

The Marion County Courthouse



These photos, from the Martha Ledbetter Collection, show the Courthouse in the early 1940s, above; below left in 1911 and right in 1910. See more on the next page.

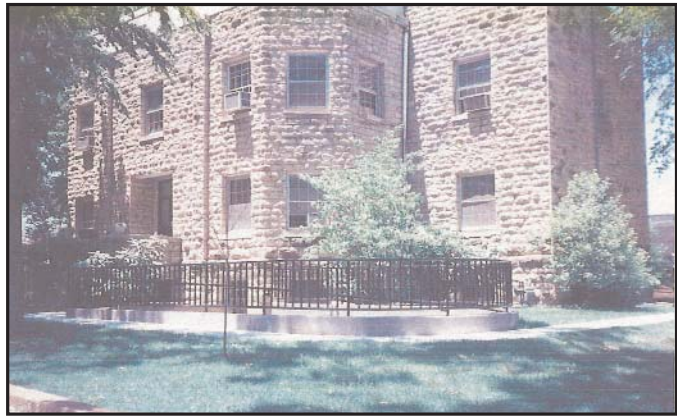




Sheila Daniel Family Collection

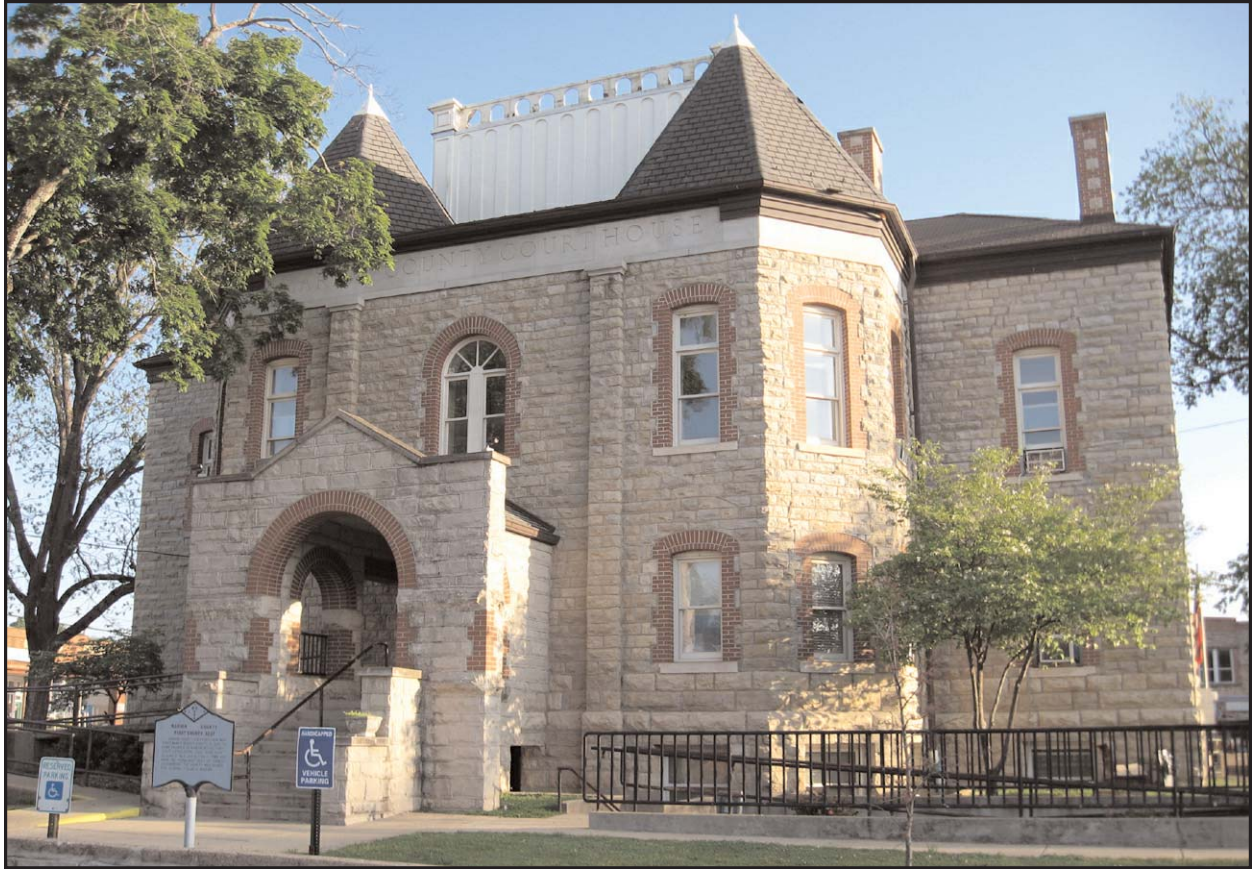
This is a postcard from 1909 showing the county clerk's office. It is the oldest known photo of the interior of the courthouse that was built in 1905 and burned in 1943. The men aren't identified on the back of the postcard but the county clerk at the time was J.F. Carson.

When the elegant 1905 courthouse burned during World War II, only the shell was left. It was rebuilt with no frills of the earlier building. At right top is the south entrance minus its original porch. At right bottom is the north entrance. Notice that the roof is flat and there are no brick edgings around the windows. Today, thanks to about half a million dollars in grants from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, the roof has been rebuilt to nearly its original appearance, the south porch has reappeared and most of the brick framings around the windows have been restored. The work continues as funding permits.



Martha Ledbetter Collection





Sheila Daniel

This is how the south side of the courthouse looks today--very nearly like it originally appeared. The only thing missing is the clocktower and the cupola, which is in the architect's plans. Heavy beams in the attic are already in place for support.

*By Martha Ledbetter,
Deputy County and Circuit Clerk*

There have been at least five courthouses on or in the vicinity of the present one. One burned during the Civil War. A wood frame structure burned Aug. 10, 1887. Almost all records before this date were destroyed. A two-story brick structure was completed in August, 1890, at a cost of about \$5,000. "Uncle Jim" Wickersham raised most of this money by subscription. J.S. Owens was county judge. It had to be torn down in 1904 because of insufficient ventilation underneath and water damage.

In April, 1905, a magnificent \$20,000 courthouse was dedicated. B.F. Fee was county judge at the time. A fireproof vault was included. Fire struck it about six o'clock in the

evening on Jan. 12, 1943, but when the vault was opened the records were intact.

With the bare shell of limestone left intact, the courthouse was rebuilt at a cost of \$40,000 and construction completed in March, 1944. Earl Berry was county judge. But only the necessities were built back; World War II was still raging.

On May 19, 1994, the courthouse was entered in the National Register of Historic Places. Through the efforts of County Judges Kenneth Jefferson and Roger Edmonson, grants were secured for restoration of the outside of the building in 1997 and 1998.

The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program provided \$550,000 in grants to fund the project.