

# THE COURTHOUSES OF PULASKI COUNTY

by Terry Primas

Pulaski County has built five courthouses in Waynesville since 1840. The first courthouse was on the hill to the south overlooking the little village. The following four courthouses were on the town square, around which the original town was platted. The first courthouse was a temporary hewn log building.

Waynesville was designated the permanent county seat in May of 1843. William Moore donated land for the town and for a permanent court house, which included the present square, and was ordered to remove a house and apple trees that were on the donated land.

The second court house, which replaced the log one, was built in 1843. According to Goodspeed Publishing's 1889 *History of Pulaski County* (115), "They located it at Waynesville, and Allen Hamor was given the contract to build the court-house in the present square; it was to be 40x28 feet and 22 feet high, with three rooms, two halls, and two outside doors on the first floor, and was to be finished in 'fashionable stile.'"

We do not have a photograph of this second courthouse. What we do have is an oil painting at right from 1864 by a soldier of the 5<sup>th</sup> Missouri State Militia by the last name of Leuteritz. He painted this view from Fort Hill during the Civil War. In the foreground is the part of the fort with its wooden palisade and earthen walls. A large portion of the village of Waynesville stretches across the middle of the canvas.

The courthouse was situated about in the middle of the square, facing east. There was a lawn of considerable size in front of the courthouse along the street on the east side of the square. Behind the courthouse six wagons are visible. These might be army supply wagons. There was not much civilian governance going on nor commerce. The occupying federal force may have been using the courthouse to store supplies.

In the detail at lower right, two

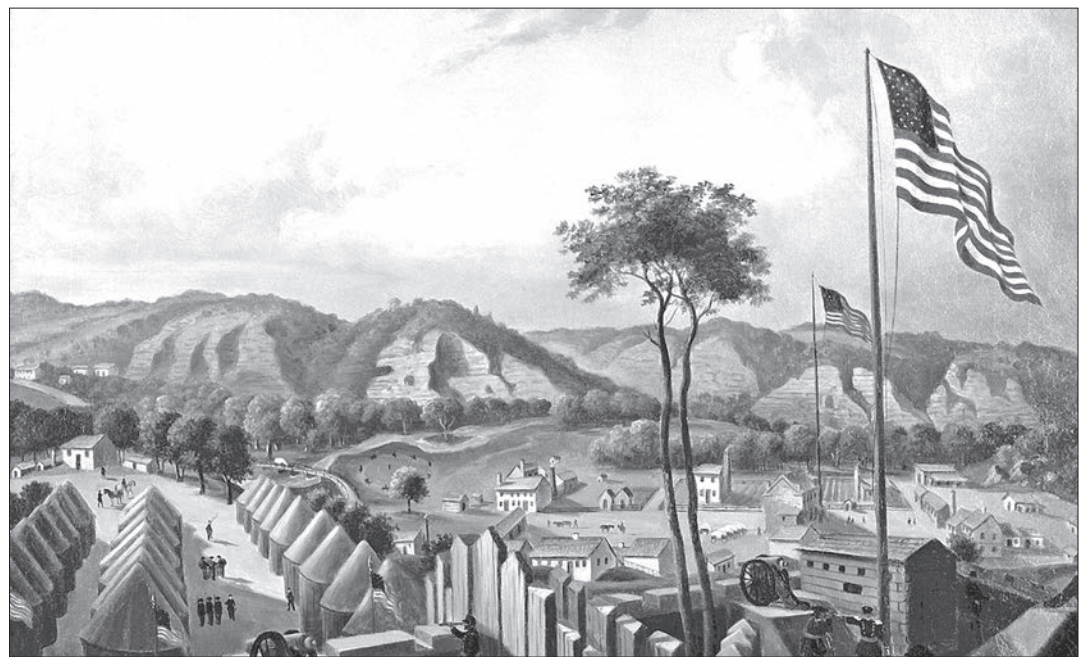
We do not have a picture of that first log courthouse. At right, is the house of James Harrison, near Arlington and the mouth of the Little Piney. It stood until the 1950s. Court for Gasconade County met there in the 1830s. Gasconade County contained at that time parts of Dallas, Webster, Texas, Phelps, Maries, Miller, Camden, and all of present Pulaski, Laclede and Wright counties. Technically, one could argue it was the first Pulaski court house. We show it as the log court house in Waynesville probably looked similar and it may have served as a later replication model.

