

# Ozark Courthouses

Although the backwoodsmen who filtered into the Ozarks in the early 1800s had some disdain for government, the Ozarkers in the mid-19th century who built towns and institutions took some pride in government at the county level. Their model for the county seat of government included a town square with roads entering at right angles on the corners. The adjacent facing blocks contained business houses, although today in many county seats, including Waynesville, the commercial district is yielding to law related offices.

The square was reserved for the placement of the county courthouse and, occasionally, the county sheriff's office. Many an Ozark square was first home to a hewn log courthouse. Those log structures were temporary and population growth and expanded services necessitated larger and more modern buildings.

This growth coupled with expression of civic pride led to much courthouse construction in the last half of the 19th century. Fire also spurred the building, consuming many of the

older buildings and then some of the new ones, too.

On this and the next three pages, we feature fourteen Ozark courthouses of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Henry H. Hohenschild of Rolla was the most prolific. He designed at least 11 Missouri courthouses and became State Architect.

These Ozark courthouses range from the simple and functional Crawford County courthouse to the more elegant structures built in Laclede and Howell counties. Seven of the 19th century buildings are still serving as the center of county governments.

If you are interested in county courthouses, pictures and short histories of each county's courthouse can be found online at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~mogeneal/court/courthouses.htm>.

Courthouse pictures courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas, unless otherwise noted.



Read the lineage of any Ozark county courthouse and it invariably started with a log building, such as this first Phelps County courthouse near Arlington.



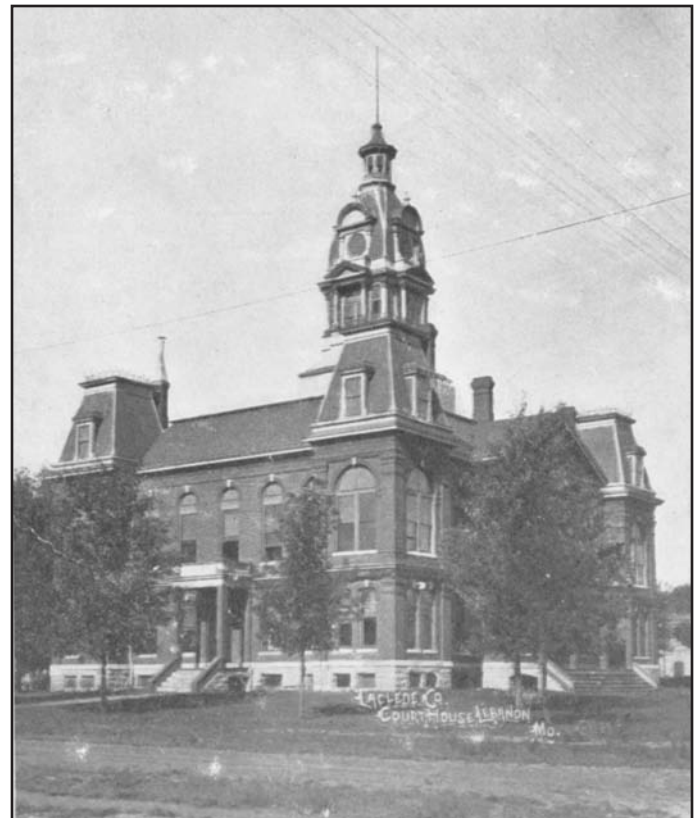
Ripley—This is the county's third courthouse, the first two were destroyed by fire. Built in 1899, remodeled in the mid-70s, it still serves the county.



Crawford—The fourth courthouse was built in 1885-86 for about \$7,500. An addition was constructed in 1974 and the courthouse continues to serve the people.



Carter—Built in 1871, an addition and remodeling was done in 1936 with a \$25,000 Public Works Administration grant. It is the only native cobblestone courthouse in Missouri. It is still in use as the county courthouse.



