

CHRONICLES OF THE COUNTY

**Featured:
Historic
Courthouse**

**People of the
Ozarks:
George Pepperdine**

**Murder in the Stacks:
The Death of
Nora Blades**



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CHRONICLES OF THE COUNTY

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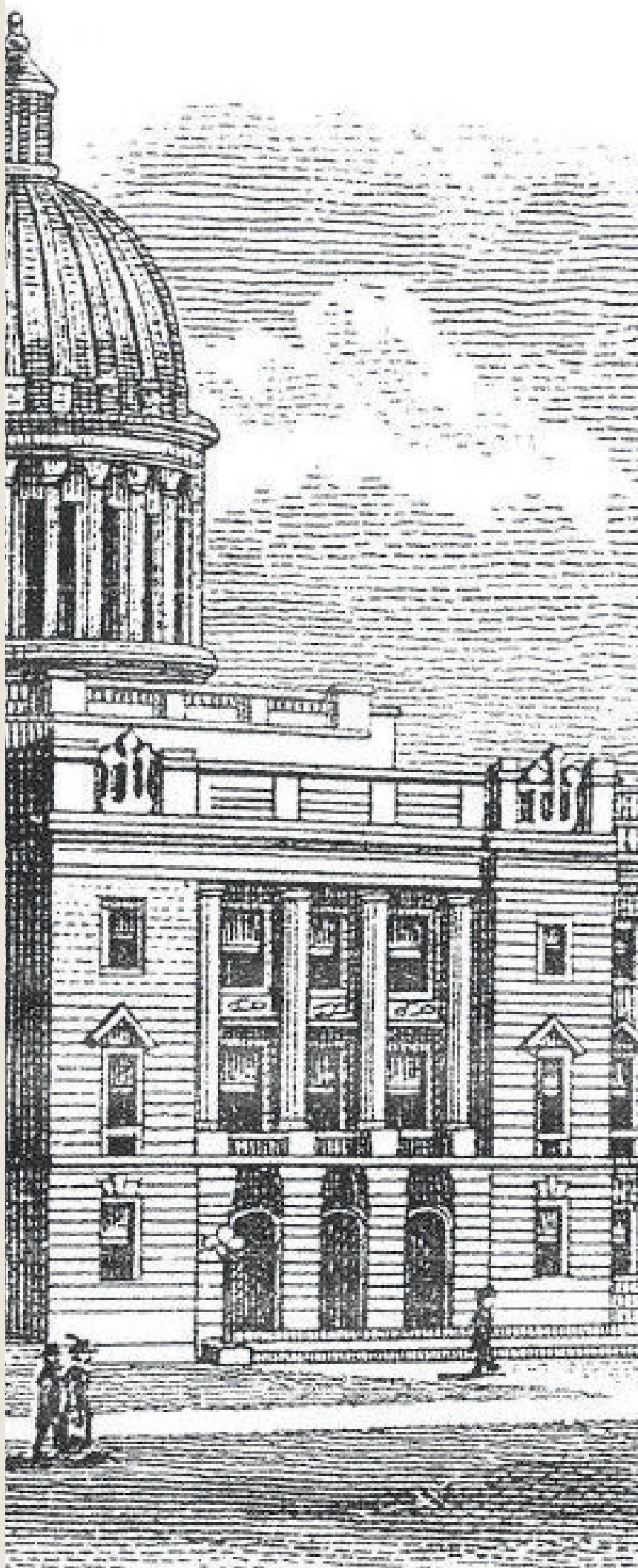
CHELSEA POINTER

OUR MISSION

1. To collect, organize, and maintain official and historical county records.
2. To maintain suitable facilities for the retention and preservation of county records.
3. To provide statutorily retained records as requested to county offices and the general public.
4. To provide professional and knowledgeable records management services.
5. To facilitate programs, resources, and outreach activities to increase public awareness about the value of the public records we preserve.

OUR VISION

To be a leading archival repository and research center in Missouri for county and regional history.



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I have been privileged to serve as the county clerk for our county for the past 11 years. During this time, we have diligently worked to retain and preserve all permanent and temporary records for current and future generations. Within these records lies a narrative that dates back to 1833, when the State of Missouri established Greene County. At that time, our county had a significantly larger footprint covering much of southwest Missouri, extending to what is now McDonald County in the far southwest corner of the state. The boundaries also stretched north to what is now Benton County and east to Crawford County.

We are fortunate to have these records, which help tell the story of Greene County and the evolution of its boundaries, which have changed over the years. Our county's history can be seen through the valuable documents of the various offices of the county, via law enforcement and prosecution records, court records, plat records, marriage records, highway records, geology records, environmental records, building permits, assessor records, collector records, financial records, licensing records, election records, and the records of decisions by the Greene County Commission. In addition to all of the official records of each office, there are also the records of our county that have been so generously donated to the county over the years.

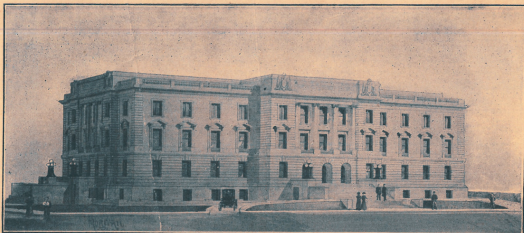
When walking through our county's archive, it's easy to overlook the extensive books of official records and the numerous boxes of documents, reducing them to mere books, paper, and boxes. However, anyone who has researched historical records knows that there is so much more to discover. Each record tells a unique story. I think about the times when a property was developed for a family's new home or when a business was established. These moments are filled with excitement and challenges tied to the property purchase. I also consider the assessor's tax records from our agricultural community that detail how much livestock was owned on local farms at the time. Marriage records remind us of the beginnings of lifelong commitments, while circuit court records often capture stories of heartache and challenges.

Our goal with these records is to preserve and share their rich history so that you can come discover a part of history important to our county and, even better, when it is an important part of your family history. This publication tells the facts with every story we write and invites you to explore any record of interest that you may have as a resident of our county or as someone doing genealogy about your family ancestry. The archives team is ready and willing to serve you in all they do and looks forward to meeting you in person, over the phone, or online.

GREENE COUNTY CLERK

BUILT FOR THE PEOPLE:

THE HISTORIC COURTHOUSE AND ITS OFFICES



Greene County's New Home

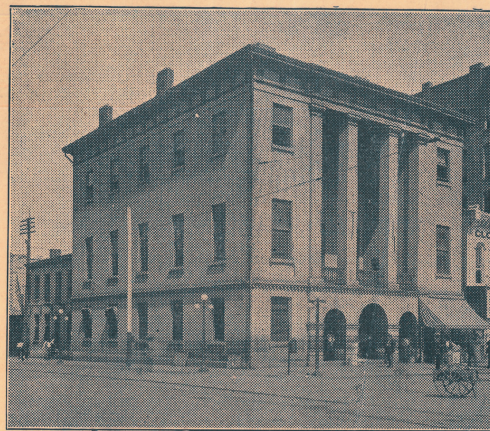
Site purchased February, 1909.

Covers more than a half acre of ground, and will contain three stories above the basement.

Will have every modern convenience.

Reinforced concrete construction, with brick and stone veneer for outer walls.

Fire proof, with private vaults for each office.



Greene County's Old Home

Erected in 1857.

