

Late Robert L. Conn, Former Mount Pulaski Times Publisher, Compiled Interesting Data

County Seat Was Moved To Pulaski In Year 1847

Note: The late Robert L. Conn, former publisher of Mount Pulaski Times, compiled following in the Illinois Bar Journal of which he was managing editor, in March 1938.

Mt. Pulaski

The Mt. Pulaski postoffice was established March 2, 1839. With a population of over three hundred, exceeding that of Postville. Mt. Pulaski in 1847 inaugurated a movement to bring the County Seat from Postville (Camden) to Mt. Pulaski. The proposition carried and the citizens raised the sum of \$2,700, which was supplemented by a County appropriation of \$300, to build a Court House.

Residents of Mt. Pulaski, where stands the historic structure that witnessed more of Mr. Lincoln's active law practice than any Court House in Logan County, await with interest the completion of the interior of the building, which will be preserved for the ages as a Lincoln Shrine. Prior to acquiring title to the building by the State the old Court House for many years had housed Mt. Pulaski's postoffice. The exterior of the building has been restored to its former state, when the martyred President as a circuit riding lawyer was in attendance upon practically every session of the Court.

On February 11, this year, with a ceremony under the auspices of the Mt. Pulaski Woman's Club, three young red oak trees from New Salem State Park, where Lincoln spent his young manhood days, were planted on the grounds surrounding the building. Representative Nicholas Hubbard of Mt. Pulaski delivered the address.

Judge Davis Preceded Here

The old building, which stands in the center of the square in the business section of the city, was the scene of many a hotly-contested legal battles. Judge David Davis was the sole judge of the old Eighth Circuit during the time the County Seat was located at Mt. Pulaski, and David B. Campbell was the district's prosecuting attorney. Judge Thomas R. Skinner was continuously County Judge at Mt. Pulaski. When Abraham Lincoln became President he appointed Judge Davis a member of the United States Supreme Court.

Lincoln Here Often

The walls of the old Court room have on many occasions reechoed the high-pitched voice of Lincoln as well as the eloquence of John T. Stuart, William H. Herndon, William Ferguson, C. H. Moore, George H. Estabrook, Joseph H. January, and others. It is said the building is one of the very few Court Houses in which Stephen A. Douglas appeared to argue his cases. Lionel P. Lacey, who came to Mt. Pulaski from the South in the early forties, was the town's first licensed lawyer. He introduced Stephen A. Douglas to an audience in Lincoln during the debate speeches of Lincoln and Douglas.

With an entire voting strength of 3,332 at the time of the Civil War, Logan County furnished 2,160 men to the Union cause. The first Illinois volunteer company to arrive at Camp Yates, at Springfield, was "the Lincoln Guards" from Logan County, captained by Wilford D. Wyatt.

The first Logan County soldiers to meet death in battle were Leo W. Meyers and John H. Duff. Major General Richard J. Oglesby, three times Governor of the State and once United States Senator, was a volunteer. Governor Oglesby passed away at his home at Elkhart Hill in April, 1899.

Lincoln Defended J. Mier

John C. Mier, another volunteer in the Civil War, who celebrated his 97th birthday anniversary February 13, 1938, continues to reside in Mt. Pulaski.

Mr. Mier has reason to remember Abraham Lincoln. It is told that Mr. Mier, now Mt. Pulaski's oldest citizen, when in his early teens, was one of a group of farmers who became incensed at a certain farm worker, who because of a grievance shocked wheat in a manner which left it exposed to the weather, resulting in loss to the owner. Because of this he was given a coat of tar and feathers by men in the neighborhood. Mier was arrested with the group and brought to trial. They were defended by Abraham Lincoln. Mier and the others were acquitted. During his service in the war Mr. Mier was taken prisoner at Guntown, Mississippi, and was confined in Andersonville prison.