Laclede—One of the larger Ozark edifices, this courthouse was built in 1894 for \$20,000. The two-story building had a basement, 16 room first floor, and second floor with jury, witness, and consulting rooms. It burned in 1920. You might notice some similarity to Ripley. Both were designed by William F. Schrage.



Phelps—Built in 1860, this courthouse served as a hospital during the Civil War. Replaced by a new courthouse in 1994, the building is now a museum.



Vernon—Finished in 1908, this Carthage stone courthouse cost almost \$80,000. Subsequent maintenance has not altered the original design of this beauty.



Johnson—Not quite in the Ozarks, this courthouse in Warrensburg was built of local sandstone in 1898 for \$50,000. It is still used by the county government.



Lafayette—The oldest continuously used courthouse in the state is at Lexington. Built in 1849 for \$14,382.46, one of the columns contains a Civil War cannon ball.

Judge Colin Long

Seda's Gift Shoppe

Pepsi

Sanman's Car Care

Farnham Realty

City of St. Robert



Howell—Architect Henry H. Hohenschild designed this courthouse when he was 19. Built in 1884 in West Plains and damaged by a nearby explosion, it was razed in 1933.



Texas—In 1901, Texas County had Hohenschild extensively renovate the existing 1882 courthouse in Houston into the beautiful structure above. The man on the right is believed to be Ben Meador and the young looking man on the left looks to us like Henry H. Hohenschild. This courthouse burned in December of 1930. Photo courtesy of the Texas County Genealogical and Historical Society.



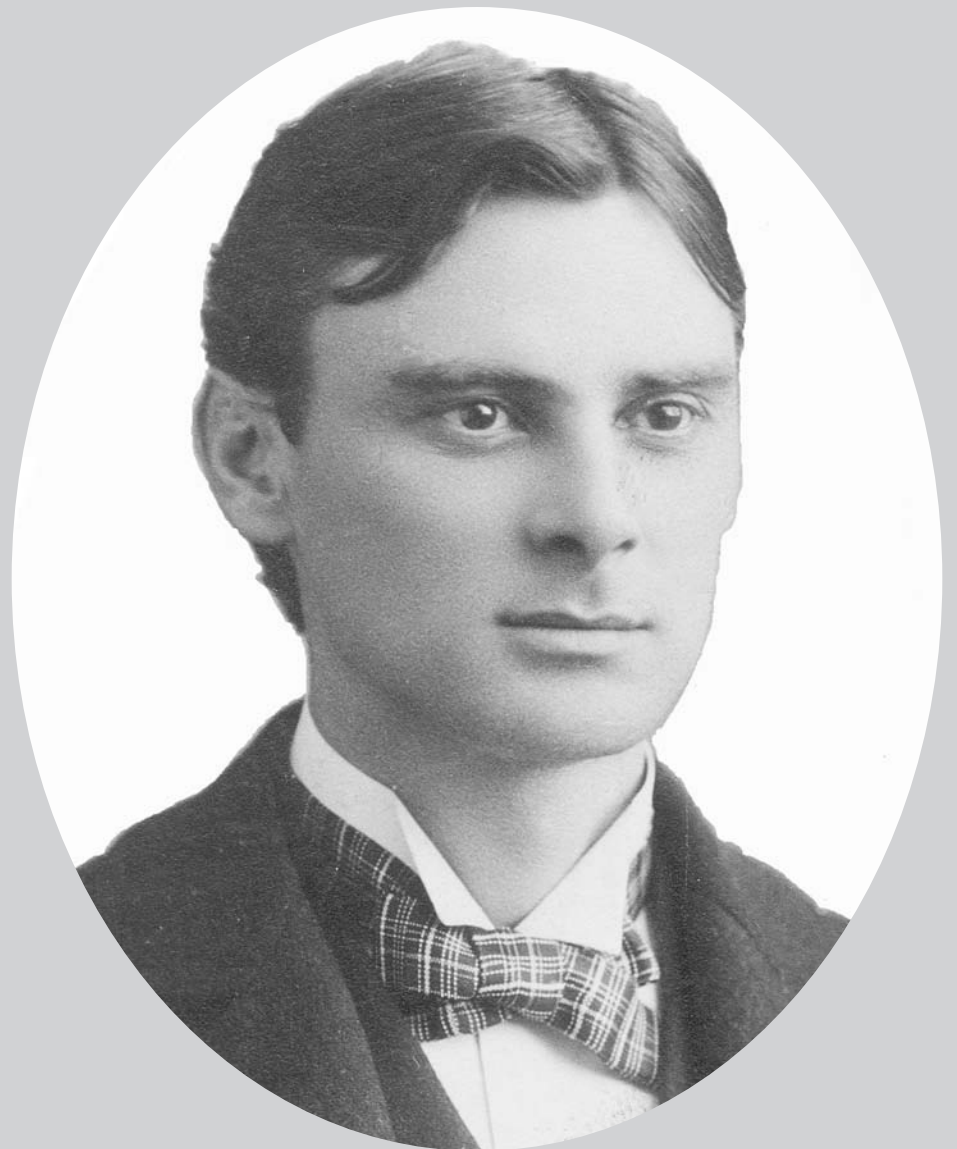
Christian—This was the first courthouse to be built after the legislature authorized counties to issue bonds without a vote of the people. Hohenschild was paid \$2,150 for his plans of the \$90,000 building. The 1919 courthouse is still in use.

