

## SHELBY COUNTY AND ITS COURTHOUSES

In **1851** the General Assembly of Iowa fixed the boundaries of Shelby County. The new county was named after General Isaac Shelby, who was famous for serving in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and becoming the first governor of the state of Kentucky. Early settling in Shelby County began in **1848** in Galland's Grove.

The first documentation dealing with the location of the county government of Shelby County was found in the minute book of the County Judges of Shelby County and dated at Council Bluffs, **December 3, 1853**. Samuel H. Riddle, Judge of the Seventh Judicial District of Iowa appointed Marshall Turly, of "Council Bluffs City," J. F. Vails, of Crawford County, and Lorenzo Butler, of Harrison County, to locate the seat of justice in Shelby County "as near the geographical center as may be, having due regard to present as well as to the future population of said county." The next entry is dated **December 21, 1853**, and consists of a report by said commissioners that they had fixed the county seat on the Northeast quarter of Section 27, Township 81, Range 40, Grove Township, and "was across the road west a short distance from the well known residence of F. J. McNaughton, one of the prominent pioneers of Shelby County." On **February 5, 1855**, Shelbyville was officially platted on this quarter section of land. There is no record of a courthouse in Shelbyville.

By a vote of the people in **April of 1859**, the county seat was moved from Shelbyville to Harlan, and in **1860** there was erected by James M. Long and Adam T. Ault a frame courthouse on the corner of Court and Seventh Streets. The official business of the County was held in this building until **1875**, when the Board of Supervisors appropriated the sum of four thousand two hundred and fifty dollars (\$4,250) for a courthouse, which was built in that year on the Public Square.

According to the Board minutes of **October 21, 1879**, a petition was presented to the Board signed by citizens of Harlan asking permission to build four cisterns in the Public Square for the purpose of securing water to be used in case of fire and for other purposes. On motion the request of the petitioners was granted provided the cisterns were placed in the corners of the Public Square.

The following "quoted" excerpts are from PAST AND PRESENT OF SHELBY COUNTY, IOWA by Edward S. White, B.A., LL. B.

"At its session **October 17, 1881**, the Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to procure the building of a suitable fence and railing around the public square."

"On **April 4, 1882**, the Board of Supervisors passed a motion providing that the court room should not be used for any purpose except court and county business, and for the holding of the religious services by any denomination without a church building and for the purpose of holding school elections. It was also provided by the motion that the courthouse yard should not be used for auctioneer grounds."

**Board Minutes dated April 11, 1890:** The Board received a communication from the Grand Jury concerning the condition of the vaults in the courthouse and recommended that the Board hire an expert to examine them.

"At its session **June 1, 1890**, the Board of Supervisors received a report of William Foster, an experienced architect, with reference to the vaults of the courthouse, containing the county records. Mr. Foster recommended to the Board that they should be condemned, since they were of no protection whatever against fire. Mr. Foster reported to the Board that the county business to be transacted in each of the county offices had so increased, keeping pace with the large increase of population, that the office vaults and court rooms were no longer adequate for the purpose of transaction of public business. It was, therefore, at this meeting resolved by the Board of Supervisors that there should be submitted to the voters the question of erecting a new courthouse at a cost of not to exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000), at a special election to be held on **July 15, 1890**.

"On **January 28, 1890**, Supervisors F. W. Leohr and Joshua Brindly requested the county auditor to call a special meeting of the Board to reconsider the matter of the submission of the question of building a fifty thousand dollar (\$50,000) courthouse. County Auditor J. W. French accordingly gave notice to the Board which, therefore, met on **July 7, 1890**, at which time the Board reconsidered and rescinded its former action providing for the submission of said question.

"At its meeting on **July 16, 1890**, the Board decided to submit the question of the erection of a fifty thousand dollar (\$50,000) courthouse at a special election to be held on **August 19, 1890**, the said fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to cover cost of building and fixtures.

"Under date of **July 16, 1890**, provision was made by the Board of Supervisors for moving the records of the Recorder's Office to a building on the north side of the square."

**Harlan Tribune dated July 23, 1890:** A good many of the opponents of a new courthouse seem to forget that its advocates are just as honorable, fairminded, reasonable, have the good of the county at heart as much as heavy taxpayers, and as much entitled to a hearing as

themselves. There is no necessity for getting into a passion over the matter, or in moments of heat and ill temper impute motives to those who do not agree with them that are unfair and unworthy. It is just as well to be reasonable and calm in arguing the matter. There is much to be gained by it. It is hardly worthwhile to create a lasting enmity with your neighbor because he does not coincide in your opinion. No matter what the occasion, people will differ in their opinions and neither can tell why. Either the question will carry or it will not, and whichever way public opinion decides someone is sure to be disappointed. We believe that we have shown conclusively that the actual amount of the tax need cuts a very small figure. The less property a voter has the less will be required of him and the larger the amount of property owned by the taxpayer certainly the more able is he to pay his share. The only question worthy of deliberation is whether under all the circumstances Shelby County has now reached that stage in her development where it is due the reputation of the citizens of the county as careful, prudent persons to build a new courthouse.

