

HISTORY OF HENRY COUNTY COURT HOUSE

The first court was held in the home of Peter Wall in 1821 until the first courthouse could be completed in 1823. During that time the clerk and registrar kept their papers and books of record at any house in the county that might best suit their convenience and safekeeping until a court house could be completed.

It was a small two room building made of poplar logs. A second court house was a two story brick building built in 1825 on the present location.

In 1852 a third court house was erected at a cost of \$42,000.

From an early date there was a fence around the court house yard. First a wooden fence, then an iron fence. (The iron fence was later moved to the Paris City Cemetery.) There was an iron chain just outside of the fence where horses were hitched while their owners transacted business in Paris. The present building was constructed in 1896. After the fence was removed, there were benches around the court yard and especially on Saturdays, men swapped knives, played checkers and whittled.

The county's first murder trial led to the landmark "State vs. Grainger" case in 1830 that set a precedent for self defense as the basis for appeal.

During the Civil War, in 1860 and 1861, Confederate military units were organized here and then marched to the Robert E. Lee School Building. Union troops occupied the building in 1862. Troops were also sent from here in World War I and World War II. From 1906 until 1917 the congregation of Presbyterian Church met there while the present church was being built. Services were held in the Circuit Court Room.

The bell in the tower was formerly the bell in the Paris Female Academy. This bell are many silver dollars donated by the citizens of Henry County.

This is West Tennessee's oldest working Court House.