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THE RICHINS SISTERS SPREAD THEIR MESSAGE OF KINDNESS

# Calloway County Celebrates 200 Years

By Bobbie Smith Bryant, Louisville; Randy Patterson, Murray; and Pat Seiber, Murray

The Jackson Purchase region was added to the Commonwealth of Kentucky on Feb. 4, 1820. Calloway County was carved from Hickman County in 1822 and named for Col. Richard Callaway, an explorer and pioneer who was killed at Boonesboro in 1780. The original area of Calloway County included land that later was sectioned off to form Marshall County.

Centrally located Wadesboro was designated as the county seat and the site of the land office for the Jackson Purchase region. At that time, roads from what are now Paducah, Mayfield, Benton and Paris, Tennessee, pointed to Wadesboro, which was thriving with homes, a public square, a courthouse, a jail, a tavern and various businesses. A stagecoach came twice weekly to deliver or pick up passengers.

## **The Calloway County Courthouse: Record Keeper/Storyteller**

On Jan. 16, 1823, commissioners appointed by the state met in Wadesboro to form the new government. The first Calloway County Courthouse was built in 1823 for \$100. It was 29 feet square, a story and a half high, constructed of hewed logs “notched down close” and covered with clapboards. The floor was undressed plank. The furnishings consisted of the judge’s bench, one large bench for the jury, and one good seat for the “council” [sic].

For a time, Wadesboro was the focal business point in that part of Kentucky west of the Tennessee River. In its heyday, it offered “14 large businesses, including a tannery, flour and lumber mills, a hotel, three blacksmith shops, two churches, its public buildings, and a schoolhouse.” By 1830, the village’s population was 163. In 1830, the population of Calloway County had mushroomed to 5,164, of whom 361 were enslaved Black persons.

Also in 1830, a more stately courthouse was ordered to be constructed in Wadesboro. It was brick, 36 feet square and two stories high, with a courtroom and county offices.

Within 10 years, the county’s population had almost doubled, nearing 10,000. Believing that all Kentuckians should be no more than a day’s ride from their county seat, the state legislature appointed a committee to divide Calloway County. A straight line running east and west near Wadesboro marked the division of the land to create Marshall County to the north.

Immediately after the division, commissioners were appointed to relocate Calloway County’s seat of justice. They selected a site near the geographical center of the redrawn county. The present location of the courthouse was selected, and the town was named Murray, in honor of John L. Murray, the district’s congressman.

The first Calloway County Courthouse in Murray was constructed in 1843, when the county seat was moved to a central location in the newly configured county. The first



Above, the 1823 Calloway County Courthouse; right, the courthouse in Murray constructed in 1913.

Murray courthouse burned in 1906. A \$40,000 bond issue to build a new courthouse was voted on for the third time in 1912 before the measure finally passed.

## **The Calloway County Courthouse: Everyday Rites and High Drama**

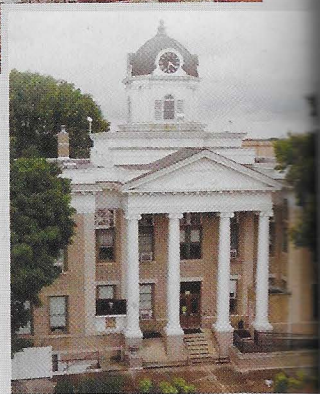
The current Calloway County Courthouse of buff-colored brick designed in the Classical Revival style was erected in 1913. Each of the four sides has a three-story classical portico with Ionic columns. On top of the structure is an eight-sided cupola with a dome top and dormer clocks on four sides. The only original features in the interior are the iron staircase banisters and marble wainscoting.

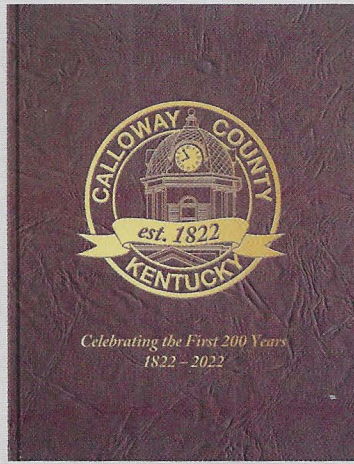
For more than a century, the citizens of Calloway County have participated in the everyday, but sacred, rites of citizenship at the courthouse. It has, however, also been the scene of numerous historical events, the most dramatic and impactful occurring on the morning of Jan. 11, 1917.