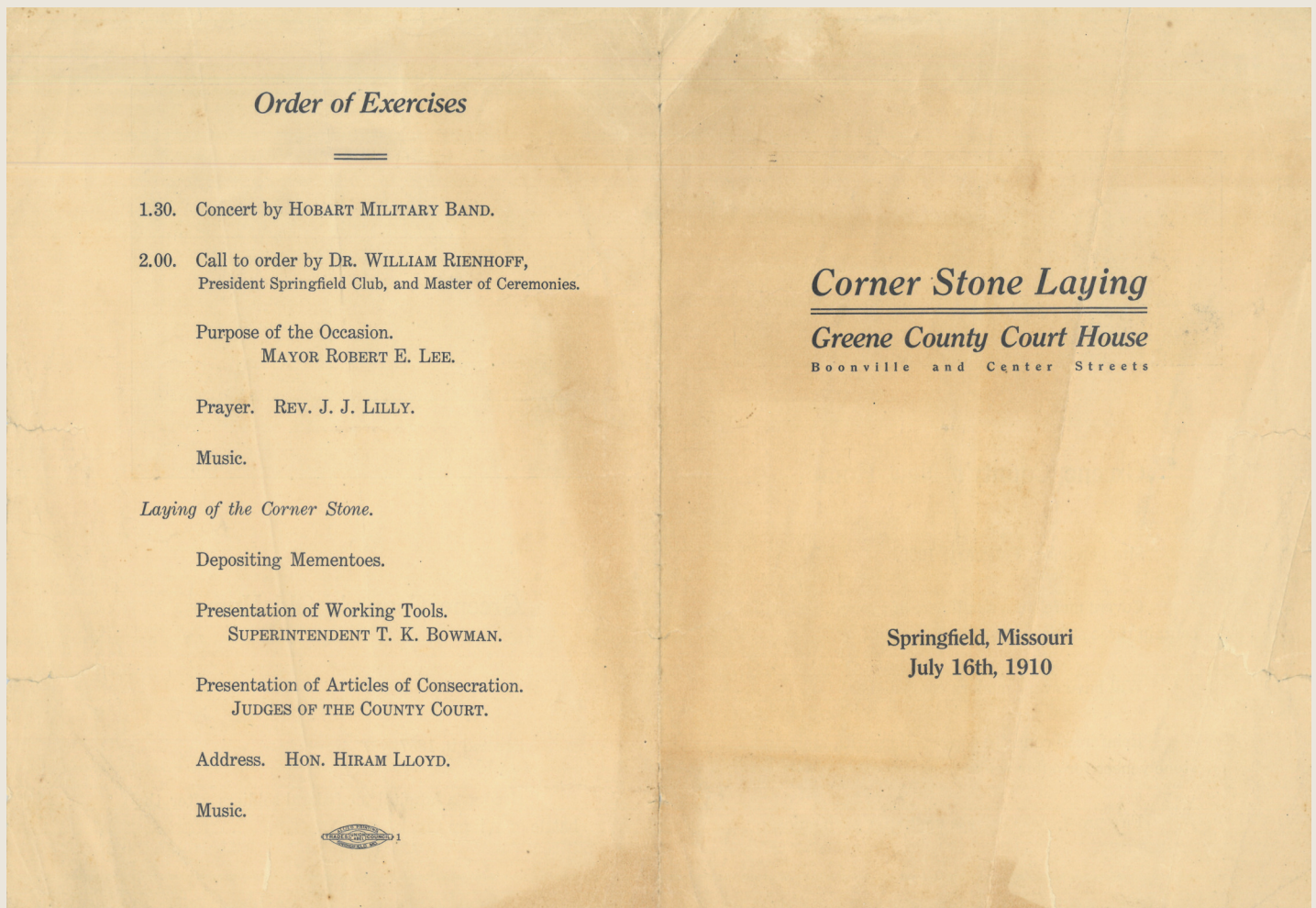
Used as a hospital for federal soldiers after the battle of Wilson Creek.

By 1900, Greene County had outgrown its third courthouse located at the corner of the Public Square and College. Talk began of the need for a new courthouse and possible locations. Some citizens believed it should remain on the square; others thought it should be further north, between the two primary business districts of the square and Commercial Street. That disagreement, and funds, meant it would take over 10 years for a new courthouse to be built.

In March 1900, the county court, comprised of John Y. Fulbright, C. M. Bennett, and Andrew J. O'Neal, placed A. W. Ollis in charge of finding a site for a potential new courthouse.[1] Ollis located property that he believed would be "satisfactory" on the north corner of Boonville and Center (now Central) that he said could be purchased for \$7 – 8,000. At a meeting of 20 city and county (male) representatives, most expressed the desire to buy the lots immediately, then put the decision to build a new courthouse to a public vote. They were concerned about the "great danger from fire" in the existing courthouse, potentially destroying county records. By the end of the meeting, the group tentatively planned to go ahead with the land purchase.[2]

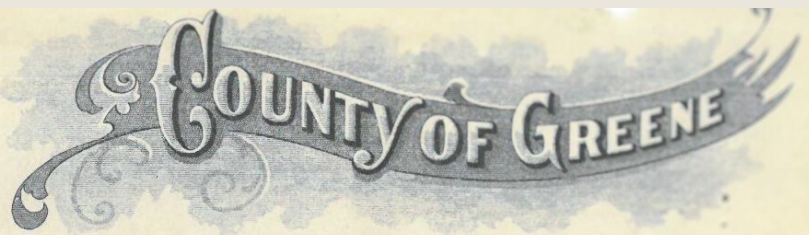
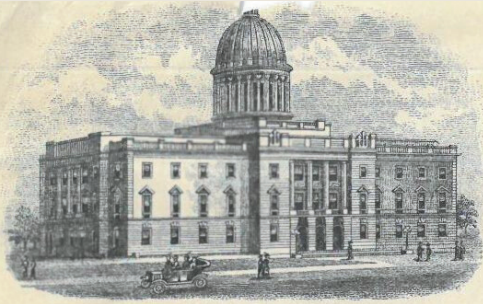
Despite the concern for county records, the county court did not yet take action. In 1901, an editorial in the *Springfield Republican* warned that "The time has come for the people of Greene County to erect a courthouse" and the location "is a highly important matter." [3] Just a week later, another *Republican* editorial announced that everyone knew "about where [the new courthouse] should be placed," as well as "the desirability of having a safe place to keep the records...." [4]

Still, it wasn't until 1904 that a concerted effort was made to find a location for a new courthouse. Due to the "dilapidated condition" of the current courthouse, the lack of space for office holders, crowded conditions, and danger to records, the county could no longer "neglect action." The county already owned the lot where the jail was located near Robberson Avenue and Center Street, and now deemed it convenient to have the new courthouse constructed nearby, particularly since that location was "very near the geographical center" of Springfield. In June, Benjamin U. Massey, a local attorney, was awarded the contract to help with the purchase of land adjoining the jail. Ultimately, Massey's primary role was to advise, counsel, and prepare legal documents regarding the land purchases, as well as advise the county regarding any potential petitions for or against bonds to build the courthouse.



On July 5, the new county court judges, consisting of Benjamin J. Diemer, Thomas K. Bowman, and Howard B. East, issued the order to have land purchased on which to build a new courthouse; a task that Richard A. Ollis had already completed. [5] Immediately the county court ordered the treasurer to transfer \$6,000 from the Road and Bridge Fund to a contingent fund.[6] Massey submitted certified abstracts of the title to the lots previously obtained by Richard A. Ollis and his wife.[7]

The news about a potential new courthouse was now public and not everyone was pleased. In November, 19 prominent Springfieldians, including T. B. Holland, John O'Day, Kate Keet, and J. M. Kirby, filed suit against all three county court judges, the county treasurer and treasurer-elect, Bank of Springfield, Elwyn B. Bentley, Massey, A. W. Ollis and Company, and Richard A. Ollis.[8]



JOHN R. McAFEE
COUNTY SURVEYOR AND EX-OFFICIO
HIGHWAY ENGINEER

Springfield, Mo.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR STEPS AND PARAPET WALLS.

The same general specifications for sidewalk material shall apply to steps. The proportions shall be: the top $\frac{1}{2}$ in. shall be a mortar composed of one part cement, and two parts sand, the remainder, 1 part cement, 2 parts sand and 4 parts stone.

Especial care shall be taken to have all edges true and straight and all exposed surfaces, a true plane. The treads of all steps shall be brought to a true plane with float and trowel and then carefully brushed with a dampened brush.

I hereby dissent from the action of this court, in attempting to change the site of the public buildings of Greene county, beyond the original town site of Springfield Mo. as being without authority of law.

The action taken contemplates, in effect, a change of county seat, on which proposition the people of said county have not been consulted as by law made and provided.

