2014 County Info

1600 Business 54 West
Bowling Green, MO 63334
573-324-3202

JAIL 50-beds
SIZE 673 square miles

Sheriff Stephen W. Korte
2009–Present

Earning Trust and Respect of Citizens

Pike County, originally part of the Louisiana Purchase, was organized December 4, 1818, before Missouri existed as a state. At its start, the county, named for explorer Zebulon M. Pike, comprised all of the present county of Pike, together with nearly all of Audrain; part of Randolph, Macon, Adair, and Schuyler; and all of Ralls, Marion, Monroe, Shelby, Lewis, Knox, Clark, and Scotland.

Having earned the trust and confidence of William Clark, governor of the territory of Missouri, on January 1, 1819, at the first convening of the Circuit Court, Samuel K. Caldwell was sworn in as the first sheriff. He held office for two years with "all the powers, privileges, and emoluments" the position offered.

It was quite a responsibility. In those days, sheriffs' duties extended far beyond chief law enforcement officer and con-

Pike County Sheriff Glenn C. Brown tries out the new radio equipment installed in his vehicle in June 1956. Similar radios were installed in police cars belonging to the cities of Bowling Green and Louisiana and Pike County's Civil Defense Chairman J.O. Mudd. The federal government cooperated with the county in the purchase of the radios for civil defense purposes.

servator of the peace. The sheriff also acted as collector, assessor, and court official. He was also tasked to "provide for the county a set of weights and measures, such as the foot, yard, half bushel, gallon, half gallon, quart, avoirdupois weight, and one seal with the initial of the county inscribed thereon."

That first court session was held at the home of Obadiah Dickerson, and Louisiana was established at the temporary county seat. Sheriff Caldwell also requested and was granted a license to operate a ferry across the Mississippi River at Louisiana. Obviously an entrepreneur of sorts, Sheriff Caldwell began practice as an attorney after leaving office in 1821.

The second term of the Circuit Court convened August 9, 1819 where a grand jury returned an indictment against three men for trespass, assault, and battery. Two appeared in court; a warrant was issued against the third with bail set at $100. The first defendant acknowledged his guilt and submitted himself to the mercy of the court, which got him a $5 fine and costs. The second defendant, however, denied the charge, which necessitated a jury trial. The 12 "good and lawful men" brought in a guilty verdict; the court fined him $5 and costs, and ordered him into custody.

At that meeting, the court also ordered the sheriff to begin collecting property tax on such possessions as horses, cattle, mules, tanneries, distilleries — and billiard tables.

In April 1820, the court ordered construction of a small two-story courthouse in Lancaster. Courts met there until November 1823 when the new, but temporary courthouse was completed — at a cost of $114 — in Bowling Green, the permanent county seat. Early in 1843 the court appropriated $6,000 for construction of a permanent courthouse that included a sheriff's office and jail. It was destroyed by fire in 1864. Another courthouse was built in 1868, but it too burned down in 1915. Another new building was ordered in 1916. The court first occupied the $100,000 building in January

1919 and has been meeting there ever since.

It appears that the first murder committed in the county was by a slave who killed his master in 1829 when John Lindsay was sheriff. After being arrested, he confessed and was hanged in Montgomery County a short time later.

The only other execution in Pike County was carried out as punishment for what was described as "one of the most cold-blooded, deliberate, unprovoked murders committed." The evil deed, carried out in March 1841, was also at the hands of a slave who had been working with his master in the field. When the body was discovered with the throat cut from ear to ear, the man confessed. The murderer was sentenced to be executed at Bowling Green, August 7, 1841. Though the weather was inclement, about 3,000 gathered to witness the execution, carried out by Sheriff William Penix.

John Lindsay was elected sheriff in 1828, served four years, was re-elected in 1836 and served four years more before going on to serve in the state legislature. He was known for "filling his positions in public life in an able manner, with great credit to himself and to the satisfaction of his constituents. His honest dealings won for him many friends."

William G. Hawkins was the first assessor elected by the people of Pike County, serving three terms. He then served as deputy sheriff from 1846 to 1850; was elected sheriff in 1852 and again in 1854; after which he was appointed United States deputy marshal for the Eastern District of Missouri. In 1856, he was elected state representative and in 1860 was appointed United States deputy marshal to take the census of Pike County. He was reelected to the state legislature in 1872 and 1874. Previously, Col. Hawkins served in the military and was a volunteer in the Black Hawk War. After retiring, he managed his 500-acre farm.

William Penix came to Missouri in the spring of 1820 with his brother John and a drove of cattle. In 1826 he and another man built and ran a grist mill on Sugar Creek before selling it and engaging in the wool-carding business. In 1838 he was appointed deputy sheriff, serving two years before being elected sheriff in 1840 and reelected in 1842. In 1846 he was awarded the government contract for furnishing cattle for the forts of

Pike County Courthouse, built in 1933.

St. Peters, Atchison, and Prairie Du Chien. Then in 1847 he was elected judge of the county court, holding that seat for six years. In 1862 he was appointed judge by the governor; and in 1864 he was once more called by the people to the office of sheriff for two years. It was said he filled all positions "with great credit to himself, and to the satisfaction of his constituents. Probably no man in the county has the confidence and respect of the people more than Judge Penix."

William Harrison Glenn began working in a tobacco factor when he was 9. He continued in that field throughout his adult life and then opened a tobacco warehouse. In 1876 he was appointed fire chief, a position he held for many years. In 1878 he was appointed marshal of Louisiana, and served until 1880 when he resigned. In the same year he was elected constable of Buffalo Township and in 1881 he was elected sheriff of Pike County.

Current Sheriff Stephen Korte has also worked hard to gain the trust and respect of his community. A 20-year veteran of the United States Naval Reserves with the rank of chief petty officer, he was mobilized for two tours of duty in Iraq — the first in 2004 and the second in 2007-08. He now works with his staff to provide a safer community for the citizens of Pike County. ★

Sources: *"A History of Pike County Missouri;"* University of Missouri Extension.