



# LEWIS COUNTY

## Sheriffs Dedicate Lives to Serving the Public

Located in northeast Missouri along the Mississippi River, Lewis County was originally formed by legislation signed into law by Missouri Governor Daniel Dunklin in January 1833. The county was named in honor of Captain Meriwether Lewis, famous for his expedition across the west along with Captain William Clark. The county seat was established in 1834 in the centralized location of Monticello, which was named in honor of President Thomas Jefferson's estate in the state of Virginia. Since that time, Monticello has remained the county seat, and with a population of 98, is the smallest county seat in the state of Missouri.

The first sheriff of Lewis County was Chilton B. Tate, who was appointed by Governor Dunklin in 1833. He also served

as collector. Sheriff Tate was elected later that year with 158 votes and remained sheriff until 1838. He was elected state representative and remained in that position until 1842, when he returned to Lewis County and was reelected to the position of sheriff. He died in 1879.

Sheriff Tate presented the first criminal matter to a Lewis County grand jury in 1834. In a rather audacious beginning, a woman, Elizabeth Jones, the wife of Benjamin Jones, was indicted for adultery along with her co-defendant, Joseph Fry. According to local records, the matter was partially tried and then dismissed. The first ever civil action tried before a jury of four men was Thomas Creasey v. Fountain Jones. The jury sided with plaintiff Creasey and awarded him \$2.10, to be paid by Mr. Jones.

The first courthouse in Monticello was a small, one-room log structure built by J.B. Buckley in 1834 for the sum of \$210. It was described as "never commodious nor comfortable" and had very few conveniences, even for that day. The county had to borrow \$100 to pay the bill. Recognizing the need for a larger building, the county built a two-story, brick courthouse in 1839 for the sum of \$3,200. In 1875 the court approved plans for the current courthouse. Measuring 75 feet by 50 feet, the two-story building originally included six offices and a large hallway on the first floor, and a courtroom, three offices, a library and judge and jury rooms on the second at a cost of \$9,750. Court has been held in that building, which has been modified over the years, ever since.

The county's first jail was built near the courthouse in 1842 under the guidance of Sheriff Tate. It was designed as two strong log pens, one inclosing the other, with the space between them filled with other logs set in "palisade form"

### 2014 COUNTY INFO

107 S. Washington St.  
Monticello, MO 63457  
573-767-5287

**JAIL** 18-beds  
**SIZE** 505 square miles



**Sheriff David T. Parrish**  
2000–Present



Sheriff P. Hicks, 1962-1969, and Deputy B. Whitmer.

deep into the earth. It stood in the southeast corner of the square, and cost the county \$1,000.

The jail and sheriff's house have remained at the county seat ever since. At some point the jail and sheriff's house were combined, requiring the sheriff and his wife to care for the prisoners on a round-the-clock basis. The sheriff's wife generally provided meals for her the prisoners.

Sheriff George W. Smith and his wife, Elizabeth, along with their family, occupied the house and jail in the 1920s. His son, Burrell Smith, who still resides in Monticello, has fond memories of living there. Sheriff Smith was known for the search warrants he executed on illegal whiskey stills throughout Lewis County during Prohibition. The language in his affidavit remains much the same as it is today for illegal drugs.

The latest addition, built in 1941, included the jail on the first floor and the sheriff's living quarters on the second floor. Sheriff Alexander Stephenson and his wife, Alpha, along with their family, were the first to occupy the new residence and jail. Sheriff Stephenson, who was first elected in 1932, informed his brother he was pursuing the position because, among other concerns, "the price of hogs was less than four cents a pound." His daughter, Mary McReynolds, who still resides in Lewis County today, remembers playing cards with a trustee in the jail.

Sheriff Pearl Hicks, who was appointed in October 1962, after Sheriff Wilbur Wallace died in a vehicle crash, and then elected in November 1962, remains the longest serving sher-



Lewis County Courthouse sketch 1875.

iff in Lewis County history. He served from 1962 to the time of his retirement in 1979.

While the sheriff's house and jail, built in 1941, still stands, it has been remodeled and serves as office space. In 1996, Lewis County citizens approved the addition of an 18-bed facility to the current structure. This new jail includes a kitchen, booking room, holding cell, control room, property room, two inmate pods and an outdoor recreation area.

The Lewis County Sheriff's Office, under the lead of Sheriff David Parrish, remains a full service operation and after serving the public for 131 years, looks forward to many more. ★

Sources: *History of Lewis, Clark, Knox, and Scotland counties, Missouri from the earliest times to the present*; Genealogy Trails; University of Missouri Extension.

## FORMER SHERIFFS

Sheriff Michael Bringer Jr. ....	1996–2000
Sheriff B. Laverne Whitaker .....	1992–1996
Sheriff Robert Whitmer .....	1980–1992
Sheriff Robert Parker .....	1979–1980
Sheriff Pearl Hicks .....	1962–1979
Sheriff Wilber Wallace.....	1956–1962
Sheriff Frank Leslie .....	1944–1956
Sheriff Alexander F. Stephenson.....	1940–1944
Sheriff S.J. Galbraith .....	1936–1940
Sheriff Alexander F. Stephenson.....	1932–1936
Sheriff George W. Smith .....	1928–1932
Sheriff Edward Palmer.....	1924–1928
Sheriff George W. Smith .....	1920–1924
Sheriff James H. Shanks.....	1916–1920
Sheriff Cyrus J. Kendrick.....	1912–1916
Sheriff Charles H. Brown.....	1908–1912
Sheriff Gary R. Primrose.....	1904–1908
Sheriff John D. Johnson .....	1900–1904
Sheriff William B. Anderson.....	1896–1900
Sheriff Jackson Jones .....	1892–1896
Sheriff Lancelot W. Summers.....	1888–1892
Sheriff Jacob E. Cooksey.....	1884–1888
Sheriff Lancelot W. Summers.....	1880–1884
Sheriff William S. Richardson.....	1876–1880
Sheriff W.M. Moore.....	1874–1876
Sheriff W.G. Allen.....	1872–1874
Sheriff Lewis Sells.....	1866–1872
Sheriff John Sisler .....	1862–1866
Sheriff W.J. Burnett.....	1860–1862
Sheriff George B. Nelson.....	1856–1860
Sheriff John Caldwell .....	1852–1856
Sheriff James A. Richardson .....	1847–1852
Sheriff Benjamin Stit .....	1846–1847
Sheriff Chilton B. Tate .....	1842–1846
Sheriff V.A. Sublett.....	1838–1842
Sheriff Chilton B. Tate .....	1833–1838