

# Courthouse Shrine Opened To Public 1939

**Restored Shrine  
Opened To Public  
Sunday, Feb. 16, '39**

February 16, 1939

Several hundred persons passed thru the Lincoln Memorial Shrine atop the hill in Mount Pulaski, Sunday, when the recently completed restored courthouse was thrown open to the public.

Many out-of-town visitors took advantage of the beautiful day to visit the shrine and had their first view of the state's newest memorial to Abraham Lincoln. Many Mount Pulaskians who had followed the progress of the restoration from the sidelines made their first trip to the building and were very much pleased with the completeness with which the state had restored the building.

Numbered among the visitors were several who had attended school in the courthouse before the first combined grade and high school was built, on the site of the present grade school. It took them back many years to very pleasant memories. Pacer Zah, the custodian, was a pupil in the school held in the courthouse and the thought that today he has charge of the building which is now a shrine to Lincoln, is a matter of pride with him.

While no furniture is as yet placed in the courthouse, the completeness of the restoration was worth viewing. The newness of the complete work was modified somewhat by the smudges left here and there to give it an appearance of antiquity.

An ODOMETER in the surveyor's office was an instrument used to measure distance in the 1840's in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maine and Illinois, by Daniel H. Davidson, a surveyor from Woodford county. A recording instrument on the large wheel of the device which looks like a glorified wheelbarrow, registers the distance.

The original gavel used by Judge David Davis, who held court here in the courthouse days between 1848 and 1852, is enshrined on the Judge's desk in the court room on the second floor of the Mt. Pulaski Shrine. Judge Davis was later appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States.

**Joe Snyder Was  
Spearhead In  
Securing Shrine**

June 22, 1933

A meeting was held at the city clerk's office Wednesday night and a temporary organization formed in the interests of taking definite steps to make a shrine out of the old Mount Pulaski Court House.

A fine group of interested citizens were present to help get the project under way, and from the enthusiasm shown, it is but a matter of a definite organization pushing the matter and keeping at it until the job is completed.

Joe Snyder, who has been doing considerable research work in reference to various phases of the proposition to make a Lincoln shrine out of the building, was chosen as temporary chairman and Keith Rothwell, secretary, both to act in that capacity until a permanent organization is formed.

The new chairman was authorized to appoint a committee of five or seven members to complete the setup for the permanent organization, a meeting to be called shortly to do this.

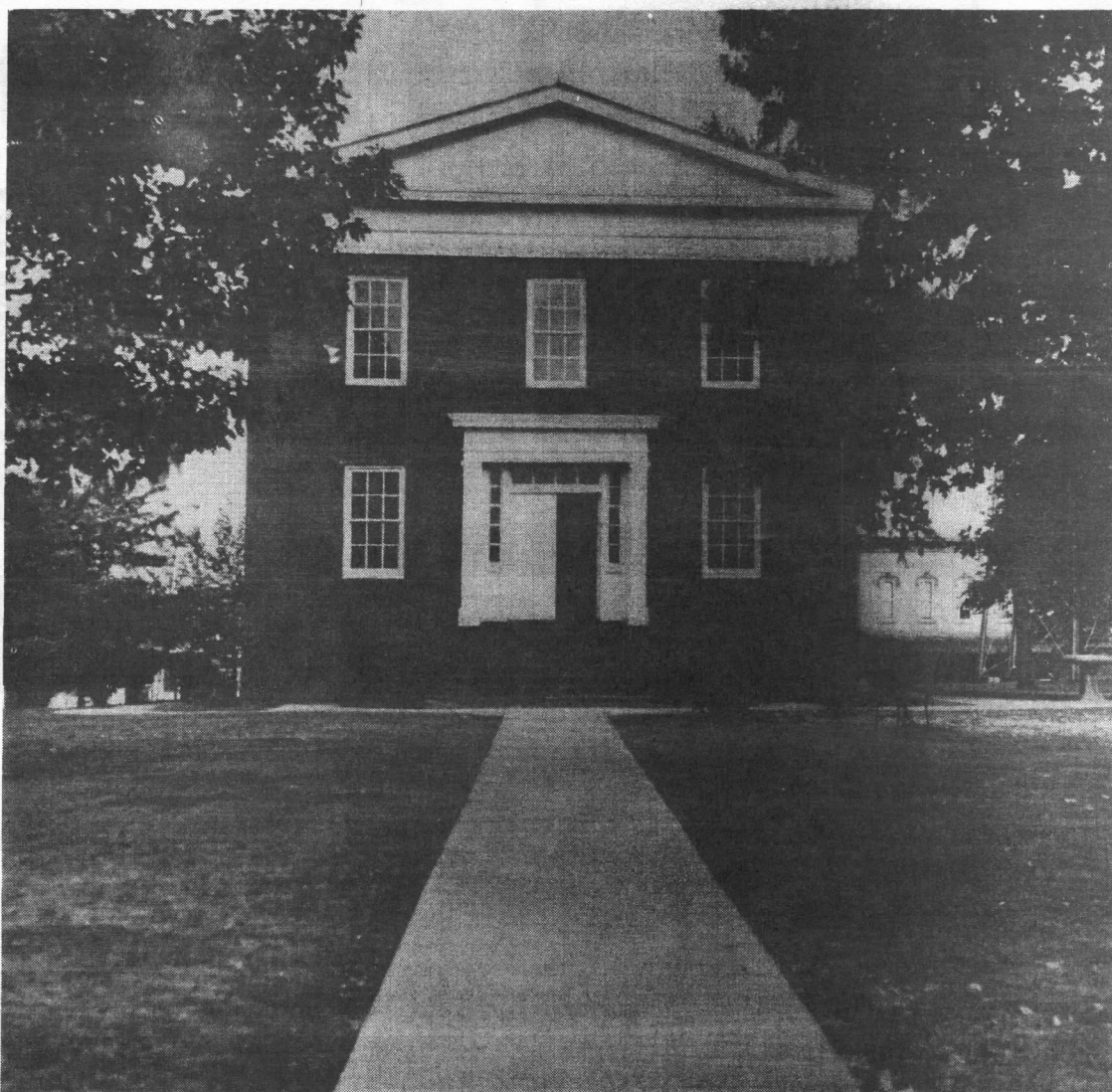
John M. Rothwell, speaking in favor of the project, told of past enthusiasm that had been aroused but allowed to die down before the task had gotten under way. The expensive memorial marker on the south side of the grounds was an expression of the interest of the South Side Club.