Further, in view of the strife and litigation, that will likely follow, if this court adheres to the position taken, I urge that it recede; and insist that the welfare of Springfield & Greene county would be subserved, by submitting sites for location, and cost of construction, (of the contemplated public buildings), to the legal voters of aforesaid county.
H. G. Muehlhage

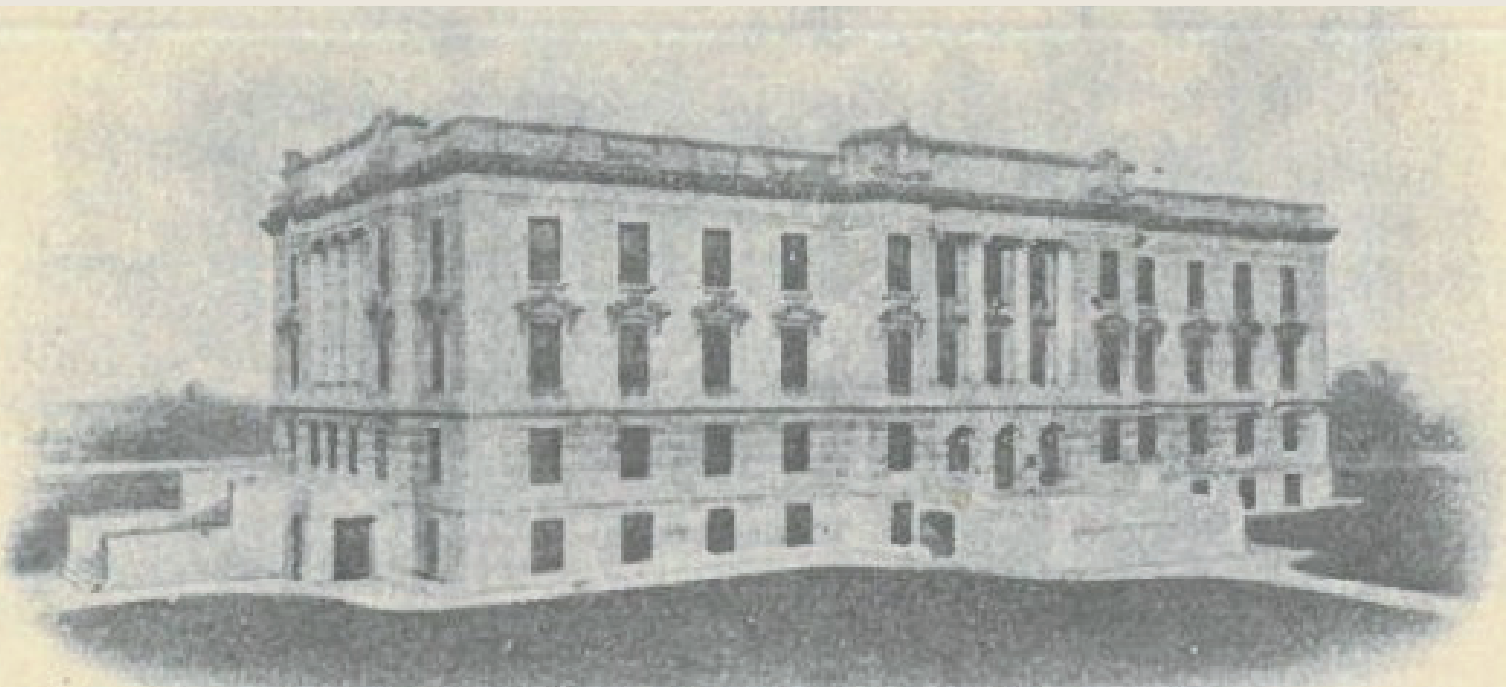
The lawsuit alleged that the county court did not have legal authority to purchase real estate “for the purpose of erecting a courthouse...unless there [were] sufficient funds in the treasury for that purpose, not otherwise appropriated...” Records show that the treasurer was ordered to reallocate another \$7,325, but he “protested for want of funds with which” to do so. Additionally, the court was required to issue an order to build a courthouse before purchasing land, rather than after, as they had done. Only then could a location legally be chosen and purchased. The plaintiffs stated that the county treasury did not currently contain sufficient funds to build a courthouse. Therefore, the county did not have the legal right to begin the process without the submission of a petition containing at least 100 “qualified voters” indicating their desire to build a new courthouse and the necessity of raising the funds to do so through a special election. Additionally, the funds transferred from the Road and Bridge Fund were never allocated for a new courthouse and therefore, what the county court did was “unlawful and illegal, and expressly prohibited by the statutes of this state...and in excess of the power granted to county courts by the statutes of this state and for this reason should be annulled...”[9]

There was considerable legal back and forth between the two parties, and in February 1905, the plaintiffs submitted an amended petition, this time with an additional 46 plaintiffs added to the original 19 listed.[10] Ultimately, a year later in February 1906, the court issued its decree for the plaintiffs.[11] However, the legal wrangling didn't end there. The defendants asked that the judgment against them be set aside and motioned for a new trial.[12]

In October 1905, a group called the "Committee of 100" held a meeting to discuss the potential of obtaining a new courthouse. The majority preferred it to be built at Boonville and Center. There was plenty of disagreement of the location and other details, such as paving and streetlights, but in the end, they decided to appoint a committee to "get signers of a petition to present to the county asking them to appoint a special election for voting on the issue of \$150,000 of bonds by the county to erect a new courthouse." [13]

The plan worked; by November 1906, petitions had been submitted, and the county court issued an order to put to the voters the question of a \$150,000 levy for the purpose of building a courthouse. Additionally, voters would have the opportunity to choose the courthouse location. Presiding Judge Diemer dissented, partly because that, although a petition of over 100 qualified voters had been submitted, it had not yet been approved, so the order was preemptive. Furthermore, Diemer stated that the county court did not have the authority to call for an election, and Diemer believed they were acting with "undue haste." [14] Judge Diemer wasn't the only dissenter; in December, a group of citizens, including J. W. Crank, E. V. Williams, and former County Court Judge Bowman, petitioned the circuit court to file a "temporary injunction restraining the county court from having the special election." The petitioners wanted to verify in court the "legality of the action of the county court" in ordering a special election for a direct levy. This group wanted the courthouse to be built but, like Diemer, questioned the authority of the county court to issue such an order. [15]

After the circuit court filed the injunction to enjoin the order, the county court rescinded the order and issued a new one, changing the date of the election to March 26, 1907. This would "give full opportunity for the voters to understand the issues involved." The content of the order did not change; voters would still decide on the levy and location of a new courthouse. Judge Diemer again dissented "for the same reasons given" in the previous order. [16] Nonetheless, the county clerk was ordered to prepare for a special election in March. [17]



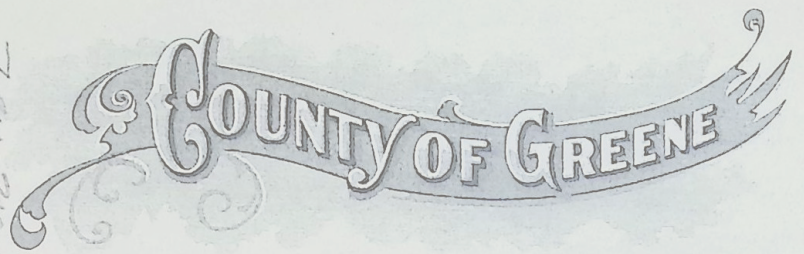
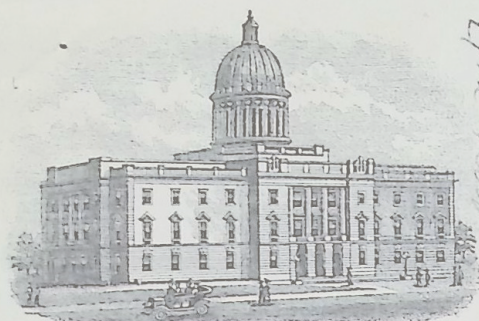
On February 4, the county court ordered the transfer of \$50,000 from the general fund to the courthouse fund. This was a surplus leftover from 1908 that was “appropriated for the purpose of purchasing a site and building a new courthouse.” Additional funds would come from the sale of the old courthouse. The court anticipated that \$100,000 would be sufficient to build the new structure, so there would be no need for a special election to raise funds. A superintendent would be hired to find a location for the new building. Judge S. D. Appleby dissented; he wanted the public to vote on a levy proposition, as well as the location.[23]

Former County Court Judge Bowman was appointed superintendent to purchase land for the new courthouse. Later in February, he reported to the county court that he had purchased land from the Bank of Springfield for \$12,825, located at the corner of Boonville and Center. The amount of \$3,500 was deducted from that price due to a lien placed on the property “by virtue of the decree of the circuit court” in the 1904 case of *Holland et al vs. Diemer et al*. The county court approved the purchase and the title. Bowman also submitted plans and the estimated cost for building the new courthouse. Judge Appleby again dissented.[24]

