

Adair History

EARLY DAYS OF ADAIR COUNTY, MISSOURI (Continued from other side)

had no official seal until 1848. Adair County is rectangular in form, with twenty-one miles north to south and twenty-seven miles east to west. It developed into many small communities with some fifty-seven post offices; in 2008 it had three. Initially, the mail came by horseback or stage from Bloomington in Macon County. In these early days, no postage stamps existed and the receiver of the mail paid the postage. Frequently the addressee had to borrow a dime to receive the addressed letter. The rail roads that came in 1868 and 1870 provided daily mail service. The first public school began in Kirksville in 1867, in two buildings; the Free Will Baptist Church and the Mercer building by 1873 4,957 students attended 76 schools in the county. As roads and highways improved, schools consolidated; in 2008, three school districts existed: Novinger, Brashear and Kirksville. Agriculture, timber, coal mining resources and some manufacturing, coupled with the founding of the First District Normal School (Truman State University) in 1867, and the founding of the osteopathic professional in 1892, caused early growth in Adair County. The population rose from 2,342 in 1850 to 22,700 in 1910. During the same period the assessed wealth of the county rose from \$90,290 to \$5,840,078. In 2007, the population of the county was slightly less than 25,00 with an assessed wealth of \$243,233,734.

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EARLY DAYS OF ADAIR COUNTY, MISSOURI (Continued on other side)

The first attempt at a settlement by Whites in this county was in 1828, twenty-five years after the Louisiana Purchase and three years after extinction of the Indian title. Settlers from Howard County decided to locate on the east side of the Chariton River, about six miles west of present day Kirksville in an area later known as The Cabins, which had long been the hunting ground for the Sac and Fox Indian tribes. Broken up by the Indians in 1829 and restored in 1830, this settlement was more than 30 miles from the nearest neighbor to the south. Hannibal and Quincy to the east and Huntsville to the south provided trading posts for the early settlers. Conditions during the first years of the early settlement were hard and primitive. Circuit riding ministers served early pioneer settlers. The first church in Adair County was the Bear Creek Baptist Church in 1838. By 1840, settlers had located in practically all the county. Created January 29, 1841, Adair County was named for the honorable John Adair of Kentucky. Immigrants from Kentucky wanted this prominent public figure remembered. Kirksville was established as the county seat by 1842; the county was originally divided into five townships: Morrow, Liberty, Benton, Pettis and Wilson. In 1865, five more were added: Walnut, Nineveh, Clay, Polk and Salt River. The county

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Kirksville

Kirksville, distinguished as the site of Missouri's first State teachers college and the world's first college of Osteopathy, was settled by pioneers mainly from Kentucky and Tennessee about 1828. First known as Long Point, then as Hopkinsville, the town took the name of Kirksville in honor of early settler Jesse Kirk, when it became the seat of Adair County, 1841.

Northeast Missouri State Teachers College was founded as the First District Normal School, 1870, when the legislature provided for normal schools north and south of the Missouri. Adair Co. and Kirksville won the north school with a bit including Joseph Baldwin's North Missouri Normal which he had opened, 1867, in the old Cumberland (Presbyterian) Academy, chartered, 1861.

Andrew Taylor Still (1828-1917), founder of osteopathy, opened the American School of Osteopathy, 1892. This school combined with the 1922 Andrew T. Still College of osteopathy and Surgery. 1926, to form the Kirksville College of Osteopathy and Surgery. On the campus is Still's log cabin

birthplace, moved here from Jonesboro, Va. Kirksville, a city of the fertile prairies, founded on land that once belonged to the Sauk, Fox and Iowa Indians, serves north central Missouri as an educational, hospital, and osteopathic center. This is a financial, wholesale, and manufacturing point for a poultry, livestock, and grain crops area.

Memorial Park here commemorates the Battle of Kirksville, a Civil War action of Aug. 6, 1862. The Federals under Col. John McNeil routed the Confederates under Col. John C. Porter. Also in the park is the site of old Cumberland Academy, antecedent institution of the teachers college.

Memorials on the campus of the teachers college are a statue of Joseph Baldwin and the Kirks Memorial Building honoring John R. Kirk, college president (1899-1925), leader in public school organization and teacher training. A memorial student loan fund honors Eugene Fair (president 1925-1937), for his state educational leadership.