**Dunlap Reporter dated July 31, 1890:** Pete Ross of Manteno called on us last week and expressed himself as bitterly opposed to voting for a new courthouse for Shelby County. He thinks the move the veriest nonsense in view of the County's impoverished financial condition.

"On **August 20, 1890**, the Board of Supervisors, consisting of F. W. Loehr, Chairman, Joshua Brindly, and Ed Quinn, met for the purpose of canvassing the vote on the courthouse proposition, which vote they found to be as follows: For the Courthouse, 851; Against the Courthouse, 1449.

**Harlan Tribune dated August 27, 1890:** The TRIBUNE is opposed to submitting the courthouse proposition at the next election for the very good reason that it makes a political football of an issue which should be decided solely upon its merits. All other counties have taken the same view of it, and in one or two cases where the proposition has been submitted eight or ten times it has always been done at a special election. It was this thought that led the republican party to submit the prohibition amendment at a special election. No thought of the expense was considered but it was done to prevent the political clash of opposing elements. Dickinson County voted in July upon a courthouse proposition and will vote again September 2. It is easy to imagine the devil's life a candidate for office would lead with this question injected into the canvass. The remark of a republican that his party had nothing to lose by the method is the secret of the republican eagerness on the subject.

"The courthouse proposition remained dormant until the meeting of the Board of Supervisors on **September 11, 1891**, on which date a resolution was adopted by the Board providing that there be submitted to the voters of Shelby County at the General Election of **November 3, 1891**, the erection of a forty-five thousand dollar (\$45,000) courthouse."

**Shelby News dated September 18, 1891:** The Board of Supervisors at the meeting last week decided to give the voters of Shelby County another opportunity to settle the Courthouse question. The proposition will be voted on at the General Election on November next.

Shelby County's new courthouse cost is not to exceed \$45,000. The amount is to be raised by taxes and is not to exceed 2 mills on the dollar until the sum is raised.

**Shelby News dated October 6, 1891:** Harlan people no doubt do not think very kindly of Shelby Township, since we failed to give the courthouse question a big boost, but it is no time now to offer any apologies. We trust that this settles the question for years to come. (Author's Note: There must have been an uprising of some kind.)

"The proposition carried at the said election. The Board at its November session, 1891, finding the vote to be: For the courthouse, 1898 votes; Against the courthouse, 1270 votes."

**Shelby News dated November 20, 1891:** The Board of Supervisors will convene in a short time to draw up plans for the new courthouse. It is the intention to have all of the preliminaries arranged so as to begin operations early in the spring.

"Accordingly at its meeting on **December 9, 1891**, the Board of Supervisors chose C. E. Bell of Council Bluffs, an architect for the construction of the new courthouse."

**Shelby News dated December 18, 1891:** Shelby County's new courthouse will be of solid stone, entire with a slate roof, the dimensions are 72 x 116 feet on the ground, three stories in height, with a ten foot basement. The apex of the central tower will kiss the morning sunlight at a height of 130 feet.

**Harlan Tribune dated December 16, 1891:** IMPORTANT SESSION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS. The county board met in adjourned session Wednesday for the purpose of receiving plans and specifications for the building of the new courthouse. Nine drawings were submitted and the board heard each man separately on the advantages of his plan of structure. After weighing all the considerations the board selected on Friday afternoon Mr. C. E. Bell of Council Bluffs, and his drawing, so far as the exterior is concerned, will probably be adopted without material changes. The plan is 72x110 feet on the ground, with three stories elevation, including a ten foot basement, with a central tower of 100 foot in height. The building will be of stone entire with the slate roof, amply lighted, and with very commodious offices and roomy vaults. It is not worth while to give the interior details of the adopted building just now, since the board wisely concluded to visit a number of the new courthouses recently built for other counties before settling upon the arrangement of the rooms, although the plan submitted by Mr. Bell has many features to commend it. The building has four fronts, is fire proof and very attractive architectural design. We are inclined to believe that the people of the county will be amply satisfied with the choice made by the supervisors. Mr. Bell is an architect of experience and comes to us highly recommended. We are perfectly satisfied that he will discharge his duties honorably and well. An odd coincidence to Mr. Bell is that the hands of the clock in the tower of his design point to five o'clock, which is within ten minutes of the hour of his selection as architect.

**Shelby News dated January 8, 1892:** In blowing about the new courthouse, the county seat newspapers should not lose sight of the fact that Shelby County will build and pay for the edifice, not Harlan.

**Shelby County Republican dated January, 1892:** The complete plans and specifications for the new courthouse are now on file at the County Auditor's Office, having been brought up by the architect Tuesday evening. However much the building in its exterior may suit, the opinion of the writer that its interior arrangement will be found anything but satisfactory. The floor space is cut into too many rooms, the result being that no office will be much above 16 x 20 in size. There are rooms on the first floor for the Superintendent, the Board of Supervisors and Sheriff, and a private office connected with each which might be dispensed with. The Sheriff could office with the Clerk, the Board of Supervisors with the Auditor, and the Superintendent could be put upstairs. There should be nothing on the first floor but four large offices and vaults for each. If there is any one reason more than another why the county should have a new courthouse, it is that there might be more room in the offices. But under the plans now adopted, the room is not there. In our humble opinion, a mistake has been made.

