

# ALREADY ON NATIONAL REGISTER

## NORTH CAROLINA HISTORIC STRUCTURES SHORT DATA SHEET

READ and USE the instruction manual to complete this form. Fill it out as completely and consistently as possible. **PLEASE NOTE:** not all variables are provided for each question and reference to the instruction manual will be necessary. In all cases: 0 or 00 denotes an undetermined or not applicable response  
9 or 99 denotes a variable other than those provided; use the space provided to indicate the answer.

**SURVEY SITE NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_ (To be assigned by S & P Branch)

1. SITE NAME: OLD CLEVELAND CO. COURTHOUSE

3. ABBREVIATED LOCATION DESCRIPTION OR STREET ADDRESS: COURT SQUARE

4. TOWN/TOWNSHIP/NEAREST COMMUNITY: SHILBY

5. COUNTY: CIL Name: CLEVELAND

6. DATE RECORDED IN FIELD: Month 10 Day 15 Year 1921

7. FIELD RECORDER: J. TIMOTHY KELLER

10. OWNER NAME: CLEVELAND COUNTY

11. OWNER ADDRESS: BOX 1210

SHILBY NC 28154

13. USE: Original Primary \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Present Primary \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                    |                          |                            |                        |                          |                |              |                                 |                         |                      |                |                |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Resid/Farm<br>0101 | Resid/Non-Farm<br>0102   | Farm Bldg/Indep of<br>0201 | Resid<br>0301          | School<br>0401           | Office<br>0402 | Bank<br>0501 | Gen'l Retail Store<br>0601-0614 | Industrial<br>0601-0614 | Gov't Office<br>0903 | Church<br>1001 | Museum<br>1701 |
| Cemetery<br>1802   | Site Aban: Unocc<br>2001 | Mobile Home Adjac<br>2002  | FHA Home Adjac<br>2003 | Other Occ Struct<br>2004 |                |              |                                 |                         |                      |                |                |

15. CONDITION: 353 Excellent 1 Good 2 Fair 3 Deteriorated 4 Ruin 5 Unexposed 6

18. THREATS TO STRUCTURE: 356 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                |             |                          |                                      |                        |                   |                    |                  |                     |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| None/Prop<br>1 | Stable<br>2 | Abusive Alterations<br>3 | Neglect/Deterioration/Vandalism<br>4 | Road Construction<br>5 | Impoundments<br>6 | Private Dev't<br>7 | Urban Dev't<br>8 | Gov't Activity<br>9 |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|

**ARCHITECTURAL DATA**

21. STYLE DEVELOPMENT: Exterior: 369 Interior: 370

- |                    |                  |                                 |                     |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| High/Academic<br>1 | Std Popular<br>2 | Simple Vernac/Polk Culture<br>3 | Vig Vernacular<br>4 |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|

23. GENERAL STYLE GROUPS: Exterior: First 373 374 Second 375 376 Interior: First 379 380 Second 381 382

- |               |                     |               |                  |                      |                  |                             |                          |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Geo<br>01     | Geo/Fed<br>02       | Fed<br>03     | Fed/Gk Rev<br>04 | Gk Rev<br>05         | Italianate<br>06 | Goth Rev<br>07              | 19/20 c Plain/Trad<br>09 |
| Q. Anne<br>11 | Non-Class Rev<br>12 | Col Rev<br>13 | Misc Vict<br>15  | Std Commercial<br>16 | Bungalow<br>25   | Coastal Plain Cottage<br>33 |                          |

24. PLAN (Primary Domestic Buildings): 385 386 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                |                     |                     |                 |                    |                              |                  |                 |              |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| One Room<br>01 | Hall & Parlor<br>02 | Quaker 3 Room<br>04 | Side Hall<br>06 | Central Hall<br>07 | Cent Hall w/Quaker Var<br>08 | Tripartite<br>13 | Irregular<br>14 | T-Hall<br>15 |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|

26. HEIGHT: 388 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |              |                  |              |                  |              |                  |                                  |                 |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Story<br>1 | 1 1/2 Story<br>2 | 2 Story<br>3 | 2 1/2 Story<br>4 | 3 Story<br>5 | 3 1/2 Story<br>6 | 4 or More, Not a Skyscraper<br>7 | Skyscraper<br>8 |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|

27. FACADE WIDTH (Principal Impact): 389 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |            |            |            |            |            |                    |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| 1 Bay<br>1 | 2 Bay<br>2 | 3 Bay<br>3 | 4 Bay<br>4 | 5 Bay<br>5 | 6 or More Bay<br>6 |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------|

28. DEPTH: 390 1 Room/Single Pile 1 2 Room/Double Pile 2 3 or More Rooms 3

29. WINGS AND ADDITIONS: Primary: 391 Secondary: 392 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                |                  |            |            |                         |
|----------------|------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Rear Shed<br>1 | Rear T or L<br>2 | Sides<br>3 | Front<br>4 | Additional Stories<br>5 |
|----------------|------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
Department of Cultural Resources  
Raleigh 27611

JAMES B. HUNT, JR.  
Governor

SARA W. HODGKINS  
Secretary

*Division of Archives and History  
Larry E. Tise, Director*

April 11, 1978

**Mr. William J. Palmer, Jr., Chairman  
Cleveland County Commissioners  
Cleveland County Courthouse  
Shelby, NC 28150**

Dear **Mr. Palmer:**

We are pleased to report that work has been completed on the nomination of **the Cleveland County Courthouse** to the National Register of Historic Places. A copy of the nomination **will be sent to you within a few weeks.**

The nomination will be reviewed by the State Professional Review Committee at its next meeting on **May 11, 1978**. The committee will determine whether to authorize the State Historic Preservation Officer to sign the nomination and submit it to the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is a "list of distinction which identifies for the people those properties worthy of preservation for their historic value." More than 400 North Carolina properties are now listed on the register. Entry on the register is an honor which places no legal obligation or restriction on a private owner. It does provide recognition and a degree of protection against state or federal projects which might have an adverse effect on the property. The recent Tax Reform Act of 1976 (Section 2124) benefits owners of commercial properties listed on the National Register by providing new tax incentives for preservation including accelerated depreciation for certified rehabilitation of such properties. Other provisions eliminate deduction of demolition costs and accelerated depreciation of new construction if a certified National Register property is demolished. Tax Act information and a leaflet explaining the National Register are enclosed. If you have questions, please contact Catherine W. Bishir at this address.

Federal law requires that you have an opportunity to provide written comments on the significance of the property before the State Professional Review Committee reviews the nomination. Comments should be sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer at this address and should arrive at least one week before the Review Committee meeting. If we do not hear from you by that time, we will assume you have no comments.

## CLEVELAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE

### Historical Sketch

In 1841 the North Carolina General Assembly established Cleveland County from Rutherford and Lincoln counties. Its first courts were held at the home of William Weathers, six miles southwest of Shelby. Weathers lived on the first floor and court was held on the second. The first permanent courthouse was built, of logs, at the county seat of Shelby in 1842, but it was replaced by a brick building in 1874. A third structure was completed around 1905, and it gave way to the present courthouse which the county built in 1974.<sup>1</sup>

### Architectural Description

The Cleveland County Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center is a multi-level contemporary structure located on the edge of Shelby's central business district. Constructed in 1974, the reinforced concrete building replaced the 1907 Cleveland County Courthouse which now functions as a county museum, office building, and public meeting hall. Designed by the architectural firm of Vaughan-Talley and Associates, the contemporary building features broad, unbroken planes of pebbleized skin which accentuate its horizontal emphasis. Unfortunately, its treeless site and neighboring parking lots detract from the appearance of the building.

Shelby's town square has been the site of county government since the first courthouse was erected there in 1842. In 1907 the antebellum building was replaced by a two-story Neo-Classical Revival courthouse. Designed by H. L. Lewman and built by Falls City Construction Company, the courthouse's imposing character and park-like setting make it the centerpiece of Shelby. The courthouse square is framed by buildings of various periods and styles which illustrate the development of the town.

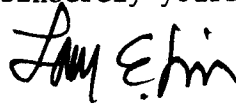
The old courthouse is rectangular in plan with boldly projecting end bays which are topped by ribbed dome-like roofs. The building is sheathed in a smooth ashlar veneer above a rusticated first floor. Tetrastyle Corinthian porticoes front the center recesses, sheltering the four main entrances to the building. Windows are paired, and a heavy cornice with cartouche crests cap the second story end bays. A balustrade conceals the flat roofline of the building and the base of a dramatic three-stage cupola. The courthouse's imposing scale, ornamentation, advancing and receding planes, domical roofs, and cupola are hallmarks of the Beaux-Arts phase of the Neo-Classical Revival style.

---

<sup>1</sup>Olds, Story of the Counties, pp. 23-24.

The preservation and continued use of our valuable, non-renewable historic resources is increasingly important to our state and nation; **the Cleveland Co. Courthouse** is a vital part of those resources. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in planning for its preservation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry E. Tise". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "E".