In April, the county court hired the architectural firm of Miller, Opel, and Torbitt. They presented plans and were ordered to “perfect said plans in detail and draw the specification for the” plans. Their fee was set at 2 ½ percent “of the cost of said building for plans and specifications, and 1 percent of the cost of said building for drawing the details thereof.”[25]

Within a week, the county court was involved in another lawsuit, this time from J. E. Decker “and other citizens” of Republic. They wanted an injunction to “perpetually” prevent the county court from building a new courthouse. Attorneys E. P. Mann and Roscoe Patterson were retained by the court. Decker and the others wanted to prove that the \$50,000 transferred from the general fund to the courthouse fund earlier in the year was not a surplus after all. The case went to trial in late November. Judge C.H. Skinker presided over the case; he refused to issue the injunction, instead finding for the defendants. The construction of the courthouse was free to proceed.[26]

In January 1910, Bowman, now president of the Commercial Club, was commissioned to advertise for sealed bids to sell the old courthouse on the square. All bids had to be accompanied by a certified check for \$5,000, payable to R. A. Bowland, county treasurer. This would be credited to the highest bidder. The county was hoping to continue using the building for one to two years and offered a rental amount of six percent of the price of the highest bidder.[27] A. B. Crawford placed the winning bid of \$50,000. Crawford agreed to lease the building back to the county for one year with the option to extend the lease to two years, at a rate of \$250 per month.[28]

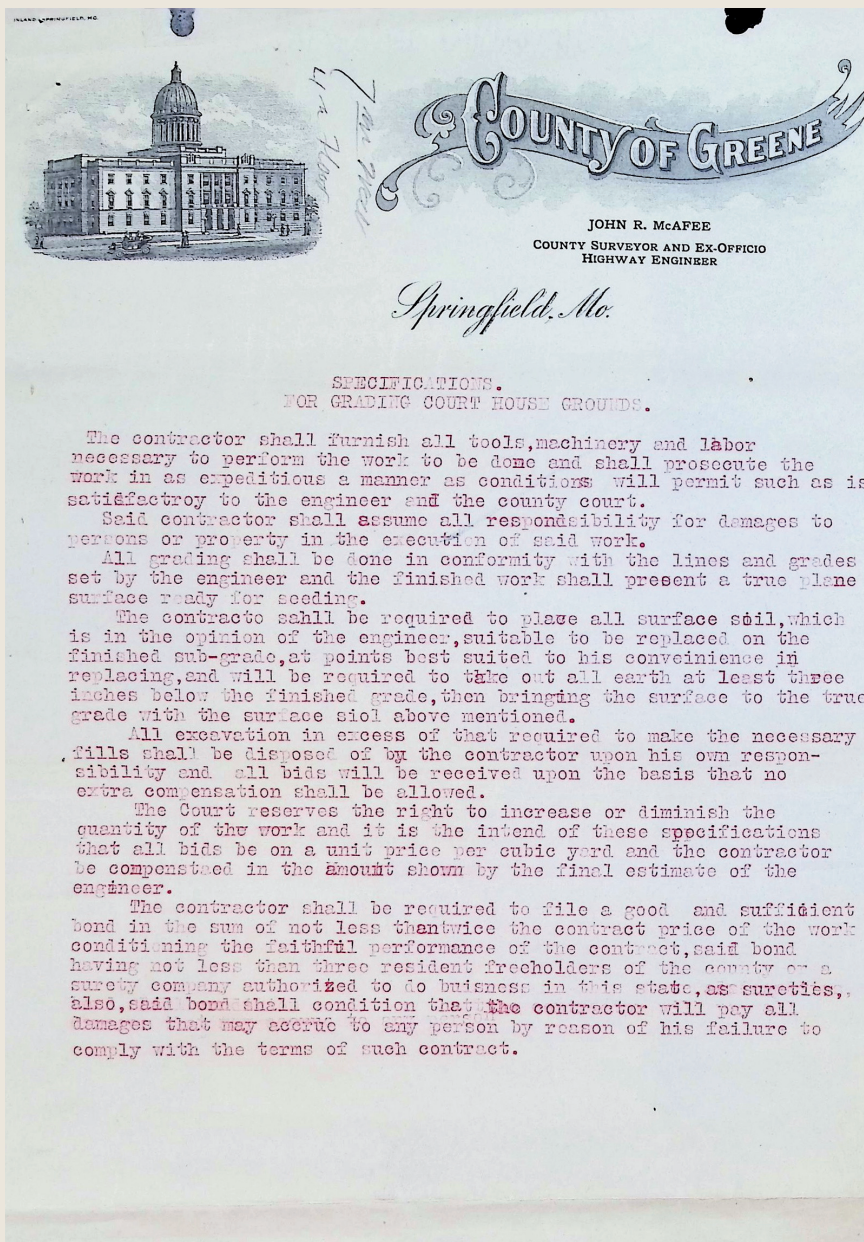


JOHN R. McAFEE
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Springfield, Mo.

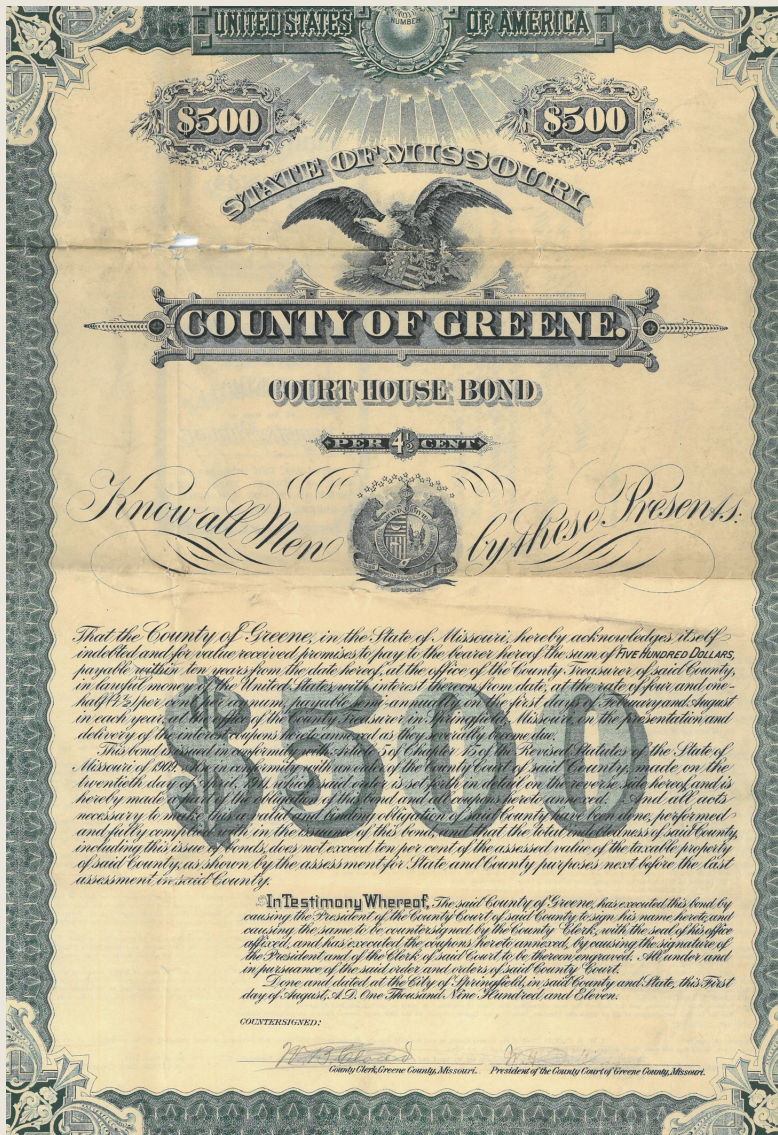
Bowman also advertised for bids for construction of the courthouse. The J. E. Gibson Construction Company from Tulsa, Oklahoma, won the bid with a cost of \$81,749. Gibson assigned his bid to the Hiram Lloyd Building and Construction Company of St. Louis, Missouri. One stipulation was the use of Phenix stone, as bid by the J. E. Gibson Company, the quarry being located in Greene County. The contract also stipulated that construction had to be completed on or before March 23, 1911, or the contractor would be required to pay \$25 per day to the county; if completed early, the contractor would receive an additional \$2.50 per day.[29] Construction could finally begin on the long-awaited new courthouse. The cornerstone was laid during a public ceremony on July 16, 1910.

