Waynesville Business District of long ago.

Pulaski County Political Events

1840. The County Court accepted a new courthouse. It is a hewn log building two stories high, with a single glass window. The upper story to be used as office for County Clerk.

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1841. Probate Judge of Pulaski County, C.H. Allen, Presiding Judge of County Court, William Bell. Sheriff of Pulaski County, Robert Wood.

Two cases tried in county, the first case of forgery, against John Costly.

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1842. Pulaski County officials: John Leek, assessor; M.F. Smith, Presiding Judge. First action of the new court was the binding of boy, Richard Skaggs to Josiah Christeson.

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1842. Commissioners to locate the County Seat permanently were appointed. They are John McElroy, Wright County, R. Robertson, Osage County, and Jacob Dubolt, Crawford County.

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Feb. 24, 1843. An act to locate the County Seat of Pulaski County was made by James E. Mill, Osage County, William Montgomery, Niangua County and Thomas J. Marshall of Miller County. The Commissioners to meet in Waynesville Monday, May 1843. Allen Hamer given the contract to erect the Court House (in present square). The new Court House to be 40' x 28' and 22' high. Plan to have 3 rooms, two halls, two outside doors on the first floor, all to be finished in fashionable stile (style).

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1844. William Carmack given contract to build Pulaski County jail.

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1849. V.B. Hill, Thomas Gresham, A.L. Morroe, L.F. Wright, J.G. Burnet, R.C. Miller, Isaac Willoughby, J.M. Baker and Pleasant Waymen were appointed to take the school enumeration in Pulaski County.

The County Court, Pulaski County, appropriated $2,000 for the improvement of navigation on the Gasconade.

600 persons appear on the assessor's list in Pulaski County with 577 polls, 87 slaves and total taxes $525.39.

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1859. E.Y. Mitchell serves as Prosecuting Attorney in Pulaski County, W.W. McDonald as clerk and H.W. Stuart as Sheriff of the county. John Ellis and W.C. York served as judges of Pulaski County with W.W. McDonald, clerk and recorder and John Leek, Sheriff in 1855.

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1859. The present boundaries of Pulaski County established, excepting Pleasant Wayman's farm, which was cut off the county in 1859.

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March 1861. Pulaski County Court was in session at Waynesville when word was received of the Fall of Fort Sumpter's mass meeting was called, and after speeches and debates, it was declared the Confederate flag would fly on the Court House square, despite approaching Union forces. Dr. Lingo's Drug Store, Waynesville, was the meeting place of some Southern sympathizers, including Dr. Lingo, Cyrus Colley, F.J. Taylor, B.W. Vaughn and A.J. McCormack.

A company of Pulaski County men had organized to serve under W.H. Stuart for the Confederates left to fight at Wilson creek, all under 6 months call. Others went to Cassville and was under Judge V.B. Hill Captain of Co. F in General McBride's Army.

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1872. Pulaski Circuit Court. The following record: Whereas at the April Term, 1872, of the Pulaski Circuit Court, Elijah Perry, Judge of said Court, caused to be entered on record an order comdemning the court house of Pulaski County as being in a dilapedated and dangerous condition, and beyond repairs and no longer safe as a place for holding court. It is therefore ordered that the two thousand dollar appropriation by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, approved April 1, 1872, for damages to the court house of Pulaski County during the and by reason of the late war be and the same, be used for building a court house on the public square in the town of Waynesville.

W.C. Kerr, superintendent of Construction, began work on the structure. Dimensions of the building were 60' x 40,' twenty two feet high, walls to be of brick. The cost to be between $8,000 and $9,000.

Word Received From Gold Field

1849. Word received from men who have reached the gold fields have been enthusiastic. The majority recommend for those who plan to go there to travel by the way of the Isthmus of Panama. It takes much less time, and so proves much cheaper. Early spring is the best time of the year to start the journey, and provisions for 100 days should be taken with you.

Prices in California are 75 cents to $1 for lumber. Flour is 60 cents per pound, Pork is 75 cents and bacon is $1 per pound. You can buy dried fruit for $1.50 pound and potatoes are $1. The climate appears to be a healthy one, and mild temperatures prevail. Clothing is much cheaper than food.

County Hanging Took Place April 21, 1905

It fell his lot to prosecute the only man to ever be hanged by court order in Pulaski County. Jim Smith, a bachelor, was a neighbor of Elias Smith. He often stopped by for the children of Elias and took them to Sunday School and church. On November 7, 1904, he disappeared. Elias sent out the report that he had bought him out and that he had left the country. Later, he told that Jim had gone to Joplin. Then a charred body was found in a burned brushpile about 3½ miles away. As soon as Elias heard this, he said, "I'll bet that was Jim Smith." When he saw the body he said, "Yes, that's him alright." The prosecuting attorney, Dan Johnson and the sheriff Bob Anderson were later taken by Elias to a woods on the Jim Smith farm where Elias told them to move away some leaves near a big tree. This they did and found dried blood. After that he instructed them to remove leaves at another spot-where a blood stained broad ax with hair on it was found-then, came the gruesome account of a premeditated murder. Elias had taken Jim to the woods under pretense of picking out tie timber. As Jim threw his head back to look up at a big tree, Elias, who had managed to be in a position behind him, dealt the fatal blow to his head with a broad ax. Under cover of night, Elias carried the body on horse back about 3½ miles. After he cut off one of the dead man's ears, which had an identifying scar, he put the corpse on a brush pile, covered it with leaves and set fire to it.

Daniel Johnson was deeply affected by this story and when the time came for him to make his speech in the courtroom, his emotions were fueled for a flow of tears. He started with Cain and Able-quoted bible verse after bible verse. He cried and nearly everyone else cried. Elias must have wept, too, for his was a sad plight-death by hanging.

Elias was kept in the Waynesville jail until the day set for the hanging, April 21, 1905. A scaffold was set up near the door of the jail and to the side of it. A stockade was built to keep the curious crowd from looking on. By arrangement many were allowed to go inside the wall. The son of preacher Frances was standing outside the wall with negro "Buff" on one side of him, on the other side was George Realford, who was 2 weeks short of being eligible to witness a hanging. Negro "Buff," who had said, "I'd sure hate to stay in that jail tonight," bent over in an attempt to see what was going on inside-his gun fell out of his pocket and shot Ike Frances through the leg. Negro "Buff" picked up the gun, was arrested and had to spend a sleepless night in what was to him a room of horrors--He was fined the next day and released.

Retired Richland City Marshal "Charlie" Powers remembers this hanging in detail because he "hitch hiked" a wagon ride to the hanging when he was 14 years old.

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