Larry E. Tise  
State Historic Preservation Officer

LET/dk

PLACES TO VISIT:

# Museum Made From A Courthouse

By PAUL L. McCRAW

Of the many new local museums opened throughout the country in conjunction with the Bicentennial, one of the most interesting and best arranged is the new Cleveland County Historical Museum located in the old county courthouse in Shelby. The museum not only does a good job by preserving some of the area's past, but it is presented in an interesting and orderly fashion found lacking in so many of the new museums. The museum is operated by the Cleveland County Historical Association, Dr. W. Wyan Washburn, President.

After Cleveland County built a new courthouse in 1974, the historical association asked for permission to locate a museum in the handsome old 1907 sandstone building occupying the shaded central square in Shelby. The county commissioners granted the permission July 1, 1975, and plans for the museum were begun. After much planning and careful collecting and designing of the exhibits, the museum was opened May 8, 1976, to coincide with Cleveland County's Bicentennial Week.

The museum has nine complete rooms, each describing a different aspect of the county's past. The Founders Room depicts the establishment of the county in 1841; the Agriculture and Early Industry Room has an 1800's barnyard setting; the Religion Room has histories and artifacts from area churches; the War and Freedom Room has displays of Cleveland's involvement in seven wars; and there are rooms set aside for government, communications, and the professions. The Family and Genealogy Room has a wealth of material for those interested in genealogical research. It has already been used widely by out-of-state people as well as North Carolinians. The Hall of Fame Room contains dis-

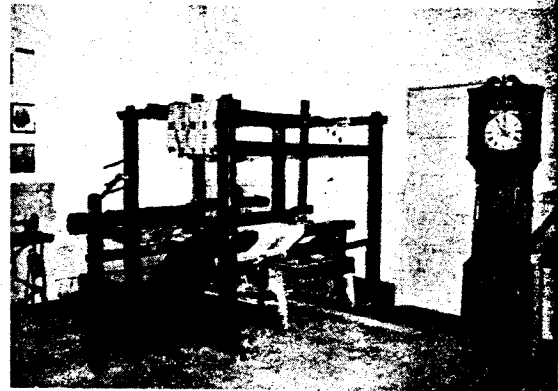
plays on ten famous Clevelanders: Clyde R. Hoey, O. Max Gardner, Faye Webb Gardner, Otis M. Mull, John W. Suttle, J. S. Dorton, Edwin Yates Webb, Thomas Dixon, Jr., W. D. Burns, and E. B. Lattimore.

One of the most interesting displays is in the center of the building where the halls intersect. It is the surveyor's instruments and equipment used by John R. Logan in the original survey of the city of Shelby in the 1850's. The display case is located over the original exact center of the city.

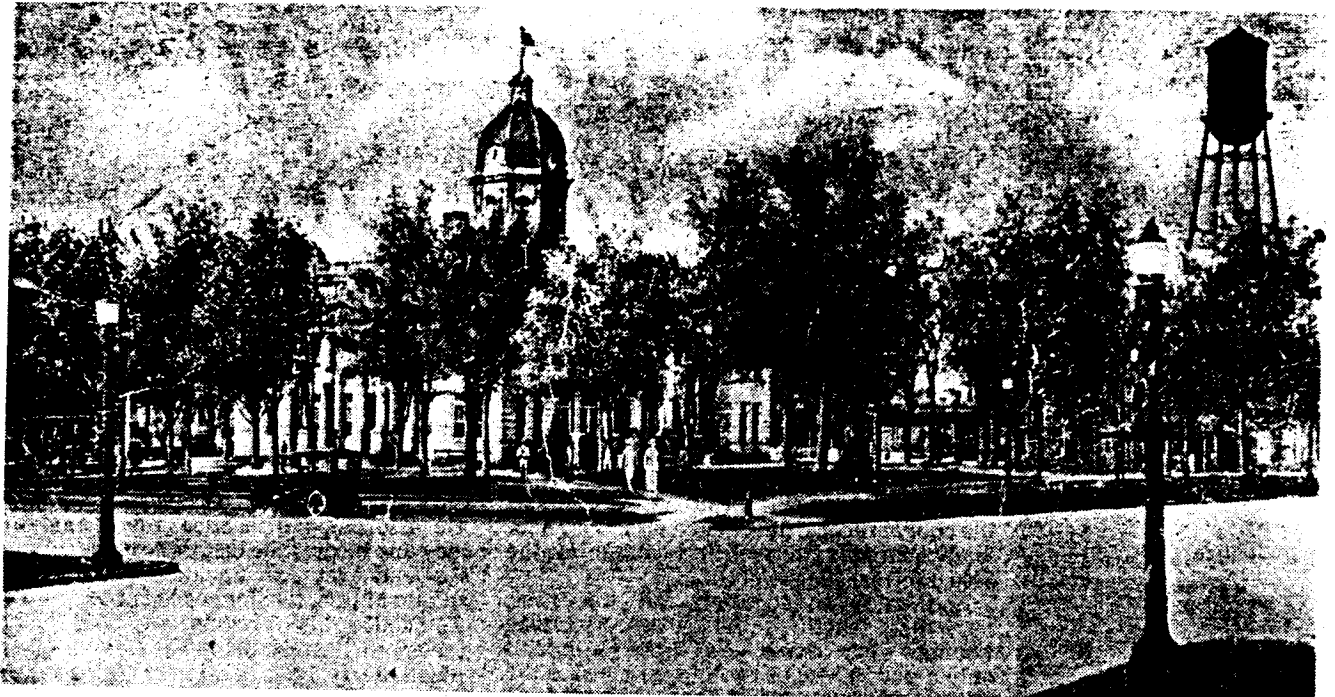
The halls of the building are used for rotating displays and special displays of schools, clubs, and other groups. A weaving demonstration is provided during the summer and for school groups. The museum emphasizes educational tours for students of area schools. Some 1,500 students toured the museum during the first month it was open. Visitors have trained guides to help interpret the displays although all artifacts in the museum are precisely labeled and dated.

Mrs. Mary Jane Wesson, assisted by Mrs. Marie Collins and a large staff mostly of volunteers do an extremely capable job of operating the museum, arranging for new displays and planning the growth of the museum. They have secured the generous donations of most of the museum pieces (approximately one-third are on loan). In order to make what is already an excellent museum more complete, the staff is presently planning three additional permanent display rooms: an Educational Room, a Costume Period Room, and a Sports History Room.

The Cleveland County Historical Museum is open without charge from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday thru Friday, and 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday.



(top) The handsome old 1907 courthouse building in Shelby's central square. Now a museum, the nine "theme" rooms describe Cleveland County's past. Here are the Agricultural and Early Industry display and the loom display. (photo by Lloyd Hamrick)



## Courtsquare

This old postcard shows a northwest view of the courthouse and surrounding square. The town water tank can be seen at right. Recently, the old courthouse — now the county historical museum — was named to the National

Register of Historic Places. The park-like setting around the building was a key factor in its being selected, according to the state Division of Archives and History.

# Old Courthouse On Register

The old Cleveland County Courthouse — now used as a historical museum — has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The U.S. Department of the Interior register is the official list of the nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation.

The courthouse is the third structure in Cleveland County to be named to the register. First was the "banker's house" on North Lafayette Street and, most recently, the Dr. Victor McBrayer house on North Morgan Street.

The neo-classical revival Cleveland County Courthouse was part of a thematic nomination of over 50 courthouses in North Carolina submitted by the state Division of Archives and History.

Mrs. Betty Burton,

president of the Cleveland County Historical Association, said "It's a great honor to be on the register" and that the courthouse is "very deserving" of that honor.

The national register certificate will be framed and displayed inside the museum and there is also the possibility of getting a state historical marker on the square, Mrs. Burton said.

She described the 1907 courthouse as "unique. It's such a beautiful centerpiece" for the city.

The Division of Archives and History agrees.

In its nomination, the agency noted the courthouse's architectural beauty along with the park-like grounds which form a classic example of an instantly recognizable center of a county seat.

H.F. Newman designed the limestone courthouse, built by Falls Construction Co. at a cost of \$75,000. It replaced the red brick 1845 courthouse.

In July 1974, the new Cleveland County Courthouse Law Enforcement

Center opened. The old courthouse was renovated and in 1976, as a Bicentennial project, became the county historical museum. That project has continued and now the county museum is considered a "model" museum by the state.

*Shelby Daily Star*

*Sept. 28, 1979*

services on Saturday and walked home on Sunday. They usually carried their shoes with them. When nearing the meeting place they set down and put their shoes on. Often the walk would be eight to ten miles and they needed to save the hen leather. The women wore homespun dresses of materials they had carded and spun by hand. Their shoes and hats were homemade, made by the men. "Many of the old settlers made and used whiskey in some manner. They very seldom got drunk but the preachers, deacons and church members used it, if for no other reason than medicinal purposes. Many of them had their own stills. According to the Collins Jones book, "There was a Baptist preacher who would work at his still until [preaching time], go and preach, then come home to work at his still until evening. There was never a thought of this as being wrong so long as moderation was practiced. The old Elders, as they were called, were highly respected and greatly loved by the people."