houses on the east side of the square are depicted facing the courthouse. The two-story house at far middle right belonged to Jesse A. Rayl. On the 1860 Census, Rayl's occupation is listed as farmer. It also discloses that Rayl was the wealthiest man in the village of 98 persons and 14 residences. Rayl had real estate valued at \$6,000 and personal property valued at \$6,000. Most of the personal property valuation was due to his ownership of five slaves, ages 2 to 40.

The one-story building next to Rayl belonged to W. W. McDonald who, previous to the war, operated it as a stagecoach stop. McDonald was also the County and Circuit Clerk, (1852-1864). Goodspeed (115) attests that "Mr. McDonald, by an order of the court, was made agent for the care of the court-house, it being ordered that he 'shall set the doors open wide for the exercise of religious worship, at any time when there are no legal proceedings in progress in said house, to all denominations who believe in the doctrines set forth in the holy scriptures,' but a ball or dancing party, or exhibitory show, shall pay \$2.50 in advance." *Painting courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society.*



Goodspeed (114) describes Waynesville's first courthouse as "a hewn log building two stories, with a single glass window, the upper story being used for a clerk's office. The people came and camped out for two weeks to build the jail." Harrison's home above is a fair look-alike.





“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 condemning the [1843] courthouse of Pulaski County as being in a dilapidated 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 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.” (Goodspeed, 117)

Thus was the second courthouse condemned. The damage caused by the “late war” was not from a Civil War skirmish but more likely from occupying soldiers and storage of

Union supplies. Additionally, \$6,000 in bonds were sold to construct the third courthouse. W. C. Kerr was to oversee the building of the brick structure that was 60x40 feet and 22 feet high. The square footage was three times that of the second courthouse. In 1873, \$1,500 more was appropriated for finishing the building but it was not occupied until the early spring of 1876. For some interior description, see page 45.

The views containing the third courthouse are panoramas, circa 1902, probably taken with the Kodak Panoram camera, introduced in 1900. In the **top view**, the Black Hotel (aka the Old Stagecoach Stop) is at the far right. The picket fence that ran from the southwest corner of the hotel and then alongside George Reed’s house is visible. Across the street on the northeast corner of the square is the square white concrete

jail.

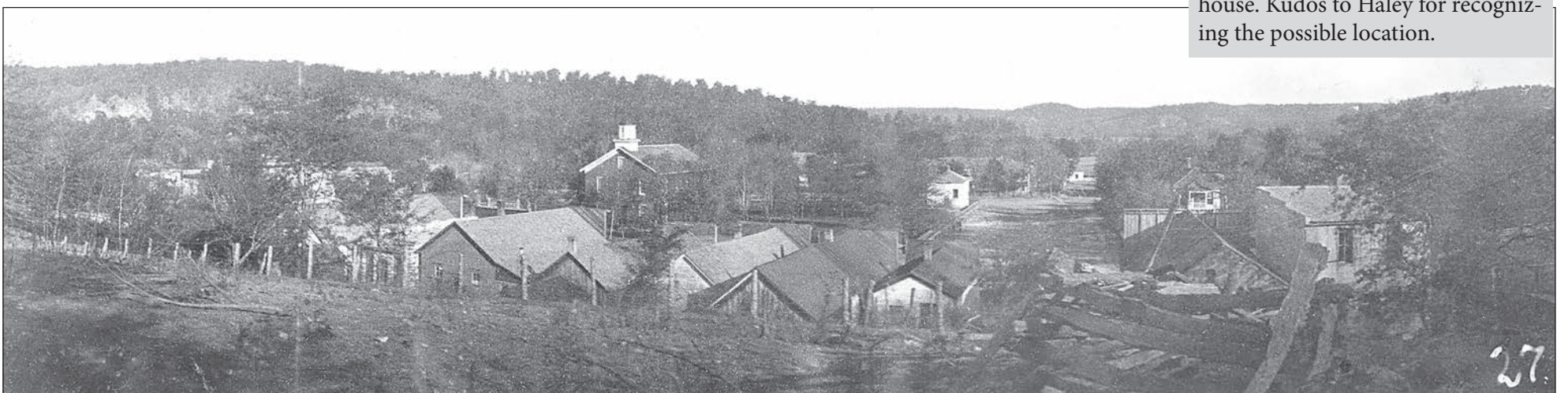
At **bottom** is a view from behind the row of business houses on the south side of the square, most with false fronts. The courthouse is at center and the jail is to the right.

