

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Carter County Courthouse

Other names/site number N/A

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

## 2. Location

Street & number 105 Main Street

N/A	not for publication
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City or town Van Buren

N/A	vicinity
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State Missouri Code MO County Carter Code 035 Zip code 63965

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

B. K. De Dery SHPO 8-22-22  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
  
 entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register  
 other (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Carter County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Carter County, Missouri  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>	
1	3	buildings
		sites
1	1	structures
1		objects
3	4	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT  
Courthouse

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/ NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE  
walls: CONCRETE  
STONE (sandstone, various)  
roof: SYNTHETICS (asphaltic shingles)  
other: \_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

Carter County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Carter County, Missouri  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1936

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Ake, Peter, 1871

Heckenlively and Mark (Springfield, MO), 1936.

Built by the WPA

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE ON CONTINUATION PAGES**

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

Carter County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Carter County, Missouri  
County and State

**Acreage of Property** 1.9

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 36.9946995 -91.0147887 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

\_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1927 or \_\_\_\_\_ NAD 1983

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (On continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (On continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Christina Clagett  
organization Homegrown Studio date 8/18/2021  
street & number 4129 Russell Blvd. telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63110  
e-mail christina@homegrownstudio-stl.com

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:**
  - A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  - A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Photographs**
- **Owner Name and Contact Information**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Carter County Courthouse**

Name of Property

**Carter County, Missouri**

County and State

## Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

## Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Carter County Courthouse**

City or Vicinity: **Van Buren**

County: **Carter County**

State: **Missouri**

Photographer: **Christina Clagett**

Date

Photographed: **July, 2021**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 18 - Northwest corner, looking southeast
- 02 of 18 - Northwest corner, looking southeast
- 03 of 18 - West elevation, looking southeast
- 04 of 18 - West elevation, looking east
- 05 of 18 - Southeast corner, looking northwest
- 06 of 18 - Southeast corner, looking southeast toward wall
- 07 of 18 - Northeast corner, looking southwest
- 08 of 18 - East elevation, looking west
- 09 of 18 - Northeast corner, looking south toward pavilion
- 10 of 18 - Northeast corner, looking southwest
- 11 of 18 - Northeast corner of property from street, looking southwest (Google street view)
- 12 of 18 - Interior second level, looking west
- 13 of 18 - Interior second level, courtroom looking southwest
- 14 of 18 - Interior first level, looking southeast toward stair
- 15 of 18 - Interior first level, looking northwest downward from stair
- 16 of 18 - Interior second level, looking east toward courtroom
- 17 of 18 - Interior second level, courtroom looking north
- 18 of 18 - Exterior detail looking east upward at front entry

## Figure Log:

Include figures on continuation pages at the end of the nomination.

1. Aerial photo map, from Google Earth with Coordinates. Accessed July 2021.
2. Aerial photo map from Google Earth, with a scale bar. Accessed July 2021.
3. Property Map with National Register Property Boundaries indicated by Christina Clagett.
4. Floor plans, existing conditions documented by J. Rogers Architecture, Inc.
5. Ozark Plateau Boundary Map. U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 94-4022. Van Buren/Big Spring area indicated with blue dot by Christina Clagett.
6. Carter County courthouse 1871. Built by Peter Ake. State Historical Society of Missouri.
7. Carter County courthouse 1936. Addition and recladding built by the Works Progress Administration team. State Historical Society of Missouri.
8. Carter County courthouse wall detail from rear of building (top image) compared with river rock from the head of nearby Big Spring. Photos by Christina Clagett.
9. Carter County courthouse wall detail from front elevation (top image) compared with CCC Structures in nearby Big Spring State Park. Photos by Christina Clagett

Carter County Courthouse

Name of Property

Carter County, Missouri

County and State

10. Additional Examples of Ozark Native Rock Cladding in the nearby towns of Winona and Eminence. Shannon County, MO. Photos by Christina Clagett July 2021.
11. Map of all WPA courthouses in Missouri (bolded). Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 95.
12. Ohman, Marian M. Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981. Library of Congress Catalog Number: 80-54474.
13. Douglas County Courthouse. Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 96.
14. Webster County Courthouse. Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 93.
15. Photo key plan.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, MO
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Summary**

The Carter County courthouse is a two-story building located at 105 Main Street in Van Buren, Carter County, MO. It was constructed in 1871 with the significant addition and recladding in 1936 (Figure 7).<sup>1</sup> The courthouse and property are enclosed in a low stone wall, which is also contributing. (Figure 3). It was completed at the same time as the courthouse cladding under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The courthouse is approximately centered on the square site and has a cross-shaped plan. The west portion of the building is the original 1871 structure, a six room 40x40 foot two-story building constructed from lumber sawed in the county and dressed by hand in Van Buren, set on a rock foundation and clad in wood siding (figure 6). The 1936-renovation plan maintained the original building components and incorporated it into the holistic cross shape and clad in rock. The renovated building now included 13 rooms and a jail with a courtroom seating 350 on the second level. The 1936 addition is located on the east side of the courthouse and is 30x70 feet. The building features a low-slope hip roof that follows the shape of the building with a modest cupola in the center. All windows and doors are modern replacements, although the windows match the historic configuration (Figure 7). The site is enclosed in a contributing wall of the same style as courthouse, and also includes public amenities added in recent history to accommodate community events: these include two small restrooms and a pavilion, each non-contributing. There is also a non-contributing relocated historic cabin from the area and a non-contributing veterans memorial with statue (Figure 3).

**Elaboration**

**Setting**

The Courthouse Square is the long-standing cultural center of downtown Van Buren, MO, the County Seat (Photo 3). It is in the south-central portion of downtown (Figure 1). The surrounding blocks consist of various commercial and industrial buildings as well as some vacant lots (Figure 2). The site within the courthouse walls is landscaped with grass and tall trees and includes many sidewalks and paths (Photo 10). There are trees and it is a quiet and tranquil area that can easily transform for public events (Figure 3). The courthouse is in the approximate center of the square in the north/south direction and shifted to the west side on the east/west axis, focusing itself toward Main St. There is a memorial statue in the northwest corner, surrounded by grass, landscaping, and trees. The east segment of the site serves as a public park with amenities; including a picnic pavilion in the near-southeast corner, a storage shed and restroom in the northeast corner, and a relocated cabin just west of those structures. Van Buren is adjacent to the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. The Current River cradles the downtown along the west from the northwest to south end of town, just a little downhill from the urban core. Downstream a couple miles is the confluence of the Current River and Big Spring, at Big Spring State Park. The park has its own collection of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) stone structures from the 1930s and they are included in the Big Spring Historic District (NR 1981) but have very different characteristics than the application on the courthouse.