We truly owe a debt of gratitude to those early settlers, many of who were our ancestors, who so courageously came to this country long ago. They reared their families and worked the land in conditions we, in this Twenty-First Century, can only imagine. Let us never forget them and may we never take for granted all that we have because of their courage and perseverance in this land known today as Cleveland County.

Submitted by: Nancy Hamrick Hughes

## EARLY YEARS OF CLEVELAND COUNTY — PART II

Many of the early settlers who came to this area from Europe settled along the rivers and streams of what would become known as Cleveland County. In low, wet places early settlers planted flax which was beaten and spun into thread that was used to weave fabrics from which the family's clothing was spun. By 1815 cotton was planted and sheep farming was undertaken. The early settlers lived either in Rutherford or Lincoln counties. By 1836 they began to demand that a new county seat be established so that they could have easier access to a trading post and a centralized center of governance. In 1841 Dr. W. J. T. Miller of Rutherford County introduced a bill in the State Legislature to form the new county and was assisted in its passage by Michael Hoke and John Runyan of Lincoln County.

"Cleveland" County was named after

Revolutionary War hero, Colonel Benjamin Cleveland. Later, Colonel Cleveland dropped the "a" from the spelling of his name as did President Grover Cleveland. An act was passed by the General Assembly of North Carolina in 1887, authorized the elimination of the letter "a" in the spelling of Cleveland County. The legislative act provided that the county seat should be located "not more than four miles from Wilson's Mineral Springs" (now Cleveland Springs). Post Road was considered the dividing line between Lincoln and Rutherford counties and the spring site was considered to be near the middle of the new county. Residents from Rutherford County objected. A compromise site was suggested at what is now the Elizabeth Church area. Rutherford residents continued to ask for a more western site. To settle this hotly debated argument, James Love offered to give the new county a site composed of about 147 acres and located in what is now the heart of Shelby. Mr. Love stipulated that six one-acre lots be set apart for religious and educational sites.

Churches located in downtown Shelby became the beneficiaries of these free sites. For a fee of \$10, William Forbes and his wife deeded the town another 40 acres. In order to raise money to build public buildings, Love gave the commissioners permission to sell at public auction that part of his gift that was not needed for public buildings. It was decided to name the streets after Revolutionary War heroes: Washington, LaFayette, Marion, Warren, DeKalb, Sumter, Morgan and Graham. The boundaries of the town formed a perfect circle, measured from the center of the courthouse. An auctioneer from Lincoln County, John Bishop Harry, was hired to conduct the auction. At the end of the day, the lots were all sold for businesses or the building of homes.

In August of 1841, the Justices of the Peace of the new county met to set up the organization of the government of Cleveland County, which was very similar to that which they had been accustomed in England. The county government was changed to its present form in 1868 with the Board of Commissioners replacing the old Justices.

The new county was soon to experience an economic and social setback that would last for half a century. The War Between the States drained the manpower of Cleveland County. Fourteen companies (2,033 men) volunteered for service. Their ladies bade them farewell and presented them with a homemade flag embroi-

dered with a pine tree with a rattlesnake coiled around it. Schools closed, industry stopped, women and children cared for farms. Many of the men never returned and many of those who did return were maimed for life. Their currency became worthless. Union soldiers took possession of the courthouse and court square and tried to control county elections and appoint county officers. Some of them remained as long as 1872.

The town of Shelby was chartered in 1875. It was also the year that the first passenger train arrived from Lincoln and the first banking institution, The Cleveland Savings Bank, was organized under a special act of the Legislature.

In the beginning, the economic picture of Cleveland County was influenced merely by meeting the daily needs of its citizens. Transportation was extremely limited because roads were narrow and in very poor condition. Bad weather made travel virtually impossible.

In the late 1800s some stagecoach lines stopped in Cleveland County (P. 168, Star) and businesses tended to locate near these stops. During the Civil War the only bridge in Cleveland County (which crossed the Broad River) washed away. Charles Ellis resorted to a flat boat ferry and charged a fee for ferrying people across the river.

Railroads arrived in Cleveland County by the mid-1800s and would be recognized as the backbone of economic development in the area. Citizens of Shelby voted to finance construction of a Seaboard Airline Railway through the city in 1857. However, many citizens opposed paying for the line and construction was delayed. Kings Mountain citizens were not so hesitant and the Atlanta-Charlotte Airline Railway (later to become Southern Railway) opened the first railway through Kings Mountain and Cleveland County on December 1, 1872. In 1886 construction began in Shelby for a railroad that would link Wilmington-Charlotte-Rutherford. This line was completed on March 1, 1887. In 1901 Major H. F. Schenck had a narrow-gauge railroad built from Lawndale to Shelby, known as "the Lawndale Dummy."

While railways prospered, road transportation continued to be a problem. In the late 1800s "all able-bodied men between the ages of 21 and 50 were required by law to work on roads about 2 to 6 days per year." (p. 171, Star) It was not until the early 1900s that road bonds were approved to improve road conditions. Joe Smith

purchased the first automobile in Cleveland County in 1902. In 1923 there were only three automobiles in the county.

Telephone service began in 1890 when Major H. F. Schenck and his son, John, built a private line connecting offices at Cleveland Mills with Double Shoals and five stations in Shelby. William Shuford built the first telephone exchange in Shelby in 1898.

Mercantile businesses, livery stables, hardware stores, newspapers, and other businesses began to appear in the county. In 1947 gross retail sales in Cleveland County totaled \$26, 121, 715.00.

Early settlers of Cleveland County were more concerned about survival than education but it did not take long for families to become interested in providing education for their children. Forefathers adopted a common language and set about organizing schools with the goal of educating the population. Before state or county governments were able to provide financial support for a public school system, citizens joined together to establish "subscription" schools, schools where parents promised to pay a certain amount of the teachers' salary each month. Early subject matter was focused on the basics: reading, writing, arithmetic and good manners.

Most of Cleveland County's early educators attained their education elsewhere and were competent teachers. Some were ministers who needed to supplement their meager income. Most were males. Teachers boarded with families in the community. Some moved from one home to another during the short winter school terms.

Many adults were illiterate and some enrolled in schools with their children. Classes were held in small one-room schools. Textbooks were scarce or non-existent. The first school districts were created in 1844. Education suffered a serious setback as a result of the Civil War. Many young boys left to fight in the war. Those who remained stayed at home to protect their family's property and help provide necessities of life, mostly keeping the farms in operation. Most schools were deserted during this time. A few patriotic ministers volunteered to teach at some schools without pay. In the late 1880s a few private schools and academies opened. Roberts Seminary operated at the Shelby home of William Roberts, the Cleveland Female Seminary located at Cleveland Springs, the Kings Mountain Military

and High School in Kings Mountain, the Shelby Academy, the Broad River Academy, and the Belwood Academy. Several years later the Shelby Military Institute, the Shelby Female College and the Normal Institute of Waco opened. The first Piedmont High School was established at Cleveland Mills in 1897 and Lattimore High School was established just after the turn of the century. Boiling Springs High School was established in 1907. Gardner Webb College grew out of this school and became a junior college in 1928. Earliest official school records in Cleveland County date back to 1906. B. T. Falls was Superintendent at that time and made a school-by-school report. At that time all schools in Cleveland County were in the same system. Total school budget for that year was \$22,107.

From the early years until the 1940s rural schools started the school year in July, held classes for about six weeks, then closed for about six weeks for "cotton picking," providing farmers with needed help to gather the cotton crop. Early schoolhouses were of crude construction, heated with pot-bellied stoves, and got their water supply from nearby springs. By the 1920s some of the smaller schools began to consolidate in order to provide an expanded curricula and vocational education. Lunchrooms were added, buses brought children to school, and sports programs began to emerge.

Basketball and baseball were highly competitive sports among the rural schools. In 1967 rural schools consolidated again in order to meet the educational needs of students in the smaller towns and rural areas of Cleveland County, especially those students who planned to attend college. Cleveland County now had four high schools: Shelby, Kings Mountain, Burns and Crest.

Another educational opportunity appeared on the scene in 1965. Cleveland County Technical Institute, originally a branch of Gaston College of the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges, began operation in a warehouse in downtown Shelby. Several years later CCTI gained independent status and later attained community college status, which meant that it could offer college transfer courses as well as vocational and technical classes. James B. Petty was the first president of Cleveland Community College. Gardner Webb College also evolved during those years from junior college status to four-year status and later to university status, offering graduate

VOLUME II PP 2-3

CLEVELAND COUNTY HERITAGE - NORTH CAROLINA - VOLUME II - 2004

BROAD RIVER GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

O

a his  
writt  
bring  
larges

The  
duct  
This  
almos  
Star a

This  
(cor

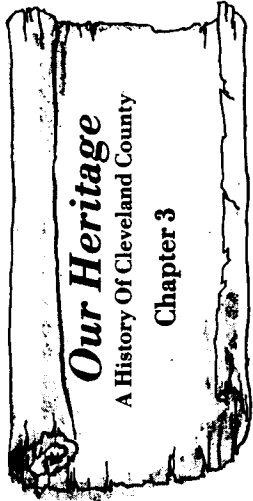


Cover:  
Outlin  
former  
(now c  
car; fc  
Clevel

Cover  
By Bot  
& Assc  
28150



No actual picture of Benjamin Cleveland is known to exist, but this is an artist's conception, drawn by J. N. Marchand and published in *The Terror of the Tortes*.