"At the meeting of the Board on **February 9, 1892**, the contract for the erection of the courthouse was awarded to W. H. Cockerell for the sum of forty-three thousand five hundred dollars (\$43,500), the courthouse to be erected within a year. Mr. Cockerell gave bond in the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000)."

**Harlan Tribune dated February 17, 1892:**

#### SHELBY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The specifications for the new building to be begun in April are very complete. The outside elevation will be stone, four inches thick, backed with brick, all of the partitions will be of brick. Dimensions of the building will be 70 x 112, with a central tower of eight corners, rising to a height of 130 feet from the ground. The tower will be of wood and galvanized iron and will contain a clock of four faces. At the point of the spire, a cluster of incandescent lights will be arrayed and at night their illumination will be visible for miles.

The floor of the basement will be laid six inches deep in concrete and finished with one inch of pure cement. The sleepers and joists in all floors are to be of oak and the spaces between securely bridged and filled in with concrete. All the floors will be double, first layer to be of common sheathing and the upper floor of matched yellow pine, dressed off smooth. The floors of the hall to be of decorative tiling and the floors in each of the offices in front of the counter to be of the same material. The roof is to be of slate and the deck of the best quality of tin painted on both sides. The spouting which carries off the water is to be of copper. The interior finish is to be of Red Oak and Yellow Pine and to be finished natural wood. The doors on the first and upper floors are to be of Red Oak with chipped glass panels. The hinges, handles and locks of the doors, and in fact all necessary hardware for the building, will be of the latest improved pattern. The vaults will be of stone and brick with double iron doors. The outside doors will be each 3/4 inch in thickness and locked in masonry with ten bolts. The

vaults will be finished in the interior with a six inch coating of patent fire-proof material. All the windows are to be American or French Plate glass and the sashes are to be of the most modern style and fitted with the best locks and weights. The stone for the exterior will be No. 1 Berea Sand Stone from Cleveland, Ohio. It will be sent in the rough and cut and dressed here. All window caps, reveals, molded courses, door jambs and stone columns are to be of rubbed stone and all door sills, outside steps and flagging to be of Bedford Sand Stone. The cornice will be galvanized iron. The plastering for the interior will be a patent preparation known as silicon of great durability and strength and which comes ready to mix with water and spread on the walls. The building will be lighted by electricity, heated by steam and have ample sewage connections. A convenience that will be appreciated by female witnesses, or others of the sex in attendance at the court, is a private room and toilet room for the ladies only, upstairs adjoining the court room. The necessity for the additions of these conveniences to the modern court room have been long felt. All the offices have toilet rooms. The water closets will be located in the basement and will be completely modern in their arrangement.

Since it may be of interest to the readers about the amount of materials which go into such a building, we will give a list by wagon loads of the different kinds of material required.

1,000,000 Bricks  
80 Car Loads of Stone

	<u>Wagon Loads</u>
Galvanized Iron	15
Vault Doors and Iron	10
Slate	15
Brick	1,000
Stone	800
Lime and Cement	550
Lumber	120
Sand	350
Plastering	20
Iron Work	20
Tile	10
Concrete	150
Sash and Doors	40
Total	3,100

"At its meeting on **April 4, 1892**, the Board of Supervisors authorized Parian Lodge No. 321, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, of Harlan, to take charge of the ceremonies at the laying of the corner stone of the courthouse.

"On **April 8, 1892**, the Board awarded the contract for the courthouse plumbing to J. C. Bixby of Council Bluffs. At the same meeting the Board sold the old courthouse to David

Mason for the sum of three hundred and ninety dollars (\$390). Mr. Mason agreed to have the said building moved off the public square by **July 1, 1892**. At the same meeting offices were rented for the use of the county officers." (The Board rented the building which sits on Lot 4, Block 47 in Longs Addition to the City of Harlan. This is now the present location of the Larson, Childs, and Hall Law Firm. Jeff Larson is our present County Attorney.)

**Harlan Tribune dated April 13, 1892:** The recorder, auditor and treasurer of this county are now located in the Weiland building on the west side of the square. Clerk Wyland will occupy Thos. Mockler's office in the opera house after this week.

**Harlan Tribune dated April 20, 1892:** David Mason will make the front of a new livery barn out of the old courthouse. The rooms in which taxes have been paid, deed recorded, claims audited, petitions filed and wills recorded for many years, will be remodeled into carriage and harness rooms. The upper floor where many a juryman has swapped yarns and borrowed a chew of tobacco while waiting for all hands to get together, where many a criminal has been indicted and many an execution issued, where many a lawyer has spoken eloquently in behalf of his client and many a knotty problem solved by his honor, where Davidson was acquitted and Cumberland sentenced to the death penalty, where Goar and Kirkwood, Allison and Hall, Bolten and Weaver and many others have advocated political creeds and where many a red hot county convention has battled out its differences; these historic old rooms will be turned into a hay mow, and the mice will scamper about with sandburs on their tails and trim their whiskers with no fear of feline injunction or kittenish motion for a new trial.

**Shelby News dated April 22, 1892:** The contract for the steam fitting and plumbing of the new courthouse has been let to J. C. Bixby of Council Bluffs on a bid of \$3,000. The old courthouse at Harlan is to be turned into a livery stable. The halls that once resounded with the eloquence of some of Iowa's greatest orators will soon be filled with an oratorio of the barnyard and the braying of jackasses.