As it turns out, \$100,000 was not going to be enough money to build the courthouse. A year after the construction contract was awarded, citizens submitted a petition to the court requesting a special election to raise another \$150,000. Petitioners preferred the issuance of bonds rather than a tax levy. The petition was granted and scheduled the special election for April 18, 1911.[30] And this time, most Greene County citizens decided in favor of spending the funds to build a new courthouse – 3,716 in favor and 755 opposed. Construction could move forward.[31]



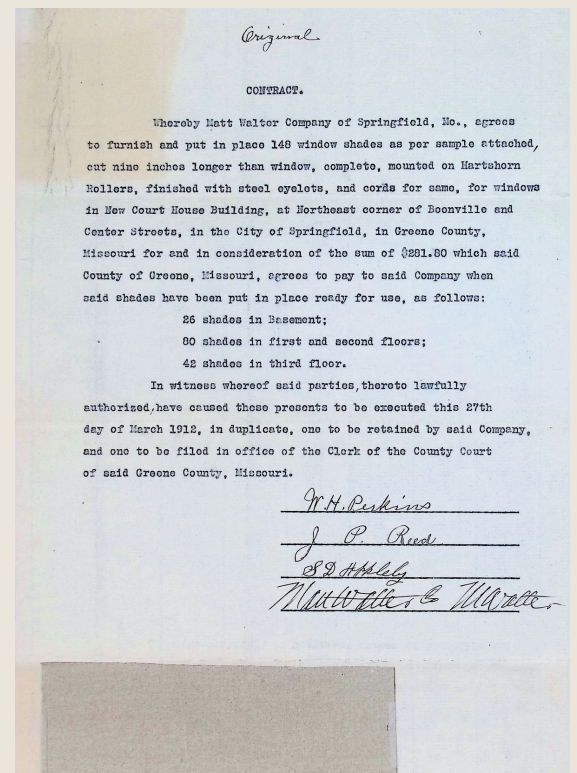
A year later, in March 1912, the county court contracted with bid-winner Tucker-Ferguson Warehouse and Transfer Company to begin moving the “goods and property...from the old courthouse and the annexes” to the new courthouse. The move would begin no later than March 20 and was expected to be completed by March 27, weather permitting. [32]

Furniture from the criminal court clerk’s office and the assessor’s and surveyor’s offices were the first to be loaded and transferred to their new home. Unfortunately, not all of the new doors had arrived; therefore, the county had to hire guards “to watch the books day and night.” At this point, the county had been paying rent to Crawford for continued use of the old structure. The two-year lease had expired in January, and Crawford took that opportunity to double the monthly rent, raising it to \$500. The county refused to pay that amount. One local citizen commented: “To have the tender memories that surround this old friend of the people rudely shaken by a tussle over the shrunken ‘remains’ is not quite what is expected in a decently regulated funeral.”[33]



Although county offices were already moving in, construction was not yet completed, and the building was “in a bad state of disorder.” County officials were “having a hard time trying to dispose of routine business, inasmuch as none of the safes” had arrived. The interior of the building was unfinished, and “loose plaster and trash” covered the floors.[34] Not all of the offices were equipped with telephones or lighting, and the only source of water was in the basement, but “owing to the conditions which seem to make the move necessary, they say they are willing to endure some privations for the general good of the county.”[35]

The roof also remained unfinished, and an overnight storm in March left water “running through the cracks between the cement slabs which compose the roof of the new building, [and] seeped down throughout the walls. Every office in the building was damp...and in some of them were large blotches on the walls.”[36]



By the end of the month, the first telephone was installed, “being placed in Sheriff W. E. Freeman’s office.” Floors and furniture were still covered in “grit,” owing to the continued construction. Cement floors were being laid, and doors were finally being installed. County employees hoped the addition of doors would relieve the “noisy interruption” of the continued construction.[37]

After the move, the county rented nine rooms on the third floor to the city for use as a city hall for two years at \$125 per month. One of the contract stipulations was that the county would install an elevator by February 1, 1913. The city also had the option to continue the lease as needed.[38]

Although the new courthouse was in use by March 1912, shortage of funds meant the interior design wasn’t completed until 1915. Updates were done in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and significant repairs done in the 1960s.

The parapet that sat on top of the building was removed in 1973 due to potential safety issues.

Needing additional space, the circuit court moved into a new judicial center down the street on Boonville in 1996. What was once the “new courthouse” is now known as the Historic Courthouse and is still home to most county office holders. It was the first county building to be added to the list of Greene County Historic Sites and has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2007. The building is well maintained and should be able to serve the citizens of Greene County for decades to come. [39]

[1] What was then County Court is now known as County Commission.

[2] *Springfield Leader Democrat*, March 17, 1900.

[3] *Springfield Republican*, February 14, 1901.

[4] *Springfield Republican*, February 21, 1901.

[5] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1904), Book 28: 591-94, 596, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield.

[6] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1904), Book 28: 594, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *T. B. Holland et al v. B. J. Diemer et al*, Greene County (Mo.) Circuit Court, FA-02, Folder 17, Box 2, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.; Richard A. Ollis was a clerk at A. W. Ollis and Company.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *T. B. Holland et al v. B. J. Diemer et al*, Greene County (Mo.) Circuit Court, FA-02, Folder 18, Box 2, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[11] *Ibid.*; Greene County Circuit Court, Book 92: 279-284, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[12] *T. B. Holland et al v. B. J. Diemer et al*, Greene County (Mo.) Circuit Court, FA-02, Folder 18, Box 2, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[13] *Springfield Leader*, October 7, 1906.

[14] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records, (1906), Book 31: 368-71, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[15] *Springfield Leader*, December 11, 1906; Greene County, Mo., County Court Records, (1906), Book 31: 408-412, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[16] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records, (1906), Book 31: 408-412, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[17] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1907), Book 31: 569, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[18] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1907), Book 31: 506 – 509, 569, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[19] *Springfield Leader*, January 29, 1907; Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1907), Book 31: 506 – 509, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[20] *Springfield Republican*, February 17, 1907.

[21] *Springfield Republican*, March 29, 1907.

[22] *Springfield Republican*, January 8, 1909.

[23] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1909), Book 34: 212-214, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.; *Springfield Daily Leader*, March 17, 1909.

[24] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1909), Book 34: 236-239, 281, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo. This was the same land previously acquired by Richard A. Ollis.

[25] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1909), Book 34: 612-613, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[26] *Springfield Daily Leader*, November 30, 1909; FA-02, Roscoe Patterson and Edgar P. Mann, Legal Services Contract, September 19, 1909, Box 2, Folder 35; Greene County, Mo., Circuit Court Records (1909), Book 101: 72, Greene County Archives and Records Center.

[27] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1910), Book 35: 180-181, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.; *Springfield Republican*, January 1, 1910.

[28] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1910), Book 35: 212-213, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[29] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1910), Book 35: 334-335; Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.; Hiram Lloyd Building and Construction Company, Construction Contract, March 29, 1910, FA-02, Box 2, Folder 37.

[30] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1911), Book 36: 530-539, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[31] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1911), Book 36: 639, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[32] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1912), Book 38: 165-167, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[33] *Springfield Republican*, March 16, 1912.

[34] *Springfield Daily Leader*, March 18, 1912.