The two gentlemen in the top image might be William Howard Johnson 1866-1940 and W. H. Locker (1870-c.1910), as the images were found in the Johnson Family Collection. Johnson, of St. Louis, had a contract with the Frisco Railroad to sell surplus land in Pulaski County until March 31, 1902. William Locker was a Waynesville resident. He was a lawyer, two term State Representative (1901-1904), and sold real estate. He had an office in St. Louis from which he managed his real estate business and assisted Mr. Johnson in selling railroad land.

In 1902, Johnson and Locker formed a partnership for mineral

speculation. In March, 1902, they found a deposit of lead 18 inches in thickness at a depth of 100 feet on a tract of land a few miles southwest of Waynesville. However, there are no subsequent reports about further exploitation of the mineral deposit.

On this page are two previously unpublished views of the third courthouse. Their recent discovery precipitated this article about the county’s courthouses. Archivist Haley Frizzle-Green of The State Historical Society of Missouri, Springfield Research Center, was processing the Johnson Family Collection given to the center by a Taney County family. These images did not seem to be in Taney County or vicinity. Haley contacted this author for verification as a Pulaski County location, which we identified by hallmark buildings and fences. Up to that time, we had not seen an image of the third courthouse. Kudos to Haley for recognizing the possible location.



The third courthouse, built in 1873, burned during the early morning hours of June 13, 1903. Many of the county's records were incinerated, including property deeds, but probate records were saved.

In 1890, an effort began to move the county seat from Waynesville to Crocker. Crockerites Judge W. H. Murphy and C. H. Howard spearheaded the effort, offering to provide the land and pay for the courthouse. They even engaged architect Henry H. Hohenschild of Rolla to draw up a plan. The issue came to a vote in 1892 and removal was defeated. With a \$5,000 insurance check in hand, the county court engaged Hohenschild to draft plans for the new 1903 courthouse. He simply made some modifications to his 1892 blueprints.

The fourth courthouse was 60 feet long by 40 feet wide at the south end (front), and 60 feet wide at the north end. The ground floor included five large office rooms which, according to the *Pulaski County Democrat*, contained "probably twice as much floor space as did the offices in the old building." The first floor also housed two fireproof vaults "with ample capacity to hold all records that might accumulate in years to come." The second floor featured a courtroom and three jury rooms, a consultation room, and a witness waiting room. It still does.

On March 7, 1904, a dedication ceremony was held with a large crowd from around the county in attendance. There was much speechifying by local lawyers, dignitaries, and Presiding Circuit Judge L. B. Woodside. Everybody was pleased with the \$10,240 courthouse.



The 1903 courthouse was built to serve Pulaski County when there were 11,000 citizens. Eighty years later, the population of the county had quadrupled and the "old" courthouse facility was inadequate to fulfill its civic and legal demands.

County officials placed a half-cent sales tax increase proposal on the February 1987 ballot. Revenue to be raised by the tax increase was earmarked to finance the construction of a new county courthouse. Voters, however, turned that proposition down, but then changed their minds when the issue was placed on the ballot again on August 4th of that same year. The sales tax was approved by a narrow 1,123 to 1,000 margin.

