

# **The Story of the Sangamon County Court House**

**by H.D. Giger - April 29, 1901**

In the year 1818 Illinois was, admitted to the Union and the same year Elisha and John Kelley, natives of North Carolina, with a few relatives and friends emigrated to what was then the far, far West. They built their cabins and formed a settlement in the timber stretching along the Town Branch, a stream that in early days flowed through the center of what is now the City of Springfield, Illinois.

Sangamon county was established by an act of the General Assembly January 30, 1821, and the original boundaries were approximately as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the third principal meridian with the Illinois river (near LaSalle), and following down the river to the mouth of Negro creek (say - Meredosia), thence striking southeasterly across the prairie to the southwest corner of the present county, and thence east along the north line of township 12 to the meridian line (about ten miles east of Taylorville), and thence north to the beginning. It will be seen from these boundaries that Sangamon county comprised the very heart of what was then known as the famous "Sangamo country" - the most fertile and productive land in the United States. By this act it was provided that as soon as the county commissioners were elected they should meet at some convenient place as near the center of population as possible, and such place when selected should be the temporary seat of justice for the county.

Rivers Cormack, Zachariah Peters and William Drennan were elected commissioners and qualified as such on April 3, 1821. The Kelleys were hunters and had sought this place as a quiet spot where they could be "far from the maddening crowds' ignoble strife;" they wanted to be on the firing line of civilization, but the commissioners came into their midst for the reason that it was the only place in the country where enough families could be found in the vicinity to take in the members of the court, and in the kindness of their hearts these rough pioneers welcomed them to their cabins. Thus it was that in the spring of 1821 the commissioners named above held a court at Kelley's settlement, on the waters of Spring creek, and Charles R. Matheny was appointed clerk and entered into bond with James Latham, of Elkheart grove, as security. At a county commissioners' court hold April 10, 1821, at the house of John Kelley, on the waters of Spring creek, the commissioners presented their certificate of the location of the temporary seat of justice for the county of "Sangamo," in which they state they have fixed and designated a certain point in the prairie near John Kelley's field on the waters of Spring creek at a stake marked "ZD" as the temporary seat of justice for said county, and do further agree that the said county seat be called and known by the name of Spring Field. The certificate is signed by Zachariah Peter and Wm. Drennan. The certificate being recorded in court record "A," page 3. The stake marked "ZD" is generally believed to have been set at or near the corner of Second and Jefferson streets.

On April 10, 1821, the commissioners entered into a contract with John Kelley, by which Kelley for the sum of \$42.50 agreed to build a court house in the prevailing style, the logs to be 20 feet long, the house one story high, plank floor, a good cabin roof, a door and window cut out; the work to be completed by

May 1st, next. This contract was not quite as lengthy as the Warren Roberts contract; but John Kelley must have fulfilled his part on time, for the record shows the next term of court "was held at the court house in Springfield" on June 4th, 1821. There was no haggling over red warrants, because page 9 shows that on June 5th, John Kelley was allowed \$42.50 due him by contract for building the court house and \$5.00 for "extras." The record does not disclose what John did with all the money.

Prior to June 5, 1821, the record shows the name of the county as Sangamo, but without any apparent reason on this day a letter is added making it Sangamon, and so it reads, to this day. Another peculiar act was performed by the court. The county was divided into four districts, and overseers for the poor were appointed - two for each district, the court then appointed three trustees to look after the overseers of the poor. It does not appear that anyone was appointed to look after the trustees. And so the summer passed away in this little out-of-the-way village, and along about the time the frost began to gather on the pumpkins and the autumn wind to whistle through the cracks of this primitive temple of justice and incidentally through the whiskers of the county officers; they bethought themselves of winter cheer. So one Jesse Brevard contracted to patch up the court house for the winter. Nine years after this they had a snow five feet deep. He agreed to chink outside and daub inside. Boards sawed and nailed on the inside cracks, a good and sufficient door shutter, to be made with good plank and hung with good iron hinges, with a latch. A window to be cut out, faced and eased, to contain nine lights, with a good, sufficient shutter hung on the outside. A fire-place to be cut out seven feet wide, and a good, sufficient wooden chimney, built with a good, sufficient back and hearth. Jesse did all this for \$20.50. Robert Hamilton built the county jail for \$84.75. Joseph Thomas was allowed \$1.00 for the plans of this jail, and on December 3, 1821, John Taylor, the sheriff, started the first racket in the board by claiming the jail was no account.