Another resident of Mt. Pulaski who remembers Lincoln is 93-year-old William Capps, son of Jabez Capps, founder of the town and Mt. Pulaski's first postmaster. The Capps home during the days when Mt. Pulaski was the County Seat was the social center, where Lincoln and Douglas and other leading members of the bar congregated.

A third cousin once removed of Mr. Lincoln is Mrs. Susan Minerva Morris Upp, residing in Mt. Pulaski, whose parents are buried in the local cemetery and whose grandparents, Thomas Lincoln and Susanna Betz, are buried at Circleville, Ohio.

Mrs. Prudence Ann Capps Beidler, daughter of Jabez Capps and the mother of Paul E. and Rell C. Beidler, for many years publishers of The Mt. Pulaski News was the first white girl born in Mt. Pulaski.

Lincoln Memorial Marker Dedicated At Courthouse

Going over some old newspaper clippings, some interesting information is gained about the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Marker in the southwest corner of the Mount Pulaski Public Square. More than ever, this Sil-Tennial Year, everyone will recognize its historical value. The clipping states:

"The dedication of the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Marker in the southwest corner of the public square drew a large crowd to Mount Pulaski on Thursday.

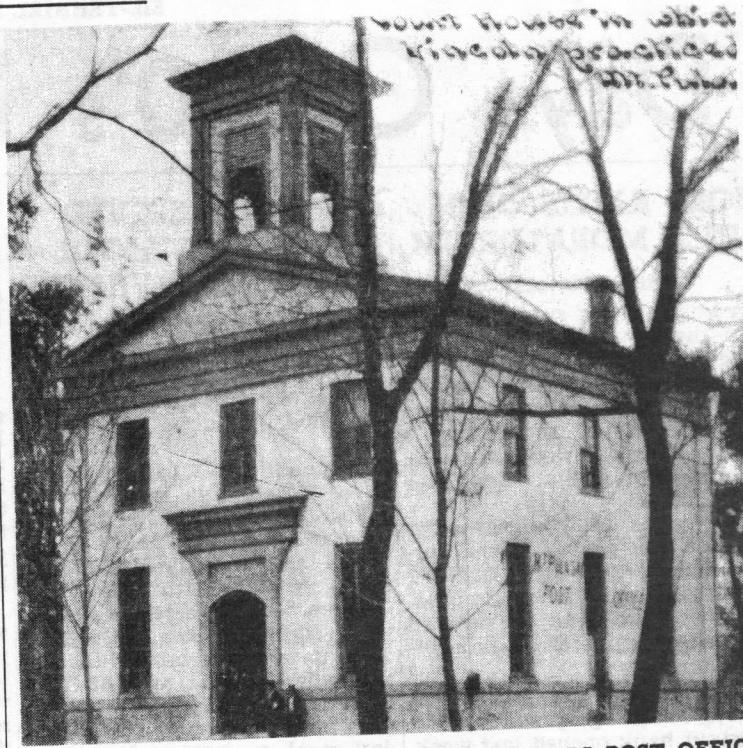
The program started with a parade of the Mount Pulaski Township High School Band and grade school pupils and teachers, led by the band. At the conclusion of the parade the band gave a short concert in the old court house grounds (public square), and was followed by the township high school glee club singing "Illinois". The marching, counter-marching and drills by the grade school pupils was greatly appreciated.

"The marker was then unveiled by Mrs. S. Linn (Prudence) Beidler and J. R. Lebo. Mrs. Beidler was the first female child born in Mount Pulaski, a daughter of one of its founders, Jabez Capps. Mr. Lebo, who had come to Mount Pulaski from Latham, represented the G. A. A. Post of which he is one of the few remaining members.

"Hon. Henry Rathbone, of Chicago, was next introduced by Rev. Charles S. Bream, pastor of the St. John's Lutheran Church, and for one hour and a half held his audience spell-bound by his eloquence, while he drew a word picture of the last day of the martyred president, as he received it from his parents, who were guests of President and Mrs. Lincoln in their box at the old Ford Theater in Washington on the night he was assassinated.