**Harlan Tribune dated April 27, 1892:** The TRIBUNE asserted previous to the first courthouse elections that the vaults were unsafe because wood and other inflammable material was reported on good authority to have been used to fill during their construction. Since David Mason has torn them down it has been found that the spaces between vaults were partly filled with shavings, and pieces of wood were taken from the side walls. A piece of wood so found was on exhibition in the treasurer's office. It is 8x8 and 2 feet long. As "filling" it was first rate, but it would have been hard on the taxpayers if the courthouse caught fire.

**Shelby News dated May 20, 1892:** Mayor Scofield will officiate at the laying of the cornerstone of Shelby County's new courthouse, as a member of the committee on reception. This position will permit some speech making and with this honor in view, the new mayor is no doubt at present memorizing suitable expressions and rehearsing the same in his dreams. The citizens of Shelby, irrespective of party or color, take the honor that has been conferred on our new mayor and will stumble over one another in their haste to the county seat to see that the cornerstone is put down to stay.

## LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE OF COURTHOUSE

"One of the great days in Shelby County history was Thursday, **August 4, 1892**, on which the corner stone of the present courthouse was laid, in the presence of more than five thousand people. The day was opened by a baseball game between the stone cutters and brick masons working on the building, which was won by Ed Parker. A bicycle race was won by Fred Mills. The fat man's race was won by William Bartrug. R. L. Kent of Monroe Township, afterwards County Recorder of Shelby County, won a foot race, with E. Philson, of Jackson Township, second. James Tague won an egg race, with Garfield Long, second. Charles Weiggart won a potato race, with William Fritz, second. Charles Long took first prize in the second potato race, and Charles Potter, second. The hundred-yard free-for-all foot race was won by Gus Moore, now better know as Dr. E. A. Moore, George True, second, and John Quigg, third, all these persons being well known members of the famous W. L. Baughn Hose Team. A race for the old soldiers was won by T. M. Harford of Irwin; second, John Honeywell of Harlan. The two-hundred-yard foot race was won by Gus Moore, with Frank Hille, second. Throughout the entire forenoon balloons were sent up and during the entire time between eight o'clock in the morning and noon, music was furnished by the half dozen bands present, among them the celebrated Earling German Cornet Band, which is now in existence, with a number of players who were present at the laying of the corner stone.

"The nine o'clock train brought up Masonic Grand Master Phelps and several other gentlemen from Atlantic, besides large delegations from Shelby and elsewhere in the south part of the county. The incoming visitors were met at the stations by committees with carriages and by the band and escorted to the public square.

"At 11:30 o'clock dinner was announced at Wyland's Park, which is now the Park School ground. Here a score or more of waiters looked after the needs of the hungry crowd. The citizens of Harlan and vicinity donated 5 oxen and 2000 loaves of bread. Everybody had enough to eat and an abundance was left. After dinner the crowd assembled on the public square, where a procession was formed in the following order:

"The Harlan Bicycle club, Earling Band, Masons, Danish band of Harlan, Masons, officers of the Masonic Grand Lodge, Harlan cornet band, Harlan hose team, Kirkman band, Knights of Pythias, Panama band, citizens, stone cutters and brick layers, ragamuffins. The procession marched south on Third Street to Baldwin, and thence west to Second, where the line of march turned north to the square, and thence to the Courthouse, where the laying of the corner stone took place. The ceremonies were opened with prayer by Chaplain J. W. Chatburn, of the Latter-Day Saints church, following which the choir rendered music. The stone was then hoisted into position ready for receiving the box containing the deposits, a description of which was given by Grand Secretary C. F. Swift, after which the box, hermetically sealed, was placed in the cavity prepared for it, and lowered to its place. After this the ceremonies were wholly Masonic, consisting of the application of the plumb, square and level to the

stone, and the declaration that it was true and correct in all these particulars according to the Masonic ritual. After all these ceremonies were completed Grand Master Phelps delivered a short address, reciting the advance, growth and prosperity of our people in every material, art and science. This completed the ceremony of laying the corner stone of Shelby County's new courthouse.

"In the afternoon the people were entertained by different sports and exercises. A part of the immense crowd was entertained by a literary program, at which Judge J. W. Chatburn acted as toastmaster. Mayor W. J. Davis of Harlan, one of the well-known early settlers of the county, spoke of "Shelby County as It has Been", in a five-minute speech. Attorney T. H. Smith, at present a pioneer attorney of Harlan, discussed the topic, "What a Lawyer Should Be." J. W. White of Jackson Township, on behalf of the farmer, discussed the topic assigned to him, "Who Pays the Freight?"

Attorney H. W. Byers, later attorney-general of Iowa, discussed the topic, "What Shelby County Will Be." Attorney D. O. Stuart, also one of the Pioneer lawyers of Harlan, had for his subject, "The Town of Harlan." W. T. Shepherd responded to the toast, "The People of Shelby County." "Father" William McGinness, who had been assigned a place on the program, was unable to be present by reason of the infirmities of age. Attorney G. W. Cullison, also assigned a toast, had been called away on business, and Senator W. F. Cleveland was also prevented from speaking by the pressure of other business. In the evening there was a two-hour display of fireworks.