**Our Heritage**  
A History Of Cleveland County  
Chapter 3

# The Square

The existence of a "lost" Cleveland County courthouse has come to light in research done by county historian Robert Gidney at the N. C. Department of Archives and History.

Gidney found references to the heretofore unrecognized courthouse in the minutes of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions — forerunner of the county commissioners — for the newly-formed county.

The first sessions of that governing body were held at the home of William Weathers in the Zion Community. The minute books record the meeting as being held March 8, 1841.

Thus, the William Weathers home was the first courthouse.

A contract with George Smith was let for a red brick courthouse, completed in 1845. Heretofore, that was considered the county's second courthouse.

However, the Pleas and Quarter Session minutes show that before this actual courthouse was built, the court met somewhere else besides the Weathers home.

On Aug. 12, 1841, "the court ordered that the county officers meet at the town site of Shelby on the second Monday and Tuesday in every month until the third Monday in November next."

And on Aug. 12, the minutes read that it was ordered that "Superior Court, fall term be held at house of William Weathers, and all other sessions both County and Superior shall be held at the county site, Shelby."

Minutes of Nov. 1841 read that the meeting of Pleas and Quarter Sessions was begun "for the County of Cleveland at the courthouse at Shelby on the second Monday and the 10th day of January 1842."

Gidney notes the meetings were held in Shelby, "although no town" had been chartered at that date.

Repairs to the early Shelby meeting place were necessary in Jan. 1842, and the court, the minutes show, ordered that "the sum of twenty-five dollars, seventy-two cents (\$25.72) be allowed to William McBrayer for repairs done to the courthouse and the further sum of three dollars, eighty-

one and one-fourth cents (3.81¼) be allowed to A. R. Homesly for glass, hinges, nails" and "one dollar and forty cents (\$1.40) be paid by the county trustee to Peter Alexander for nails for fixing courthouse." Also, \$4.50 was paid to W. A. Jackson "for work done to the courthouse" and \$15.63 be paid by the trustee to Minor Smith for planks for "the courthouse in Shelby."

And in May 1843, Edmund Jones, trustee of "Publick Buildings," was authorized to pay A. R. Homesly "for work and plank furnished on the temporary courthouse the sum of fifty dollars and thirty-five cents (\$50.35)."

Gidney's further search showed that in Feb. 1844, the court ordered that "the county trustee pay to Jacob Brooks for cleaning from under the courthouse, one dollar (\$1)."

The location of this "temporary courthouse" is apparently lost to history.

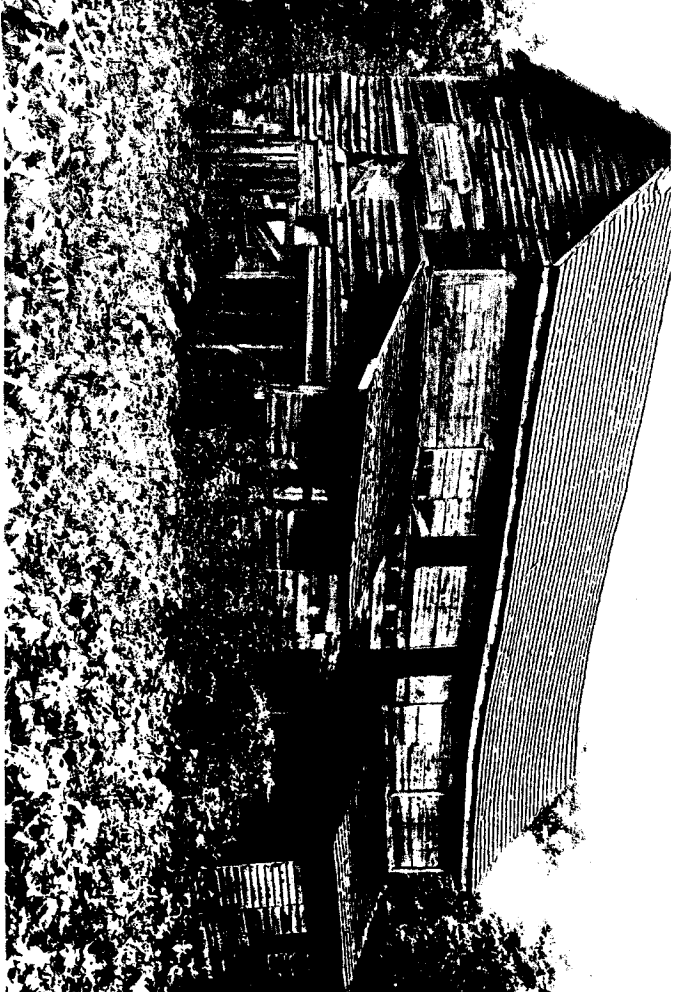
Gidney states that "no mention has ever been made, nor do records show where the first courthouse in Shelby (second in the county) was located or what it looked like, and the county certainly held court in Shelby in some type of temporary court house in 1842, 1843, 1844 and 1845, the latter being the year of the first courthouse built for this purpose."

Gidney's research into early Pleas and Quarter Session minutes shows that "although the 1845 court appears to have awarded the contract for the first permanent courthouse on the square in Shelby to George Smith and bond was given for \$12,938, it is clarified by the Feb. 1848 court that the contract was \$6,469 and that bond for twice the amount of the contract was required."

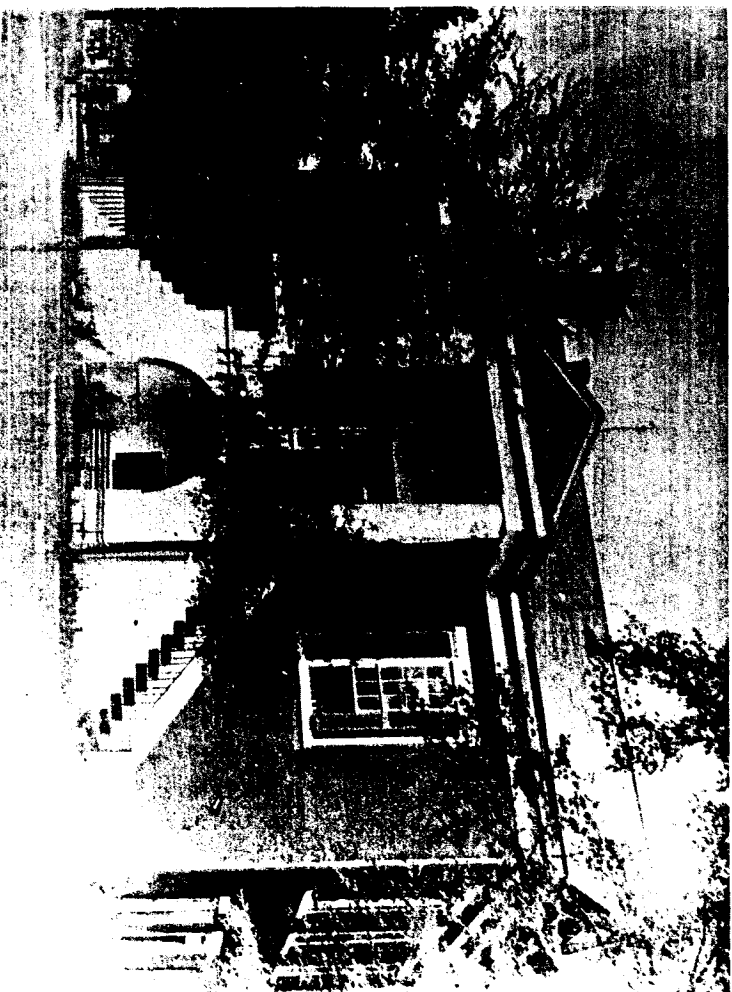
During the building of the courthouse, Gidney continues, "it was decided that a rock foundation was desirable instead of brick, and \$375 additional was allowed; also during the erection of the walls, it was discovered that the basement story was too low in the specification 'to admit a finish' to doors and windows and an additional of \$100 was allowed. Now we have a total of \$6,944. The court approved a payment of \$6,000."

The minutes show the court didn't think the brick "was such as contract required nor were they laid as specifications called for." Porticoes and steps fell "far short of meeting specifications. The court accepted the recommendation of paying only \$6,000 from its committee. Then John Dameron, who signed as security for George Smith, the contractor, filed suit against the court to recover the \$944 left unpaid, Gidney's investigation reveals. The action was filed February 1849 "asking to also be paid interest on 'this balance' from the date the work was completed. The court rejected the petition."

In Feb. 1851, Dameron's suit against the justices of Cleveland County was removed for trial to Lincoln County. Gidney notes that "there was still



*The first county court was held in the home of William Weathers, above, in 1841. Court was held in an existing building in Shelby briefly until the courthouse below was erected in 1845. It was torn down in 1907.*



reference to this claim as late as 1854. The exact decision of Lincoln Court has not been shown. It appears the case was appealed to Superior Court."