<sup>1</sup> Ohman, Marian M. Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981. Library of Congress Catalog Number: 80-54474.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, MO
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Exterior Description**

Generally, the building materials are consistent across all elevations. The courthouse walls are clad in native “cobblestones<sup>2</sup>” that range widely in their coloring, shape, texture, and size. Many of the stones sparkle when viewed closely enough for the quartz crystals to catch the sunlight (Figure 9). The stones are placed decoratively, not structurally, in a dark gray Portland cement mortar. A stone band encircles the extent of the 1936 recladding above the foundation and matches stone sills at all the windows. Changes in pattern and type of stone are used to articulate window and door openings on the tops and sides (Photo 4). The hipped roofs are modern shingles throughout and slope gently toward each wall. A modest decorative cupola sits in the center of the north/south axis at the intersection of the 1871 and 1936 rooflines. All windows are 9/9 aluminum replacements.

**West Elevation**

The main entry is located on the west elevation of the building facing Main St. (Photo 4). The facade has a symmetrical tripartite division, with the central piece projecting outward and topped by a triangular pediment, decorated by a special arrangement of small round stones. The front double doors are centered and are modern aluminum replacements, but a rounded 9-light transom constructed of wood and glass sits atop the doors and appears to be from the period of significance. In front of the entrance, there are two shallow steps with low stone walls with decorative tops on either side. A single double-hung window sits atop an embedded concrete sign “Carter County Court House” (Photo 18). On either side, there is a single double-hung window centered on each floor. On the north corner of the front elevation, is the pink granite cornerstone. Interestingly, the grand master mason’s name on the stone is misspelled, adding an erroneous “e” to James W. Skelly. The volume described so far is cladding to the original 40x40 wood frame building. The rectangular 1936 addition is centered on the existing building and extends about twenty feet in both the north and south direction along the west elevation (Photo 2). The wall is solid with the exception of a single double-hung window on the second floor on the north and south extremes of the west elevation (Photo 2).

**South Elevation**

There is a secondary entry on the south elevation with double doors near the interior stair (Figure 4). There is a solid wood fence around a storage area located along the southernmost wall (Photo 5). On the western volume, there are two double-hung windows stacked on each level. A third window sits over the double doors in the stairwell. The south projecting volume also includes two double-hung windows stacked on each level. The easternmost volume is an addition housing an elevator constructed in 1995.<sup>3</sup> Although the stone craftsmanship is a rather convincing match

<sup>2</sup> The term “Cobblestones,” will be used to refer to rough unfinished natural rock for the balance of this document, aligning with cultural terminology of the region. It can be assumed the stones are small enough to be handled easily by one mason.

<sup>3</sup> Record of permit for elevator addition to Carter County courthouse 3/9/1995. Provided by Carter County Clerk’s Office via phone. April 2022.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, MO
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

for the 1936 cladding, the addition announces itself by leaving out some of the detail from the earlier work, such as the continuous stone foundation sill.

#### East Addition Elevation

The east elevation of this volume as well (Photo 8), which unfortunately dominates the composition of the east facade. Fortunately, this elevation is on the quiet side of the courthouse facing away from downtown and the main drag. The non-contributing portion has an accessible entrance consisting of two doors with a solid glass panel in between. There are two extremely tall double hung windows on either side of the door, with more appropriately sized double hung windows aligning above and a singular double hung window in the center of the second floor.

#### Historic East Elevation

On the south end, the motif of two double-hung windows stacked on each level repeats again. There is also a subgrade stone storage room with a door and steps (Photo 8). The northwest corner used to house a records vault and is very solid, with only a small square in the middle for ventilation and a single double-hung window that falls in another room on the first floor (Photo 7).

#### North Elevation

The non-contributing east projecting volume is solid on the north elevation with no openings on either level (Photo 7). Where the 1936 addition projects northward, the first floor is solid due to the vault, and there are three double hung windows above on the second floor. The top left window was once the view out a jail cell. Along the original 1871 structure, there are three sets of stacked double-hung windows on each floor (Photo 2).

### Interior Description

Many interior finish materials have been removed due to a devastating flood in 2017. On the first level, interior partition walls are still indicated by the exposed wood studs and blocking that remain intact. The circulation runs east-west in the building and two entrances are located at each end respectively (Figure 4). The main entrance on the west elevation has an interior vestibule. The corridor is double loaded with offices that maintain the historic layout and framing (Photo 15). There is a centrally located stairwell at the junction of the 1871 and 1936 structures on the south side of the corridor. The non-contributing east addition is constructed of cinderblock on the interior and houses the elevator and some small ancillary rooms on each level. The stairwell has been stripped of finishes due the flood as well (Photo 14). The second level corridor maintains the layout and finishes original 1936, including the hardwood floors (Photo 12). Walls are white painted plaster. Heading into the courtroom (Photo 16), which is west of the elevator addition, there are a couple of non-historic partition walls that interrupt the intended flow into the courtroom (Photo 16). The courtroom has generous windows and high ceilings (Photo 13). The non-historic finishes and fixtures require replacement (Photo 17). On the west end of the second level, offices hug the exterior and encircle the main upper corridor and stair previously described. The offices are in similar condition to the courtroom. Finally, a rectangle protruding from the north is fortified with thicker walls and was designed to securely

National Register of Historic Places  
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Section number 7 Page 4

Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, MO
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

house prisoners on the second level (Figure 4) and secure documents and items on the first level. A life long Van Buren citizen giving a tour of the Courthouse in 2021 recalled a prisoner yelling out the window down to local kids loitering at the grocery store across Oliver Street in the 1960s or 1970s, requesting items from the store. The anecdote provides a useful mental image of the layout of the courthouse and jail cells in relation to the local community.