"A committee, consisting of C. F. Swift, N. Booth and Prior Tinsley, collected and had deposited in the corner stone, written and printed history, books, pamphlets, etc., as follows:

A copy of the Holy Bible, donated by the American Society.

A brief history of Shelby County, containing its date of organization, an account of its early settlements, its various resources, a list of the first and present officers.

A copy of the proceedings of the Board of Supervisors relative to the submission of the question of voting a tax, to the qualified electors of the county, for the purpose of raising funds for the erections of a new courthouse, the returns of said election and the result.

Deposit of Parian Lodge No 321, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, Harlan, Iowa, containing date of charter, charter members, first officers, present officers and present membership.

Deposits in the corner stone were made by the following secret, civic, benevolent and miscellaneous organizations, etc.:

Guardian Lodge No. 441, Free and Accepted Masons, Defiance, Iowa; Sardius Lodge No. 444, Free and Accepted Masons, Irwin, Iowa; Olivet Chapter No. 107, Royal Arch Masons, Harlan; Mt. Zion Commandery No. 48, Knights

Templar, Harlan; Lebanon Chapter Chapter No. 8, Order of the Eastern Star, Harlan; Shelby Chapter No. 67, Order of the Eastern Star, Shelby; Harlan Lodge No. 267, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Harlan; Canopy Lodge No. 401, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Shelby; Ellsworth Lodge No. 473, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Irwin; Defiance Lodge No. 99, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Defiance; Carthage Lodge No. 65, Knights of Pythias, Harlan, Prudentia Lodge No. 258, Knights of Pythias, Shelby; Defiance Lodge No. 259, Knights of Pythias, Defiance; Dick Yates' Post No. 364, Grand Army of the Republic, Shelby; Gen. W. T. Sherman's Camp No. 231, Iowa Division Sons of Veterans, Harlan; General Schofield Camp No. 162, Iowa Division Sons of Veterans, Harlan; Soman's Relief Corps No. 178, auxiliary to Harlan Post No. 197; Methodist Episcopal Church of Defiance; Methodist Episcopal Church of Kirkman; Methodist Episcopal Church, Shelby; Danish Baptist Church of Harlan; First Baptist Church of Harlan; Baptist Church of Bowman's Grove; Congregational Church of Harlan; Church of Christ of Harlan; Church of Latter-day Saints of Harlan; Church of Latter-day Saints of Galland's Grove; Presbyterian Church of Shelby; Evangelical Church of Harlan; Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Harlan; Harlan Literary Club; Shelby County Alliance; Harlan Fire Department; the Shelby County Anti-Horse Thief Association, the publishers--one copy of the Harlan Tribune, Shelby County Republican, Industrial American, Shelby News, Panama Herald, and the Defiance Enterprise, newspapers published in Shelby County; Woman's Political Equality Club of Harlan; Methodist Church of Panama; Panama Post No. 475, Iowa Department, Grand Army of the Republic of Panama; W. L. Baughn Hose Team of Harlan. City Council of Harlan. Photographs of city officials, early history of the town, an account of the electric light and water works system of Harlan, her manufacturing plants and public schools. A deposit by the Committee On Deposits, souvenir badges used upon the occasion of laying the corner stone. The Harlan public schools. Shelby County Bar. Parian Lodge No. 321. A sample of silver coins then in circulation.

"On **April 3, 1893**, the Board of Supervisors chose G. W. Cullison to deliver the oration at the dedication of the courthouse.

"At its meeting on **September 5, 1893**, the board accepted the new courthouse and directed that the balance due contractor Cockerell be paid.

**Harlan Tribune dated September 20, 1893:**

**COURTHOUSE DEDICATION  
SEPTEMBER 14, 1893  
WITH SPEECHES AND MUSIC**

**Shelby County's Fine New Courthouse is Appropriately Dedicated  
Largest Crowd Gathered Here in the History of the Town  
Douglas Township Carries Away the Prize for the Largest Delegation**

The weather clerk must have been in a particularly good humor last Thursday because the weather he served up during the day was done to a turn. The day before and day after were hideous. On Wednesday the south wind tossed the dry earth in the faces and ears of pedestrians by the shovelful and on Friday a north wind repeated the performance with a double bill. On Thursday it was different, not a breath of air stirred, and although ordinarily the dust from the parched roads would have been intolerable, on this particular day which marked an epoch in the history of Shelby County, with the aid of the sprinkler and the favor of providence, this unpleasantness was comfortably absent. At an early hour shadows of the upcoming event were cast to the winds in the shape of flags, bunting and decorations and this thrifty little city did honor to a festival occasion. The peanut and popcorn man arrived the night before and his mellow voice greeted the morn lustily, freighted with big anticipations of heavily laden pockets when night closed o'er the scene. Types of the crowd came early. There was the young man from town with the Byron Bang and his hat hung on the crown of his head by an invisible hook. He was accompanied by the miss in matched suit who tried her eyes on the smart young man's conceit with agreeable results. Then came Ezekiel and Alviry Jane, holding each other as tightly by the hand as though there was a plot on foot to destroy their sweet communion, the circuit of their young affections completed with a slab of hot taffy mutually partaken of. Next there came the sturdy farmer and his buxom wife and many babies, whose united efforts have made the country blossom as the rose. And lastly there came the grey bearded pioneer, who planted stakes here when the only roses were wild ones, and when the deer and the fawns cavorted in the dew about the ground where the courthouse now stands. This part of the assembly got together and swapped stories of the times when Council Bluffs was the nearest trading point, when the corn was ground in home made mills, when court was held in a log cabin, and how once upon a time a horse thief was released upon payment of a jug of strong waters.