### ***Courthouse Cost \$75,000***

The red brick 1845 courthouse — third in the county — was replaced in 1907 with the present limestone structure that is referred to in 1976 as the "Old Courthouse." The 1907 building cost \$75,000.

As time went by, this 1907 structure would be referred to as Cleveland County's "historic" courthouse.

Similarly, as the years went by, complaints about inadequate space would be made as county government grew, particularly in the years after 1946.

As early as 1957, proposals to expand the courthouse were considered. That year, it was estimated the cost of building two new wings with a total of 40,000 floor space would be \$600,000.

In 1958, the Board of Commissioners appointed a committee to study the space problems.

The courthouse arrangement remained the same except for courtroom and general renovation in 1961 and 1962. Two entrances were blocked off.

In the summer of 1964, the \$440,000 county office building on Highway 180 was completed and housed the agriculture, social services, school, Federal crop insurance, soil conservation and Farmers Home Administration offices.

In Dec. 1967, the county moved some offices across the street to the former post office building — thereafter known as the courthouse annex. Tax mapping, tax collector register of deeds, county finance officers were located there.

In 1965, County Manager Joe Hendrick cited the need for a separate multistructure building for the jail, sheriff's department and courtrooms.

And, in 1969, the state jail inspector put the county on notice to come up with concrete plans on a new complex which would house a new jail.

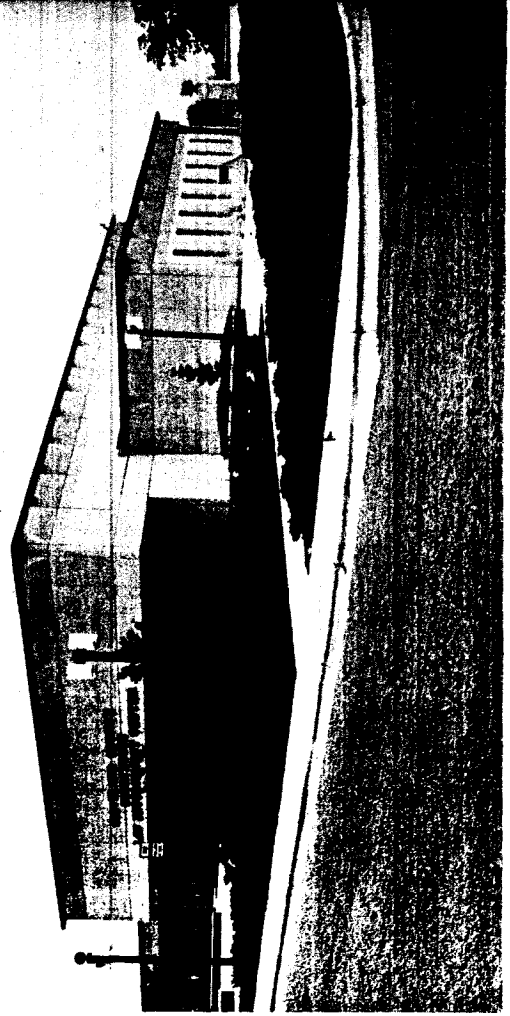
The county commissioners in March 1971 approved final preliminary drawings for the new jail and criminal justice complex. From its inception, the complex was intended to be a law enforcement center — not a legal courthouse — with the sheriff's department, courtrooms, clerk of court, civil defense, central communications and Shelby Police Department located there.

Construction of the 78,000-square foot building began in 1971.

The City of Shelby, however, did not move its police department into the complex. The city and county were far apart on rent the city should pay for space there.

The county subsequently decided to move its administrative offices out of the courthouse and annex into the new \$2.7 million law enforcement

*The courthouse above was built in 1907 and presently houses the Cleveland County Historical Museum. The Cleveland County Courthouse-Law Enforcement Center, below, opened in 1974.*



complex, with commissioners' arguing citizens would be happier if offices were filled.

The new building was financed basically through a 10-cent tax levy per \$100 that began in 1968, with \$45,000 in federal funds for the jail, \$150,000 in civil defense monies. And newly approved local sales tax receipts.

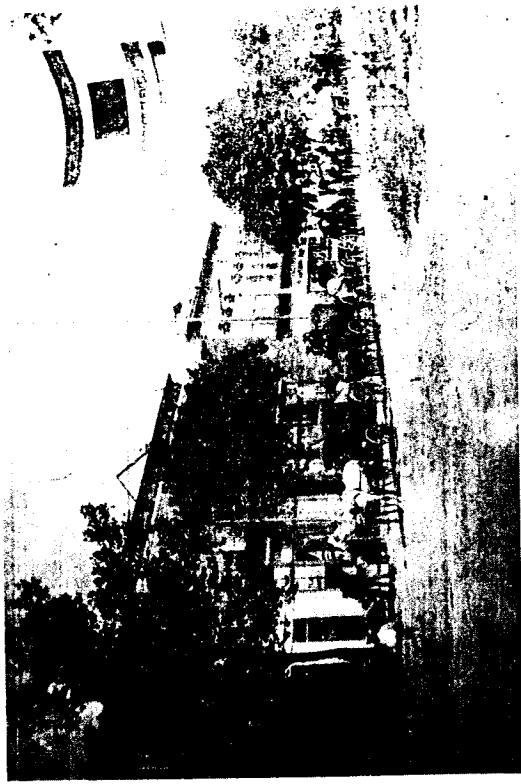
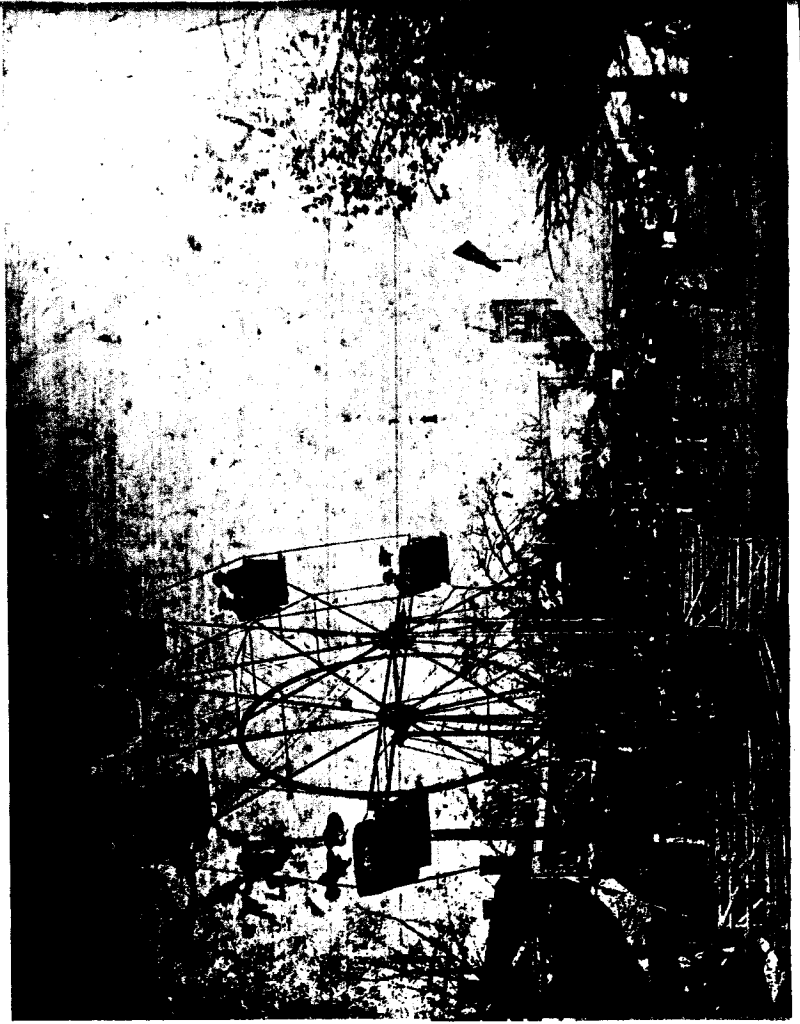
County offices began moving into the new building in July 1974 and that same month, the old jail was demolished. Inmates had been moved into the new building in May.

Confusion over the name existed and eventually, in Jan. 1975, the new court and office building, located on Justice Place, by action of the commissioners, got the official abbreviation of "Courthouse." The official name was "Cleveland County, Courthouse, Law Enforcement Center."

The "courthouse" referred, then, to the new complex, and it became the county's official center of government.

The "old courthouse" on the Courthouse was renovated, and the Cleveland County Historical Association began grooming it for a county historical museum.

*Carnivals on the courthouse in Shelby weren't unusual in the early years of the 20th century. This scene was around 1903.*



*A parade in 1888 was held in Shelby in connection with a political rally when Grover Cleveland was seeking election as the President of the United States.*

## A Center Of Activity

Around the Courthouse, the City of Shelby and County of Cleveland revolved.

The square was a focal point. Shelby natives who in later years lived elsewhere expressed fond recollections of the town and the square in the times they knew it.