Frank B. Snyder told of the arrangement and appearance of the original court house as far as he was able to ascertain from having talked with a number of old settlers the past few years.

Centennial year in 1936 is an added incentive at the time to complete this Lincoln Shrine that has been talked of for years, but lacked leadership to push it through to a reality.

Making a Lincoln Shrine out of this building in which Abraham Lincoln practiced law is the biggest asset the city of Mount Pulaski can hope to secure, and it is up to every citizen to back the project to the limit.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL COURT HOUSE SHRINE TODAY.



## RESTORATION OF COURTHOUSE AS LINCOLN SHRINE IN 1936

**City Had Sold  
Courthouse To  
State For \$1.00**

Closely associated with Lincoln the Circuit-Rider, the Mt. Pulaski Court House in Logan county is an excellent survival of early-day architecture and a significant monument to the pioneer lawyers. It was this Court House and in the others in the old 8th Circuit, that Lincoln in his associations and combats with Douglas, Stuart, McDougall, Edwards, Lamborn, Bledsoe and others of Illinois coterie of brilliant attorneys broadened his facilities and acquired the technical training he lacked as a youth.

The first Logan county court house was at Postville, now the city of Lincoln. There the court held sessions between 1840 and 1848, when the booming town of Mt. Pulaski offered a business block and a new building as an inducement to the electors of the county to move the county seat.

Mt. Pulaski backers won the election, and the citizens raised \$2,700.00 toward building the new two-story brick capitol. The court house, which is 70 percent intact today, served until 1853 when the county seat by legislation was moved to Lincoln, a thriving new community named for the Springfield lawyer who was the trusted friend and attorney of the town's founder.

The Mt. Pulaski court house was used as a schoolhouse until 1878, then as a city hall and jail and finally as a postoffice and headquarters for various town officials. In 1936, it was acquired by the State from the city of Mt. Pulaski for one dollar and restoration work was begun.

### Restore Old Stairway

The stairway at the east end of the main corridor was restored and the offices of the circuit clerk, county clerk, county judge and treasurer, all on the first floor, have been arranged as they were in the '40's and '50's. On the second story, when the original floor was uncovered seatings of newels and balusters of the jury box and judge's stand were found and served as markers in recreating the old Eighth Circuit courtroom.

This courtroom saw much of Abraham Lincoln who for nearly a quarter of a century rode the Eighth Circuit, first as a partner of John T. Stuart, later as an associate of Stephen T. Logan, and finally as the senior member of the firm of Lincoln and Herndon, a partnership dissolved by the bullet of the assassin, Booth. By turns moody and ebullient, cracking jokes and fraternizing or sitting alone and dripping gloom, Lincoln was one

of the most popular of the itinerant company of barristers who traveled the circuit. Over the entire area, which at one time took in one-fifth of the State of Illinois, his was a familiar figure. Gaunt, tall, with disproportionately long legs and unusually large hands and feet, he cared little for personal appearances, but was recognized for his sound knowledge, his common-sense and his endless store of wit.

During most of his career at the bar Lincoln spent nearly half his time away from Springfield riding from county to county, at first on a sorry-looking horse he groomed himself, later in a rig, and trying cases throughout a territory that took in the counties of Logan, McLean, Tazewell, DeWitt, Vermillion, Champaign, Moultrie, Shelby, Edgar, and Piatt.