From ten o'clock the grand marshal Hon. J. H. Louis and his aids had their hands full looking after and placing the delegations. The parade billed to start at 10:30, but it was eleven when the command "forward" was given, which was close enough. About 2,000 persons took part in the parade, a few on foot, but most on horseback, in buggies and wagons. It required an hour to pass a given point and marched in the following order:

Grand Marshal and Aides  
W. J. Davis Band, Harlan  
Speakers in Carriages  
County Officers in Carriages  
Danish Band  
Jackson Township Delegation  
Defiance Band  
Lincoln Township Delegation led by two floats filled with young ladies  
Westphalia Band  
Westphalia March Corps of 56 ex-German  
Soldiers Earling Band  
Hardware float of W. F. Cleveland & Co.  
Polk Township Martial Band  
Polk Township Delegation  
Kirkman Band  
Douglas Township Delegation led by Float filled with young ladies,  
drawn by 16 spans of horses, with outriders  
Cass Township Martial Band  
Cass Township Delegation  
Eight Hundred pupils from Harlan High School

It was twelve by the time the procession completed the line of march and returned to the square where it was disbanded, and as many as could get inside repaired to the court room where the first part of the program was carried out, consisting of:

1. Music by the band
2. Prayer by Rev. J. Bruce Mathers
3. Presentation by Senator Cleveland of Mayor Davis, who made the address of welcome
4. Music
5. Adjournment for dinner

After dinner the program was resumed as below:

6. Music
7. Oration by George W. Cullison, Esq.
8. Address by the judges of the district Judges Thornell and Smith made short addresses from the north entrance. Judge Macy was holding court at Council Bluffs and could not get away and Judge Deemer was in Chicago.

With the conclusion of the program, the crowd rambled about the courthouse or around the square where eight bands were stationed and regaled the multitude with plenty of excellent music until supper time. After supper the bands with a spirit that was fully appreciated scattered about town giving serenades until a late hour.

Those who cared for dancing were amply provided for. There was a large crowd tripping the light fantastic until twelve at the opera house, and at several other places the fiddles sounded until early morn.

The entire program was carried out as it had been conceived with apparent pleasure to the large crowd present with but one spot to mar the general enjoyment. That was the failure of the electric lights. Many visitors from the country stayed purposely to see the courthouse illuminated in the evening and they were badly disappointed, and the town folks gave vent to their annoyance in sharp expressions. The window illuminations elsewhere about the square were very good. A number of private displays of fireworks added to the brilliancy of the scene.

No other event in the history of the county has collected so many persons here as the dedication of this handsome county building. The house is the subject of general approval, as well it may be, since it takes rank with the best buildings of the kind in the district for its excellent arrangement and conveniences.

### JOINED ISSUES

Ten thousand people were present.

Douglas Township was the pet of the populace. Its splendid efforts deserved all the applause given. The delegation was a grand sight and everybody enjoyed it.

Lincoln Township is blessed with a lot of pretty girls, as the floats showed very plainly.

Those old German soldiers marched like veterans, as indeed they were.

The plumbing and steam heating in the courthouse was done by the Council Bluffs firm of J. C. Bixby. It is admirable in all its arrangements and works perfectly. The job is a standing advertisement for the excellence of the material and the skillful disposition of the plant as a whole. It was tested the other day and heated uniformly without a leak anywhere.

Douglas Township was awarded first prize, Lincoln second and Westphalia third.

A drill corps of twelve men from Westphalia township gave an admirable drill exhibition on the square in the afternoon. They were under command of Lorenz Zimmerman. All of them were veterans of the German army and some of them wore medals awarded for bravery in the Franco-Prussian war.

A part of the Douglas township demonstration was a load of hay, a load of corn to feed the horses, and a load of watermelons as a delicacy at the basket dinner.

The Cass township drum corps had the cutest little drummer ever seen. He is less than four years old, and resides just over the line in Harrison County. His name is Carl Forney and he is very clever with the sticks.

Jos. F. Beh and Fretz & Pexton had tasty illuminations in their windows, quite original in design, too.

George W. Cullison is the recipient of many compliments on his courthouse oration.

This courthouse proposition was first submitted in **August 1890** and defeated by a large majority.

It was again submitted at the general election in **1891** and carried by a majority much larger. The contract was awarded **February 10, 1892**, corner stone laid **August 4** of the same year and accepted by the board of supervisors at the **September** term **1893**.

