



Fig. 1. Jefferson County Courthouse, 1863.  
(From: An Illustrated Historical Map of Jefferson County, Missouri,  
1876)

# Jefferson Heritage And Landmarks Society

NEWSLETTER

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## THE SCALES OF JUSTICE

Jefferson County, organized in 1818, is one of Missouri's oldest counties. The county seat was established at Herculaneum, but no courthouse was ever built there. A black man rented his log cabin to be used as the first courtroom. The court met in various and sundry places in the county seat.

By 1832 the court was thinking about moving to Monticello which was a more centrally located spot in the new county. The idea was met with defeat at the polls. A persistent effort to relocate had the court appropriate \$400 in 1836 to build a 20-by-25 foot, 1½ story, hand hewn log courthouse, but once again such a building did not happen. Another try was made with a large building planned, but it too came to naught.

Finally, the county seat with the name of Hillsboro was established in 1838 on 50 acres donated by Samuel Merry and Hugh O'Neal. The county surveyor plotted the new town and eventually in 1840 the county government moved.

Charles H. Pond was contracted to build the second and larger court. The courthouse was moved to a different site in Hillsboro. Scales of Justice adorned the new building over the main entrance. It is still in place to this day.

A fireproof addition east of the courthouse was built in 1892 with a second-story connecting walkway to the main court house. The "bridge" was still being used in 1953 when the courthouse was modernized and repaired.

The last addition was made in 1975-76 for a third circuit court and new space for the sheriff's department.

Bibliography: Ohman, Marian M  
ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MISSOURI  
COURTHOUSES, c.1981

There is a sign in the vault of the Recorder of Deeds that expresses the feeling of the new Recorder and her attitude toward the documents in her care:

"Of all the national, state and county assets, old records are the most precious.

"They are the gift of one generation to another and the extent of the care marks the extent of our civilization.

"Let us give our records the best of care."

Jefferson County is extremely fortunate to have Joann Schiffler as the Recorder of Deeds. She understands the importance of our old and historic records and the need for their preservation. Her Chief Deputy, Marie Walker, is equally as interested and she is a cemetery crawler like some of us.

Joann Schiffler sent us a very nice letter, thanking us for what we are trying to do along the lines of preservation and her appreciation. She states some of the practices she has put into effect since she has been in office and some of the wonderful old records she has found stashed away. Her final paragraph is as follows:

"We in the Recorder's office will be moving from quill pen to the computer age in the very near future. I will be installing the system to better serve the needs of the people. In this age of hurry to wait, we find that data is needed NOW... Complete restoration of records was estimated at \$400,000.00."

She issues an invitation to all of us as follows:

Invitation: Coffee with the Recorder  
May 1, 1985, Recorder's Office  
10:00-11:00p.m.

On February 2, 1985 Jefferson Heritage lost one of its Board members, Judge Herbert K. Moss. He came from an early pioneer family and had a famous career as a member of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. After he retired, he came back to his home and became Presiding Judge of the County Court of Jefferson County. Later he was an able and distinguished judge of the 23rd Judicial Circuit. He was always interested in the history of his county and a strong supporter of Jefferson Heritage.

We have been very fortunate in being allowed by Platin Methodist Church to put their church records on computer. This has been done by Becky Mayberry of the DeSoto Public Library. This work was done with the approval of Betty Olsen who is Librarian. She is always ready to help us make copies.

Back in 1967 Kathryn Schneider, the widow of a former owner of the JEFFERSON COUNTY RECORD wrote a series of articles about Jefferson County based on material she had gleamed from old histories prior to 1888 and from stories she had heard and her own memories. Her family has given us permission to make copies of these newspaper articles and some of the pictures appearing with the articles.

*Leon O'Brien*  
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER:

For those who didn't attend the annual meeting at Fletcher House on March 24, the Board of Directors to serve during 1985 are: Elizabeth Golterman, Dr. Ray Henry, Mr. Roy Wickerham, Frank Magre, Jean O'Brien, Blanche Fallet, Mr. R.K. Barton, Jr., Marion Piper, and Betty Mueller.

During this meeting, the membership passed a resolution submitted by R.K. Barton suggesting that Jefferson Heritage and Landmark Corp. be called Jefferson Heritage and Landmarks Society Corp. All proposed changes of by-laws will be sent to the Missouri Secretary of State.

Mr. and Mrs. Victor Whiteside of Festus had donated an 1830-40 antique sofa to Fletcher House. It will be arriving shortly and is a lovely addition to the home. Many thanks to the Whitesides.

Put May 5 on your MUST DO calendar list. The first spring meeting will be held at Jefferson College, at 2 p.m., featuring Sue Ellen Meyer, foremost authority on midwestern antique quilts. She and her husband gave this program several years ago at Arnold High School and it was most enjoyable. Try to attend.

Work is progressing slowly on the word processing of local cemeteries that have been recorded. We hope to see something positive this coming year. We will begin doing some oral history interviews that will preserve many first hand recollections of time gone by.

We received a letter from Jules Porchey of the Jefferson County Park Department: "Jefferson County Department of Parks and Recreation takes great pride in the Governor Thomas Fletcher House. We are pleased with the support that Jefferson Heritage and Landmark has given this department. Many people have toured this landmark each year..."

Hope to see all of you on May 5, 2 p.m., at Jefferson College.

Betty Mueller

*Betty Mueller*