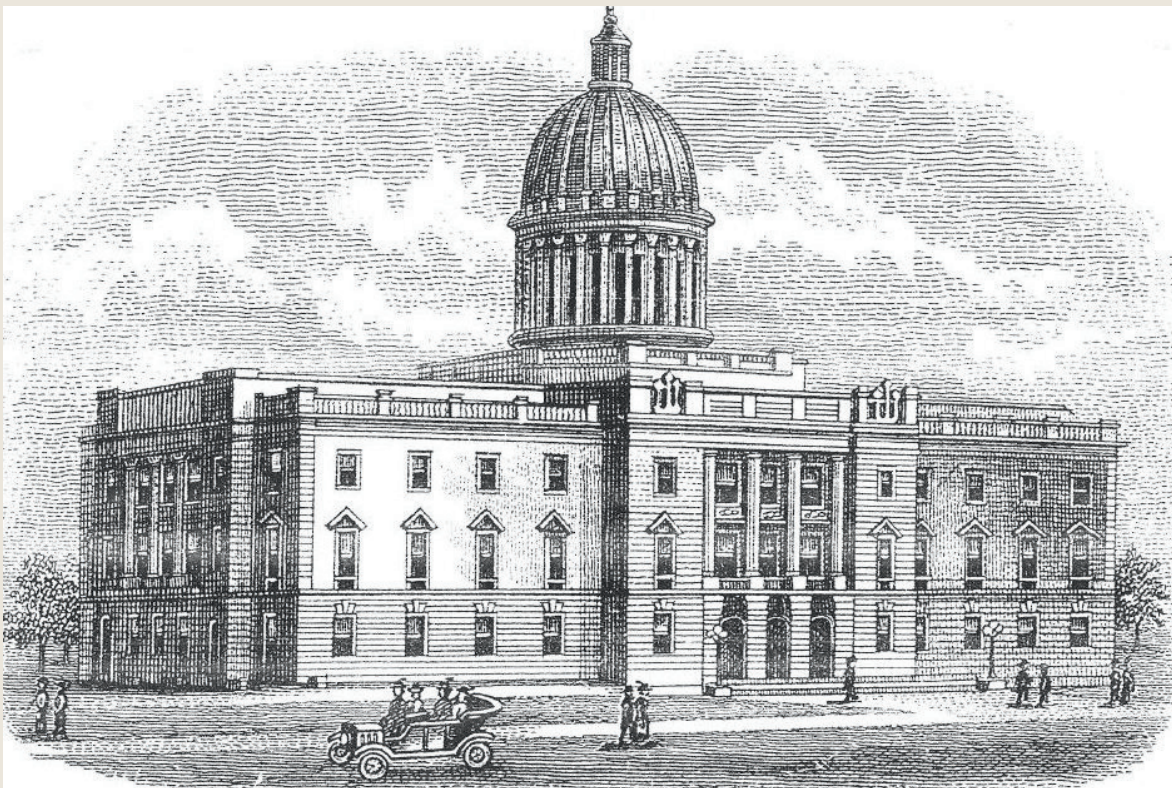
[35] *Springfield Republican*, March 19, 1912.

[36] *Springfield Daily Leader*, March 22, 1912.

[37] *Springfield Republican*, March 31, 1912.

[38] Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1912), Book 38: 361-362, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield, Mo.

[39] Emrie, Gail, “Historic Greene County Courthouse,” *Missouri Department of Natural Resources*. Missouri State Historic Preservation Office, Jefferson City, September 25, 2007; *Springfield News-Leader*, January 16, 1996.



Anna B. Patton, as principal,
A. E. Patton
and unto the State of Missouri in
\$100.00) for the payment of which
executors and administrators
ts;
and are such however, that whereas
this 1st day of October 1910,
the Probate Court in the County of
has been duly commissioned.
Patton shall faithfully demean herself
the County aforesaid, discharge
fully and correctly account for all
by virtue of said office then this
remain in full force and effect.
this 1st day of October 1910.
Anna B. Patton (Seal)
Jessie M. McCurdy (Seal)
A. E. Patton (Seal)
____ (Seal)

that I will support the Constitution
tion of the State of Missouri, and
in the office of Probate Clerk and
hands as such Clerk.

Anna B. Patton
me, this 1st day of October 1910.
hereunto set my hand and affixed
Springfield, the date aforesaid.

G. G. Lydy
Probate Judge.

of Oct 1910 G. G. Lydy

KEEPERS OF THE WILL: A HISTORY OF WOMEN PROBATE CLERKS

Minnie Bossert was appointed probate clerk in April 1911 by Judge George G. Lydy, after the resignation of Anna Patton in late March of that year. Bossert held the position until December 1914, so she was present during the courthouse construction and likely helped with the move.

Prior to 1903, men had always held the position of probate clerk, but Bossert wasn't the first woman to hold the position. By October 1903, Lottie Dalrymple was appointed probate clerk by Probate Judge Frank B. Williams. By then, Williams had acted as his own clerk for several months and was likely relieved to have help.

Dalrymple resigned as probate clerk in August 1906. Her stated reason was that she had accepted another job. However, Judge Williams was not up for reelection, and there was no certainty that a new judge would reappoint her. Her resignation was effective immediately, so Williams appointed Mrs. Beatrice Payne Vaughan as the new probate clerk. Vaughan was a widow from Ozark.

By mid-December, Dalrymple was back on the payroll, reappointed by Judge Lydy. Vaughan and Dalrymple worked together in December. The next few months are unclear, but Dalrymple was on her own in the position again by June 1907.

In June 1910, Patton filled in for Dalrymple while she was taking care of her sick mother. Patton must have made a good impression with the judge; when Dalrymple resigned later that year to get married, Patton assumed the position and stayed through March 1911.

When Patton resigned in March 1911 to take a position as cashier for Frisco in Aurora, Bossert replaced her. Bossert held the job until December 1914. Jessie M. McCurdy took over from her in January 1915 and stayed with probate court until the end of 1919. McCurdy later worked as chief deputy clerk in the circuit clerk's office for several years.

Jennie Underwood Jolley began work as probate clerk in January 1920. A widow, Jolley lost her first husband, Charles, to pneumonia in 1918.

Jolley was a member of the Springfield Business and Professional Women's Club, the Delphian Society, and served on the public library board.

Dorothy Connelly took over in January 1935 but only stayed until February 1936. Huldah E. McEvilly replaced Connelly and stayed until illness forced her to retire in late 1941. The position appears to have remained vacant through most of 1942. Helen M. Connelly (possibly Dorothy Connelly's aunt) filled in during the month of October, but Probate Judge John H. Fairman was on his own until McCurdy relieved him that December.

McCurdy had resigned from her role in the circuit clerk's office in November 1942, effective January 1. She already had another job, that of probate clerk for the new probate judge, Harold Pierce. McCurdy was concerned that she wouldn't be allowed to keep her job with the circuit clerk in the new year, at least not at the same pay rate. The probate job was a certainty, as Pierce had offered it to her. She stayed with the probate office until January 1946, when she died at home of heart trouble. McCurdy was also the owner of McCurdy Paint Company, once located on E. Commercial Street.

McCurdy's friend, Jennie Page (formerly Jolley), was asked to fill in by Probate Judge Pierce. She filled in much longer than she likely anticipated; Page stayed until December 1954, when a leadership change in the probate office prevented her reappointment. She was replaced by R. Marvin Cowden, thus ending the 50-year reign of women as probate clerks.

Official Bond.

Know all men by these presents: that Anna B. Patton, as principal,
J. I. Woodfill and H. E. Patton
as securities are held and firmly bound unto the State of Missouri in the sum of One Thousand Dollars, (\$1000.00) for the payment of which we hereby bind ourselves our heirs, executors and administrators severally and jointly by these presents;

The conditions of the above bond are such however, that whereas the said Anna B. Patton was on the 1st day of October 1910, appointed to the office of Clerk of the Probate Court in the County of Greene in the State of Missouri, and has been duly commissioned. Now therefore, if the said Anna B. Patton shall faithfully demean herself in said office of Probate Clerk of the County aforesaid, discharge all of the duties honestly and faithfully and correctly account for all moneys that shall come into her hands by virtue of said office then this obligation to be void, otherwise to remain in full force and effect.

Witness our hands and seals, this 1st day of October 1910.

Anna B. Patton (Seal)

J. I. Woodfill (Seal)

H. E. Patton (Seal)

____ (Seal)

I, Anna B. Patton, do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Missouri, and that I will faithfully demean myself in the office of Probate Clerk and account for all moneys coming into my hands as such Clerk.

Anna B. Patton

Subscribed and sworn to before me, this 1st day of October 1910.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said Court in the City of Springfield, the date aforesaid.

G. G. Lyday

Probate Judge.

Approved by the Judge this 1st day of Oct 1910 G. G. Lyday
Probate Judge

MURDER IN THE STACKS

Till Death Did Them Part: The Murder of Nora Blades

STATE WARRANT-- J. P.

[IN CASE OF FELONY.—R. S. VOL. 1, Sec. 1725.]

STATE OF MISSOURI,

County of Greene

} ss.

The State of Missouri, to the Sheriff or any Constable of said County—GREETING:

WHEREAS, Complaint has been made before me, one of the Justices of the Peace in and for the County aforesaid, upon the oath of A. M. Jones

that Ollie Blades late of the County aforesaid, did on or about

the 29 day of December, A. D., 1903, at the County of Greene

Did then and there Willfully and unlawfully
Shoot and Kill Nora Blades

THESE ARE THEREFORE TO COMMAND YOU to take the said Ollie Blades
if to be found in your County, and him safely keep so that you have his
body forthwith before me to answer said Complaint, and be further dealt with according to law.

