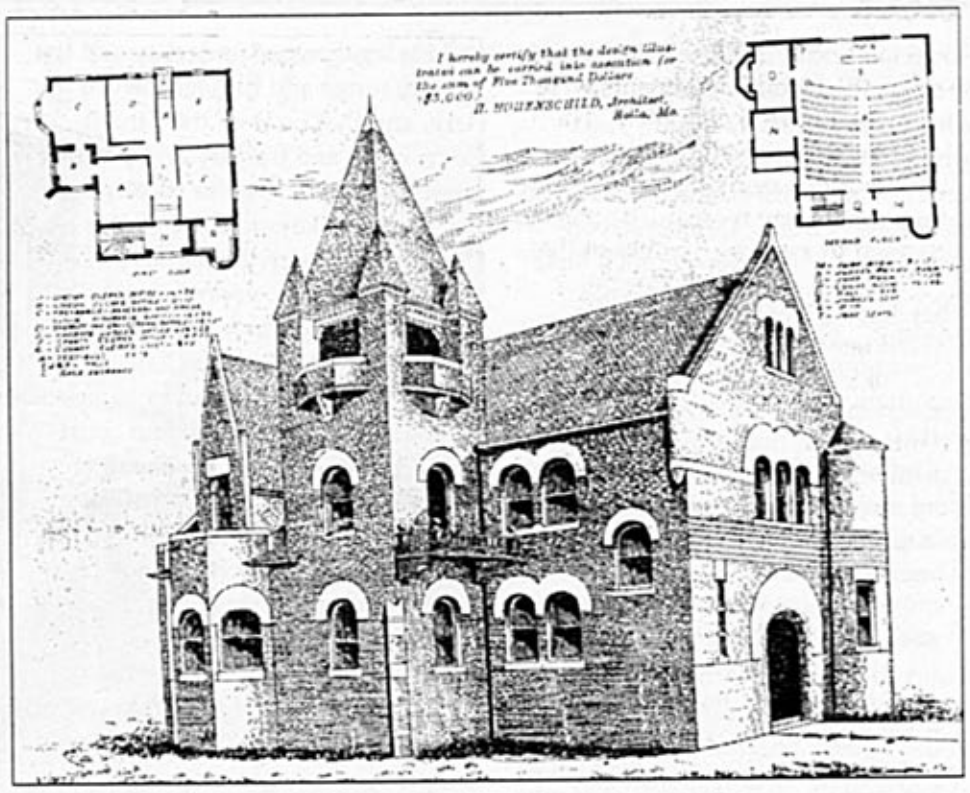
This post bellum courthouse served the county well, but its status was challenged in the late 1800's by successive county seat removal attempts, first by Richland, and then by Crocker. Neither attempt was successful, primarily due to petty rivalries between the more densely populated railroad communities who each wanted county seat status for themselves.

However, where politics failed, nature succeeded. In the early morning hours of June 13, 1903, fire broke out and soon engulfed and destroyed this third courthouse. Some county records were saved, but many other irreplaceable documents went up in smoke. As Waynesville residents sadly inspected the charred skeleton of their beloved courthouse, word reached town that Richland interests were going to attempt to have the county seat removed there. The rumor, however, proved to be without substance.

A five thousand dollar insurance policy allowed county officials to promptly begin clearing out the charred rubble, hiring Rolla architect H. H. Hohenschild to draw up blueprints for a new structure, and to plan on building a replacement courthouse. Ironically, Hohenschild, who had drawn up the blueprints for a courthouse to be built in Crocker if the 1892 county seat removal effort had been successful, merely reworked and modified these plans very slightly.

County court judges approved the modified plans and work got started in the late summer. By fall, W. J. Mitchell fired up his kiln located in the current City Park and produced the bricks used to construct the new courthouse. Even though, the construction work was completely in short order, the finishing touches probably weren't completed until early next year. The sign above the front entrance to the building, however, reads, "1903."

A dedication ceremony for this newly erected structure was held on March 7, 1904. Crowds began arriving early in the day for the event.



Architect Hohenschild's sketch of a courthouse to be built in Crocker, had the voters approved county seat removal from Waynesville to there. These plans formed the basis of the blueprints for the 1903 courthouse.