"Judge Lawrence B. Stringer, of Lincoln, followed Mr. Rathbone and held enraptured for another hour, the same audience, while he gave a history of Logan county and the early days of the pioneers.

"A horseshoe pitching contest was held late in the afternoon. The day ended with a concert by Goodman's Band, of Decatur, and an old-fashioned fish



COURTHOUSE AS IT APPEARED WHEN USED AS POST OFFICE
up until 1936 when the State of Illinois, which had bought the former Logan County Courthouse for \$1.00, started restoring it to its original appearance.

REMEMBERED LINCOLN AND JUDGE D. DAVIS HOLDING COURT HERE

Special Bed Was Built for 300-Pound Judge's Comfort.

December 13, 1934 Issue
Letter received by Mrs. E. O. Mayer, dated Nov. 23, 1934.
Wellington, Kansas

Dear Minnie:

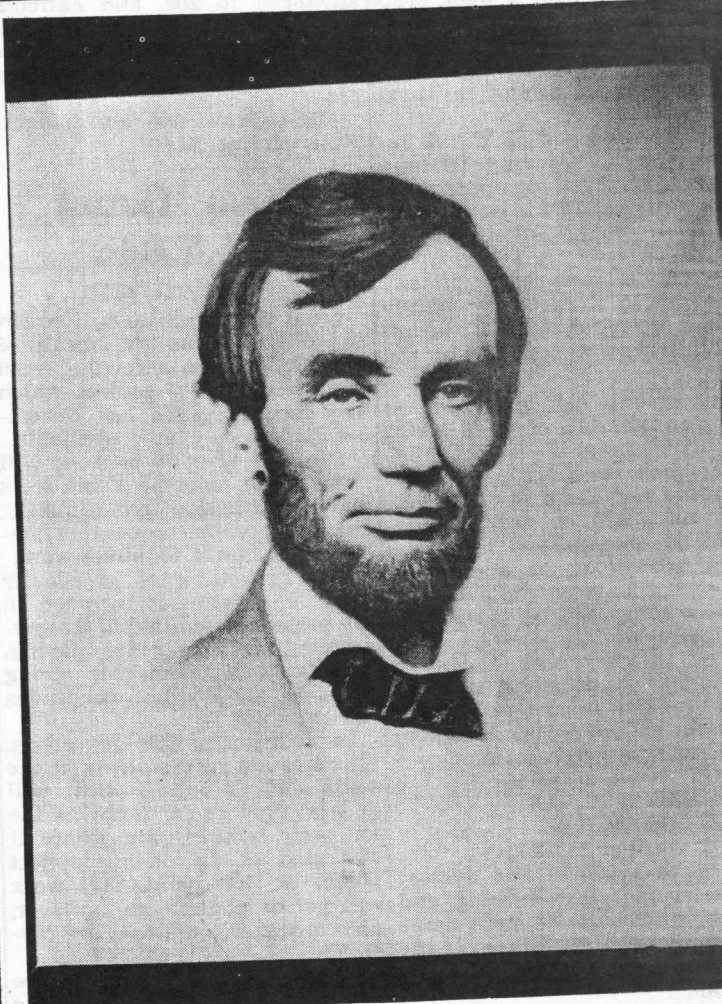
Yes, I remember the Court house as it was very well. The lower floor was used for offices and upper floor for the Court room and you entered it from the west and the platform, or Judge's desk, was in the southwest corner.

Father Clark, because of the poor tavern facilities and because he had what was considered at that time a large house, accommodated a number of lawyers. Among them, I remember was Judge David Davis, a huge man who weighed about 300 lbs. and so Father had a special bed or cot built for him; and I can remember Governor Oglesby and Judge Parks and have indistinct recollection of others who came there.