At a court held March 1, 1822, the court began to put on a little style, so they ordered that fourteen rods east and west, including the street, and twelve rods north and south, including the street, in the town of Springfield, on which the court house now stands, be set apart for public purposes and the accommodation of the court house and other public buildings.

Prior to 1823, the principal occupation of the frontiersman of the Kelley settlement consisted in hunting, trapping, fishing and bee hunting; but the fame of the "Sangamo country" spread through the land and the town began to fill up with progressive citizens accustomed to the more advanced ways of the larger cities of the East.

About this time came such men as Major Elijah Iles, Pascal P. Enos, Col. Thomas Cox, Charles R. Matheny, Mordecai Mobley, Thomas M. Neale, James C. Stevenson and Daniel P. Cook. Iles and Enos in 1823 laid out the town. It was called "Calhoun" in honor of the great nullifier of South Carolina; but the name was not popular and but little used, the name of the post office being Springfield. The streets and alleys and the lots and blocks exist the same today as laid out by them in 1823. The plat comprises that portion of the city bounded on the west by First street, on the east by Seventh street, on the north by Madison street, and on the south by Monroe; the public square remaining as it is. All of the persons above named proceeded to lay off strips of land between the several streets and running from Madison street north to the quarter section line near Enos avenue, and from Monroe street south to the quarter

section line near Lawrence avenue. These strips they deeded to each other alternately, so that no one person would have a large tract of land near the center of improvements. Major Iles kept a store and lived at the southeast corner of Jefferson and Second streets. Col. John Williams was his clerk. East of this was the store of Jabez Capps. Across the street was the store and home of Archer Herndon. Next east was Hooper Warren the printer, and next east the home and office of P. P. Enos, the public land agent. On the northwest corner of Fourth and Jefferson was the residence of Dr. William Jayne's father, Dr. Gershom Jayne. This house stood until replaced by Central Music Hall. Jefferson street was the only thoroughfare in the town and all the business centered about First and Second streets. On the southeast corner of First and Jefferson streets stood the Abrams Inn; next east the store of John Taylor; next the "Buck Tavern," kept by Andrew Elliott. William Carpenter lived and kept a store at the southwest corner of Second and Jefferson. On the north side of Jefferson, between First and Second streets, were a row of small shops occupied by various craftsmen, including the inevitable justice of the peace in the person of Asa Shaw. Following Jefferson street west to the crossing at the branch (Pasfield street) we find the ox-mill and distillery of Colonel Cox. His tavern stood at the north side of Jefferson near First street. West of the mill-lot was the rock-quarry. On the south side of Jefferson at Pasfield street and across the branch was the tan-yard of William Proctor, and up over the hill on which the High School stands and a little to the west and south was a settlement called "Newsomville"-jocularly called "Nuisanceville" by the jealous residents of the "Old Town." On the south side of Jefferson just east of the tan-yard stood the cabin of Uncle Billy Fagan, next east the house of William Baker, and next the home of John Moor, the step-father of Isaac A. Hawley. On the southwest corner of First and Jefferson Streets lived Sherrill the cobbler. Other persons here at the time, were Gen. J. D. Henry, Dr. John Todd, Edward Mitchell, Dr. John G. Bergen, P. C. Latham, Z. A. Enos, Isaac A. Hawley, Gordon Abrams, Dr. Garrett -Elkin, Thomas Strawbridge, Dr. Darling, Jacob Plank, "Aunt Creecy" a free negress, and others.

At this period the road leading from St. Louis met the road from Vincennes at Macoupin point and followed close to the line of the old Chatham road, passing the Master's farm house (Second and Lawrence) on the east and then swerving to the left over the hill through the grove where the Capitol now stands, then up First street, crossing the branch at Adams, and on up First to Jefferson, then east on Jefferson to Fourth, thence across the country by the Converse farm and on northward to Erastus Wright's ferry at Fort Clark (Peoria), and then on to Galena and the lead mines. Mr. Wright afterwards lived in Springfield and traded eighty acres of land for a tame elk that he rode and drove to harness like a horse. The other road ran west on Jefferson from First, crossing the branch at the tan-yard, ran a little to the southwest passing Newsomville, to the forks. Here one road branched off to Beardstown running close to the present line of the Beardstown road; the other struck out to the southwest for the Diamond Grove (Jacksonville), following the line of the old Jacksonville road.

By an act of the General Assembly of December 23, 1824, the boundaries of the county were re-established, and James Mason, Rowland P. Allen, Charles Gear, John G. Lofton and John R. Sloo, were appointed commissioners to locate the permanent seat of justice of the county. It was stipulated in this fact that the parties on whose lands the county seat was located, should donate to the county thirty-five acres of land adjoining it.