Given under my hand this 29 day of December, A. D., 1903

C. H. Young
Justice of the Peace.

AT APPROXIMATELY 8 A.M. ON DECEMBER 29, 1913, OLLIE BLADES SHOT HIS YOUNG WIFE, NORA, WITH A .22-RIFLE. NORA'S 13-YEAR-OLD SISTER, IDA DOTY, WITNESSED THE MURDER.[1]

Ollie Blades and Nora Doty, both from Republic, were married October 23, 1913.[2] Fifteen-year-old Nora had to have permission from her father, Charles Doty, to get married. Two months later, Nora was dead, murdered by her 21-year-old husband.

Local authorities were quickly notified and a warrant for Ollie's arrest was issued by Greene County Prosecuting Attorney Sam Wear. The inquest, led by Coroner W. C. Lohmeyer, was held that day in Republic. It was here that Ollie admitted to murdering his wife, who he claimed "...never did treat [him] right...Within two weeks after our marriage, she seemed to want to quarrel with me over trifles that didn't amount to nothing... Last Sunday morning she called me a thief...and I slapped her."

Ollie insisted that he did not plan to shoot Nora, and that he had his rifle with him that morning because he planned to go hunting. He happened to meet Nora and Ida while walking down the road. He said he "spoke to Nora but she would not answer me." He said he couldn't remember what happened next, other than he started shooting at her dog just for fun. Although he admitted to shooting Nora, he said he did not intend to aim at her. "I don't know what made me fire that first shot...I simply had an impulse and I obeyed it." [3]

His testimony continued:

I didn't want to see her suffer so I shot a second time. After the first shot she fell forward upon her knees and then on her face. The body gradually sank until she was resting on her elbows and knees. I was standing over her when I fired the second shot from my hip. It missed. I could hear her breathing. In fact, she was panting. The blood was dripping from the wound in her breast. For the third time I pulled the trigger. The head jerked and a small black spot appeared in the nape of her neck. I knew the last shot had taken effect. She then sank to the ground and the body rolled over on the right side. I stooped to my knees beside the body and kissed her.

Ollie admitted to being somewhat sorry for murdering his wife, but said it was the only way he could prevent her from potentially seeing other men. "You may call it jealousy if you want to. I guess that was what I did it for." [4]

Prosecutor Wear wanted Ollie tried before the March term of the criminal court.[5] In early January, Judge Arch A. Johnson set the court date for January 19.[6] Wear planned to charge him with first-degree murder.[7] Judge Johnson soon changed his mind and announced that the trial would be postponed to the March term, citing the need for more time to prepare to hear the case. At this time, Ollie's father, Gideon, visited him in jail for the first time.[8]

AFFIDAVIT FOR STATE WARRANT

STATE OF MISSOURI, } ss.
COUNTY OF GREENE,

BEFORE ME, C. H. Young Justice of the Peace within and for
Republic

Township in the county aforesaid, personally came Sam M. Wear

who, being duly sworn according to law, deposes and says

that on or about the 29 day of December A. D. 19 13, in

Republic Township, in the County of Greene and state of Missouri, †

Ollie Blades

did then and there, willfully and unlawfully feloniously, deliberately, premeditatedly
and of his malice aforethought in and upon the body of one Nora
Blades then and there being make an assault with a certain
dangerous and deadly weapon, to-wit: a rifle loaded with gun-
powder and leaden bullets, which he, the said Ollie Blades
then and there had and held in his hand and at and against her,
the said Nora Blades he, the said Ollie Blades then and there
feloniously, wilfully, deliberately, premeditatedly and of his
malice aforethought did shoot off and discharge, and with the
rifle aforesaid and the gunpowder and leaden bullets aforesaid
then and there feloniously, on purpose and of his malice
aforethought, wilfully, deliberately and premeditatedly did
shoot and strike her, the said Nora Blades in and upon the back
of the head of her, the said Nora Blades, giving to her, the
said Nora Blades with the dangerous and deadly weapon aforesaid,
to-wit: the rifle and gunpowder and leaden bullets aforesaid
in and upon the back of the head of her, the said Nora Blades,
one mortal wound of the breadth of one half inch and of the
depth of four inches, of which mortal wound she, the said
Nora Blades, then and there instantly died; and so the
said Sam M. Wear, upon his oath aforesaid, does say that
the said Ollie Blades, her the said Nora Blades, in the manner
and by the means aforesaid feloniously, wilfully, deliberately,
premeditatedly and of his malice aforethought did kill
and murder.

contrary to the form of the Statute in such cases made and provided, and against the peace and dignity of the state.

Sworn and subscribed before me this, the 29 day of December A. D. 1913.

C. H. Young Justice of the Peace

†Describe the offense charged to have been committed as nearly as possible, and state who is guilty of the fact charged, or who is accessory to it, as the case may be.

The court issued subpoenas from mid-to-late March, primarily for state witnesses. A few were called as state witnesses as well as witnesses for the defendant. Ollie retained two attorneys, William Mooneyham of Republic and G. Purd Hayes of Ozark. On March 30, Hayes requested a change of venue, stating that Judge Johnson was biased against his client.[9] The case was transferred to the courtroom of Judge C. H. Skinker.

“YOU MAY CALL IT
JEALOUSY IF YOU WANT
TO. I GUESS THAT WAS
WHAT I DID IT FOR.”

Ultimately, there was no trial. On March 30, Hayes informed the court that Ollie “had decided to enter a plea of guilty of murder in the first degree...and throw himself on the mercy of the court.” Missouri law provided two options for first-degree murder—hanging or life in prison. Family and friends in Republic circulated a petition to save Ollie from death, asking the court to sentence him to life in prison. The petition contained 64 names; the first signature was that of Charles Doty, father of Nora Blades.

During sentencing, Mooneyham spoke about the petition and the community’s wish to spare Ollie’s life. Hayes said he had known the Blades family “for two generations,” and prior to this event he had never known them to be criminals. He believed that no one would be helped by Ollie’s death. For his part, Prosecuting Attorney Wear was surprised by the plea and had fully expected to have a trial. He refused to offer the court a sentencing recommendation, but pointed out that the murder was “cold-blooded [and] premeditated.”[10]

On March 31, Judge Skinker sentenced Ollie Blades to life in prison with no possibility of parole.[11] He spent 15 years in Missouri State Prison in Jefferson City until May 1923, when Missouri Governor A. M. Hyde commuted his sentence.[12]

[1] *Springfield Leader*, March 31, 1914.

[2] Greene County, Missouri, marriage certificate no. 770 (1913), Ollie Blades and Nora Doty, Office of the Recorder of Deeds, Springfield.

[3] *Springfield Daily Leader*, December 30, 1913.

[4] *Springfield Leader*, December 30, 1913.

[5] *Springfield Daily Leader*, January 8, 1914.

[6] *Springfield Republican*, January 10, 1914.

[7] *Springfield Republican*, January 13, 1914.

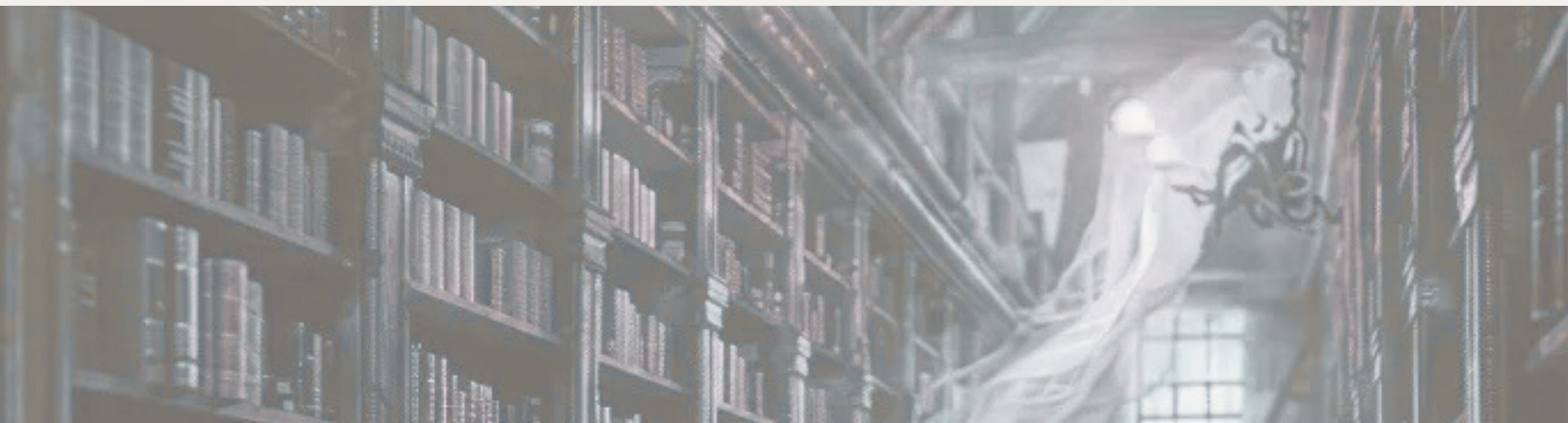
[8] *Springfield Republican*, January 20, 1914; Greene County, Missouri, Circuit Case Files, case no. 55611, *State of Missouri v. Ollie Blades*, November Term 1913, “Petition of Murder,” 29 December 1913, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield.