**Ancillary Resources**

The Courthouse site (Figure 3) is a public amenity in downtown Van Buren, MO, and includes several non-contributing structures and a contributing perimeter wall.

**Contributing: Perimeter Wall**

The historic low wall encloses the square courthouse site. It was also constructed by the WPA and around 1936. The stone technique utilized here is slightly more regular in this application than on the main building (Photo 6). The wall is about 30” tall and includes decorative capped stone columns at each of the corners and at sidewalk openings. At the main entry, the wall becomes a decorative matching planter flanking the main sidewalk within the stone wall for about fifteen feet (Photo 4).

**Contributing: War Memorial and “Doughboy” Statue**

Installed 1921, the statue was designed by artist John Paulding, remembered for World War I memorials across the country, to commemorate WW1 soldiers from the area. Names were added over time after subsequent wars (Photo 1).

**Non-Contributing: Picnic Pavilion**

The picnic pavilion is a large covered open-air structure added to the southeast end of the site in 1990 as a public amenity. It is constructed out of timber columns and has exposed trusses and an asphalt roof. (Photo 5).

**Non-Contributing: Restroom**

A small single restroom was added as a public amenity around 1992, as a complement to the public pavilion and help facilitate outdoor activities on the property without impact to the courthouse interior.

**Non-Contributing: Storage Shed**

The storage shed was also added around 1992 as a complement to the public pavilion and to help facilitate outdoor activities on the property without impact to the courthouse interior. (Photo 9).

**Non-Contributing: The Sweeza-Griffin Log Cabin**

Also on the site is a historic 1851 log cabin originally home to the Sweeza family and located in a nearby valley (Photo 11). It was relocated to Courthouse Square in 1959 as part of a Centennial Celebration for Carter County. According to City Officials, the rock fireplace is from the 1853 Griffin house.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, MO
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Integrity:**

Between the period of significance and 2017 flood, most of the doors and windows were replaced with aluminum systems. They were installed to have a similar appearance to what was there historically. The elevator addition was added to the east side of the courthouse in 1995 to make each level of the courthouse accessible to all citizens.<sup>4</sup> The cladding was applied to match the existing and is convincing until one gets a close look at the slightly lighter mortar and lack of the stone foundation band. There were over 80 functional years of operation from the 1936 addition and renovation, however, the building was damaged by a rare and disastrous flood on the Current River in 2017. The courthouse functions were relocated to another building after that, and moldy finish materials such as drywall and carpets were removed from the ground level, leaving bare flooring and the interior wood framing that maintains the layout of the plans. The damage starts to reach up the stairs, but there is no flood damage on the second level. Spaces on the second level could use refreshing of finishes but maintain layouts from the time of operation. The flood damage is surface level and the Ozark Rock Masonry walls look as they always have. There are no alarming cracks, the roof is sound, floors and structural members remain intact. The Carter County courthouse has held up over time and has already long outlived the builders who became craftsmen making it. It is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture the only cobblestone-covered courthouse in Missouri. Although Ozark Rock Masonry is a common style across the region, the Carter County courthouse is notable as a “cobblestone” application utilizing river/creek rock on a government building, as well as a unique application overall among the Ozark Rock clad structures (Figure 8).

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<sup>4</sup> Record of permit for elevator addition to Carter County courthouse 3/9/1995. Provided by Carter County Clerk’s Office via phone. April 2022.

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Section number 8 Page 6

Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**Summary:**

The Carter County courthouse at 105 Main Street in Van Buren, Carter County Missouri, is significant under Criterion C at a statewide level in the area of Architecture. It is the only cobblestone-covered courthouse in the state, with cladding of local native rock.<sup>5</sup> Ozark rock masonry is a ubiquitous building material across the region, corresponding with the geography of the landscape. The plentiful material and teachable technique of Ozark Rock Masonry cladding made craftsmen out of those needing work or shelter and created a lasting connection with nature that we are still able to observe and enjoy today; as many of these rugged buildings still stand strong. The vast majority of these structures are residential but many are commercial. These include public works projects built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration during the great depression. The period of significance is 1936, when the existing square courthouse was reclad in cobblestone to match a large addition. The Carter County courthouse stands alone as an indicative Ozark rock masonry structure that also served as a county seat of government. The application and appearance are also a standout among Ozark rock masonry buildings as a whole, for utilization of the uncut “cobblestone” technique using the abundant river rocks around Van Buren instead of the usual fieldstones found in farmer fields. The juxtaposition of a seat of government with this wild and natural application is striking.

**Elaboration:**

**Early History of Carter County:**

Van Buren, MO, is the county seat of Carter County. Carter County is located on the Ozark Plateau, which consists of 50,000 square miles, lying in the south-central and western part of Missouri, northern Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma and Kansas (figure 5).<sup>6</sup> The county itself has about 500 square miles of land area and is almost entirely mountainous. The highest hills in the county are found along the main course of the Current River which runs along downtown Van Buren.<sup>7</sup> Carter County, MO, was once a part of Ripley County before separating in 1859. Van Buren was chosen as the new County Seat. Mr. Carter operated a farm on the present site of Van Buren and the county was thus named in honor of him.<sup>8</sup> An original courthouse constructed of logs in 1858 quickly proved to be too small and half-measure additions and alterations only sufficed for a few years. A series of locations served until the court appropriated money to build a proper courthouse in the Square of Van Buren in 1871.

**Original Courthouse, 1871**

<sup>5</sup> Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page i.

<sup>6</sup> Adamski, James C., Petersen, James C. Freiwald, David A. and Davis, Jerri V. “Environmental and hydrologic setting of the Ozark Plateaus Study Unit, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.” U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 94-4022. Page 11.