When the above law was passed, quite a struggle ensued between Springfield, Sangamo town and a "paper town" located on the river where the water works now stands. The historic town of Sangamo-where Lincoln built his flat boat-was located on the west bluff of the river in the northwest quarter of section two in Gardner township. It has long been extinct. Charles Broadwell was the proprietor, and at the time the question of locating the permanent county seat was agitated, had grown into quite a respectable town for those days, and was actually a better location than Springfield, it was on the water, contained several stores, had a saw-mill and grist-mill and a carding machine. The other rival of Springfield was a town that existed on paper, and was principally owned by speculators from the east, of whom Wm. S. Hamilton, a young lawyer and son of Alexander Hamilton, of Aaron Burr fame, was the prime mover. The commissioners, it seems, were required to view the various sites offered, much as parties seeking factory sites do nowadays, and after visiting Springfield, with which they were not very much impressed, inquired the nearest route to Sangamo and Hamilton's town.

Major Iles and the other citizens would not hear of their leaving without a guide, so Andrew Elliott, the keeper of the "Buck Tavern," and a noted woodsman volunteered to show them the way. It is now about an hour's drive to old Sangamo town, but Elliott took the commissioners in a roundabout way through swamps and thickets, and back and forth across Spring creek and the river, and when the commissioners arrived at Sangamo they were so exhausted and disgusted with the supposed inaccessible region, that they would listen to no explanations and soon put back to Springfield, where after hanging fire like a legislative committee, they finally located the permanent county seat. It would be impossible to calculate of how much value this decision was for the struggling little town at that period. The State warrants for expenses held by the commissioners were practically worthless, as there were at that date no taxable lands, and Major Iles intimated that if it should so happen that they should select Springfield, he would see that their warrants were cashed. The warrants were cashed.

The commissioners made formal report to the court March 18, 1825, that they had located the permanent county seat at Springfield, and Major Iles and P. P. Enos deeded to the county a tract of land, beginning at the northeast corner of Fifth and Monroe streets, thence north to the northeast corner of Fifth and Washington streets, thence east to the northeast corner of Sixth and Washington streets, thence north to Madison street, thence east to the quarter section line between Eight and Ninth streets, thence south to Monroe street, and thence west to the place of beginning, containing thirty-five acres, and including the public square.

Sarcasm surely existed at this early period, for the court record shows that W. S. Hamilton, the disappointed proprietor of the "paper town" was magnanimously appointed to make the survey of the tract donated to the county, but this appointment was scornfully ignored by him, and he soon left this part of the country forever. Thomas M. Neale made the survey, for which he was paid \$38.95.

The old court house (the Kelley one) was sold to John Taylor on September 7, 1825, for \$32.00, and the contract to build a frame court house was let to Thomas M. Neale for \$449.00, except the chimney, which was let to Joseph Thomas for \$70.00. Robert Thompson was allowed \$2.50 for the plan of the court house. On July 15, 1826, the treasurer was ordered to pay T. M. Neale balance of \$87.00 when the court house was finished, or his contract fulfilled, and John Taylor and Chas. R. Matheny were appointed

to receive the house. It was ordered that Chas. White be employed to lath and plaster the court house at 37 1/2 cents a yard. This frame court house stood on the northeast corner of Sixth and Adams street.

On January 4, 1830, it was ordered that a brick court house be built-on or about the middle of the public square, as now laid out in the town of Springfield or Calhoun. John Todd, Asa S. Shaw and Garret Elkin, were appointed agents for the county to contract for the building and to superintend the same. The committee reported that they lot the contract March 2, 1830. On March 6, 1830, the committee were ordered to have the court house built near the center of the square, the southeast corner to be at a stake set by the commissioners for that purpose.

The brick court house stood in the middle of the square, and was completed in 1831 at a cost of \$6,841.00. It was a two-story square, brick building, with a hip roof, and cupalo on top, similar to the court houses peculiar to the Mississippi valley at that period, and from the time it was built all the business of the town centered around the square, and the old town on Jefferson street began to decay. The row of small shops on the east end of the north side of the square was called "Chicken Row." In the fall of 1835 a young man fresh from the prim and dignified courts of New York arrived in Springfield. He wandered into the brick building standing in the center of the square, and saw the judge on his bench with his chair tilted back, his heels higher than his head, a cob pipe in his mouth, his hair all awry, and before him stood a small dark man with long black hair pleading his case. Attentively listening sprawled a long sombre form on the low platform used for the judge's rostrum. The room was filled with men laughing and smoking. The judge was Stephen T. Logan, acknowledged to be the greatest lawyer Illinois has ever produced. The little man was Stephen A. Douglas the "Little Giant," and the form on the floor was that of Abraham Lincoln, destined in the years to come to be the two foremost characters in the most formidable crisis the Union ever knew.