At first, the square was called the "Public Square." The Cleveland County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions had appointed commissioners to lay off town lots and the public square in the town of Shelby in Aug. 1841, according to court minutes transcribed by county historian Robert Gidney.

And, in Jan. 1842, the court ordered that "the timber on the Public Square in the town of Shelby remain untouched — any person cutting or removing the same shall be liable to indictment and fined at the discretion of the court."

The first courthouse was completed in 1845.

Robert C. Miller, son of A. C. Miller, grew up in Shelby in the 1880s. He was quoted in an article by the late Miss Mamie Jones as recalling "when I was a little boy, Shelby was a village having several hundred inhabitants. Streets and sidewalks were not paved. The thoroughfares were either

muddy or rusty (sic), according to the weather. The streets in all four directions from the courthouse were full of dirt with many holes in them, and they were very muddy when it rained. Nearly every corner was decorated with hitching posts and water wells. There were no laws of sanitation and garbage was dumped out into the streets or left in the yards."

Miller also remembered the oil lamps around the square.

They were set on posts and each evening Jim Beam "carried a five-gallon can of kerosene oil about the streets and filled the smoky lamps. When Shelby men went uptown at night, they carried lanterns to light the way and keep them from stepping into holes in the sidewalks."

Later, it was the chief of police's duty to light the lamps, and Miss Jones recalled how her father, who served in that position, said he lit the lamps each evening walking from post to post.

In the late 1890s, electric street lamps were installed.

Occasionally, carnivals were held on the courthouse.

A story in the Centennial edition of *The Star* noted that a two room building on the southside of the courthouse — then used as a post office — housed a fair one spring. In early April of 1902 *The Cleveland Star* ran an advertisement about the midway, baby show, lunch counter and souvenir stand. Tickets sold for five cents.

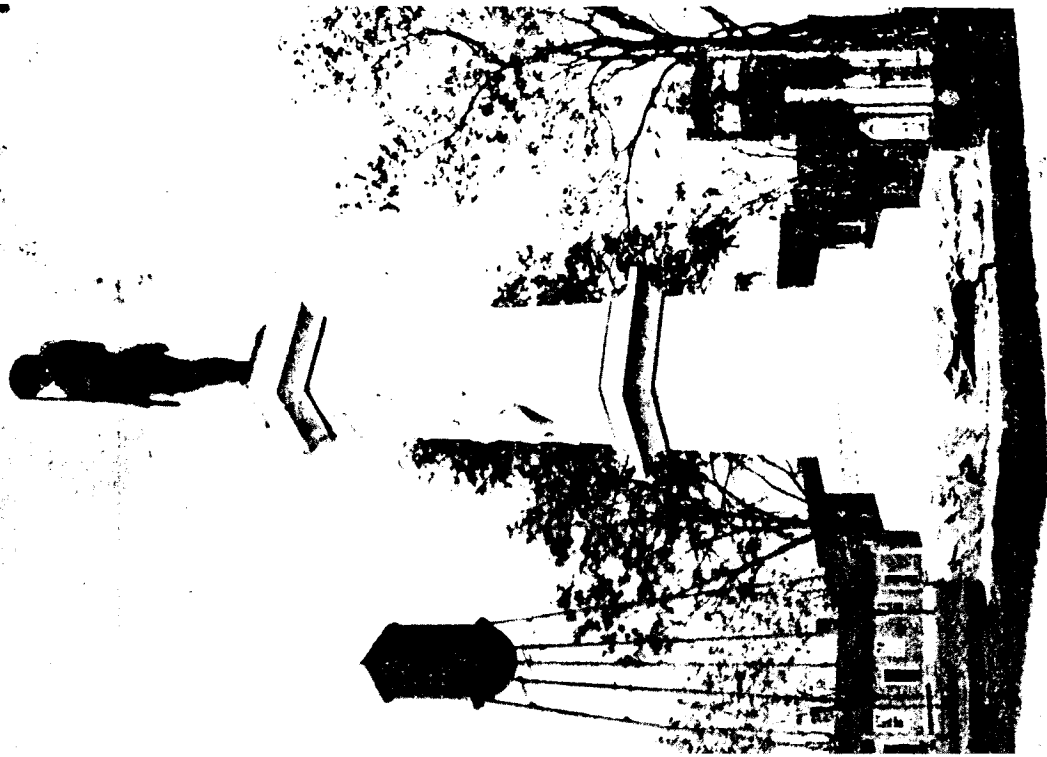
Mrs. Margaret Anthony Meagher once set down her recollections of how the courthouse looked in her childhood — from 1905 to 1915.

On the east where the Cleveland Tech uptown annex (old postoffice building) now sits was the A. B. Blanton home "with a vacant adjoining lot. On the corner was a quaint house known as the Dr. Williams place" where Central Methodist Church now stands. The "Williams place" was, incidentally, the original "Jackson house," supposedly the first house built in Shelby. *The Centennial Star* printed a letter from Mrs. J. F. Williamson (the former Minnie Lee Jackson) of Roebuck, S. C., in which she stated that her father, Thomas P. Jackson, had built the house and that it was the first such structure built in the new town. In front, she said, was a store and the dwelling part in back. Her father married Nannie Ford Bailey and both were natives of Cleveland County. They lived in Shelby several years and then moved to Atlanta, Ga. Mrs. Williamson also wrote that her uncle, Jim Jackson, had built the second house in Shelby.

At the site of the service station across from the Williams' house was the home of Mrs. Zula Green. It had a large yard, Mrs. Meagher wrote.

Central Methodist Church was on the opposite corner. When it moved to its present location, the old church building was remodeled and became the Webb Theatre. The building was demolished in 1960 and the Union Trust building constructed.

Beside Central Methodist was a long, one-story house and *The Cleveland Star* occupied the building which extended to the alley. Opposite the alley was a one-story, wooden building in which D. Z. Newton once had his law



*The Confederate monument, around 1920 is set against the old Central Methodist Church, right rear, part of the old Courtview Hotel and the old town water tank.*

SHELBY DAILY STAR, OUR HERITAGE - A HISTORY OF  
CLEVELAND COUNTY, 1976

"Our Confederate Dead 1861—Dedicated to the Memory of 300 unknown soldiers by the Ladies Memorial Association, of Greensboro, N. C."

---

### SHELBY

The Confederate monument at Shelby, N. C., is located west of the courthouse on the large and beautiful Court Square, in the center of the city. On the east side of the monument are the words:

"Erected by the Daughters of  
the Confederacy  
Nov. 21, 1906."

(On the west side, or front, facing North Lafayette Street, are the words)

"In Honor of the Confederate  
Heroes of Cleveland County.  
1861-1865  
Lest We Forget."

Above those words is a large Confederate flag, and above the flag are the initials, "C.S.A." At the top of the monument stands the statue of a Confederate infantryman, wearing knapsack, and canteen, and holding his musket at "Present arms."

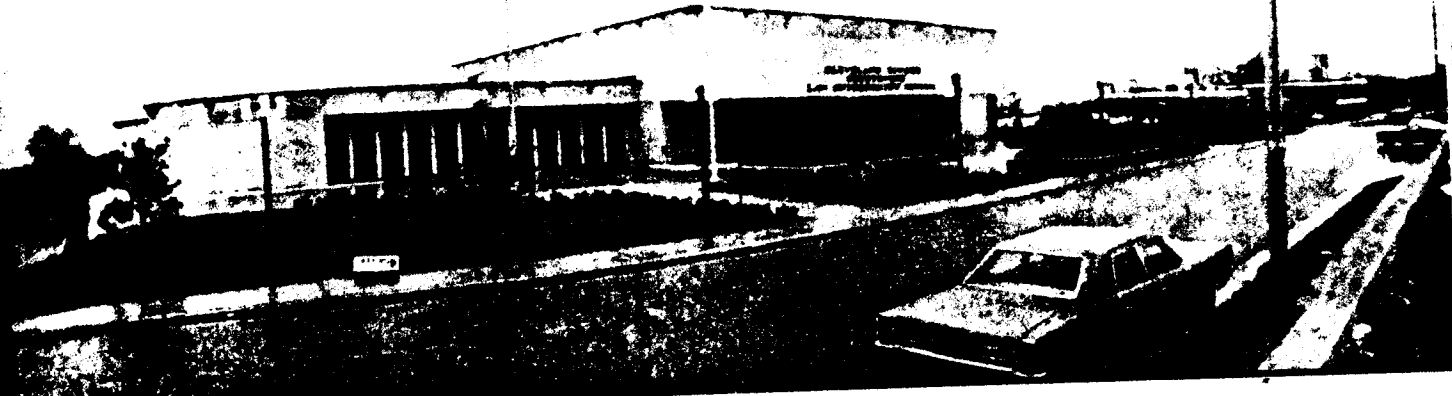
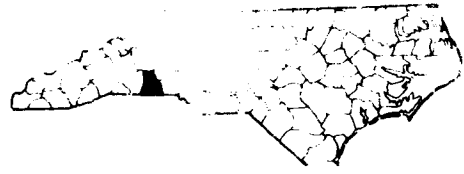
The monument was erected November 21, 1906, and unveiled May 10, 1907. Two young girls, Elizabeth Roberts, daughter of Capt. J. Frank Roberts, and Helen Gardner, daughter of Col. J. T. Gardner, pulled the cords that removed the covering. John Charles McNeill read an original poem.