<sup>7</sup> Oakley, Gene. The History of Carter County. Van Buren, MO: J-G Publications, Printed by Shannon County Newspapers, 1970

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Carter County Courthouse
Name of Property
Carter County, Missouri
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Peter Ake was given the contract for the building of the structure and provided a diagram for the original structure. Between June and October of 1871, he was issued warrants in amounts which totaled \$3,000. In October of 1871, Mr. Ake came before the court and asked to be released from his contract as the work had been completed. The 40x40 foot two-story building was constructed from lumber sawed in the county and dressed by hand in Van Buren, set on a rock foundation (figure 6). There were six rooms.<sup>9</sup>

### Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

#### Ozark Rock Masonry

Ozark rock masonry is a vernacular building cladding featuring the use of fieldstone rocks, as opposed to quarried and refined blocks of stone. “Stone” as a description is most often used with rock that has been processed in some way, and often refers to the product of a quarry.<sup>10</sup> This type and size of rock both plentiful and abundant, found close to the surface in the Ozarks region (Figure 5). It became a popular building material in the region for abundant supply as well as access. It was the early years of the 20th century when fieldstone became a popular vernacular building material in the region. That change correlates with the availability of Portland cement, a hard, fast curing cement. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw cement increase in use as a common ingredient in structural concrete and masonry mortar. The availability of raw materials, fast-curing concrete, and easily shared technique ensured Ozark rock construction as a local building tradition.<sup>11</sup>

### 1930s

#### The Great Depression & WPA

By the time of the great depression, fieldstone construction was ubiquitous in the area, and “one could find native rock on everything from urban park buildings to rural milk-houses.”<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, as the depression geared up, federal work relief programs were implemented to employ thousands of out-of-work Americans. President Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) on May 6, 1935, with Executive Order No. 7034. It was under authority of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935.<sup>13</sup> The mandate of the WPA, and predecessor PWA, was to stimulate the private sector of the building industry through public works projects.<sup>14</sup> Whenever possible, counties sought local architects and builders for these

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Sheals, Debbie. “Ozark Rock Masonry in Springfield, [MO], 1910 – 1955,” The Society of Architectural Historians, Missouri Valley Chapter News Letter. 2006, Volume XII:2A: 1-9.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Federal Works Agency, Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946, pp. 7-10.

<sup>14</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 94.

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projects.<sup>15</sup> The projects undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and WPA at Big Spring State Park, just south of Van Buren (Figure 9) contained many new buildings that employed the Rustic architectural style. They were characterized by hand craftsmanship, use of native materials, and details influenced by Ozark culture. The WPA and CCC were active throughout the Ozark region, adding their signature to the landscape of countless communities. Native stone construction was a popular choice for these types of projects.<sup>16</sup> It was used to build a wide variety of structures and public amenities like schools and bridges. There are other examples of WPA stone projects in southern Missouri as well, including the lakefront at Branson and the City Park in West Plains.<sup>17</sup>

### **Ozark Rock Masonry & Carter County Courthouse**

It should also be noted that the courthouse showcases a unique application of stone cladding, even among others in the same vernacular and as described in the CCC/WPA section. Most examples in the region use other variations of cut stone, such as splitting the stones or cutting into masonry blocks. Split stones applied in the “giraffe” style are prominent in the region and found on various building types from industrial to single-family residential (Figure 10). Big Spring State Park features more traditional load-bearing structures of quarried and refined large stones (Figure 8). In contrast to the more common applications in the region, the courthouse is an example of using natural “cobblestones” without any cutting or smoothing out of the stones. The stones are placed in the mortar with lots of space in between stones, creating a floating appearance. The stones here were likely taken from the nearby creeks and rivers, a logistical plus. The quality of the rocks is even more notable. A large percentage of the rocks are visually interesting, in shape and or texture (Figure 8). It is evident that the builders hand-picked the stones with care. The rocks are informative as to the ancient geology of the area, some even having characteristics of sea life (Figure 9).

### **1936**

#### **Carter County Courthouse Expansion & Recladding**

The WPA expanded into other public sectors as well. While the WPA was in operation, 19 of the 114 counties in Missouri constructed courthouses in cooperation.<sup>18</sup> Southern Missouri had a particularly rough time during the depression, and it is no coincidence that 12 of the 19 courthouses were in the region (Figure 11).<sup>19</sup> Although the builders were local, the architect of record, Heckenlively and Mark, came from Springfield. The scope of the WPA courthouse

<sup>15</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 101.

<sup>16</sup> Gilmore, Robert. “A Building Legacy Preserved: The WPA and CCC” OzarksWatch Vol. VII, No. 3, Spring 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 95.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

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project was to re clad the original wood portion in rough faced Ozark rock masonry and to add a much larger addition to be finished in the same cladding for a continuous appearance. The WPA covered \$25,000 of the \$30,000 cost and the rest was covered by county funds. No bonds were required. This resulted in the least expensive WPA courthouse in Missouri, while the most expensive was the \$283,000 Clay County Courthouse.<sup>20</sup> The completed building was dedicated on January 21, 1936.<sup>21</sup> The building has much in common with the recreational works projects nearby at Big Spring State Park, also characterized by hand craftsmanship, use of native materials, and details influenced by Ozark culture.

### **Courthouse Cladding Throughout Missouri**

#### **Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cladding**

Courthouses began to pop up across the counties of Missouri in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Originally, the forms were simple and hardly distinguishable from homes in form and materials such as hand-made brick, timber, and fieldstone. However, wood began to fall out of favor as a common courthouse cladding as the century went on, due to disasters in many towns with fires and pests.<sup>23</sup> It is notable that the original 1871 Carter County courthouse constructed of wood did survive and exists as the basis for the addition and recladding constructed in the 1930s.

#### **Late 19<sup>th</sup> – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cladding**

While the Carter County courthouse is notable as the only county courthouse in Missouri to utilize rock cladding in a cobblestone-style application, there are other examples of rough stone county courthouses in the state. Romanesque Revival style architecture was the dominate style of Missouri courthouses built between the late 1880s and early 1910s.<sup>24</sup> There are 20 courthouses in the state with characteristic features of the style; synonymous with Richardsonian Romanesque architecture popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was especially true in architect Henry Hobson Richardson's America. The monumental style was characterized by copying key features brought back into vogue by Richardson: round arches, colonnettes, and most importantly, rusticated stone.<sup>25</sup> The 1893 Jasper County courthouse is a typical representation of how this aesthetic translated to a Missouri courthouse (Figure 12). Other examples of Missouri courthouses in that style include Bates County (1902), Carroll County

<sup>20</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 106.

<sup>21</sup> Ohman, Marian M. Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981. Library of Congress Catalog Number: 80-54474.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 96.

