



Photograph from 1918 showing the construction of the new jail behind the courthouse expansion. WV GEOEXPLORER.

1872: COURTHOUSE RESTORED & ENLARGED

In 1872, Jefferson County renovated what remained of its courthouse. They made walls and columns taller and enlarged the bell tower for a town clock. Inside, commissioners created offices on the first floor and a courtroom with balcony on the second floor. In essence, they built a new courthouse.

Stoves still heated the new courtroom, and windows still provided light and ventilation. But a new mahogany railing and balusters defined the judge's bench and a 60-light, round chandelier, fueled by kerosene, lit the area.

COURTHOUSE ADDITION

In 1910 commissioners built an annex onto the rear of the courthouse for judge's chambers, jury and witness rooms, and a clerk's office. In 1919, commissioners built a new jail behind the courthouse.

1912-1921: WAR IN THE COALFIELDS OF WEST VIRGINIA

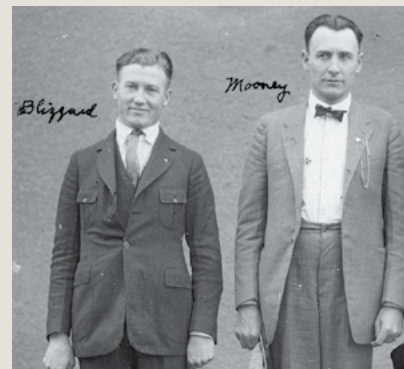
In 1922, 250 miles from Charles Town in the southwestern coalfields of West Virginia, enraged miners inflamed by Mother Jones and union leaders attempted to invade and unionize Logan County. The "Battle of Blair Mountain" resulted. Actual warfare with machine guns and aerial bombardment followed. Two thousand federal troops were needed to stop the fighting.

1922 SECOND TREASON TRIAL: State of West Virginia vs. William Blizzard

A Logan County grand jury indicted union leader Bill Blizzard and two dozen other miners with treason and murder. To ensure a fair trial, the State transferred the trial venue to Charles Town, Jefferson County. National and world media descended on Charles Town, as did United Mine Workers President John L. Lewis, Governor Ephraim Morgan, and miner's families.

LEADER ACQUITTED

The jury acquitted Bill Blizzard and convicted the Reverend John Wilburn and his son of second-degree murder (but the governor later commuted their sentences). Finally, the jury convicted Walter Allen of treason. Released pending appeal, Allen simply disappeared. After those trials, the State moved future venues to Morgan County, Greenbrier County, and Fayette County, but the State never tried anyone else and dismissed the remaining indictments.



Defendants "General" Bill Blizzard (l) and Fred Mooney (r). 1922. William H. League photo. JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM.



Crowds outside the courthouse during miners' trials in 1922. EDWIN FITZPATRICK PHOTO. JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM.

PRESERVATION

Declared a National Historic Landmark in 2023 by the National Park Service to recognize the Courthouse's importance to the field of American labor history. The Jefferson County Courthouse remains a working courthouse and a contributing structure in the Charles Town Historic District. The Jefferson County Commission continues to maintain the courthouse, advised by a subcommittee of the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission. This subcommittee brings together groups and individuals dedicated to preserve and interpret the county's central landmark.



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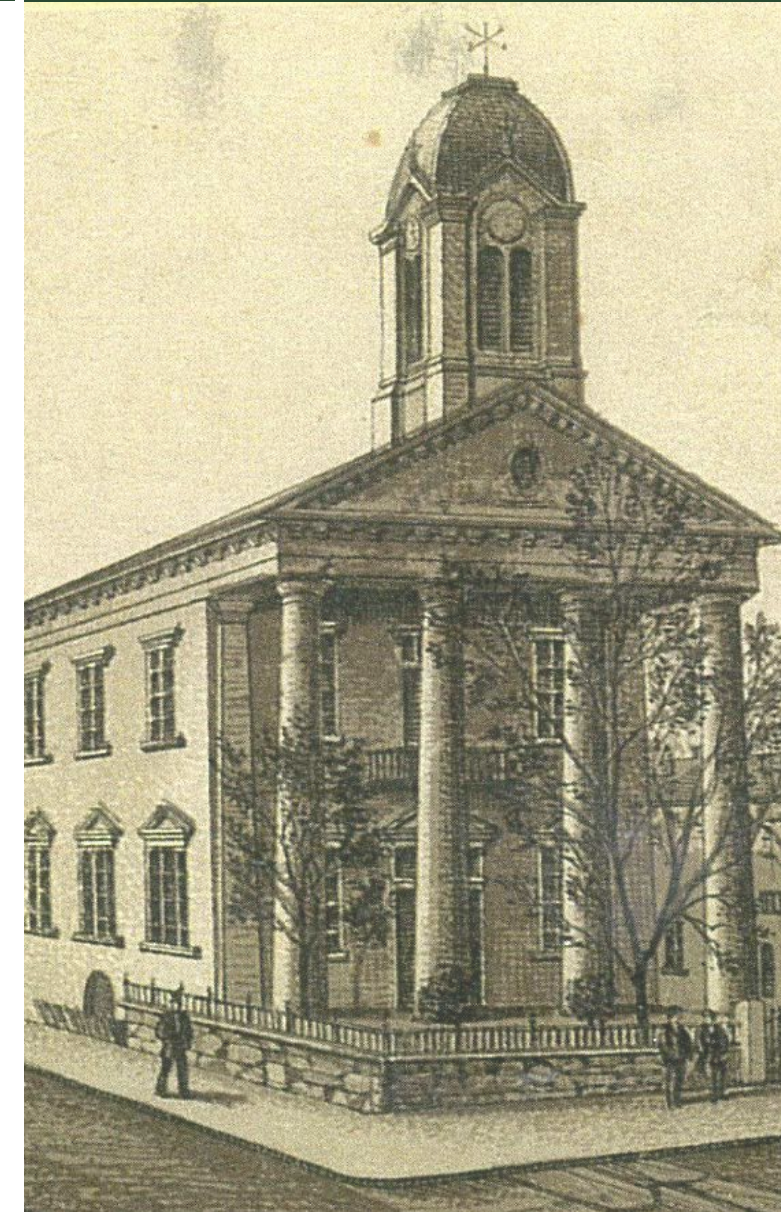
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The Jefferson County COURTHOUSE

