

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

CHRISTIAN COUNTY

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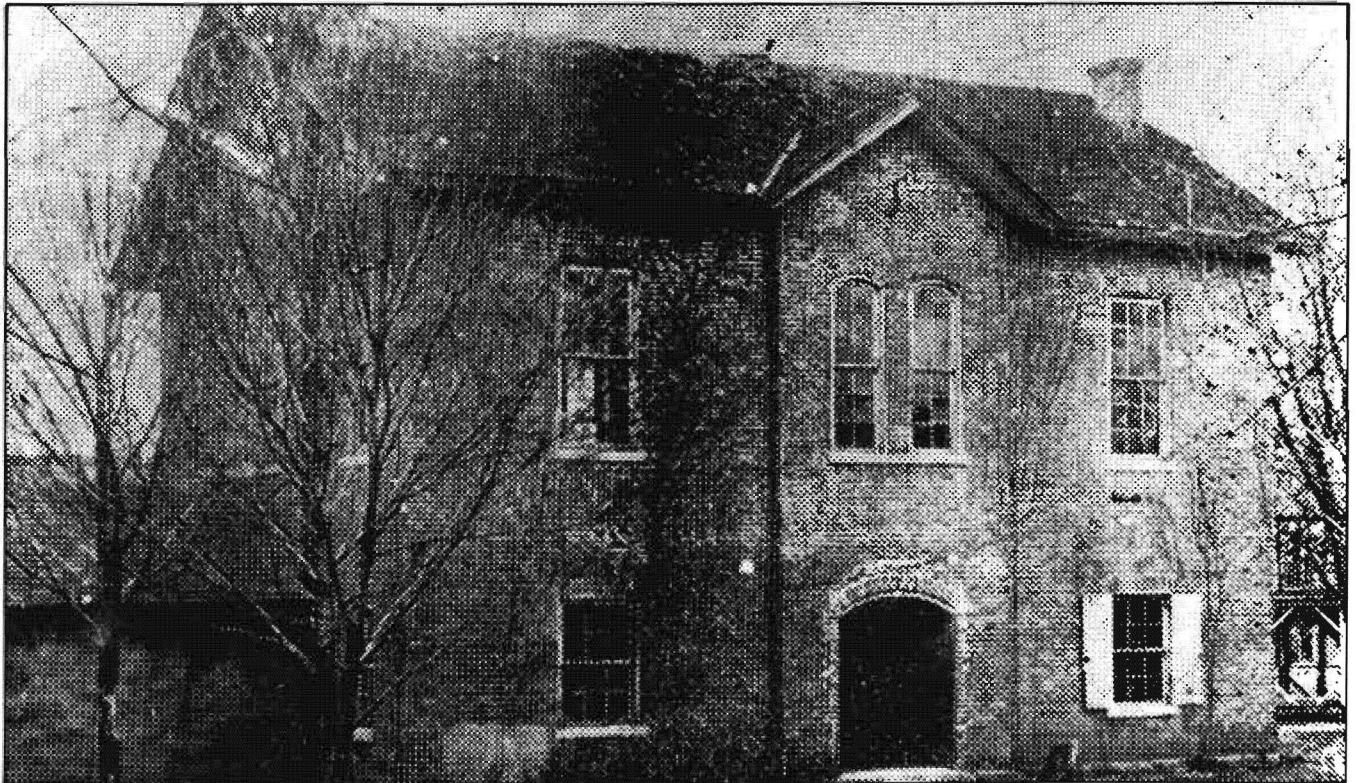


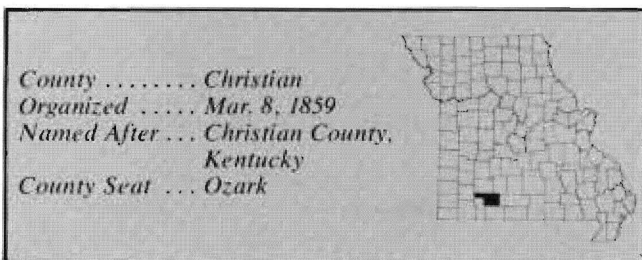
Fig. 1. Christian County Courthouse, 1867-1914. (From: *Ozarks Mountaineer*, July 1958)

Commissioners selected Ozark as the county seat of Christian County in 1859 because of central location and accessibility. In 1860 the first courthouse, a two-story frame, was built on the north side of the square, probably financed by \$4,000 from the sale of lots. It

measured 30 by 40 feet, with the courtroom below and offices on the second floor. Arsonists destroyed the building and all court records on August 20, 1865.

The court appointed James W. Robertson superintendent of public buildings and in 1866 requested he present two plans for consideration, one of brick, the other of frame. The court appropriated \$5,000 and in May 1866 ordered that the courthouse be built on the center of the square. The court placed notices for contracting in Springfield papers and then accepted William Lauring's [Lawing] bid for \$7,000 in September 1866. Final costs came to \$7,775 (Fig. 1).