<sup>24</sup> Holmes, M. Patricia. National Register of Historic Places Nomination, the Cole County Courthouse and Jail-Sheriff's House. April 3, 1973.

<sup>25</sup> Trachtenberg, Marvin and Isabelle Hyman. Architecture, from prehistory to postmodernity. Second Edition. Harry N. Abrams, Incorporated. New York, 2002. Pages 471-73.

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(1901), Cole County (1896), Henry County (1893), and Miller County (1910).<sup>26</sup> Many of those buildings are still in service.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Cladding

There was some backlash to the ornateness and extravagance of the Romanesque courthouses. The styles began to be seen as outdated and ornamentation was increasingly met with vocal disdain from county officials across the state.<sup>27</sup> More classical courthouses characterized by simplicity and order took over as the prevailing style; with 23 being constructed in the state from 1920-1928. These classical courthouses featured columns, porticos, low flat roofs, and pedimented entries. The cladding was light-colored smooth stone.<sup>28</sup> The Carter County courthouse has some characteristics in common with this style in terms of simple massing, while it is a more extreme contrast to the Romanesque examples.

### WPA Contemporaries

There are 19 examples of courthouses constructed through the WPA in Missouri (and Public Works Administration, PWA); all of which are clad with concrete, brick, or stone.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the Clay County Courthouse, there are many WPA courthouse examples located closer to Carter County in southern Missouri. These include the Douglas County Courthouse, constructed of brick (Figure 13), and the Webster County Courthouse constructed of stone and concrete (Figure 14). The clear distinction between all examples provided and the Carter County courthouse is the cobblestone cladding applied with an improvisational layout.

### Carter County Courthouse Life and Status

The courthouse continued to be used for the intended purposes until unprecedented flooding of the nearby Current River in May 2017. Although the building is currently empty, the Carter County courthouse remains the center of the community where locals gather for Christmas tree lightings, Easter egg hunts and the annual Festival of Lights. Aside from interior first level wall coverings being removed to promote drying; no work has been done since the flooding and the building has remained empty. The jail and courthouse functions have been relocated. In 2019 the county approved the creation of the Courthouse Renovation Committee, a citizens group with a goal of creating a non-profit which will partner with the county to oversee the plans for renovation and reuse. Support for retaining the courthouse is unanimous in the community.

### Conclusion

The Carter County courthouse is an informative example of local materials, design aesthetic, and craftsmanship. It is significant to the State of Missouri under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the only cobblestone-covered courthouse in the state. Although Ozark rock

<sup>26</sup> Ohman, Marian M. Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981. Library of Congress Catalog Number: 80-54474.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 96.

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masonry is a common style across the region, the Carter County courthouse is a distinctive example. A close examination is a rewarding experience that is informative of nature, human craftsmanship, and our system of laws and government. The materials and feeling are very specific to the location and geology of the area.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the property are shown as a green rectangle around the property on the map in Figure Three.

**Boundary Justification**

The current boundaries encompass all of the land currently and historically associated with the building.

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Figure 1: Aerial photo map, from Google Earth with Coordinates. Accessed July 2021.



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Name of Property	Carter County Courthouse
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Figure 2: Aerial photo map from Google Earth, with a scale bar. Accessed July 2021.

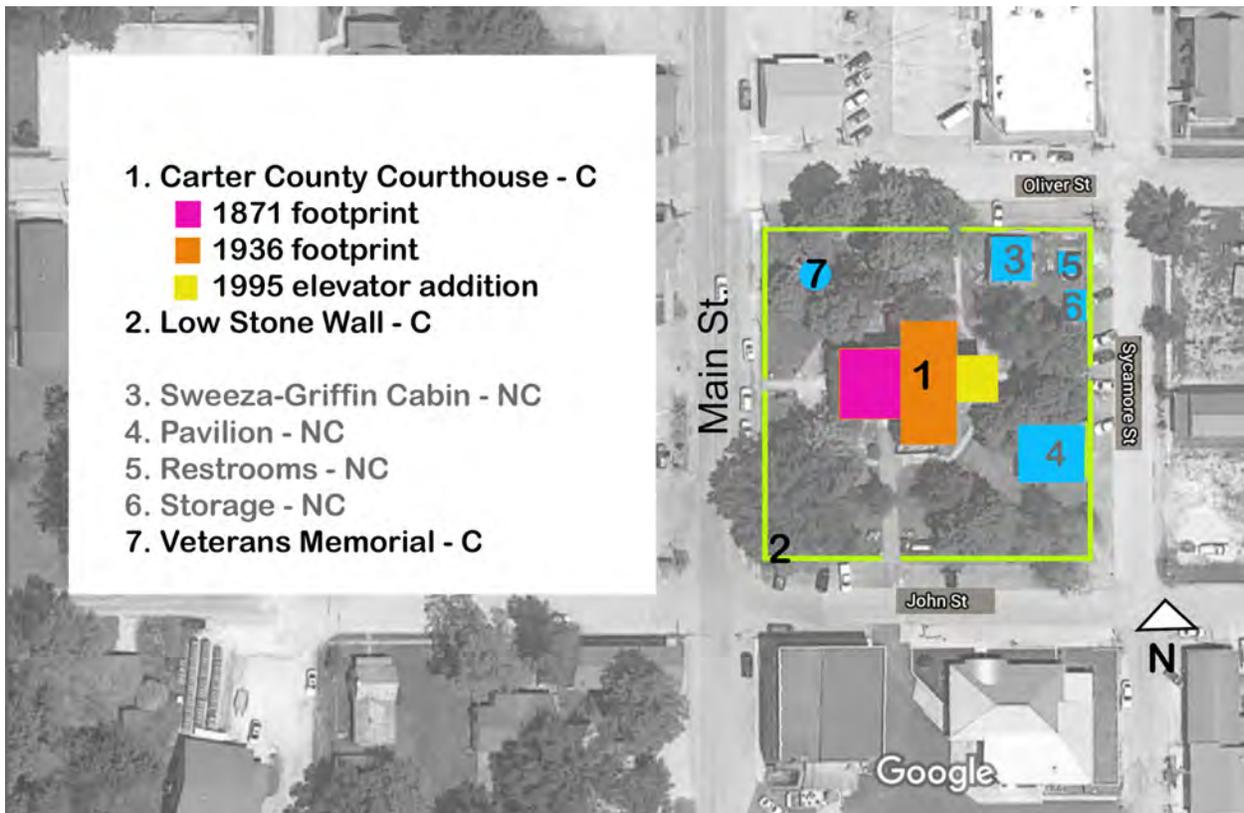


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Name of Property	Carter County Courthouse
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Figure 3: Property Map with National Register Property Boundaries added by Christina Clagett. NTS. Google Maps. Accessed July 2021.