Historians agree that these years at Mt. Pulaski, Metamora, and other towns on this route had much to do with his later greatness. The State of Illinois has preserved for all time at Mt. Pulaski a building which played an important role in Lincoln's life.

### The Mount Pulaski Court

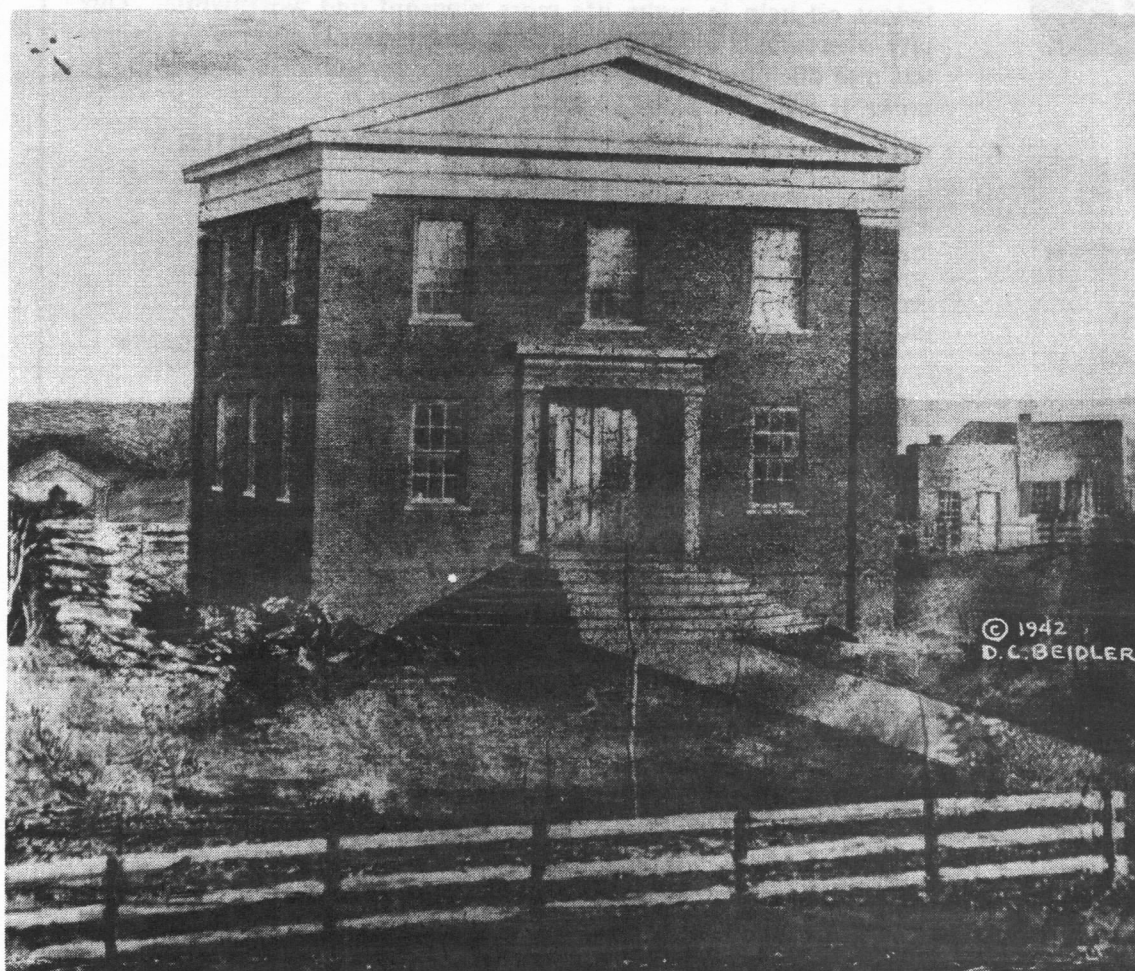
At the time of the change of the county seat, Logan county was a part of the old Eighth Judicial district, made famous by the circuit itinerary of Abraham Lincoln, the lawyer. Judge David Davis of Bloomington, was the presiding judge at most sessions.

There were two terms of the circuit court each year, beginning the last Thursday of May and October, respectively. The early court terms lasted but a few days, rarely more than three. Abraham Lincoln was present practically at every term of the Mount Pulaski court.

Other lawyers from Springfield and other adjacent points also attended the Mt. Pulaski court. They usually stopped at the Mt. Pulaski Hotel, which was a busy place in court terms. Mr. Lincoln, however, was more frequently a guest at the home of Jabez Capps.

The two leading resident licensed lawyers at the Mt. Pulaski court were Lionel P. Lacey and Samuel C. Parks. Parks came to Mt. Pulaski from Springfield and

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REPRODUCTION OF ORIGINAL COURTHOUSE as made in 1942 by the late Donald C. Beidler, noted New York photographer, and a former resident of Mount Pulaski.