

Missouri State Archives

Finding Aid RG 600.03

Supreme Court of Missouri

District Courts, 1866-1870

Abstract: Record Books from the District Courts including Dockets, General Record Books and Minute Books.

Extent: 6.4 cubic ft. (13 Volumes)

Record Description: Bound Volumes. Volume 8054 (6th District Court Minutes) has mold damage.

Alternative Formats: None.

Location: Missouri State Archives.

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions: No special restrictions.

Publication Restrictions: Copyright is in the public domain. Items reproduced for online or physical publication should carry the credit line: Courtesy of the Missouri State Archives.

Preferred Citation: [Item description], [Date]; [Volume and Page]; [Series]; District Courts, Supreme Court of Missouri, Record Group 600.03; Missouri State Archives, Jefferson City.

Acquisition Information: Agency Transfer.

Processing Information: Processing completed by Christina Miller on 8/14/2026.

Historical and Biographical Notes

Created by Article VI, Section XII of the 1865 Constitution, the district courts were Missouri's first attempt at appellate courts between the circuit courts and the Supreme Court.

Per the constitution, Missouri, except the county of St. Louis, was to be divided into at least 5 districts. The judges of the circuit courts within the district were to be the judges of the district courts. The district courts had “like original jurisdiction with the supreme court, and appellate jurisdiction from the final judgments of the circuit courts, and of all inferior courts of record within the district except probate and county courts.” Aside from St. Louis, all cases eligible to be heard by the district courts were to be appealed to the district court before appeal to the Supreme Court (*General Statutes*, Constitution, Article VI, Section XII).

In 1866, the General Assembly created the following six district courts (*General Statutes*, Chapter 135, p. 544):

- 1st District: Jefferson City; 1st, 6th, 9, 18th Judicial Circuits
- 2nd District: Cape Girardeau; 10th, 15th, 20th Judicial Circuits
- 3rd District: Springfield; 7th, 13th, 14th Judicial Circuits
- 4th District: Macon; 2nd, 4th, 11th Judicial Circuits
- 5th District: St. Joseph; 5th, 12th, 17th Judicial Circuits
- 6th District: St. Charles; 3rd, 16th, 19th Judicial Circuits

In 1869, the 21st and 22nd Judicial Circuits were added, with the 21st Judicial Circuit assigned to the 3rd District Court and the 22nd Judicial Circuit assigned to the 1st District Court (*Laws*, 1869, p. 14 and 18).

On November 8, 1870, a constitutional amendment abolishing the district courts was approved by voters and on December 12, 1870 the governor issued an executive proclamation abolishing the district courts (*Revised Statutes*, 1872, p. 66a).

Timeline

Year	Event
1865	District courts created by 1865 Constitution.
1866	Six district courts were defined and assigned their locations and judicial circuits (<i>General Statutes</i> , Chapter 135)
1869	The 21 st and 22 nd Judicial Circuits were created and added to the 1 st and 3 rd District Courts (<i>Revised Statutes</i> , 1870, p. 429)
1870	District courts were abolished at the November 8, 1870 General Election and by Executive Proclamation on December 12, 1870 (<i>Revised Statutes</i> , 1872, p. 66a).

Additional Descriptive Information

Bibliography

General Statutes of Missouri, 1866.

<https://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16795coll26/id/6606/rec/8>

Revised Statutes of Missouri, 1870, Volume 1

<https://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16795coll26/id/8235/rec/9>

Revised Statutes of Missouri, 1872, Volume 1

<https://mdh.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16795coll26/id/9082/rec/11>

Related Material

Case files from the district courts are known to be interfiled with the case files of the Supreme Court St. Joseph District (1866-1875). All surviving cases from the District Courts should be indexed in the Supreme Court Database, although they do not indicate they are district court cases.

Series

The records are organized into the following series:

Dockets, 1869-1876

General Record Books, 1866-1870

Minute Books, 1867-1870

Dockets, 1867-1876

Extent: 1.6 cubic ft. (3 Volumes)

Arrangement: By District Court and chronological within each volume.

Scope and Content

The dockets provide term of court lists of cases filed. Information includes term of court, attorneys, parties, county from which case appealed, and remarks of the court.

Volumes are labeled Bar Docket, Docket and General Docket, but all contain the same level of information. Dockets for the 1st, 3rd, 4th and 6th District Courts are missing.

Container List

Location	Volume	Contents	Dates
	8128	2 nd District (Cape Girardeau) Bar Docket	Feb., 1867 – July, 1870
	8277	5 th District (St. Joseph) Docket	June, 1869 – June, 1870
	8278	5 th District (St. Joseph) and Supreme Court – St. Joseph General Docket Pages 1-31 are the 5 th District Court Pages 32-152 are the Supreme Court held at St. Joseph (1872-1876).	June, 1869 – May 1876

General Record Books, 1866-1870

Extent: 3.2 cubic ft. (7 volumes)

Arrangement: By district court and then chronological within each volume

Scope and Content

The General Record Books of the courts document the actions of the court each day. Information may include which judges are present; the appointment and presence of clerks and marshals; admissions of attorneys to the bar; actions taken or information presented on specific cases each day; and adjournments of the court.

Not all General Records are indexed. The indexes that exist are included in the list below. The General Record for the 4th District (Macon) is missing.

Container List

Location	Volume	Contents	Dates
	8200	1 st District (Jefferson City) General Record	Dec. 3, 1866 – June 22, 1870
	8207	2 nd District (Cape Girardeau) General Record	Feb. 11, 1867 – Aug. 20, 1870
	8163	2 nd District (Cape Girardeau) Index to General Record	Feb. 11, 1867 – Aug. 20, 1870
	8203	3 rd District (Springfield) General Record	Dec. 17, 1866 – June 22, 1870
	8205	5 th District (St. Joseph) General Record	Dec. 24, 1866 – July 16, 1870
	8167	5 th District (St. Joseph) Index to General Record	Dec. 24, 1866 – July 16, 1870
	8209	6 th District (St. Charles) General Record (Index in volume).	Jan 14, 1867 – July 16, 1870

Minute Books, 1867-1870

Extent: 1.6 cubic ft. (3 Volumes)

Arrangement: By district and then chronological

Scope and Content

Minutes of the courts document the day-to-day activities of the court. They are generally less detailed than the General Record. They may note which judges are present each day, and the enrollment of attorneys, but they also note briefs filed, fees paid, and movement of cases to the Supreme Court or back to the Circuit Courts.

Minute books for the 1st, 4th, and 5th District Courts are missing.

Container List

Location	Volume	Contents	Dates
	8063	2 nd District (Cape Girardeau) Minute Book	Feb. 11, 1867 – Aug. 20, 1870
	8064	3 rd District (Springfield) Minute Book	Dec. 17, 1866 – June 22, 1870
	8054	6 th District (St. Charles) Minute Book	Jan 14, 1867 – July 16, 1870