

HISTORY OF BROWN COUNTY COURTHOUSES

On April 19, 1858, \$2,000.00 was appropriated for the purpose of erecting a courthouse in the new county seat of Hiawatha. This courthouse was completed August 1, 1858. The building was frame, thirty feet square, with the entrance on the south side. Lower story of 4 rooms and hall, upper story divided into court and jury room. The building was located in the center of the public square. In 1859, trees were set out in front of the courthouse. By 1877, the courthouse was mostly abandoned and the offices scattered all around town. In 1880, the building was sold and torn down, and material was used to build two small dwellings at 604-608 Shawnee St.

With the offices scattered around town the leading citizens having regard for the safety of the public records and good name of the county began agitation of a new courthouse in 1877. Politics as well as unprosperous times and unrest among the people, finally put the issue on the Nov 6, 1877 ballot, the results being 798 for and 655 against. \$20,000.00 was the limit to be spent on the building. The cornerstone for the new courthouse was laid by the Masons on April 16, 1879. The new courthouse was built in brick.

The present Brown County courthouse was erected in 1925 at a cost of \$350,000.00. This amount includes the cost of the jail, which was built half a block west of the courthouse. A cornerstone is located on the northeast corner of the foundation put in place by the Masonic Lodge on June 15, 1925. It was dedicated November 11, 1926 with a large parade and a 21-gun salute. Of stone, the courthouse sits in the center of the public square. The building has 3 stories with large lobby areas on the first and second floors. All floors and stairs are made of gray and white marble. The same marble is on the walls halfway up and there are large marble pillars in the lobby of the second floor. The second floor is designed to resemble a bank with open windows in each office on a ledge of marble. This makes for a very beautiful area.