The Cleveland Guards chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy had long wanted to erect a monument to the brave men and women of Cleveland County. In August, 1905, Shelby celebrated the Home Coming week. One day was set apart as "Confederate Day." A wonderful address was delivered by Governor Robert B. Glenn. Then Hon. E. Y. Webb, Member of Congress, told of the desire to erect a monument, and asked for contributions. About \$1,500 was pledged that day, to add to the \$400 already collected. Later other contributions were made, and to the total amount of \$2,500.

A purchasing committee was selected, composed of Mrs. James L. Webb, Mrs. J. T. Gardner and Mrs. J. Frank Roberts. The contract was let to the C. M. Walsh Marble Company, of Petersburg, Va.

An immense throng was present at the unveiling.





# CLEVELAND COUNTY

## COUNTY DESCRIPTION

Formed in 1841 from Lincoln and Rutherford counties, Cleveland County took its name from Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, a famous leader in the Revolution. The county seat, Shelby, was incorporated in 1843 and was named for another hero of the Revolutionary War, Colonel Isaac Shelby.

Cleveland County lies in the western Piedmont. It ranks 51st in area (466 square miles) and 21st in population (78,100) among the counties. The population has grown by over 20,000 since 1940 and consists of 63% non-farm, 34% urban and 3% farm residents. Shelby (population 16,520) is the leading city followed by King's Mountain (population 8,930).

Almost half of the county's employment derives from manufacturing, stone, clay and glass products being most important, followed by textiles, chemicals, printing, and transportation equipment. Highly significant reserves of both feldspar and lithium are mined in the county, and cotton is the major farm product. Cleveland ranks sixth in cattle and tenth in egg production in the State. Gardner-Webb College and a technical institute are located in the county.

## COURTHOUSE CONTEXT

The elegant former courthouse lies in the center of the old town square, veiled by the foliage of mature trees which surround the site. Commercial buildings frame the square, creating a tidy, focused environment. Although downtown Shelby has lost vigor because of development on its fringes, its strong form and visual character have survived.

The modern courthouse lies on a site only two blocks from the old, yet its immediate environment constitutes a radical departure from that of the old courthouse square. Neither buildings nor trees ring the new courthouse. Instead, it is sited along a broad and busy street, surrounded by generous, but featureless, parking lots. The new setting is distinctly automobile-oriented, loosely built-up, and suburban in character. The rapid progression from traditional to modern environment occurs along East Warren Street as one moves out of the original courthouse square. The sleek new courthouse rests at the foot of this street, but its low profile lacks sufficient monumentality to create a strong visual climax. By hiding much of its bulk downhill to the rear, the courthouse sacrifices prominence and visibility, which results in an understated sense of image and presence in the townscape.

## EXISTING COURT FACILITIES

Cleveland County Courthouse houses all court functions except the public defender, whose office is in the Court Annex, and three magistrates housed in various non-county buildings.

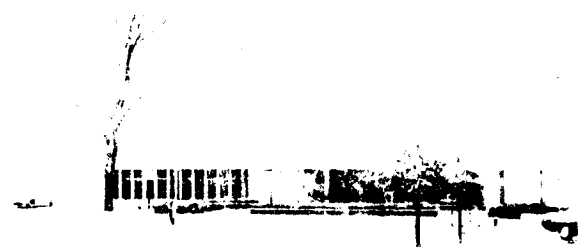
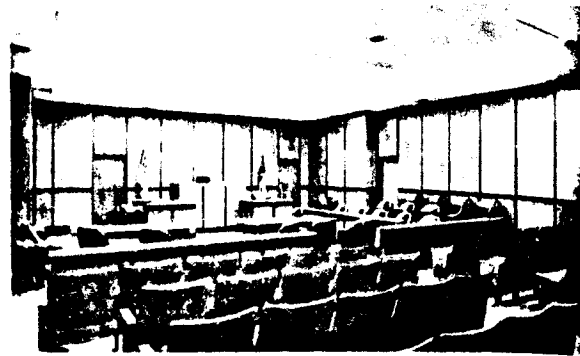
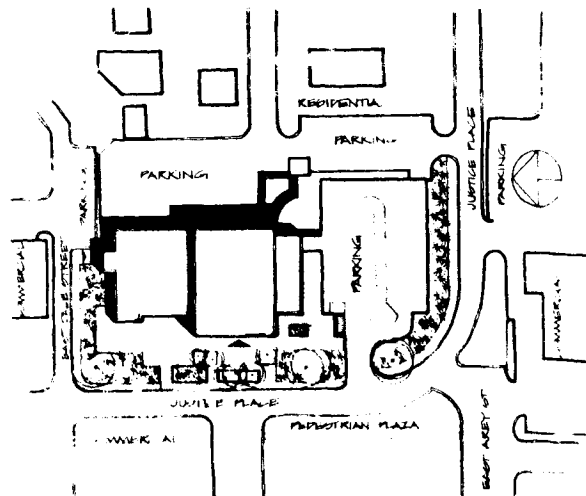
## COURTHOUSE HISTORY

Cleveland County's first courts were held at the home of William Weathers, six miles southwest of Shelby. Weathers lived on the first floor, and court was held on the second. The first permanent courthouse was built of logs in the town square at the county seat of Shelby in 1842. The antebellum building was replaced by a brick building in 1874. A third structure was completed around 1907, and it gave way to the present courthouse which the county built in 1974. The 1907 courthouse now functions as a county museum, office building, and public meeting hall.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Cleveland County Courthouse and Law Enforcement Center is a multi-level contemporary structure designed by the Shelby architectural firm of Vaughan-Talley and Associates. The reinforced concrete building features broad, unbroken panels of blond, exposed aggregate concrete and a flat roof which together generate a horizontal emphasis. The main entrance occurs at the third level of the building, off a formal paved plaza. Another entryway is reached by a pedestrian bridge from a side parking area. The building gains two additional stories at the rear because the site drops away abruptly into a steep embankment. The interior features a spacious foyer on the third floor, from which emanate wide perpendicular corridors. The north corridor on this level leads to the courtrooms and an informal waiting area. The windowless courtrooms all have similar layouts and modern furnishings.

The 1907 Neo-Classical Revival courthouse was designed by H.L. Lewman and built by Falls City Construction Company. The old courthouse is rectangular in plan with boldly projecting end bays which are topped by ribbed, dome-like roofs. The building is sheathed in a smooth ashlar veneer above a rusticated first floor. Tetrastyle Corinthian porticoes front the center recesses, sheltering the four main entrances to the building. Windows are paired, and a heavy cornice with cartouche crests caps the second story end bays. A balustrade con-



Site sketch, above  
 Courtroom interior, center  
 Courthouse facade, below

ceals the flat roofline of the building and the base of a dramatic three-stage cupola.

Cleveland Co. Courthouse

PS Form 3811, Mar. 1976  
RETURN RECEIPT, REGISTERED, INSURED AND CERTIFIED MAIL

● SENDER: Complete items 1, 2, and 3.  
Add your address in the "RETURN TO" space on reverse.

1. The following service is requested (check one).
- Show to whom and date delivered..... 15¢
  - Show to whom, date, & address of delivery.. 35¢
  - RESTRICTED DELIVERY.  
Show to whom and date delivered..... 65¢
  - RESTRICTED DELIVERY.  
Show to whom, date, and address of delivery 85¢

2. ARTICLE ADDRESSED TO:  
 William J. Palmer  
 Cleveland Co. Courthouse  
 Shelby, NC 28150

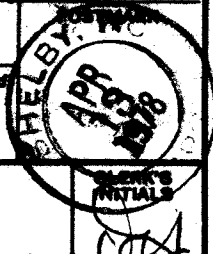
3. ARTICLE DESCRIPTION:  
 REGISTERED NO. | CERTIFIED NO. | INSURED NO.  
 | 315738 | |

(Always obtain signature of addressee or agent)  
 I have received the article described above  
 SIGNATURE  Addressee  Authorized agent  
 William J. Palmer

4. DATE OF DELIVERY  
 APR 27 1978

5. ADDRESS (Complete only if requested)

6. UNABLE TO DELIVER BECAUSE:



Carolina

CLIPPING SERVICE  
2911 ESSEX CIRCLE  
RALEIGH, N. C. 27608  
TEL. (919) 782-0893

DAILY STAR  
SHELBY, N. C.  
D-15,368

Cleve.

MAR-20-75

(31)

# Renovation Of Courthouse For Museyma Progressing

THE SHELBY DAILY STAR  
A 23

By JON DARRIST

Renovation of the old county courthouse will start about 400 more weeks, the Board of Directors of the Cleveland County Historical Association announced Monday.