Long before noon, the town was filled with people from all parts of the county. Speeches were made by Joe Mc Gregor, W. D. Rowden, G. M. Reed, J. L. Johnson, S. J. Manes, C. H. Davis, C. H. Shubert, W. E. Johnson, and Judge L. B. Woodside.

Attendees at the event were allowed to tour their new courthouse, which was a spacious 60 feet long by

Bowles Aquarium
109 1/2 Hwy. 63 South
Rolla, MO. 65401
573-364-4155
Established 1969

KING
AUTO GLASS DISTRIBUTORS
AUTO GLASS
We are not a SIDELINE!
We Specialize in
Auto Glass!
• Insurance Claims • Free Estimates •
• Huge Inventory of All Types of Auto Glass •
• Free Mobile Service For Your
Convenience In The Surrounding Area •
573-364-3389
or 1-800-346-3389
I-44 West - Located 3.5 miles West on
Martin Springs Drive - Rolla

40 feet in width at the south end and 60 feet wide at the north end, and which cost $10,240 to build. The ground floor sights included five large office rooms, which according to the Pulaski County Democrat, contained "probably twice as much floor space as did the offices in the old building." The second floor featured a courtroom and three jury rooms, a consultation room, and a witness waiting room.

The lower floor contained two fireproof vaults "with ample capacity to hold all records that may accumulate in years to come."

Soon after the dedication, County Court Judges placed the courthouse and grounds in the care and keeping of the County Sheriff, who was charged to be "held responsible for their preservation."

"It is further ordered," the proclamation read, "that he do not permit anyone to occupy any of the offices or any of the rooms inside of the court house, up or down stairs, except the County Clerk and Circuit Clerk and Recorder and his legal sworn in deputy, Collector of the Revenue and his legal sworn in deputy, the Sheriff and his legal sworn in deputy and the Probate Judge and his legal sworn in clerk, and that he keep the Circuit Court room and the jury and all other rooms upstairs locked in vacation and place the keys in the Circuit Clerk's vault; keep the hall doors locked on Sunday, doors to be locked every day at 6 o' clock p.m., except during the sessions of the Circuit Court; not allow any kind of games played in the court house and court house yard; not allow the chairs or benches to be taken outside of the court house for any purpose; not allow the Circuit Court room to be used for any purpose but political meetings and speaking; not allow anyone to sell fruit, merchandise or any other article in the court house or court house yard; not allow anyone to camp or use any part of the court house for sleeping, or camping, court house to be opened at 6 o' clock a.m. during sessions of any of the Courts, and at 7 a.m. in vacation."

For well over 80 years, this turn-of-the-century courthouse served the county well. However, by the 1980's, it had become apparent to county officials that the building was no longer adequate to house the many offices of county government. When it was new, the courthouse had served only about 11,000 constituents. Approximately four times that amount resided in Pulaski County some eighty years later.

J. J. Clark of Waynesville. Courtesy of Bob and Geneva Goodrich.

County officials placed a half-cent sales tax increase proposal on a February 1987 ballot. Revenue to be raised by the tax increase was earmarked to finance the construction of a new county courthouse. Voters, however, turned that proposal down, but then changed their minds when the issue was placed on the ballot again on August 4th of that year. The sales tax was approved by a narrow 1,123 to 1,000 margin. Strongest support came in Waynesville and Dixon. The measure passed narrowly in Laquey, Swedeborg and Hooker, but failed to garner majority support in St. Robert, Richland, and Crocker.

Approval of the sales tax allowed the county to erect today's modern, state-of- the-art, 51,484 square foot courthouse just east of the 1903 structure on the Courthouse Square in Waynesville. Construction work took approximately two years to complete and cost the county 3.9-million dollars.

Community Bank of Dixon

Branch of The Maries County Bank
(Established 1900)

Personalized Service For All Your Banking Needs:

- Installment Loans
- Free Regular Checking
- Business Checking Account
- Ag/Commercial Loans
- Small Town Personal Service

- Residential Loans
- Money Market Accounts
- Certificates of Deposit
- Super Now Accounts
- Passbook Savings

24 Hour Drive Thru ATM

Hours: Mon. - Thurs. 8:30 to 4:00
Friday 8:30 to 5:00
Saturday 9:00 to 12:00

101 W. 2nd. St., Dixon, MO. 65459

573-759-3399
Fax: 573-759-3398

FULL SERVICE BANK

Member **FDIC**

EQUAL HOUSING LENDER