On Dec. 9, 1916, Lube Martin, a Black man, shot Guthrie Diuguid, a white man, and the next day, Diuguid died. Martin was jailed. On Jan. 8, Circuit Judge Charles Bush and Commonwealth Attorney Denny Smith came to Murray for Martin’s trial. Defense attorney Pat Holt asked for a continuance, which was granted. The day to hear the case arrived, and Judge Bush announced a postponement, whereupon he and Smith essentially were taken prisoners in their hotel room by vengeful citizens.

On the evening of Jan. 10, Gov. Augustus Owsley Stanley in Louisville received a call “that there was big trouble in Murray.” The governor arranged for a fast, nonstop train ride west. After an early-morning arrival in Murray, he conferred with Bush and Smith in their hotel room, and they headed for the courthouse.

Entering the packed second-floor courtroom, the





From far left, newspaper article on Gov. Stanley's speech at the courthouse; middle, commemorative Calloway County bicentennial book; top, left the county is in the far western part of Kentucky; bottom left, activist and attorney William Kunstler speaking at Murray State University in 1971.

governor moved in front of the jury box and began to speak, "Gentlemen, the drops of blood which course through my tired heart are not as dear to me as my honor as a man, and I will enforce the law," he said. He recounted his trip from Louisville, "Back there in Paducah ... I told that sheriff to hold that prisoner in safety. I told him I would go to Murray alone, unarmed and unaided. I come not as a soldier, for I have that which is more powerful—I have the dignity and the majesty of the law."

The governor moved through his speech, in conclusion admonishing his listeners, "Now I appeal to you in the names of your mothers, your wives and children ... the dignity of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and Most High God to assist the governor and this circuit judge in the maintenance of law and order."

The speech ended. The governor, Bush and Smith safely departed Murray by train. The men of Calloway County went home. Martin was tried and convicted. He was executed on July 15, 1919. Calloway is believed to be the only county in the Jackson Purchase that has never been the scene of a lynching.

The courthouse and grounds often have been the setting for speeches during political campaigns. Such a speech occurred during the historic 1954 campaign of former Vice President **Alben Barkley** for the United States Senate seat held by incumbent Republican Sen. **John Sherman Cooper**. Barkley won the election and became the only former vice president to return to the Senate, where

he formerly had served as senator and as president of the Senate.

Another significant speech on the courthouse grounds was on March 29, 1971. **William M. Kunstler**, a so-called "radical lawyer," civil rights activist and defender of the Chicago Seven, spoke to more than 800 people at the invitation of the Murray State University Student Government Association for the "Insight '71" series.

The Board of Regents and the MSU administration vetoed the idea of hosting the controversial speaker on campus. **Dan Miller** and **Max Russell**, from the SGA Committee, worked with Dan's father, Calloway County Judge **Robert O. Miller**, and Murray Mayor **Holmes Ellis** to arrange the speech to be given on the Court Square. One analyst later noted, "[E]veryone involved in MSU/Kunstler saga won. Kunstler got to speak, the students got to hear him, the Regents saved face, and no one burned anything down."

### **Celebrating Calloway County**

These stories are excerpts from *Calloway County, Kentucky: Celebrating the First 200 Years, 1822-2022*, published by Acclaim Press. This commemorative history book will be made available to the public on Founders Day, Nov. 3, 2022. For a schedule of Founders Day events, please visit [Calloway2022.com](http://Calloway2022.com). For specific questions or additional information, contact Calloway County Deputy County Judge Executive **Gina Winchester** at 270.753.2920.

## People of Note from Calloway County

- **John Mack Carter** headed the nation's top three women's magazines—*McCall's*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*—before becoming president of *Hearst Magazines Enterprises*.
- **Gordon Cooper** was the youngest of the seven original astronauts in *Project Mercury*, the first human space program of the United States. He graduated from Murray High School in 1945.
- **Gene Swann Graham** was the co-winner of the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting when he exposed how a deal between the coal industry and the United Mine Workers deprived mine workers of their hospitalization.
- **Forrest Pogue** was an author and historian who researched and wrote *The Supreme Command, the history of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force* commanded by Gen. **Dwight David Eisenhower**.
- **Molly Sims** is an American fashion model and actress.
- **Nathan B. Stubblefield** was an inventor best known for his wireless telephone work.
- Artist **Joy Thomas** painted the official portrait of Kentucky Gov. **Steve Beshear**, as well numerous other leaders in business, government, academia and finance.
- **Harry Lee Waterfield** served as the 42nd and 44th lieutenant governor of Kentucky.

**Middlesboro claims to be the site of the first golf course in the South, a nine-hole course built in 1889.**