In Kirk Memorial is the noted Violette Museum, named for history professor E. M. Violette who began the collection.

Erected by State Historical Society of Missouri and State Highway Commission 1953

Adair Historical Markers

The Adair County Historical Society has placed four historical markers on the courthouse square. The first one describes the Battle of Kirksville and is placed on the southeast side of the courthouse. The second marker, Cyclone of April 27, 1899, was erected on the southwest side of the courthouse. The third and fourth markers were erected on the north side of the courthouse. One is a history of Adair County and the other about the three Adair County Courthouses.

The ACHS board believes that these markers add significantly to the downtown area by making the area historical appealing to both residents and visitors. The board envisions as many as fifteen markers could be placed around Adair County. Each one of these historic markers cost approximately \$2,000. ACHS is accepting donations from members, non-members, service organizations and businesses. Any non-member who makes a \$15 donation or more will receive a membership to the historical society. Any individual or organization who makes a donation of \$1,000 or more will have the name inscribed on a plaque at the historical society. All donations are fully tax deductible within the limits of the law.

Please make your check out to:
The Adair County Historical Society.
Thank you for your support!

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Adair County Historical Society
211 South Elson St.
Kirksville, Missouri 63501
660-665-6502

Hours: 1:00-4:00 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
<http://www.adairchs.org>

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ADAIR COUNTY, MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

The first courthouse of Adair County, completed on July 15, 1843, was constructed on the northwest corner at the intersection of Harrison and Elson Streets. Described as "a low brick affair," the building was said to cost \$1,000, a large amount of money in those days. By 1852, Adair County was ready and willing to build a new and improved courthouse. The second courthouse was built on the "Square" in Kirksville, based on the "Shelbyville" type square. Kirksville's square features the courthouse located in the middle of tow sets of parallel streets that circumvent around the perimeter. The building was so organized that the first floor contained offices, and the second floor contained the court room. A cupola garnished the peak of the roof. Reportedly costing \$2,350 the new courthouse played an integral part in the Battle of Kirksville on August 6, 1862. On April 12, 1865 after the second courthouse burned, the courthouse square became known as "The Park." From 1865 to 1898, Adair County did not have a courthouse; hence, officials conducted their work in rented rooms on or near the square. Bond issues of 1872, 1891, 1892, and 1896 failed to build a new courthouse. Finally, in 1897, a county bond issue for \$50,000 passed to build a new courthouse. Kirsch & Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin designed the three story

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ADAIR COUNTY, MISSOURI COURTHOUSES

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structure. Robert G. Kirsch personally supervised the building of the structure made of light blue (Ohio) sandstone. It was influenced by the (H.H.) Richardson Romanesque style of architecture "with its broad arches, squat column clusters, roughfaced stone masonry, massed hip roofs and an ornate clock tower that could be seen for miles topped by a Statue of Justice eight feet tall." For several years, the clock faces had no protection and pigeons landed on the hands, riding them down. Obtaining correct time was a county-wide joke; later the faces were enclosed, and the clock was quite dependable, though the weight caused it to be removed in 1949. On November 6, 1897, the contract was let to Anderson & Menke for \$46,675. The actual cost came close to \$60,000. The cornerstone was laid May 2, 1898. On February 24, 1899, the county court received the building from the contractors. Five weeks later, March 31, 1899, the county offices moved into their new home. For seventy years hitching posts were on all sides of the square as well as a watering fountain for animals. Also two wells on the courthouse lawn, on the southeast and the northwest, provided storekeepers and nearby residents with water. The Adair County Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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THE CYCLONE April 27, 1899