Abraham Lincoln knew the Capps family in Springfield and usually stopped at their home

which was just across the street, but he spent most of his time at our house with the other lawyers. I can remember of his cautioning the other lawyers when they became too noisy, that they were in a private home. There was an old desk in Emma Snyder's home which was used by father, and Lincoln frequently would write on it as they probably did not have such good accommodations for writing as father's doctor's office provided. Davis, afterwards was a supreme court judge and a part of the Hayes Electrical Commission and United States Senator from Illinois.

Both your uncle Oscar and I went to school in this building after the County Seat was removed to Lincoln. I can now remember only Frank Fisk, Miss Daggett and Jennie Baught among my teachers. I remember how we used to have speaking and reading in that old building. I was valedictorian of my class. One of the things they stressed in that old building was singing. I member that song books were so high that each of us made our own song book.



THIS PICTURE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN was presented to the Mount Pulaski Court House Shrine by the late Miss Marie Dean at the Old Settlers Day program here in September, 1957.

—Times-News Photo.

I had a part in the various Lincoln Demonstrations during his political campaign riding in floats and on horseback. Those were great events and as people came from miles around and the crowds were dense and enthusiastic.

Mrs. O. T. Hackney (my aunt) was Lena Clark, adopted daughter of Dr. John Clark, and her home mentioned in this letter is the home now occupied by Frank Snyder and family. Mrs. Hackney was born Jan. 6, 1847 and lives at Wellington, Kansas.

Courthouse Given

(Continued from preceding page)

power. I Dill. on Muncie, Corp. Sec. 40, pages 253 and 254. Richmond Co. vs Lawrence Co. 12 Ill. 1. Montpelier vs East Montpelier 29 Vt. 12 to 19. Town of Paulet vs Clark 9 Cranch WT (sup ct) 292 to 236. Dartmouth College Case 4 Wheat. 518. On the second proposition therefore I am of the opinion that the Legislature exceeded its powers in passing the act transferring the use of the building on the Public Square to the School Directors for school purposes; because the building was a part of the realty and the fee simple title to the realty was in the Town of Mt. Pulaski for the benefit of the general public and also for the use of private lot owners as we have already seen. It may be said that school purposes are public purposes, so they are, but the use in that case is widely variant from the use which the general public have in a Public Square and it is easily seen that the use of this block of ground was destroyed by this act of the Legislature disposing of the use of the building thereon for school purposes. All the public had a legal interest in the use of this Public Square and the Legislature had no right to abridge and destroy that use of transferring it to some other purpose. If then, this act of the Legislature was invalid and not binding, the right of use and control and ownership over the Public Square was never lawfully taken from the Town of Mt. Pulaski and vested in the Board of School Directors, and therefore such use and control remains with the Village authorities of the Village of Mt. Pulaski as successors to the authorities of the Town of Mt. Pulaski for the benefit of the general public.

A discussion of the third point is therefore not necessary to a decision of the question submitted for my opinion; nevertheless it seems plain to me that the School Directors in any event could only control and use for school purposes under the statute of AD 1856, and this use being abandoned, in my judgment, the law will not commit the absurdity and wrong of leaving a public square dedicated to Public uses, and of such comfort and benefit to the Public, when properly protected and cared for, to fall into decay and disuse, for the want of some authority to protect and care for it.

Respectfully submitted April 20th, AD 1878.

James T. Hoblit.

FULL PAGE PICTURE OF JUDGE STRINGER IN TIMES-NEWS

(Dec. 10, 1942)

As a mark of friendship and high esteem for Judge Lawrence B. Stringer, who was to have completed his 24th consecutive year as county judge of Logan county on Monday, Dec. 7, 1942, at which time he was going to retire from public life after more than a half century of unexcelled service, the Mount Pulaski Times-News in its issue of Dec. 3, printed a comprehensive article about his long and useful career, and in the Pictorial Section carried a full front page picture of Judge Stringer, taken in August at his desk in his office in the Logan county court house, by Donald C. Beidler, of Manhasset, Long Island, N.Y.

Welcome to the Mount Pulaski Sil-Tennial Celebration July 22-29