"From the minutes of the County Auditor under date of **November 13, 1893**, it appears that the cost of the courthouse, including furniture, steam heating plant, the fees of architect and superintendent, electric light fixtures, painting, etc., was sixty-two thousand seven hundred thirty-three dollars and ninety cents (\$62,733.90). At their meeting in November the Board of Supervisors, consisting of Ed Quinn, Thomas McCoid and J. W. Morgan, invited the people to inspect the building.

#### REMOVAL OF THE TOWER

"At the **April, 1899**, session of the Board of Supervisors it was ordered that twenty feet in height of the courthouse tower be removed and that the trusses supporting the same be reinforced or doubled.

"At its **June** session of the Board, **1899**, it was ordered that the tower be removed, and the contract for the removal be awarded to Larsen Brothers of Harlan, for the sum of five hundred and sixty three dollars (\$563)."

**Board Minutes dated December 16, 1903:** The following resolution was unanimously adopted. Resolved: That the use of the basement and corridors of the Courthouse as a resort for bootlegging and drinking whiskey is condemned and anyone found practicing the same will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The Board of Supervisors will sustain the janitor or anyone else in enforcing the resolution.

**Board Minutes dated April 2, 1907:** The Board was waited on by a committee of ladies representing the Woman's Union. The ladies asked that a room in the basement of the courthouse be set aside for use as a rest room and their organization promised to furnish and keep up the room. The matter was discussed informally and the Board promised to set aside the southwest room in the basement and would see what could be done about suitable toilet connections.

**Board Minutes dated June 12, 1907:** The Board accepted the bid of W. W. Wheeler & Son for putting in plumbing in the southwest corner of the courthouse basement, and let the contract

to them for \$90.57, the work to be done in a first class manner and properly connected with the sewer.

"On **July 8, 1910**, the Board of Supervisors appropriated four hundred fifty-nine dollars and twenty cents (\$459.20) for eight ornamental electroliers to be placed around the courthouse square upon the condition that the city would furnish current for the lights without expense to the county."

**Board Minutes dated July 3, 1911:** Mayor Lockwood appeared before the Board and objected to the placing of signs on the Courthouse square, and on motion the Board ordered that henceforth no signs or advertisements of any kind will be permitted upon or around the Courthouse square.

**Board Minutes dated September 13, 1915:** A petition signed by 120 taxpayers was presented to the Board of Supervisors asking them to levy a tax of one mill on the taxable value of property in Shelby County, Iowa, for Soldiers Relief and for the erection of a Soldiers & Sailors monument.

**Shelby County Republican dated January 20, 1916:**

#### SOLDIER'S MONUMENT ASSURED

A committee of the G. A. R. and the Board of Supervisors this afternoon let the contract with D. M. Deen of this city for an old soldier's monument, costing \$9,000, to be erected upon the courthouse square in Harlan.

Preparations for this monument have been under way for many months, and after many difficulties we are very glad to see the men who wear the bronze button honored in this fitting manner. The illustration shown here (see next page) is approximately as the finished monument will look. The complete monument will be thirty-eight feet in height, capped with a statue twelve feet high, the statue showing a soldier youth, dress in the regulation uniform and visored cap of the Union army. The position of the young man and his rifle show him at parade rest.

On two faces of the monument will be lettered the following inscription, in a traced panel: "Erected **1916** by Shelby County, Iowa, in Memory of Our Nation's Defenders." These panels will be about four feet high, as now planned.

The monument will have an oblong cross section, with the die, or main body of the monument, polished on four sides. At each corner of the die, a round column 1 foot 4 inches will stand. The top of each column will be handsomely carved with three eagles. On the face of the monument will be the old soldiers' badge, finely carved. On the second die, or lower part of the shaft will be carved cross guns.

The finest Barre granite will be used in the construction, and with this construction will last supposedly for centuries.

The weight of the monument complete will be 180,000 pounds, the weight of the soldier statue, 9000 pounds. Then the measurements of the parts from the base up are as follows:

First base, 15 feet by 11 feet, 10 inches high. Second base, 12 feet by 8 feet, 9 inches high. Third base, 10 feet by 6 feet, 9 inches high.

First die, 8 feet 6 inches by 4 feet 10 inches, 3 feet 10 inches high. Second die, 3 feet 6 inches by 3 feet 6 inches, 12 feet 3 inches high.

Columns, 1 foot 4 inches in diameter, 12 feet 3 inches high, resting upon a base 1 foot 7 inches square.

Plinth, or the portion of the shaft immediately under the statue, 6 feet by 3 feet 8 inches, 4 feet high. Under the monument will be a concrete foundation, 15 feet 6 inches by 11 feet 6 inches, 7 feet deep.

The monument will be a handsome addition to Shelby County's attractions and something that will bring the memory of the revered defenders of our country in the 60's repeatedly to our minds.

## COURTHOUSE REMODELED

**The Sunday Nonpariel dated December 10, 1978:** What began as a plan to come up with some federal dollars to repair the exterior of the Shelby County Courthouse, ended last week with the building being designated as a national historic site. But the funds are still out of reach.

That is the situation according to Shelby County Supervisor Phil Phelps who was instrumental in getting recognition for the 86-year-old structure which graces the center of the central business district here. "We were trying to get some kind of grant to sandblast the outside and fill in some of the cracks," he said, "and we heard you could get some kind of grant if it made it into the register."