On March 10, 1831, the old court house (on 6th and Adams) and the lot on which it stood were sold to John B. Moffett for \$626.00.

On March 10, 1831, it was ordered that 30 feet of the north end of the public square be appropriated for a walk, provided a brick market house is built in the street not less than 40 feet long. This market house stood in the middle of Sixth street just north of Washington, with a driveway on either side, the street being widened for that purpose.

In the Legislature at Vandalia in the session of 1836-7, Sangamon county was represented by two senators and seven members of the lower house. They were a singular body of men, all tall and angular and their combined height was exactly 54 feet, they are famous in Illinois history as the "Long Nine." The men were Abraham Lincoln, Ninian W. Edwards, Archer G. Herndon, Job Fletcher, John Dawson, Andrew McCormack, Dan Stone, William F. Elkin and Robert L. Wilson. "Honest Old Abe" contributed four inches to make the average six feet.

The capitol of the State at this time was at Vandalia, having been removed there from Kaskaskia and as the tide of emigration was moving northward it was conceded that the capitol must be nearer the center of population; although Vandalia and Southern Illinois fought hard against it.

The people were wild over a mania called internal improvements, a plan of which Governor Duncan was a strong advocate, and which eventually plunged the State into bankruptcy. From the beginning of the session the "Long Nine" set to work "log rolling." They asked for no public improvements; they wanted no railroads, canals, no plank roads, but would help out any member that did want them for his district, if he would vote to remove the capital to Springfield.

There were many applicants, and on the first ballot Springfield had but 35 out of 121 votes. The vote stood as follows: Springfield 35, Jacksonville 14, Vandalia 16, Peoria 16, Alton 15, scattering 25. Illiopolis, a "paper town" of mammoth proportions, covering 8,000 acres, laid out near the site of the present village of that name, by Governor Duncan, John Taylor, Eli C. Blakenship and the Sangamo Land Company, received ten votes on the second ballot. "Poor old Peoria," as usual, brought up the rear and Springfield captured the prize on the fourth ballot.

The city and county have never made any public recognition of the valuable services rendered by the "Long Nine," and it is to be hoped that if a monument is not erected to their memory in the court house park, their names at least may be inscribed on the historic walls of the building they so skillfully obtained for Springfield.

By an act supplemental to the act permanently locating the seat of government of Illinois at Springfield, approved March 3, 1837, the county commissioners were empowered to convey to the governor of the State the property known as the "public square" in the city of Springfield, containing two and a half acres, and the deed to Governor Joseph Duncan is recorded in Book "K," page 503. In Book "O," page 319, is recorded a contract between the commissioners and Leroy L. Hill, in which Hill gives the commissioners the right of taking from his stone quarry on Sugar creek, all the rock they want from December 1, 1837, to January, 1841, at the rate of \$1.00 per load. Mr. Hill's farm was on Sugar creek near the home of Uncle Philemon Stout, and the peculiar rock in the present building came from this quarry. Daniel O. and David A. Brown, twin brothers, and well known citizens, at fifteen years of age sawed all the lath used in the building.

By reason of a defect supposed to exist in the former deed to the state an order was entered by the court February 10, 1847, authorizing the commissioners to execute another deed to the State for the public square, and the deed to Governor French can be found in Book "Y," page 581.

An act legalizing both deeds was passed Feb. 17, 1847.

An act passed Feb. 25, 1867, provided for the erection of a new State house and the Governor was empowered to reconvey to the county of Sangamon and the city of Springfield the public square for the sum of \$200,000, and the further consideration that the grantees cause to be conveyed to the State the tract on which the capitol now stands on Second street. The deed from Gov. John M. Palmer to the county and city is recorded in book 41, page 44, and the deed from the city to the county is recorded in book 41, page 45.