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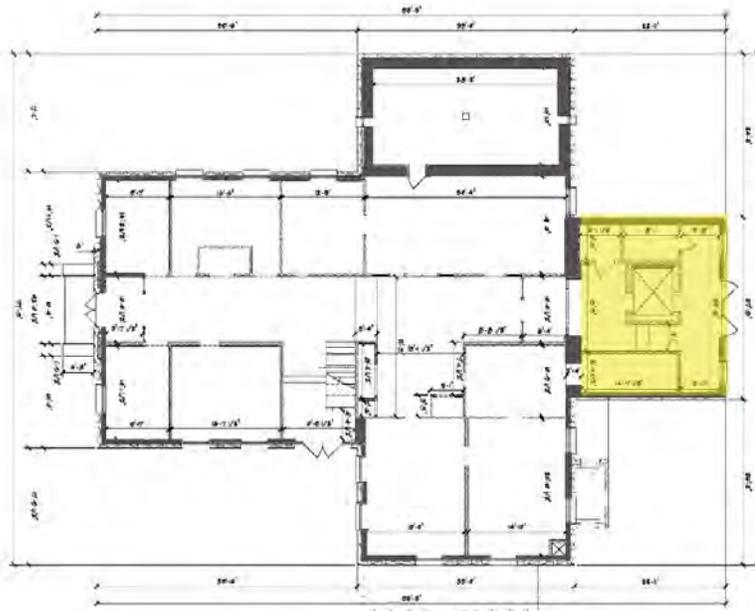
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Figure 4. Floor plans, existing conditions. Documented by J. Rogers Architecture, Inc (yellow indicates walls or structures from outside of significance. )



2nd FLOOR PLAN  
1/8"=1'-0"



1st FLOOR PLAN  
1/8"=1'-0"

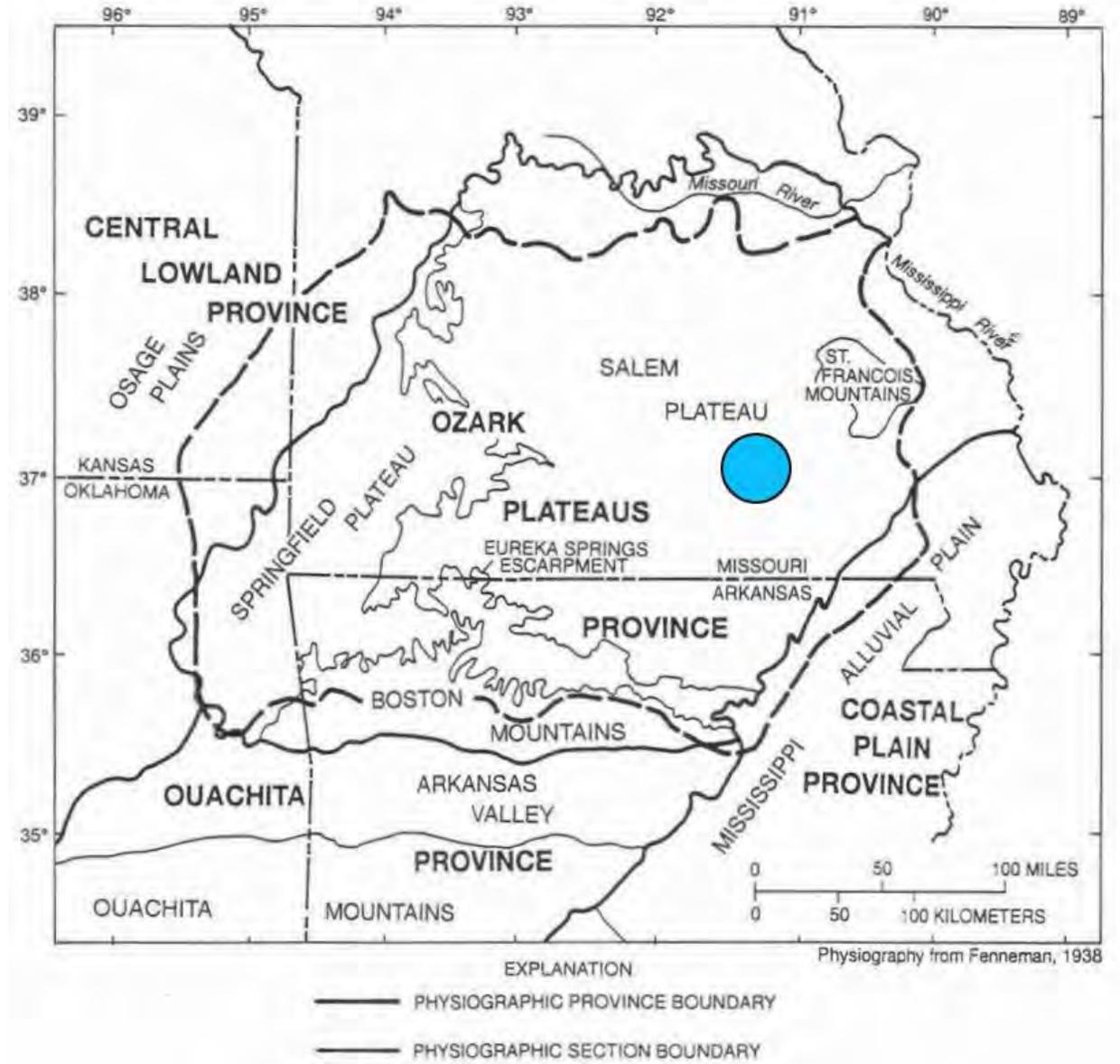


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Figure 5. Ozark Plateau Boundary Map. U.S. Geological Survey Water-Resources Investigations Report 94-4022. Page 11. Van Buren/Big Spring area indicated with blue dot by Christina Clagett.