Seeking materials and volunteers to work on the county courthouse building, the Board of Directors of the Cleveland County Historical Association announced Monday.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

evolution of counties in the state until Cleveland was formed and to appear in the governmental records, says, display of farm implements in the agriculture room, copies of the history of the county, and a display of the first settlement of a new county in the area.

county history in pamphlet form. The general membership meeting was set for Monday, April 22, tentatively for Kings Mountain. Dr. Washburn noted that at the last meeting Kings Mountain Mayor John Henry Moore had extended an invitation for the association's meeting to be held there.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

restoring can be finished. "I think it will really be a fine facility," Gidney said.

DAILY STAR  
SHELBY, N. C.  
D-15,368

JAN-5 -74

# Old Courthouse Building Will Take On New Life

By Bill Newsom

Star Staff Writer

Some old courthouses may disappear with the passage of time... but not the one in Cleveland County. Plans to renovate the building to the present... and to use it as the main office building for the county... specifically for the... despite the fact that... of its occupants to... law enforcement...  
Then, the old building will remain standing and in fact take on new life... are for what... new court... and... Once the... to... is... the... of...  
"We will refurbish the old building and make it look as much as it used to be in order to recapture its old quality," said

County Manager Joe Hendrick. This includes tentative plans to reopen the doors on the east and west sides of the building.

Present thinking, Hendrick said, calls for moving the commission meeting chambers from the first floor to the ground floor, and possibly retaining the... of... where it is now on the first floor.

The county manager's office, now housed in a separate building on the courthouse grounds, will be moved to the first floor of the courthouse. (The present county manager's office will not be removed, Hendrick said, but there are no present plans for its use.)

Also on the first floor of the courthouse will be conference rooms to be utilized for meeting... for any county... such as the Adjustment Board, Planning Board, etc.

The Cleveland County Historical Association has requested space in the courthouse for a museum, and commissioners have indicated

they favor this, though no formal action has been taken. No other requests for space have been made, Hendrick said.

The large courtroom upstairs will be retained as a public meeting room. "There is a possibility that somewhere along the line we might have an extraordinary court problem and if so, court could be held in this room. It will give us a fourth courtroom in a real pinch. It's not anticipated, but it could happen," Hendrick said.

The county manager pointed out that all offices presently located in the Courthouse Annex will remain there. These in-

clude Register of Deeds, tax collections, tax supervisor and tax mapping, finance department and building inspection.

If future office space is needed, Hendrick said, the new county center could be expanded on the north or east side of an adjacent property. If another building is needed, but this would require paying additional land.

The new building is not designed for any additions to the top, except for the new jail which could be expanded over the clerk of court's office.

~~27-31~~

P. 1

1

DAILY STAR  
SHELBY, N. C.  
D-15,358

Cleveland

JUN-21-75

## ~~Court House~~ Renovation Is Near Completion <sup>31</sup>

A goal of the Cleveland County Historical Association is about to be realized.

Kenneth Gettys, maintenance supervisor for the old courthouse renovation project, said yesterday that by the end of next week, the principal areas to be occupied by the association for the county museum will be completed.

He said that the entire courthouse project should be completed in the next two to three weeks, except for some minor details. The project began about six months ago, and is considered one of the county's major Bicentennial activities.

Gettys said the first floor is "about finished now," and basically just needs to be cleaned up. On the second floor, the courtroom needs to be painted, and the jury room needs finishing.

He said he has been trying to get the museum areas completed first.

Last week, carpets were laid in a number of the rooms, he said. Those carpets are rust-colored. The walls are oyster white, and the bases are a beeswax color. Central air-conditioning has been put in on the first floor.

Gettys said that his crew has had "no problems" in the renovation project—a project aimed at restoring the courthouse, a county landmark, to its original state.

That building was constructed in 1887 and replaced the original courthouse, which sat in the same square in 1843.



...the ... of a ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...

The Morris girls make up one of the ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...  
... the ... of the ...

The Society of American Archivists presented its  
annual distinguished service award for 1961 to the South  
Carolina Department of Archives and History. The  
award, given at the annual meeting of the society, is the  
highest honor bestowed by the society to a national  
organization. The South Carolina archives was chosen for  
outstanding service to the American people for  
its exemplary contribution to the archival profession and  
for developing, over the years, an archival program of  
such depth and scope as to warrant special recognition.  
Students at Union County history must especially get in  
the South Carolina archives because of the county's  
unique post-Civil War history against South Carolina, the  
final boundary between Union and Lancaster counties  
not being finalized until in the 1800's.....

What a shocker to turn to the sports pages the other  
day and see that Carolina had defeated State in  
basketball! Yes, it's true. The UNC team, led  
by All-American Marsha Mann (a six-footer who played  
on the U.S. team in last year's World University  
Games in Mexico), over-powered the State ladies 74-47  
the other night at Chapel Hill. Harriet Steels, a former  
State forward who played her high school basketball at  
Piedmont High and who is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs.  
Ken Steels, contributed three points to State's ...

When a woman marries again it is because she  
loved her first husband. When a man marries again,  
it is because he loved his first wife. Women try their  
best, men, like Steels.

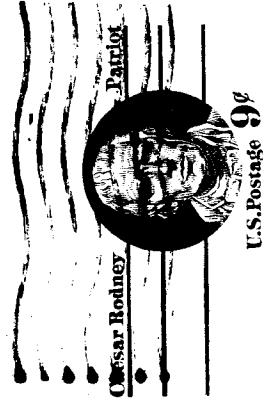
Dear Sir



The old Cleveland County Courthouse is being removed  
 to the National Registry of Historic Places as suitable  
 The nomination was made to keep ~~the~~ many ~~of~~  
 of County-owned land around the courthouse  
 on the courthouse square. If the property's less than  
 an acre, "less than an acre" will be a sufficient  
 answer.

Old Cleveland County  
 Courthouse Property  
 contains 1.82  
 Mary Ann Lee  
 Survey and Planning Unit  
 N.C. Division of Archives & History

Sumner + Plamondon  
109 G. Jones St.  
Raleigh, NC 27612



Cleveland County Manager  
Cleveland County Courthouse  
Shelby, NC 28150

NEWS HERALD  
MORGANTON, N. C.  
D-10, 123  
*Cleveland*

JAN-6--75

31

# Cleveland keeps 'old' courthouse

Our friends in Cleveland County have a local lease on which they are in agreement with Burke County citizens — the old courthouse not only must be saved but must be devoted to some regular and useful activity to avoid the deterioration of neglect.

In Cleveland, there has been no sentiment for tearing down the huge courthouse in the heart of Shelby, where it has been a focal point for generations. In fact, the County Commissioners are committed not only to preserving it but also restoring it to its original form, which means reopening two of the four entrances which provided access to and from the four streets forming the courthouse square but which were closed to provide more office room at a time when space was at a premium for growing county services.

It is understandable that Cleveland and especially, of course, Shelby, are looking for expanded that the historic building of the courthouse as well as its strategic location at the heart of the county seat would justify the expense.

The Cleveland courthouse, as mentioned in the same structure known as the "Old Court House" at Burke Center, is much larger than the new Court House, although they both occupy dominating positions in their county seats. This difference in size is to be expected, since these halls of justice represent two eras in courthouse history.

The large courthouse at Shelby was built in 1897, whereas the historic Burke courthouse was completed about 1835. That means that the courthouse here was

At 5:00 p.m. on Monday, the Daily Star captioned "Assure Maintenance of Former Courthouse" which we pass along as reflecting the public's concern for the preservation of a courthouse far newer than ours.

There is no use crying over spilt milk; thus, there is no imaginable reason to argue the county commissioners' decision to fill up all the space at the new Law Enforcement Center by moving the county manager and themselves to the facility.

But a word of caution should be voiced, we think over the future of the historic courthouse in the middle of downtown Shelby: The commissioners should make every commitment necessary — in policy and funds — to restore the courthouse to its original state, as they have previously promised, and they should make every commitment to assure the maintenance and usefulness of the building.

Plans already formulated in general terms have foreseen the restoration of the courthouse by reopening entrances closed to make office space for burgeoning government prior to occupation of the Law Enforcement Center. The county's Historical Society has been granted space by county commissioners, and it has been anticipated that the old courtroom would be used by the public for meetings. All these plans are in the record, in one form or another.

The dangers involved in the commissioners' split decision center around the adage that what is not inhabited becomes run down just that more quickly. This cannot be allowed to happen to the courthouse, and we presume that by voting to move to the Law Enforcement Center, the commissioners have implicitly said they would maintain the courthouse.

It makes sense, we suppose, for the county manager to have his official office in the Law Enforcement Center where many other administrative offices of the county are now located. The county manager should be close to the tax offices, for instance, and to the communications center which he now runs. He has used space originally intended for civil defense as a second office in the Center, any way. The commissioners could just as easily have met in the courthouse since they keep no permanent desks or offices, but the allure of that meeting room in the Center's basement was too appealing, we suppose.

The Law Enforcement Center is now the "courthouse" in practical terms as well as in legal terms, and so be it.

But to most Clevelanders, the courthouse on the Square will remain the courthouse, and it must be maintained in useful and eye-appealing terms.