One of the conditions of locating the capitol in Springfield in 1837 was that the city should pay \$50,000 toward the erection of the building, and although the population was but 1,100, the brave little town

met the first two installments promptly, but the third fell due just as the great financial crash swept over the country and while the building was still uncompleted. On March 22, 1838, 101 loyal citizens executed their joint note to the State Bank of Illinois for \$16,666.67 and the money was paid to the State. The note was paid off when it became due and is now preserved at the Ridgely bank. The note was signed by John Hay, Joseph Thayer, M. O. Reeves, W. P. Grimsley, William Wallace, Thomas Mather, D. Prickett, Washington Iles, Joel Johnson, Wm. S. Burch, C. R. Matheny, Wm. Butler, P. C. Latham, N. W. Edwards, J. T. Stuart, George Pasfield, B. O. Webster, S. M. Tinsley, J. F. Amos, S. Conant, R. B. Zimmerman, James L. Lamb, B. Ferguson, B. Talbott, Simeon Francis, Nathaniel Hay, Robert Irwin, V. Hickox, Geo. Trotter, S. T. Logan, E. M. Henkle, J. W. Keyes, Jno. G. Bergen, E. Wright, E. D. Baker, A. Lincoln, Garrett Elkin, G. Jayne, Abner Y. Ellis, S. H. Treat, E. Iles, James Maxey, W. M. Cowgill and others.

The cost was estimated at \$130,000, but the sum of \$240,000 was expended on the building.

After the conveyance of the public square to the State in 1837, the brick court house standing in the middle of the square was demolished to make room for the State house, which was immediately erected on the ground. The corner stone was laid with appropriate ceremonies July 4, 1837. While this structure was in course of erection the State departments were removed in wagons (there being no railroads) from Vandalia to Springfield, and the Senate occupied the First Methodist church on the southeast corner of Monroe and Fifth streets and the House of Representatives used the old Second Presbyterian church, on the west side of Fourth street and south of the alley, just north of the present church. The supreme court sat in the Episcopal (St. Paul's) church.

In 1837, after such conveyance to the State, the county leased the buildings on the west side of Fifth street, just north of Washington, the same being known as "Hoffman's Row."

Hoffman's Row was occupied by the county until 1845, when a lot on the southeast corner of Sixth and Washington streets, fronting 78 1/2 feet on Sixth and 160 feet on Washington, was purchased by the county, May 14th of that year, and on which another brick court house, with stone portico and trimmings, was built. It stood just north of the old building of the State Bank of Illinois, the two buildings occupying the half block on the east side of the square. They were massive, picturesque structures, and added much dignity to the town. The bank was a Grecian temple on the Corinthian order, and the court house was of Doric architecture. The building was to cost according to the contract, \$9,680. This building was used by the county from 1845 to January, 1876 when the State moved its offices to the present State capitol and vacated the public square, which had been re-conveyed to the county by deed of Oct. 23, 1869, nearly seven years before. The county then moved into the present building, and the court house, on 6th and Washington streets, was torn away, the ground subdivided into business lots and sold off in 1877.

The old State House, being large and spacious, served eminently for a court house, and for many years was amply sufficient for the needs of a county building. But the county was rapidly growing in population and wealth, and the business necessarily transacted at the court house gradually increased, until it became apparent, that, sooner or later, more room must be provided. Another matter which began to be taken into account, was the condition of the building with regard to fire. John Kelley's

contract had no such phrases as "absolutely fire-proof" or "practically fire-proof," and, indeed, the old State House seems to have been constructed without taking danger from fire into consideration at all, except that the office of the State Treasurer (used by the county for the recorders office), was provided with a so called fire-proof vault. The remainder of the building, and especially the roof and dome, would in these days be called "a veritable fire trap." This matter of jeopardizing the county records, which, if destroyed could never be replaced, was often pointed out and thoroughly discussed. Finally, on the 11th of June, 1897, Dr. A. L. Converse introduced a resolution in the Board of Supervisors, setting forth the need of additional room, the danger from fire, etc., and providing for the appointment of a committee to investigate the matter. On December 16th this committee reported in substance, that they had found a bigger job than they expected, and advised that nothing be done until the finances of the county would justify giving the building a general overhauling.