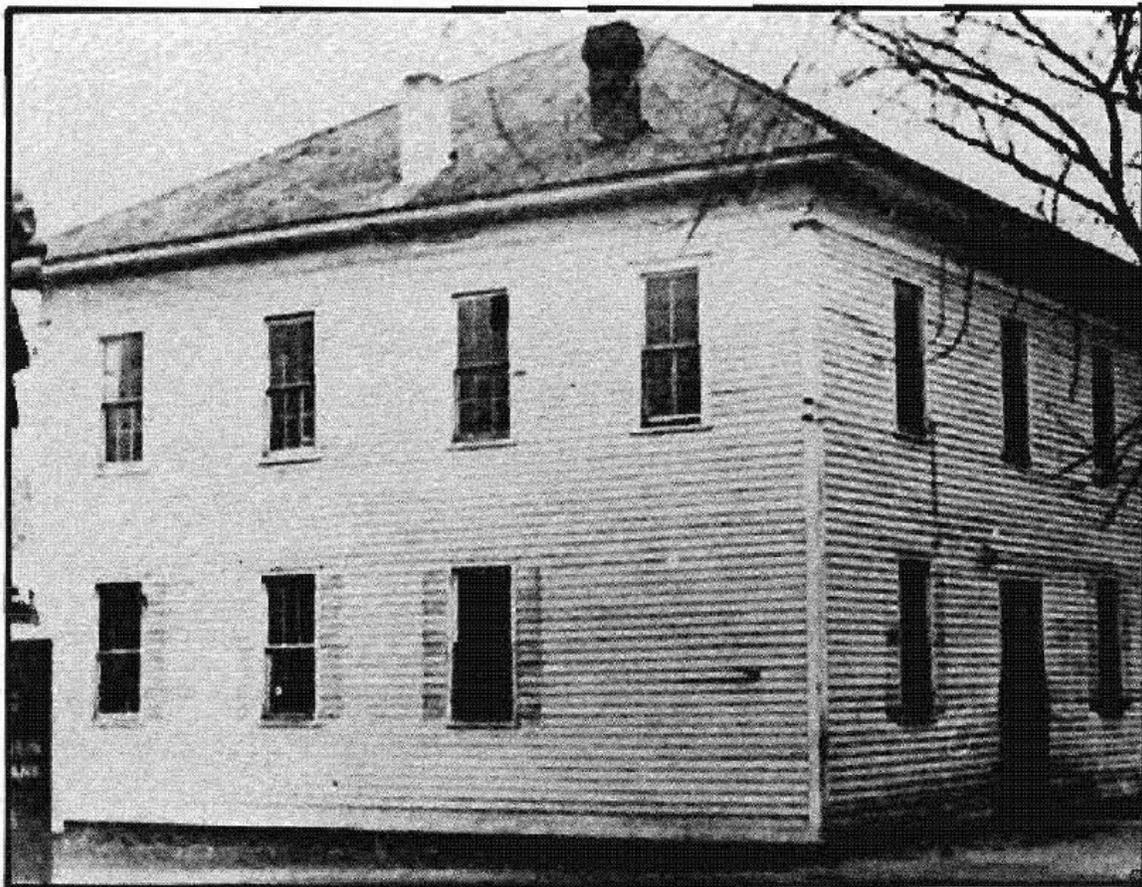


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Name of Property	Carter County Courthouse
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Figure 6. Carter County courthouse 1871. Built by Peter Ake. State Historical Society of Missouri.

