

APPANOOSE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

This building is actually the third Appanoose County Courthouse.

The First Courthouse: *The first Appanoose County Courthouse was a log cabin on the south side of the Centerville Square. It served from 1848 until 1863, but it was far too small, so the second courthouse was being considered as early as 1856.*

The Second Courthouse: *Times were particularly difficult, so the reality of a new Appanoose County Courthouse didn't see the light of day until 1860, when a proposed courthouse costing \$15,000 was voted upon and won. Money appropriated from the sale of swamp land along the Chariton River helped to fund the construction. The foundation was laid later that year.*



Construction began, but the Civil War delayed the construction. And a high wind blew down the west brick wall and further delayed construction. The second Appanoose County Courthouse was completed in January 1864. It was a beautiful, majestic building in the center of the courtyard that served from 1864 until 1881 without issue. But on July 4, 1881, a fireworks display started a fire in the cupola of the building, destroying the cupola and second floor. It was patched up and used for a while, but in 1891, it was condemned.

So, the second floor was removed and the bottom floor remained as an ugly remnant of the once gorgeous building. They called it 'the Sheep Shed', and it was used for another few years. It was torn down in the spring of 1903 to make room for the new, current Appanoose County Courthouse.



**The third Appanoose County Courthouse,
the building we know and love today:**

The proposition to spend the money for a new county courthouse failed a few times before some major efforts were made to bring people around to understand the need for a new facility. After using the diminished, inadequate building that had been damaged by fire in 1881 for several years, it was time for a new building. In the November election of 1902, it finally passed, issuing \$75,000 in bonds for the new courthouse. Architects were Smith and Gage of Des Moines and the contractor chosen was local William Peatman. The cornerstone was laid on May 21, 1903 by the local Masons of Jackson Lodge. The box that was put into the cornerstone includes: a business directory from 1902, a list of attorneys in the county, a copy of the Iowegian, and other area newspapers along with some other leaflets and information.

Construction began in earnest and was completed on schedule in July of 1904. Peatman's bill was \$69,900. The plumbing and heating by a separate contractor was an additional \$5,500, which used up almost all of the allotted \$75,000. There was nothing left to furnish the building. Some furnishings from the old building were used and the Board of Supervisors spent an additional \$6,140.77 on furnishings. And there were other unforeseen expenses as completion neared. When construction was completed in the summer of 1904, the total cost was \$90,000.

The courthouse was dedicated on Monday, September 12, 1904, the first day of the fall term of the court.

A few years later, there was an attempt to raise money for a clock to be installed in the tower above the courthouse. With very little luck in raising funds, wealthy businessman J.R. Wooden stepped in and donated most of the money to complete the project. The courthouse clock was installed in 1905 and a huge 'thank you' celebration was held as a surprise for J.R. Wooden on March 14, 1905.

In 2004, a 100-year anniversary of the courthouse was held on the lawn of the courthouse with many dignitaries and speakers on-hand to mark the special occasion.