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Courthouse has long been prominent structure in City

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For as long as there has been a town in Elizabethton, there has been a courthouse where men have governed. It was here that the first laws of a new county were drawn up and for over 100 years and more these same laws were those that governed the town's citizens, as it was not until 1905 that Elizabethton formed its own government.

The first courthouse, probably a log structure, was erected around 1799 on the site where the present courthouse now stands.

The selected site for the town was a 50-acre tract at the foot of Lynn, east of the Doe River and about a mile above where the river empties into the larger Watauga. The committee composed of Landon Carter, Reuben Thornton, Andrew Greer Sr., Zachariah Campbell and David McNabb set aside a one and one-half acre tract for use by the county government, which made for a town square at the intersection of Forge Street (now Elk Avenue) and Long Street (now Main Street). The county seat was given the name Elizabethton, in honor of Landon's Carter's wife, Elizabeth MacLin Carter.

The General Assembly had

instructed the committee "to proceed to appoint, fix on and lay out a place most suitable and convenient for the purpose of erecting a courthouse."

In the May session of Carter County Court in 1820, the decision was made to sell the old courthouse building and construct a new one. A tax levy was authorized to pay for the building. The first courthouse had served the area for approximately 25 years.

The second building served the public for about 30 years, but with time and growth, a new and larger courthouse was planned.

The third courthouse building, a three-story structure, was constructed. The shell of the 1852 courthouse remains intact in the front section of the present courthouse even though the building was heavily damaged in November 1932 by a fire which destroyed the attic and roof.

An interesting sidebar to the history of the courthouse is featured in an article which ran in the STAR in 1932. The article noted that Elizabethton was growing into a modern city, and Carter County was keeping pace. Positive proof of this was seen in the passing of the old sheet iron stoves from the county court-

house. A modern, new steam heating plant was being installed and would be used when winter came that year.

The article read: "The large stoves in the courthouse, a relic of bygone days, tell a silent story of its favoritism during those past years by the many tobacco stains accumulated on its side over a period of many winters. The stove is rusty, aged and worn, but it has radiated heat for many of the most sensational trials ever held in the county. It has also survived the passing of most of East Tennessee's most prominent lawyers. It has furnished warmth for cold-hearted lawyers, lived through the making of history and romance, and in later years has probably frowned upon the breaking up of some of those romances through the mills of divorce.

"The stove in the register's office, whose glowing sides have greeted hundreds of callers long after the stoves in all the other offices in the courthouse have started on their summer vacations, will also be replaced by a modern radiation. It will seek a new home along with others in the courthouse.

Photos of the 1852 courthouse reveals no steps and an entrance directly at the ground level, where an entrance still exists. Later photographs show the courthouse with a single flight of outside steps at the front of the building leading to a front door on the second floor.

The present courthouse, which has dual steps at the front entrance, has undergone renovation through the years, with a new addition made in 1987 and again in 1998.

Some of the county's first of-



Photo Contributed

Carter County Courthouse in 1910.

ficials included:

SHERIFF — Nathaniel Taylor, 1769-1799; Abraham Byler, 1799-1805; Archibald Williams, 1805-1813; Andrew Taylor, 1813-1821; William B. Carter, 1821-1823; William Carter, 1823-1829; Alexander Smith, 1835-1836; Abraham Tipton, 1836-1840; Elijah D. Hardin, 1840-1842; Edmond Williams, 1842-1848; Albert J. Tipton, 1848-1854; Elijah Simerly, 1854-1860; John K. Miller, 1860-1863; Jacob Vandeventer, 1863-1865; P.A.J. Crockett, 1863-1865; James W. Orr, 1868-1872; Elijah W. Heaton, 1872-1874; J. Dugger Pearce, 1874-1877; John M. Simerly, 1877-1880; Isaac Grindstaff, 1886-1892; James L. Bradley, 1892-1899; and James A. Nave, 1905-1910.

In 1905 the City organized a government and elected its first

Solomon Hendrix, 1836-1840; Malcolm N. Folsom, 1840-1844; Isaac H. Brown, 1840-1850; W. Williams, 1850-1851; Jackson G. Fellers, 1851-1860; Joseph Taylor, 1860-1870; Gilson O. Collins, 1871-1872; W.B.C. Smith, 1879-1880; E.D. Oliver, 1880-1882; W.L. Carriger, 1882-1890; D.B. Peters, 1890-1898; and David K. Lovelace, 1898-1906.

COUNTY COURT CLERK — George Williams, 1796-1836; Malcolm N. Folsom, 1836-1840; James L. Bradley, 1849-1878; George T. Williams, 1878-1886; John G. Emmert, 1886-1894; J.H. Berry, 1894-1899; and J.R. Burrows, 1899-1918.

CIRCUIT COURT CLERKS — Alfred M. Carter, 1810-1836; George C. Williams, 1836-1840; Carrick W. Nelson, 1840-1846; Isaac P. Tipton, 1846-1854; John Singletary, 1854-1861; James A.

staff, 1882-1890; and J.A. Jones, 1890-1895.

TRUSTEES — John MacLin, 1797-?; William Peoples Jr., 1811-1813; David McNabb, 1813-1817; Willie W. Williams, 1817-1819; Ezekiel Smith, 1825-1836; Joseph O'Brien, 1836-1840; Samuel Drake, 1840-1844; George Emmert, 1844-1856; John W. Hyder, 1846-1852; Isaac H. Brown, 1852-1856; John T. Carriger, 1856-1862; William M. Cass, 1862-1865; William J. Folsom, 1862-1865; William M. Cass, 1866-1868; Joseph P. VanHuss, 1868-1872; Archibald Williams, 1872-1874; J.D. Carriger, 1874-1878; T.C. White, 1878-1880; N.G. Hyder, 1878-1880; Thomas C. White, 1880-1881; J.J. McCorkle, 1881-1886; James L. Lewis, 1886-1892; T.J. Williams, 1892-1897; and L.H. Anderson, 1897-1901.

Upama's ne... for Americans age 65 and older. The direct and indirect costs of Alzheimer's and dementia triple health care costs annually. Alzheimer's Association report (www.alz.org).