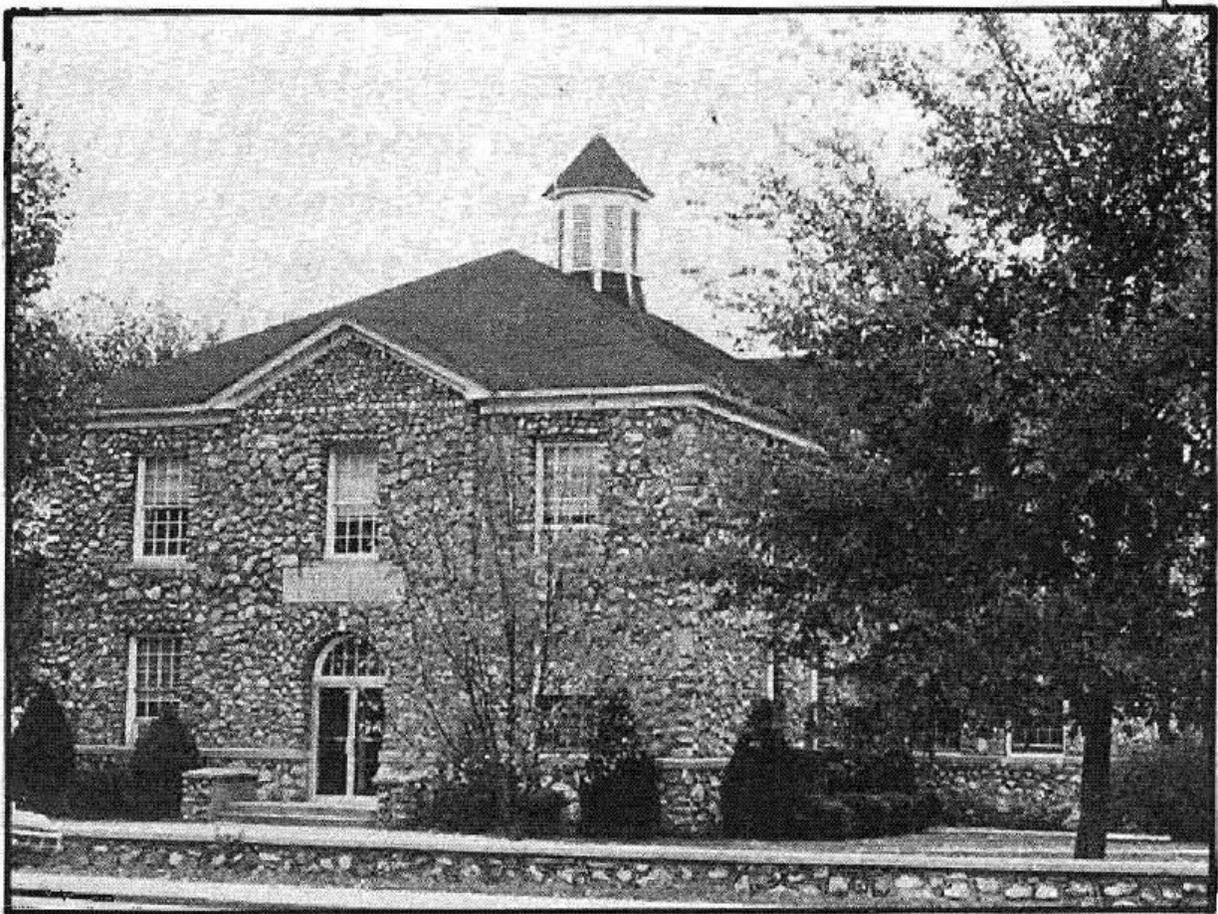


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Figure 7. Carter County courthouse 1936. Addition and recladding built by the Works Progress Administration team. State Historical Society of Missouri.



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Figure 8. Carter County courthouse wall detail from rear of building (top image) compared with river rock from the head of nearby Big Spring. Photos by Christina Clagett.



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Figure 9. Carter County courthouse wall detail from front elevation (top image) compared with CCC Structures in nearby Big Spring State Park. Photos by Christina Clagett



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Figure 10. Additional Examples of Ozark Native Rock Cladding in the nearby towns of Winona (top) and Eminence (bottom). Shannon County, MO. Photos by Christina Clagett July 2021.



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Figure 11. Map of all WPA courthouses in Missouri (bolded). Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 95.

State Historical Society of Missouri



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N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Figure 12. Ohman, Marian M. *Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981.



Jasper County Courthouse, 1893-. Architect: M. A. Orlopp (From: *Carthage Souvenir Album*)

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Figure 13. Douglas County Courthouse. Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 96.



Courtesy Trenton Boyd

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Figure 14. Webster County Courthouse. Ohman, Marion A. PWA and WPA Courthouses in Missouri. Missouri Historical Review. Goodrich, James W., ed., with Lynn Wolf Gentzler and Rhiannon Southworth. Volume XCVI, Number 2. State Historical Society of Missouri. January 2002. Page 93.



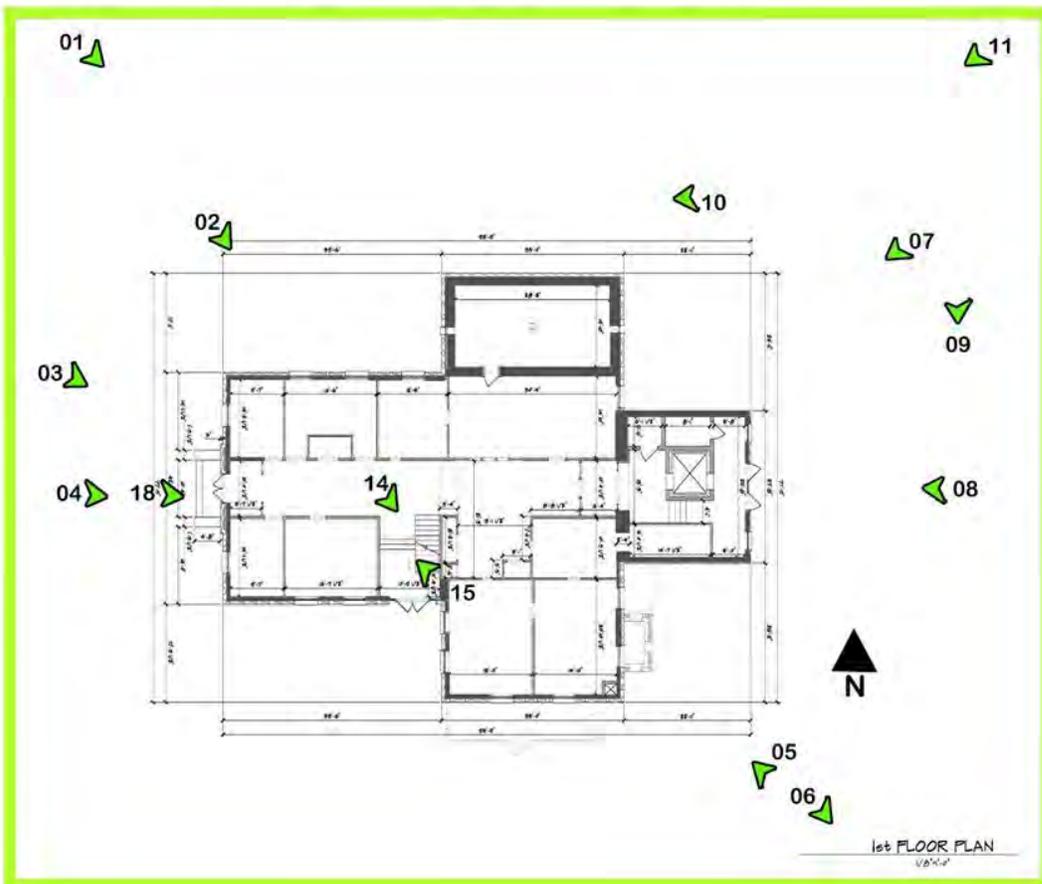
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State Historical Society of Missouri

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Photo Key.





ERECTED BY THE  
COLLEGE OF CARTER COUNTY  
IN HONOR OF  
THE SOLDIERS WHO  
DIED IN THE  
WORLD WAR I  
1914-1918

WILLIAM THOMAS  
CHARLES O. HARRIS  
OSCAR MARCHAND  
GEORGE L. HARRIS  
ED. MORLER  
J. L. KINBAR  
CHARLES E. SPADEN  
KEVIN M. HARRIS  
WALTER S. HARRIS  
WILLIAM E. HARRIS







IT'S OUR HOUSE  
LET'S FIX IT!

IT'S OUR HOUSE  
LET'S FIX IT!

























Please  
Before entering  
this location,  
please close and  
lock the door and  
notify the office.  
Thank you





CARTER COUNTY  
COURT HOUSE