

## COURTHOUSES OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

On December 14, 1837, Montgomery County was created by the Texas Legislature. Several months earlier, William Sheppard, platted a town on the present site of Montgomery and agreed to give sixty acres of land to pay for building a courthouse and jail if, Montgomery should be selected for the County seat.

In 1838 the first courthouse, a small log cabin was erected. This building soon became inadequate and in 1842 a new two-story courthouse was built of hand-hewn lumber.

Montgomery was at its best about 1854, there was a building boom on. Many new homes, churches, and a school "Montgomery Academy" were built. The courthouse had been judged unsafe for court so a new courthouse was started. The courthouse was completed in 1855. In addition to county offices and courtrooms, it housed a ballroom. It was the scene of many "grand balls".

The Civil War and reconstruction days were hard on Montgomery.

By 1870 Willis was started, and in just a few years became one of the leading towns in the county; the I & GN railroad had completed a line to Willis in 1872. This was the first railroad in the county. Most of the business houses from Danville and many residents moved to the new town near the railroad. Others from Montgomery and Old Waverly also located in the new town.

In September 1874, after much agitation by the citizens of Willis, an election was held to move the county seat to Willis. Willis won the election, but after six years of heated arguments another election was held. As a result, the county seat remained in Montgomery.

In 1881, Isaac Conroe purchased the J.G. Smith tract of land and moved his sawmill to a site about 2½ miles east of the I & GN Railroad. A tram was built from the mill to the I & GN railroad. This tram was made with wooden rails and spiked with wooden spikes. In 1885 the Santa Fe Railroad extended its line to Conroe. This put Conroe in a unique position. It was at the junction of a North-South (the I&GN) railroad and a East-West (Santa Fe) railroad. The only such location in the county. It was also near the geographic center of the county.

May 6, 1889 an election was held to move the county seat from Montgomery to Conroe. Conroe won the election. It was just seven days later that Conroe profiting by Willis' experience designated a temporary building to be used as a courthouse. The town of Conroe had been located east of the I&GN railroad and north of the Santa Fe until this time.

J.K. Ayers, who had purchased the land west of the I&GN railroad and north of the Santa Fe, deeded the land to the county for \$1.00 for the courthouse and jail site. Each site consisted of one city block. The present courthouse is located on the courthouse block and the county library and First National Bank Building are located on the jail block.



A new red brick courthouse and jail was completed in 1891. The brick were manufactured in Conroe.



In 1909 the courthouse was plastered on the outside, and thus it stood until it was torn down to make way for our present courthouse.

During the Spring of 1935 there was considerable talk among the citizens of Montgomery County as to advisability of building a new courthouse to replace the old building built in 1890. The old courthouse was inadequate to carry on the business of Montgomery County.

On August 7, 1935 a mass meeting was held in the old courthouse and it was the census of opinion of the citizens assembled that something should be done about a new courthouse. This mass meeting appointed the following citizen committee to work with the Commissioners' Court:

W. N. Hooper, was elected chairman of the committee, and the others were,

Charles Harriett, Jr., W.P. McComb, and R.D. Simonton, Conroe, Texas;

J.E. Scott, Roy Watson, L.Q. Goff, of Willis, Texas;

J.G. Buckalew, W.T. Brautigam, T.H. Yon, of Magnolia, Texas; and

F.L. Wilcox, R.A. Powell, and W.N. Weisin-ger, Montgomery, Texas.

The Commissioners' Court on the advice of the citizens committee advertised for bids to be submitted August 19, 1935. These bids were rejected and new bids were advertised to be submitted September 12, 1935.

The construction for the courthouse was awarded to the lowest bidder on that date. On September 25, 1935 contractor started taking down the old courthouse. On October 20, 1935, the old courthouse was completely demolished and on the next day excavation was started for the new courthouse. On November 4, 1936, the courthouse was completed and was accepted by the Commissioners Court, and the last dime on the courthouse was paid February 18, 1938. Montgomery County citizens need not be afraid that they will have to pay as suggested by some in the years to come for this courthouse.



Courthouse completed in 1936

There have been numerous additions to this courthouse, as Montgomery County has grown.