About this time, many of the business men of the city, especially around the square, began to get ashamed of the old soft gravel walks in the court house yard and sent a petition to the county board asking them to replace these horrid walks with something more up-to-date. The majority of the supervisors, however, were farmers, and were not afraid of a little mud, and politely suggested to their "city cousins" that there were other things needed more than walks. Public sentiment, when aimed in a certain direction, is a potent factor in influencing to action men in public service. The need of doing something with the court house was now fully apparent, but public sentiment was greatly divided on what to do. One idea advanced was to sell off three-fourths of the public square and build a new court house on the remaining quarter with the money thus obtained. H. H. Biggs introduced a resolution in the board of supervisors to this effect September 13, 1898. This idea met with violent opposition. The old building was one of historic interest. Its halls had echoed the voices of Lincoln and Douglas in matters of vital import to the State and Nation. Within its walls Stephen T. Logan, Illinois' greatest lawyer, and other noted men had pleaded with juries for the lives and liberties of their fellow men. Its corridor had been made sacred by having held in state, the remains of the lamented Lincoln. Under its dome many stirring scenes, "in times which tried men's souls" had been enacted. So filled was, indeed, the whole structure with recollections, pleasant and otherwise, that the sentiment was well nigh universal, that the appearance of the time-honored building must not be molested. A resolution in harmony with this feeling, but pointing to some plan for improving the building was introduced in the County Board September 15, by Thomas C. Mather, and met with hearty support. It was generally agreed that, sometime, somehow, something must be done to enlarge the space and fireproof the building but the great obstacle in the way, as is usual in such cases, was how to meet the expense. The financial condition of the county lent little encouragement. The constitutional levy of 75 cents on the \$1.00 hardly furnished sufficient revenue to defray the current expenses of the County. The railroad bonds issued on account of the Springfield and Illinois Southeastern, and Gilman, Clinton, and Springfield railroads had not all been paid. The permanent location of the State Fair at Springfield had cost the County \$75,000, none of which had been paid. However, the matter was referred to a committee which at a special meeting October 4th, reported that they had fully examined the building, found it inadequate, dangerous and unsafe; that they believed it inexpedient and undesirable to sell off any of the ground, but advised that steps be taken at once, to remodel, enlarge and fireproof the old building. On the acceptance of this report the Board decided to submit the question of levying a tax of \$100,000

to remodel the Court House, to the voters of the county at the county election in November. This action of the Board was taken in a "committee of the whole;" it found itself in the (w) hole many times afterward. A majority of the votes cast on the question, at the election, were in favor of the additional tax, so the question of remodeling the court house came squarely before the board of supervisors. The question of plans now became the paramount idea, and everybody had a notion of his own. It was thought that the large corridor running north and south through the building, if properly utilized, would afford the necessary additional room, and would not "change the external appearance of the building." Some advocated building wings on the building, others tearing off the roof and adding a story on the top, but as these were not in harmony with the prevailing idea, but little attention was paid to them. S. J. Hanes, one of the architects, who afterwards furnished the plans, advanced the idea of raising the building and constructing a complete story underneath, which, he insisted would not mar the external appearance but rather improve it. This idea, although it was later adopted, was looked upon as an utter impossibility and cast aside. Mr. Mather solved the problem for the time being with an omnibus resolution which, in substance, provided for an extension of \$20,000.00 on the tax books for the ensuing year by way of a starter; that architects be invited to prepare plans and specifications, to present to the board; that certain premiums be offered to architects to induce them to submit plans; that the necessary committee be appointed, etc., etc. Lest the prevailing idea should be lost sight of, E. S. Scott tacked on a little proviso that none of the plans should provide for any "change in its external appearance." This resolution was then adopted by a vote of 21 to 16, with the express understanding that the cost should not exceed \$50,000.00, and the following committee appointed, being the first committee on "Remodeling the Court House: " E. L. Stockdale, of Talkington, J. H. Maxey, of Island Grove, J. H. Crowder, of Cotton Hill, Thomas C. Mather and H. H. Biggs, of Capital town- ship. At the next meeting, this committee submitted three plans, and after much deliberating, a plan presented by S. J. Hanes was adopted, but the proposition to raise the building was defeated. Hanes and S.A. Bullard were jointly employed to superintend the job. The contract was let on March 29, 1899, to Warren Roberts & Co., of Chicago, for \$49,850.00.

On April 5th, the county officers moved to their temporary quarters, the most of whom found shelter in the I. O. O. F. building, corner Fourth and Monroe streets. The building committee was now changed. E. S. Scott and J. M. Amos were appointed in place of Messrs. Biggs and Crowder whose term expired, and Mr. Simmons in place of Mr. Mather, who did not wish to serve longer on the committee. Mr. J. O. Joy, chairman of the Board was also added to the committee. This committee chose Mr. George Simmons as general overseer. At the expiration of their term, Messrs, Scott and Amos were succeeded by Philip Nelch and G. W. M. Gordon, otherwise the committee remained the same.