A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK





The 1830 plat of Charles Town showing the four corner donated by the Washington family for public use: the courthouse, jail, market, and clerk's office. WV GEOEXPLORER.

CHARLES WASHINGTON & CHARLES TOWN

Charles Town takes its name from its founder, Charles Washington, youngest brother of George. In 1785, Charles petitioned the Virginia legislature to enact a new town, "Charlestown."

When Charles died in 1799, his will left land in the town square for public buildings.

In 1801, the Virginia legislature named Charles Town county seat for a new Jefferson County. Any Virginia county needed a courthouse to record deeds, to hear cases of civil and criminal law, and to auction property, including human.

In 1803, Jefferson County built a simple courthouse, modest because contributions paid for it. A market house, jail, and clerk's office sat at other corners on the square. This common arrangement in Virginia enabled court days where citizens could sell produce, record legal papers at the clerk's office, and hire a lawyer to argue a case. In local taverns the same citizens could enjoy an outing from hard physical labor.



Charles Town during John Brown's trial, printed in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, November 19, 1859, and reprinted on a 1908 postcard published by W.L. Erwin in Harpers Ferry. JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM.

1836: NEW COURTHOUSE AS A GREEK TEMPLE

The new county grew quickly. In 1836 county commissioners built a new courthouse with a cupola and columns. A big, open courtroom occupied the ground floor. Windows ventilated in summer and cast iron stoves heated in winter. The judge and court officials sat elevated behind a railing. This courtroom became site of the first of two famous treason trials in American history.

1859: JOHN BROWN'S RAID

On October 16, 1859, John Brown led a raid on the Federal Arsenal and Armory in nearby Harpers Ferry. He hoped to incite a national slave rebellion. Brown's raiders killed five Virginians including a free Black man and the mayor of Harpers Ferry. Colonel Robert E. Lee led U. S. Marines who killed ten raiders and captured Brown and five others. The Commonwealth of Virginia charged the captives with murder, incitement of slaves, and treason. Brown and his raiders awaited trial at the courthouse in Charles Town.



The courtroom during John Brown's trial. Sketched by David Hunter Strother (known as "Porte Crayon" and printed in Harpers Weekly on November 12, 1859. HARPERS WEEKLY.

THE FIRST TREASON TRIAL: *The Commonwealth of Virginia vs. John Brown*

For John Brown, the trial began Wednesday, October 26, and ended Monday, October 31. The jury deliberated only 30 minutes before they returned a verdict of guilty on all counts. Brown's lawyers appealed without success. On December 2, 1859, the Commonwealth of Virginia hanged John Brown in Charles Town.



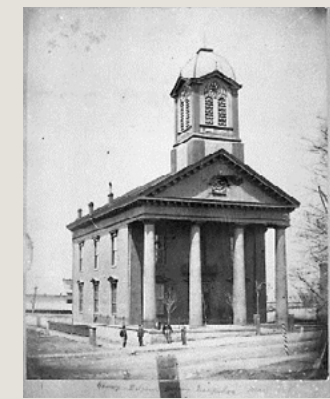
Reproduction of a daguerreotype of abolitionist John Brown attributed to Martin M. Lawrence (c. 1859). LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.



Sheriden falling back through Charles Town, fire from the enemy's field pieces sweeping the street," August 22, 1864, as depicted in the James E. Taylor Sketchbook. WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

WAR DESTROYS COURTHOUSE

Just before the Civil War, county commissioners moved court records to Lexington, Virginia, for safekeeping. The records survived the war intact, but the courthouse did not. The Civil War ravaged Charles Town. More than once, the town changed hands between Federals and Confederates. On October 18, 1863, Confederates surrounded Federals holding the courthouse. The brief battle nearly destroyed the building. The courthouse became a stable for the rest of the war.



Photograph of the new courthouse (c. 1875), as it was rebuilt following the Civil War. JEFFERSON COUNTY MUSEUM.