[9] Greene County, Mo., Circuit Court Case No. 55611, *State v. Blades*, Nov. Term 1913, “Petition of Murder.”

[10] *Springfield Republican*, March 31, 1914.

[11] *Springfield Leader*, March 31, 1914.

[12] *State of Missouri v. Ollie Blades*, register no. 15707, Missouri State Penitentiary Database, Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.



The Orator of the Ozarks: George Pepperdine

"At a meeting held by Attorneys George Pepperdine and John S. Farrington and the three judges of the Greene County court...it was definitely decided that the date for voting a bond issue of \$150,000 to complete Greene County's new court house would be Tuesday April 18...The calling of the election is the result of numerous petitions circulated through and in the twenty-five voting precincts of the county." [1]

Springfield Attorney Pepperdine handled "the legal end of the court house construction work." [2] Pepperdine and his wife Florence moved to Springfield from Illinois in 1889. [3] He joined a law firm and quickly established himself as a prominent attorney, working with several partners through the years, including Farrington.

In addition to his legal duties, Pepperdine helped with preparations to say good-bye to the old courthouse on the square in March 1912. He was appointed to the banquet committee, along with Judge Neville and McLain Jones, secretary of the local bar association. The association decided the banquet should be held "amid the surroundings of the murky old courthouse." [4]

an, 1894 to 1906	14
e Sons,	20
Brown, 1902	12
& Co. Lond 1915	7
1902	20
1904	4
Edition,	
r-Hifflin 1907	9
s, 1903	13
Mor.	18
ab. Co. 1899	16
Hifflin 1905	15
Hifflin 1899	6
, 1906	10
Jack,	
gh, 1905	4
, #201.	
own, 1901	12
oughton 1911	2
n, 1902	10
& Co.	26
d. 1,000, #304.	

Cooper,	Works,	Putnsma,		33
	Iroquois Ed. Ltd.	1,000, #763,	Bd in Buckram.	
Carleton,	Works,	Collier,		3
Collins,	Works,	"		30
Defoe,	Works,	Crowell, Cloth	1903	16
Delussett,	Workd,	Edwin C. Hill,	1907	10
Dante,				
DeBourienne,	Memoirs of Napoleon,	Grobier Society,	1801	
	London,			21
	Mor. Tooled, Ed. DeLuxe,	Ltd. 1,000, #182.		

De-Tallyrand,
DeBroglie,

Memoirs of Prince DeTallyrand,

PUBLIC SALE

--THE--

Pepperdine Library

The literary library of the late George Pepperdine, consisting of about 10,000 volumns of classical and literary works, with the cases, all good as new, will be sold at public auction at 2:00 o'clock on

Friday, July 25th,

at [REDACTED] Springfield, Missouri.

Also his law library of about 250 volumns will be sold at 4:00 o'clock on the same day at room 1000 Landers Building.

Terms of Sale, cash under \$500.00, over that amount, ten months on good security.

J. E. POTTER,
Administrator



As a defense attorney, Pepperdine defended quite a number of alleged criminals, but likely none were more notorious than William "Bud" Ray. Ray, a former Bald Knobber, was indicted for the shooting death of ex-Christian County Sheriff A. C. Crain in July 1895.

The "argument for the defense was continued by George Pepperdine." The "eloquent lawyer" stated that his client "had taken the life of Crain in self-defense." Pepperdine's eloquence wasn't enough; Ray was sentenced to 25 years in prison.[5]

Pepperdine was included in a Springfield Republican editorial called "Makers of Springfield" in March 1912.

Called the "orator of the Ozarks" for the speeches he gave at "Fourth of July celebrations, at old soldiers' reunions and other festive gatherings." Before giving a public speech, Pepperdine "studied his subject thoroughly and few public speakers equaled his literary excellence and polished rhetoric of his oratory." He once refused to give a speech about George Washington with only two weeks' notice, stating that he would need at least a year to prepare. [6]

Pepperdine died of a heart attack in the early morning of December 19, 1918. He had been ill for a couple of months after having influenza. He had held a number of positions during his career, including Greene County Tax Attorney and Deputy Clerk of the Southern Division of the Western District.[7]

At the time of his death, Pepperdine likely had the "largest, best-selected and most attractive library" in Springfield.[8] His collection of around 10,000 volumes included law books, mythology, philosophy, travel, poetry, and fiction, as well as numerous other topics. His wife, Florence, bought part of the collection, paying \$4,000 for an unspecified quantity of books. The remainder were sold at public auction. [9]

Long a member of the local school board, Pepperdine became the namesake of a new Springfield school, Pepperdine Elementary, in 1920. The building, located on E. Dale Street, still stands.

[1] *Springfield Leader*, March 20, 1911; Greene County, Mo., County Court Records (1911), Book 36: 535, Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield.

[2] *Springfield Republican*, January 29, 1913.

[3] *Springfield Leader*, December 19, 1918.

[4] *Springfield Leader*, March 11, 1912.

[5] *Springfield Republican*, November 23, 1895.

[6] *Springfield Leader*, December 20, 1918.

[7] *Springfield Leader*, December 19, 1918.

[8] *Springfield Republican*, December 21, 1918.

[9] Greene County, Missouri, probate case files, file no. 8721, George Pepperdine (1918), Greene County Archives and Records Center, Springfield.

The Greene County Archives Foundation Speaker Series



Presents:
Power, Scandal, and Reform

**Springfield's Mayor and the Police Matron:
An Early 20th Century Tale from the Queen City**

Connie Yen is an author and archivist with a passion for history and telling stories. She is the author of *Sinner and Savior: Emma Molloy and the Graham Murder*, the true story of an 1886 murder in Greene County known as "The Graham Tragedy," published in 2018, and *A Postcard History of Springfield* (Arcadia Publishing, 2014). Connie graduated from Missouri State University in 2012 with a degree in History and a minor in Ozark Studies. She earned a Masters' Degree in History in 2015. In 2021, Connie won a Fellowship with the State Historical Society of Missouri. Her third book, *Springfield: Past and Present*, was published in October 2022.



Archivist and author Connie Yen

Since 2016, Connie has been the director of the Greene County Archives and Records Center in Springfield, Missouri. She serves as the secretary for the Greene County Archives Foundation. She is a member of the Missouri Writers' Guild, the Springfield Writers' Guild, the Ozarks Genealogical Society, the Greene County Historical Society, and the Christian County Historical Society. She is currently the Southwest Representative for the Missouri Association of Museums and Archives. Although an introvert at heart, Connie enjoys speaking about Missouri history and engaging with her audiences at conferences and book signings. She loves books, history, hiking, and fountain pens. Connie lives in the Missouri Ozarks with her husband and a few hundred books.

Thursday, September 18, 2025

Speaker begins at 6:30 PM

Historic Elfindale Mansion

1701 S Fort Ave, Springfield, MO 65807

Resources Available at the Greene County Archives

- Assessor's House & Business Photographs
- Collector's Tax Books – Personal Property
- Collector's Tax Books – Real Estate
- Coroner's/Medical Examiner's Records
- Recorder's Deed Indexes
- Springfield Council Proceedings, Ordinances, and Resolutions
- County Poor Farm Records
- Alms House Records
- Probate Records and Wills
- Sanborn Maps
- Circuit Court Records – Civil and Criminal
- Justice of the Peace Books
- Dram Shop and Pool Licenses

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