After the contract had been let and the old building dismantled, those who frequented the court house began to entertain some fear lest after all the building, when remodeled, would not furnish the necessary room. Hanes still stuck to his theory that the building could be raised and its appearance preserved, and even augmented. This theory gradually gained in favor until finally, May 15, Mr. Mather secured the passage of a resolution in conformity with this idea. Of course it became necessary to get the consent of the contractor in order to make the change, but "Barkis was willin'" and accordingly on the 14th day of June a second contract was made with the same firm (they being the lowest bidders), by

which the entire building was to be raised eleven feet, and a complete story built underneath, for \$27,500. This was the greatest feat of engineering skill ever attempted in the county, but it was successfully done. Several weeks were consumed in placing the "jacks" and blocks into position, but when at length everything was ready, the entire building was raised the eleven feet in about twelve days, or an average of nearly a foot a day, and it was generally conceded that the appearance of the structure had been enhanced rather than deteriorated, except that the dome now "looked too squatty," and the agitation at once arose that it too must be improved. All the contracts up to this, time had provided for making the building "practically fire-proof," and as the old framework in the roof and dome was the worst fire-trap of all, it was soon decided that it must "go." So after the usual "resolutin" the contract for a new roof and dome was let to the same firm for \$12,000. The court house was now very much like the Irishman's, old barrel; although it had had new heads, new hoops and new staves, Pat still maintained it had the same old "bung," and consequently was the same old barrel; so it appeared, especially to those who had opposed the improvements, that the only thing to be left of the old court house would be the "bung," if it had one.

This completed the improvements so far as the building was concerned, although it was sarcastically suggested that the stone in the walls "looked pretty shabby." New troubles arose, however, in the way of furniture. Something up-to-date and commensurate with the improved building must be provided. This proved to be as perplexing a problem as the building itself. For nearly two years the board of supervisors wrestled with it. There were whereases and resolutions innumerable, motions, amendments, substitutes, re-considerations and tax levies galore; and always the inevitable committee," without which no special work by a public body of men is ever possible. Finally two contracts were let, one to Geo. D. Barnard & Co. of St. Louis, for the steel furniture, consisting of fire-proof file cases, book shelves, counters, etc., for the sum of \$20,517; and one to the Wollaeger Mfg. Co. of Milwaukee, for wooden furniture consisting of tables, desks, chairs, and other innumerable paraphernalia for the various rooms and offices for \$11,750. (Jacob Ellis supplied the "furniture" for the first court house which consisted of a judge's seat and bar, for which he received the exhorbitant (?) sum of four dollars and fifty cents.)

During the progress of the remodeling, of the court house the old soldiers sent a petition to the County Board asking that a room be set apart for the use of the Grand Army of the Republic. The old veterans usually get what they go after, and the result of their effort in this direction is that now an elegant room on the fourth floor has been provided and neatly furnished for their "use, benefit and behoof forever," and which is known as Grand Army Hall.

Another matter was brought to the attention of the board, but as yet no action has been taken. When a citizen of the county becomes insane the only place to confine him pending an investigation and commitment to an asylum, is the jail along with common criminals. Judge Murray has been especially active in an effort to have a room in the court house which might be fitted up expressly for this purpose. The board at one time acted favorably on his suggestion and recommended that such a place be provided, but somehow in the confusion it has been overlooked. The committee and architects, however, are of the opinion that some of the unoccupied rooms can yet be fitted up for this purpose,

and it is to be hoped that they will be able to do so, and in future spare the families of such unfortunate people the humiliation of seeing their relatives and friends confined like criminals in a common bastille.

The total cost of remodeling the court house can, at present, be only approximated, as the work is not entirely completed and many of the little incidentals are not yet paid for. The following figures, however, are substantially correct:

The Warren Roberts Co., three contracts and extras... \$103,220.07

Less credits for old material sold and changes..... 2,491.86

-- \$100,728.21

Geo. D. Barnard & Co., contract and extras - 20,971.75

The Wollaeger Mfg. Co., contract and extras - 12,471.00

Hanes and Ballard, architects - 6,771.40

Electric wiring, clocks, frescoes arbitration, etc - 9,186.02

Furnishing Grand Army Hall - 2,259.80

Cement Walks, etc - 2,736.72

Making a total cost of improvements to date, not including the curtains, carpets, linoleum, furnishing dormitory, etc \$155,125.90.

In order to get the total expense the county has been to on account, of the remodeling of the court house, there should be added to the above, \$16,994, which has been paid out for rent, moving and other miscellaneous items, which, with a reasonable estimate for the uncompleted work, will make in round numbers \$175,000 as the total cost of the improvements.