### Henry H. Hohenschild

Henry H. Hohenschild (1863-1928) was somewhat of an architectural prodigy. Self-taught, he designed his first courthouse (Howell County) at the age of 19. Hohenschild relocated from St. Louis to Rolla and designed several large buildings in that Phelps County town, as well as the Houston Bank in Texas County. He entered local politics, serving as Secretary/Treasurer of the Rolla Special Road District. In 1896, he was nominated on the 52nd ballot to run as the Democratic candidate for State Senator of the 27th District. The Senate District included the counties of Pulaski, Phelps, Maries, Miller, Osage, and Cole. Hohenschild exerted much effort during the campaign, seemingly speaking at every little crossroad community. He orated at Relfe and Big Piney. On one speaking occasion, he delivered his stump speech in both English and German. His opponent was Dr. John Lovely Short of Rolla. Hohenschild handily defeated the doctor in the election.

Henry returned to St. Louis sometime after designing and overseeing the construction of Jackling Gymnasium on the Missouri School of Mines (now UMR) campus. He entered the banking business, serving as president of Day and Night Bank of St. Louis, which went bankrupt in 1922. Hohenschild was then sued by his partners. After a hung jury in a first trial, Hohenschild was acquitted in a second trial in 1923. Henry designed his last Missouri courthouse in 1924.

Missouri courthouses designed by Henry Hohenschild are: Howell County at West Plains (1882); Shannon, Eminence (1899); Texas, Houston (1901); Pulaski, Waynesville (1903); Washington, Potosi (1908); Scott, Benton (1911); Barry, Cassville (1913); Pike, Bowling Green (1917); Christian, Ozark (1919); Osage, Linn (1923); and Pemiscot, Caruthersville (1924).

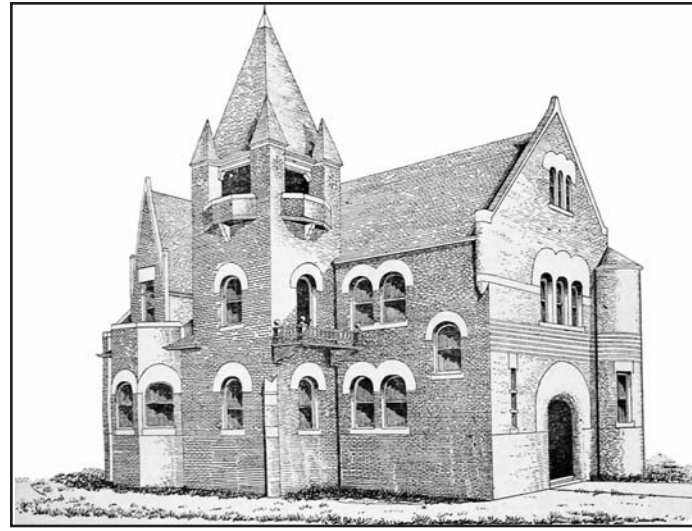


A youthful looking Henry Hohenschild during his term as State Senator for the 27th District, 1896-1900. Used with permission, State Historical Society of Missouri Columbia.