The National Register of Historic Places announced the designation through the Iowa State Historical Society. And becoming part of the register does have some financial advantages. For instance, the move makes the county eligible for federal matching funds for restoration. The building is also protected to a degree against any construction that might adversely affect it.

"I thought they'd forgotten about us," said Phelps of the wait since the initial application was made in **January of 1977**.

"I don't know that we'll get any funds," Phelps said. "And I really don't know that this will really do anything for us...except they're giving us a plaque to put inside."

The designation comes at an opportune moment, as Harlan is nearing its centennial celebration scheduled to begin sometime this spring. It also comes as a \$300,000 remodeling project on the interior of the building is nearing completion. The entire second floor underwent a face lift. As one enters the sandstone structure, the pungent odor of fresh paint fills the senses; the soft light from fluorescent bulbs illuminates the new drywall, the wood paneling, the lowered ceilings.

It is a study in contradictions. The exterior, elaborate, haunting. The interior, modernistic, neo-American institution style. The contradiction could provoke negative comments from the more traditional.

"When you're old-fashioned you have to accept some of these things," said Mrs. Thelma Heflin of the Shelby County Historical Society. "It doesn't bother me any more, but, I guess, to people who are sort of purists."

It did bother Mrs. Heflin at first. The oak woodwork which enhanced the appearance of the second-floor courtroom is gone, replaced by pressboard and such. The Board of Supervisors was well aware that any drastic changes might jeopardize the application made to the National Register, Phelps said, as the board had to submit blueprints, photographs--old and new--and plans for remodeling. That consciousness led the board to invite the participation of the historical society as the remodeling was under way.

Mrs. Heflin said the historical society received the old oak railings which separated the gallery from the judge and barristers in the late 19th century. Also saved was a wooden cupboard out of the auditor's office. The railings were put to a practical, yet decorative, use in the Shelby County Historical Museum in Potters Park, as dividers between displays.

The vintage judge's chair was put to use in the magistrate office in the courthouse.

But the bulk of the woodwork is gone. "I hate to see that go," Mrs. Heflin said. "But I'm not fighting it."

"The inside hadn't had anything done to it for years," Phelps said. "Something had to be done to this thing sometime. I don't think they'd ever get a bond issue through.

The renovations were done totally with federal dollars—a \$292,000 grant, and the remainder of the \$309,000 price tag footed by federal revenue sharing monies.

“There had been plans for remodeling, but money had not been available. Then along came federal public works funds. The county had 90 days to grab the cash or do without,” Phelps said.

Chief among the reasons the project was begun was that the courthouse did not have an elevator. For more than 86 years, the stairway was the only way to get from the basement to the third level. Because of concern for the handicapped and the aged, the county was required to install the elevator by federal law. The deadline for compliance with the regulation for public buildings is 1980, Phelps said.

The Shelby County Courthouse may not be of sufficient interest to entice hurried travelers 11 miles to the south on Interstate 80, but it is a source of pride for citizens here, according to County Auditor H. Clay Pauley. That view is echoed by two members of the Shelby County Historical Society and County Supervisor Phil Phelps. In fact, tourism never figured in to the original idea of placing the building on the National Register of Historic Places, said Pauley, who is in charge of the building.

A local newspaper article noted the building's "ponderous mass." and that is indeed what first strikes the passersby. That and the ornate detail that is, in some cases, not readily noticeable to the casual onlooker. The architecture is of the Romanesque style, early architecture which preceded the more stylized Gothic so evident in older, more exclusive residential neighborhoods. Romanesque, unlike many other styles, does not "keep to a certain canon or representation," the

experts say, which means that there is no definitive style. But like most Romanesque buildings, the courthouse here is weighty, somewhat ominous.

The detail of the four gables and the false arches are particularly impressive. As one approaches the main entrance the hint of a face can be seen above the vaulted doorway. Blind justice, peering out into the courtyard.

The building is made out of sandstone that was quarried in Joliet, Illinois. Its surface is rough and masculine. When it was first constructed, a 130-foot clock tower was positioned in the center of the roof. But inadequate supports forced the county in 1899 to rid the building of the extra weight which threatened to crash through the roof.

Cannons and an iron fence highlighted the building until the war effort in the 1940's prompted citizens here to part with the valuable iron, Pauley said.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Due to lack of time, this report will end at this time in history. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, there will be time to bring it all up to date--the courtyard renovation, the addition of a second veterans memorial, etc.

Many changes have occurred in our years--some good, some not so good--but one thing has always been true. We have a beautiful Courthouse and Courtyard in Shelby County. It is something that we as Shelby Countians can be proud of and brag about to our children and our children's children.

**"FUTURE LEADERS AND CITIZENS OF SHELBY COUNTY, WE PRESENT TO YOU OUR COURTHOUSE.....TAKE PRIDE IN IT.....CARE FOR IT AS WE HAVE, AND AS THOSE BEFORE US, AND FIGHT TO KEEP OUR COUNTY STRONG."**

**NOTE: NEED TO ADD COURTYARD RENOVATION, NEW SOLDIER'S MONUMENT, CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, MOVING SHERIFF OUT?, ANNEX? , MOVING ENGINEER OUT?**