The old "gravel paths" through the court house yard have now been supplemented by cement walks which defy stone itself in strength and durability, diverging from the building and angling across the grounds, making it easily accessible from every direction. Two large cannon, the combined weight of which is 6,900 pounds, stationed on either side of the building add much to the ornamentation of the grounds. These are the gift of our distinguished citizen, Congressman Ben. F. Caldwell, and are dedicated to the county in honor of her soldiery. Judge James H. Matheney once planted a maple tree in the court house grounds, just southwest of the building, which he dedicated to Stephenson Post No. 30, G. A. R. This tree was struck by lightning and materially disfigured. On Friday afternoon, April 26, 1901, the Post reciprocated this tender act of affection by planting to his memory a beautiful poplar tree near the site selected by the deceased judge for his tree. The planting was attended with appropriate exercises, Judge G. W. Murray delivering the address.

Another ornament(?) once adorned the public square, but which has long since been removed. This was the "whipping post" which stood near the northeast corner of the square, adjacent to the jail. This post

has passed out of the recollection of many of the old inhabitants, and a majority of our citizens of today do not know that one was ever established. Such is the fact, however, and several persons "paid the penalty of their misdeeds" at that post. An old settler informed the writer that it was only used for "little offenses like petty stealing, and wife-beating. It is said that James D. Henry was the last sheriff who used the post, and he often remarked that he was so chicken-hearted that he suffered more when inflicting the penalty than the offender he punished. On the other hand, Judge Sawyer rather enjoyed seeing the punishment inflicted. It finally came to be looked upon as a "relic of barbarism" and dropped into disuse.

The building itself, as it stands today, is a marvel of strength and beauty. It is the Grecian-Doric style of architecture, especially applicable to buildings of its character, and is one of the very few to be found anywhere in the United States. It is 123 feet long, 90 feet wide, and to the top of the flag-staff is 154 feet. From the ground to the cornice line is 57 feet. The porticos on the north and south project 11 1/2 feet. There are three full floors of offices and an upper story in which is the G. A. R. hall, the dormitory, the gallery of the circuit court and storage rooms.

Grand, solitary, dignified, historic old structure, sufficient for years for the needs of the great commonwealth of Illinois, yet grown too small for the business of a county. For three-quarters of a century it has been a faithful servant of the public, and as it stands today, remodeled, enlarged, renewed, bids fair to perform its part and take its place in the history of another century, which is yet to be made and written. It may be of interest to note, briefly, something of the history of the county as a county, from its origin to the present time. There were originally (June 5, 1821), four townships, as follows: "Sangamon, comprised all the territory east of Edward's old trace." "Springfield, west of Edward's old trace including all the settlements on Spring Creek." "Richland, west of Spring Creek and south of the Sangamon river." "Union, west of Edward's old trace, and north of the Sangamon river."

Thus it will be seen that the Kelly settlement on Spring Creek was the "hub" from which all the rest of the unsettled territory branched. As this remote territory settled up new counties were formed out of the famous Sangamo, and gradually its proportions decreased to its present size. Macon, on the east, swung off January 19, 1829. Morgan, on the west, next "followed suit" February 12, 1835. Cass, on the northwest, was next to go March 3, 1837. Logan, on the north, and Dane (now Christian), on the southeast, simultaneously severed their connection with us February 15, 1839. Finally, little Menard concluded she could take care of herself, and organized as a county February 28, 1847.\* Late in the year 1860, Sangamon county, by vote decided to change her form of government and adopted the "New England" system of township organization. Accordingly, April 29, 1861, the first board of supervisors met at the court house and organized by electing William Lively chairman. This was just forty years ago, and forty years after the organization as a county (April, 1821). There were then 23 supervisors representing 22 townships, Springfield having two supervisors. There are now 27 townships with 40 supervisors, the city having 13.

In 1821 the tax rate was "one-half percentum" and George Hayworth, the county treasurer for that year, reported to the court that he had collected \$447.44, and his report shows charges against the county amounting to just \$447.44. George must have figured pretty close, or else collected just enough to pay

expenses and then quit. After reducing the territory to about one-seventh its original size the assessed valuation in 1900 was \$14,386,168.00, the rate being two and one-half mills higher than in 1821.

**First Officers were:**

**James Latham - Probate Judge**

**John Taylor - Sheriff**

**Charles R. Matheny - County and Circuit Clerk, Recorder of Deeds**

**George Hayworth - Treasurer [James Sims having refused to qualify]**

**Joseph Dickson - Coroner**

**James C. Stephenson - Surveyor**

**Samuel D. Lockwood - Prosecuting Attorney [Later judge of the supreme court]**

**Stephen A. Douglas - Prosecuting Attorney in 1835**