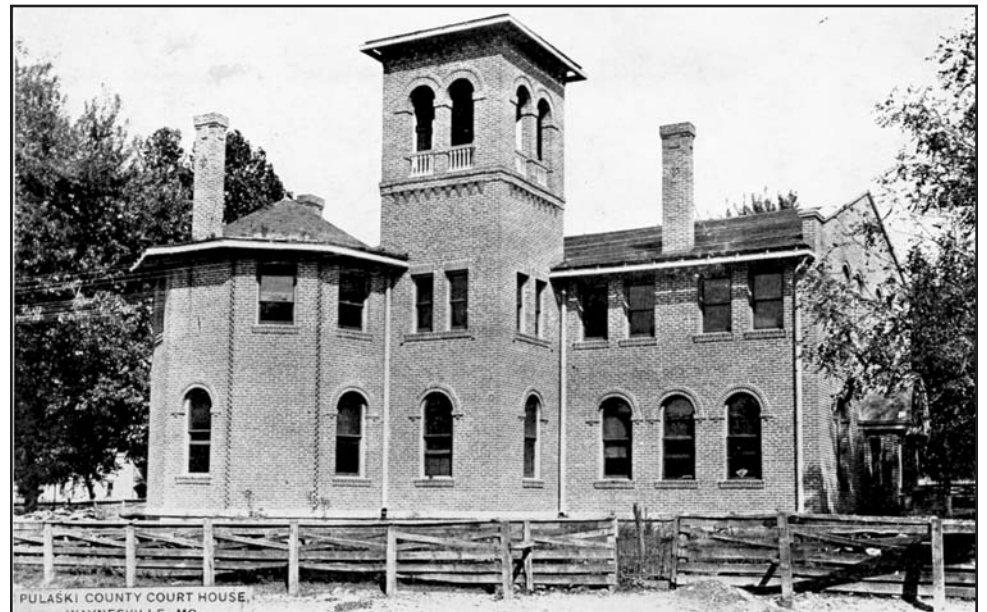
Pike—Hohenschild specified Bedford stone and gray Georgia granite for this \$100,000 courthouse in Bowling Green, finished in 1919, and still in use.

Right Column—The Henry Hohenschild designs for the Pulaski County courthouse are an interesting story, recounted in the 1992 *Gazette* by Gary Knehans (also see May 24, page 20 of this issue.) It began in 1882 with the County Seat Removal campaign. This was an effort to move the county seat from Waynesville to Richland. The railroad towns of Richland, Crocker, and Dixon were bigger than Waynesville and offered more accommodations and rail access. The Waynesville House (now Old Stagecoach Stop) was the only hotel in Waynesville. The 1882 removal vote failed but supporters, particularly Judge W. H. Murphy, began lobbying for a move to Crocker. Judge Murphy published a four page pamphlet which touted the advantages of Crocker as the county seat and the deficits of the Waynesville location. To make the move all but irresistible, supporters acquired land, deposited \$5000 for construction, and had Henry H. Hohenschild draw up plans. The vote on the proposition was 891 for removal and 503 against, The outcome was 39 votes short of the needed two-thirds majority. When the courthouse burned in 1903, Hohenschild was selected as architect and his design was a more modest version of the Crocker plan of 1890.



Left—Hohenschild's Crocker courthouse design from the "Removal Advocate", 1890, published by Judge W. H. Murphy. Courtesy of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Rolla.

Below—Pulaski courthouse ca. 1910.



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