Approval of the sales tax allowed the county to erect its fifth courthouse in 1989, a 51,484 square foot structure just east of the 1903 courthouse. The courthouse also provided room for the county sheriff's offices and jail, which moved to their own building in December of 2020. The construction work took almost two years to complete and cost the county 3.9 million dollars.

The old (fourth) courthouse still stands on the square and is maintained by Pulaski County. It is now a museum operated by the Pulaski County Historical Society.



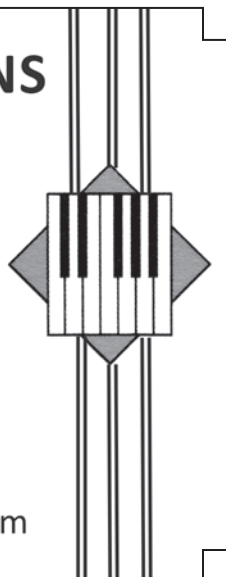
## PIANO LESSONS

**LISA SCHWANDT**

Piano Instructor  
100 Mitchell Hts.  
Waynesville, MO 65583

573-774-2512

[lisaschwandt@yahoo.com](mailto:lisaschwandt@yahoo.com)



*I hope you enjoy  
this edition of the  
Old Settlers Gazette.*



**Thank you for allowing me  
to serve you.**

**RACHELLE BEASLEY**

Pulaski County Circuit Clerk  
573-774-4755  
[Rachelle.Beasley@courts.mo.gov](mailto:Rachelle.Beasley@courts.mo.gov)  
Paid for by the Candidate.

**LA FAMILIA  
MEXICAN RESTAURANT**  
1018 Missouri Avenue  
Saint Robert, Mo 65584

**573-336-3339**

Mon - Sat 10:30 am - 8:00 pm  
Sunday Closed

# **EDMORSE FORD**

**S A I N T   R O B E R T**



**341 VFW Memorial Drive**

**St. Robert, Missouri**

**573-336-2000**

**[edmorsefordstrobort.com](http://edmorsefordstrobort.com)**

## Courthouses Postscript Lest We Forget Mabel Mottaz

The Pulaski County Historical Society was organized March 27, 1969. The first president was Mabel Mottaz (1900-1980). Its first big project was to erect a replica of the first courthouse and was spearheaded by Mrs. Mottaz beginning in 1971.

Mabel Manes Mottaz received a B. S. in Education from the University of Missouri at Rolla and later a Master's Degree in Counseling from Columbia University in New York. She taught in rural schools and finished her 22 year career teaching Social Studies and serving as a counselor at Waynesville High School. She retired in 1960. At the end of that same year, she wrote and published the first history of Pulaski County (other than Goodspeed's 1889 volume), an 81-page paperback titled *Lest We Forget—A History of Pulaski County, Missouri and Fort Leonard Wood*. Mabel financed the printing of 5,000 copies and began selling them for \$1.50 each. By the mid-1970s, Mabel was living at the newly opened John Knox Village of the Ozarks retirement facility. She had less than 100 books left and was selling them for \$5.00, with the profit going to the Pulaski County Historical Society.

Mrs. Mottaz worked hard to generate support for building a replica

of the first courthouse on a site in Laughlin Memorial Park. The Building Trades classes at Waynesville High School were drafting plans based on the picture of Harrison's home/courthouse on page 30.

Mabel spoke to civic groups and wrote several articles that were published in county newspapers. She cited other such successful projects, such as Springfield, Illinois, and its restoration of a log courthouse where Abe Lincoln served as lawyer



Mabel Mottaz's faculty picture in *The Tige* 1951, the yearbook published by the students of Waynesville High School. It included all of the students and teachers in the entire school district. Courtesy of Susan Farnham Morriss.

and Rolla's restoration of the Dillon Log Cabin, which housed their museum.

In an essay in the *Pulaski County Democrat* of September 28, 1972, Mabel asserted that "Four courthouses have since been erected in Waynesville, but this tiny, rudely built log house was the first. The pioneers were fulfilling the American Dream and made history in 1839 because they believed without organization and law and order this wide area would have been chaos. We want this building to be a memento not only of the past, but to serve our youth and coming generations as a reminder of these hardy pioneers who went before and carved out homes in the primeval forest using the great trees to supply their need for building materials..."