On April 27, 1899, at 6:20 p.m. a monstrous killer cyclone approached Kirksville from the southwest taking dead aim on the new Adair County Courthouse. Suddenly, the cyclone veered more to the northeast, making a clear path of destruction from the southwest corner of the Normal School campus to the Holy Cross Church at the eastern end of Washington Street. The Old Baldwin Hall tower received damage and the brick side wall to the Catholic Church exploded, scattering interior furnishings but the crucifix and altar showed no ill effects. The cyclone crossed the five hundred block of North Baltimore and continued its deadly way to the northeast. For much of the night heavy rains and fires came, but relief effort went on from local doctors, nurses and osteopathic students. Mayor Noonan and city officials were hard at work, citizens were eager to help: at least 1500 houses were destroyed, 28 persons killed, 13 fatally injured, 91 injured, 1,000 homeless and \$250,000 of property damage. A newsman found an unharmed piano and beat out the stains of Home Sweet Home amid the scene of desolation and the stillness of the spring night. Trains brought doctors, nurses and volunteers from Quincy and Moberly. The Commercial Club helped organize the out-of-town workers. Mayors of St. Louis, Kansas City, Quincy, St. Joseph, Sedalia, Moberly, Macon, and as far away as New York offered help. The cyclone spawned many stories. Edward Kelloog was picked up and carried about 300 feet,

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THE CYCLONE April 27, 1899

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landing in a pond; the water was sucked out of the pond, leaving him standing in mud. A cooling baby was picked up in a field 400 feet from home; another baby was found crushed. Miss Whaley was found pinned to the ground with a scantling driven through her back and abdomen. Surgeons sawed off both ends, fearing to remove it. She died two hours later. Senator A.N. Seaber's barn went up in flames. The family horse was found tied to a post, the only visible remains of the barn. Miss Morehouse, was picked up and carried beyond the Catholic Church, and let down so gently that she was not seriously harmed. she spoke of being conscious, flying much higher than church steeples and seeing a white horse rotating around her. The white horse, owned by a teamster named Cheney was carried uninjured for a mile; its mate had been killed in a wrecked barn. A piano made by W.W. Kimble Co. of Chicago was hurled 1,000 feet through the roof of a house and found in playable condition. The "Cyclone Piano" was later taken back to Chicago by the company and used as an example of excellent construction. A poem was written about little "Molly," living in that house and wishing for a piano, and how on April 27 her prayers were answered. The poem just as the Clouds Passed O'er was based on the disaster. By April 29, most of the bodies had been buried. For days the city was crowded with sightseers. Kirksville was determined to rebuild, in spite of grievous losses.

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BATTLE OF KIRKSVILLE AUGUST 6, 1862

Confederate Lieutenant Colonel Joseph C. Porter of Lewis County had been recruiting and harrying in Northeast Missouri throughout the summer of 1862. Adair County farmer Captain Mathias (Tice) Cain (Confederate), in command of irregulars from Schuyler County, sent word to Porter that he held Kirksville, then a village of 700 extending only a few blocks from the courthouse square. Their combined force was about 2000. Only about 500 were well equipped and took part in the battle; fully 1000 were unarmed, raw recruits. Porter arrived before noon on August 6. Colonel John McNeil (Union), Commander of the Northeast Division of the District of Missouri, had been following Porter since July 29. McNeil's forces were based in what is now Memorial Park. After unnerving the enemy with an artillery barrage, the Federals arrived on the edge of Kirksville about 10 a.m. The focal point of the battle was the courthouse square. McNeil sent in a squad who drew fire from the rebels concealed in the courthouse and the houses and shops around the square. The Confederates being discovered, the battle was joined, with Lieutenant Colonel Shaffer in charge of the Union

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BATTLE OF KIRKSVILLE AUGUST 6, 1862

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right wing while Major Caldwell commanded the left. McNeil used about 500 of his 1250 soldiers in the battle. As the two wings met and succeeded in driving the Confederates from the courthouse area, Porter yielded ground and concentrated his forces behind a fence on the western edge of town. From this position the Confederates poured withering fire into McNeil's men, who moved against the line and drove it to the west, while the left wing took full possession of the southern part of Kirksville. The battle lasted about three hours, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Many residents evacuated town before the battle, and only tow civilians were killed. McNeil reported five of his troops killed and thirty - two wounded, against 150 Confederates killed, 300 to 400 wounded and forty - seven taken prisoner. A number of rebels were tried and executed for violation of parole on August 7 and 8. The day after the battle Colonel McNeil ordered Kirksville residents to bury the Confederate dead. The Battle of Kirksville is regarded as consolidating Union control of Missouri.

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Adair Courthouses

Kirksville 1899 Cyclone

Battle of Kirksville - 1862