The County Court Record recorded specifications and referred to four detailed drawings which had ac-



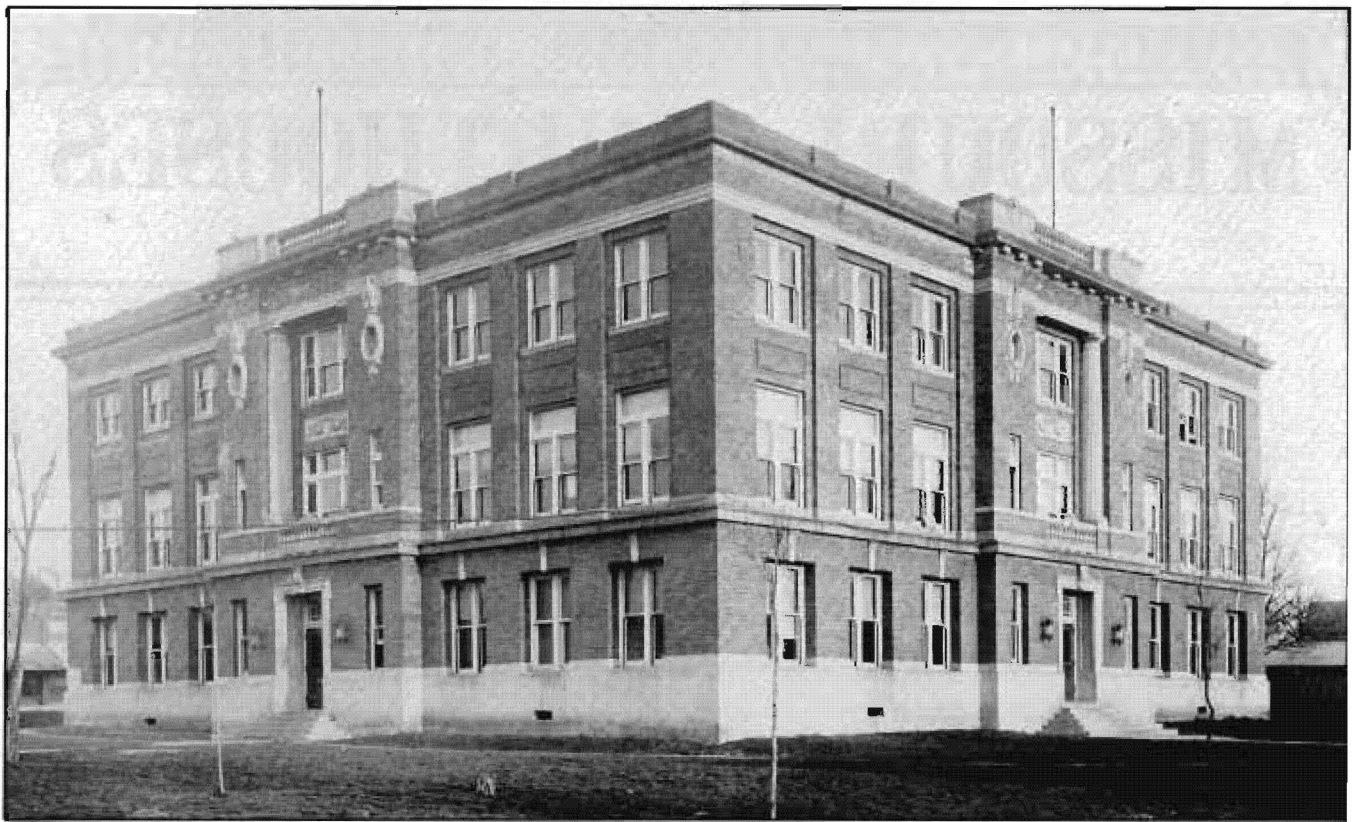


Fig. 2. Christian County Courthouse, 1919-. Architect: H.H. Hohenschild (From: postcard, Trenton Boyd collection)

accompanied the specifications but were not included in the record. An illustration shows the brick, rectangular building with projecting entry featuring a segmental arch above the door, which is balanced by a pair of windows on the second story. The courtroom was on the second floor. The building continued in use until 1914, when razed. Contemporary accounts described it as the county's oldest building and one of the landmarks of southwest Missouri.

In 1913 the state legislature gave counties the authority to issue bonds for constructing county buildings without submitting the question to a vote of the people. Christian County was the first to attempt the action. The court visited Barton and Barry counties, examining their courthouses. After interviewing and considering proposals from Charles A. O. Brunk Construction Co., St. Louis, J. M. Whitehead, and Henry H. Hohenschild, the court unanimously selected Hohenschild and commissioned him to prepare plans.

The county, however, was embroiled in politics and unsettled over location of the county seat. With such antagonism existing, some viewed the court's move as underhanded.

In March 1919, after a long, bitter legal struggle, voters did authorize \$90,000 for a courthouse. The site was the same as the previous courthouse, which had been razed four years previously. The new court represented the obligation the former court had made five years earlier to Hohenschild's plan, but felt bound by

the commitment, particularly since the architect had been paid \$2,150.

H. J. Hanson, Sarcxie, successfully bid for the general contract in June 1919; Earl Hawkins acted as superintendent. Work began in August; cornerstone ceremonies took place on March 16, 1920, and Christian County's present courthouse was completed by December of that year (Fig. 2). Other related courthouse designs from Hohenschild include Scott, 1911; Barry, 1913; and Pemiscot, 1924, all still standing.

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