

“The Story of the Court House”

An agitation has been going on for many years to build a new Court House for Ashland County as the old building was more than seventy years of age and was entirely inadequate to house the numerous offices and to store the ever increasing records and it was unsafe as a repository of the vast amount of invaluable public records and documents.

An effort was made in 1914 to vote \$200,000 to build a new Court House but this levy failed to carry, largely because it followed so closely on the disastrous 1913 flood which wiped out so many bridges in Ashland County. The matter was not brought up again until the summer of 1927 when a State Inspector visited the old Court House and found that extensive and costly repairs must be made.

The Board of County Commissioners, consisting of D.V. Peterson, R.L. Kreiling, and J.W. Davidson, thinking that it was a waste of money to put such a large sum in the old building, deemed it wise to consult with the citizens of the County before making this expenditure and so a mass meeting of all the citizens of the County was called by the Commissioners. This mass meeting unanimously decided that the County Commissioners should put the question of building a new Court House up to the voters at the November election in 1927. The County Commissioners called in several eminent architects, among whom was the firm of Vernon Redding & Associates of Mansfield, Ohio, and they were of the opinion that it would take at least \$325,000.00 to build and equip a new Court House that would meet the needs of Ashland County. The County Auditor, Mr. J.P. Hunter, certified to the County Commissioners that a bond issue of this amount would cost the people .348 mills, on an average. He also certified that the bonds would run for twenty-four years. This question was put to the voters of the County and it carried by a 1201 majority.

The election was held on the 8th day of November, 1927. On the 26th day of November, Hon. C.C. Chapman, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, in compliance with the General Code of Ohio, appointed the following men as a building commission to act in conjunction with the Board of County Commissioners: Paul D. Mann of Ruggles Township, Todd V. Simanton of the City of Ashland, Newton Mansfield of the City of Ashland and William J. Weirick of Loudonville. Mr. Weirick was taken suddenly ill and was unable to serve on the Board. Mr. D.C. Nouse of Loudonville was appointed to take Mr. Weirick's place.

It might be of interest to know that the old Court House was built in 1852 at a cost of \$20,000.00, met largely by popular subscription.

At the first meeting of the Building Commission, R.L. Kreiling was elected Chairman of the Board and Elsie E. Wheeler, the Commissioner's Clerk, Clerk of the Board. The firm of Vernon Redding & Associates, Architects of Mansfield, were chosen to plan and supervise the construction of the building out of a selection of nearly thirty of the leading

architects of this part of the country. After plans were prepared, bids were received. The Melbourne Construction Company of Canton, Ohio, was given the general contract in the sum of \$198,273.00; Jay Patterson of Ashland Ohio, was given the electrical contract in the sum of \$3,011.00; and R.T. Withers Sons Company of New Castle, Pa., were given the plumbing and heating contract at a sum of \$22,100.00; the Otis Elevator Company of Cleveland, Ohio, was given the contract for the elevator in the sum of \$3,685.00.

The first ground was broken on the evening of Friday, July 6, 1928, at which time Congressman Martin L. Davey, of Kent, Ohio Democratic Candidate for Governor, made the speech of the evening and music was furnished by the Loudonville Band. Each member of the Commission turned a spade full of earth. The spade was a nickel-plated spade with a red white and blue enameled handle donated for the occasion by the Melbourne Construction Company.

On April 2nd Miss Zella Swartz resumed her duties as Commissioners Clerk, and automatically succeeded Miss Elsie Wheeler as Clerk of the Building Commission.

The corner stone is being laid Sunday, September 16th, 1928, by the Masonic Order of Ashland, assisted by visiting orders from surrounding towns and cities. Hon. Carrington (?) T. Marshall, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Ohio, and Hon. Carl Weygandt, Common Pleas Judge of Cleveland, Ohio and son of Wm. Weygandy former Common Pleas Judge of Wooster, Ohio, and a practitioner in the Ashland County Courts as to make the address of the day.

It is with deep curiosity as to just what Ashland County will be like when this history of the building of our much needed and much wanted Court House is read.

The old Court House saw electric lights, the telephone, automobiles, radio, flying machines, moving pictures and many wonderful inventions ushered in, and we are wondering what you people have that we did not. It seems to us that the limit is reached. "We wonder if it is"?