

MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

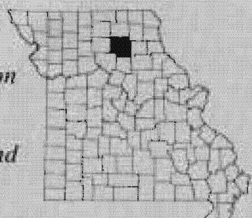
MACON COUNTY

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Fig. 1. Macon County Courthouse, 1865-. Architect: Levi Aldrich (Courtesy: State Historical Society of Missouri; photo by Massie. *Missouri Commerce*)

County Macon
Organized Jan. 6, 1837
Named After . . . Nathaniel Macon
of North
Carolina, U.S.
congressman and
senator
County Seat . . . Macon



Bloomington, the site of Macon County's first county seat, had the first courthouse. It was a temporary log structure, built in 1838 according to a plan submitted by Joseph Owenbey. The building measured 20 by 30 feet. There were two stories, one central chimney stack, four doors and three windows. Built by Willis E. Green, the building cost \$209. It was later sold for \$150 but apparently rented for a time by the County

Court as a clerk's office.

James T. Haley built the second courthouse in Bloomington, a 45-foot-square, brick building with cupola. After many delays and changes, the court accepted the building in November 1841. The first story was 14 feet, the second 10 feet. Estimated cost was \$3,000.

Because of its citizens' Southern sympathies, Gen. Lewis Merrill ordered Bloomington burned; fortunately, Maj. Thomas Moody suggested a more humane penalty—move the government to a new county seat. In 1863 an act of legislature moved the site to Macon City.

For their first Macon City courthouse, the court appointed Fred Rowland superintendent, who was to present a plan to the court for consideration. They approved the plan March 9, 1864 (Fig. 1). Levi Aldrich was architect and contractor. In February 1864 the court had appropriated \$10,000 from the general fund and ordered that the money be raised by a special tax. After seeing the plan, they appropriated an additional \$15,000. Costs ran to approximately \$30,000. The

county offices moved into the building in September 1865. An annex was added in 1895, costing about \$8,500.

Levi Aldrich immigrated to Missouri from Rhode Island, settling in St. Louis. He was born in 1806; the 1850 census identified him as an architect-builder. Aldrich also served as architect of the 1865 Chariton County courthouse. These are the only two known examples of courthouses designed by Aldrich.

In 1938 Macon County began planning for a new courthouse when they got a Work Projects Administration grant for \$114,545. Officials called a special election for September 20, 1938, to vote on a \$140,000 bond issue, but they cancelled the election because of insufficient time to complete necessary arrangements and begin construction within the specified nine week time limit.

Today, the 1865 courthouse is a rare example of architecture, representing this turbulent decade of Missouri's history. It has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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