Several locals offered rock from old chimneys and fireplaces, as well as logs from old cabins. In addition to material, there were several cash donations, as well as promises of donated labor. The Optimist Club donated one thousand dollars to enable the project to begin.

Gerald Wyatt tore down the donated cabins and hauled the logs to the park location where he began the construction of the walls. He also provided over 300 hours of backhoe work in preparing the site.

In October of 1972, part of a log wall had been constructed but more funds would be needed to finish

the project. Roofing, wiring, and interior amenities would be needed. KFBD held a radio marathon to raise money for the courthouse replica. Mabel remarked in the October 12 *Democrat* issue, "Our sincere thanks go to KFBD and their entire staff, who worked so hard for twenty four hours on the marathon and it was through no fault of theirs that the results were disappointing in that we failed to reach our goal. Unless more people take an interest in this project, it cannot go forward."

What must also have been equally disheartening was the fact that two weeks later, another KFBD marathon was held for the USO and it raised \$4,300 in 36 hours. The first courthouse replication project lost steam and was not mentioned again in print.

Mabel remained active in the historical society for almost another decade. Mabel was born September 20, 1900, to Seth and Olive Manes. She married E. N. Henson on February 18, 1920 and they had one son, Drury. She married Waynesville banker Sam T. Rollins on April 1, 1944, and married C. E. Mottaz on April 3, 1948, all of whom preceded her in death. Mabel was civic-minded and particularly had an interest in local history. She often expressed her opinion that "only by studying and knowing the past that we would be able to perceive the future and know what was to come."

### Judge Kevin Hillman

Associate Circuit Judge  
25<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit



HOPES YOU ENJOY  
THIS 43<sup>RD</sup> ISSUE OF THE  
OLD SETTLERS GAZETTE

### Schwandt Construction Company

Office: 573-736-2202 • Cell: 573-433-5055

John Schwandt  
Owner

- Home Building
- Excavations
- Metal Buildings
- Concrete Construction

100 Mitchell Heights  
Waynesville, MO 65583

### Secret Western Store



Come see our new store

Western clothing for the whole family. Boots, hats, and tack.

Custom Tshirts made.

Monday—Friday 9:00-5:00

Saturday 9:00-3:00



22975 Hardy Lane  
St. Robert, MO 5584  
573-336-5066



Join our VIP Group on FB for live sales & specials.

# IT'S NOT JUST LAND, IT'S A LIFESTYLE



LIVINGTHEDREAMLAND.COM

855-BUY-DIRT



**CREEKSIDE LODGE**  
Texas County, MO

Nestled just minutes from town and easily accessible off a paved highway, this 87 acre property offers the perfect balance of convenience and seclusion. Hidden from the world, it features over 1/4 mile of crystal-clear Hog Creek, providing a peaceful backdrop for recreational activities.

87± acres \$1,200,000



**TIGHT LINES LODGE**  
Phelps County, MO

The Little Piney never disappoints! Tight Lines Lodge is located just outside Newburg, Missouri. Conveniently located in the middle of St. Louis and Springfield and roughly 3 hours from Kansas City. This property sits alongside the Little Piney with a meticulously pre-planned home.

7.24 acres \$695,000



**DRY CREEK RANCH**  
Pulaski County, MO

The moment you drive through the gates and cross the bridge, you are encompassed in the shade of mature walnut trees and mighty oaks that line the driveway and surrounding hillside. The only traffic is a flock of turkeys or whitetail deer. The home is a 2,800 sq. ft. ranch style earth contact home.

102.8 acres \$675,000

For more details on the above properties and others, visit [livingthedreamland.com](http://livingthedreamland.com).

## MATCHING EXCEPTIONAL PROPERTIES with EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

Our national network has consistently sold over 175 million every three months since conception

**Jeff Browning**  
(417) 260-5176

[jwbrowning92@gmail.com](mailto:jwbrowning92@gmail.com)

Licensed in  
Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois,  
Arkansas, and Kansas