

The trial of Mass-Murderer Robert Stewart will likely move to the Moore County Courthouse in Carthage next week. Jury selection is almost complete. The selection of five alternate jurors was down to two yesterday afternoon. All jurors are residents of Stanly County and will be driven back and forth to Albemarle each day of a trial which could last up to six weeks. Stewart, who killed eight people inside a Carthage nursing home using a 12.gauge shot gun at point-blank range, will argue he was medically impaired at the time of the shootings two years ago. This week defense lawyers questioned potential jurors about their views of medication and mental health issues. Even before the trial starts the defense has outlined its courtroom strategy. They will claim Stewart visited a physician seeking help for a mental and emotional problems less than 48 hours before committing the murders. Instead of being examined by a doctor, his lawyers will claim, he was seen by a physician's assistant who prescribed the antidepressant Lexapro. Their 47-year-old client, Stewart's attorneys plan to argue, was not in control of his actions because he was under the influence of alcohol and various mood altering prescription drugs, including the sleep medication Ambien. Prosecutors excused one potential juror who said his uncle was arrested for fighting while under the influence of Ambien. The state is seeking the death penalty.