

THE FIRST COURT

Greene County was a part of the Fifth Judicial District of the Commonwealth and the President Judge was Alexander Addison of Pittsburgh who continued to hold court here, with the help of associate justices. It is interesting to note that Judge Addison was impeached and removed from office in 1803 because in a jury trial for slander he directed the jury to disregard the remarks of Judge Lucas, and associate lay judge. The first court was held, as directed, at the tavern home of Jacob Kline on Muddy Creek. It was a modest log cabin and the first case placed on the docket was that of Neal Gillespie v. Luke Wapole, a confession of judgment in the amount of 457 pounds. At that time, four attorneys were admitted to practice, they being Joseph Penecost, Esquire; Parker Campbell, Esquire; John Siminton, Esquire; and James Allison, Esquire. The second court was held at the same place. Jacob Kline is listed on the tax roll of the county as having been a tavern keeper. On April 3, 1797, by unanimous consent of the court and county commissioners, the Court was moved to Waynesburg, to a two story log structure build by George Ullom and George Graham. This original courthouse still stands on its original site on the southwest corner of Greene Street and Whiskey Alley, adjacent to the Waynesburg Volunteer Fire Company. This building was used until about 1800 as the courthouse. The early records of the construction of the first courthouse on the present site are incomplete and very meager, but it appears that a brick courthouse of a very modest dimension was first erected around 1800, to which the business of the county, including the courts, was moved. It was built by Robert Milliken, a native of Ireland, who was then a resident of Morris Township. He was also the first Justice of the Peace of that township. It was about the same time that a stone jail was constructed to the south of the alley.

The next President Judge, succeeding Judge Addison, was Samuel Roberts, commissioned on June 2, 1803. In 1818 the judicial districts were realigned and Greene County became a part of the Fourteenth Judicial District which included Washington, Greene Fayette and Somerset Counties, while the Fifth Judicial District continued to include Allegheny, Beaver and Butler. On October 19, 1818, Thomas H. Baird was appointed President Judge of the Fourteenth Judicial District. Judge Nathaniel Ewing was next appointed after the resignation of Judge Baird on February 22, 1838, at which time the term of a law judge, as distinguished from a lay judge, was fixed at ten years. At the expiration of Judge Ewing's term, Judge Samuel A. Gilmore was appointed to preside over the Fourteenth Judicial District, the last of the appointed judges. In 1850 an Act was passed requiring the judges to be elected by the people. Consequently, Judge Gilmore, who had been appointed, succeeded himself by election on November 6, 1851.

James Lindsey, the first judge of the judicial district born in Greene County, was elected in 1861, the son of John Lindsey and Annie Collins Lindsey, having been educated at Greene Academy in Carmichaels, Greene County. His father was once a sheriff and twice a prothonotary in the county, and James, at the age of thirty-four, came to the bench well prepared politically and professionally. His good fortune was shortlived, however. He took ill presiding over court in Washington in August of 1864

and died September 1, the same year. Former judge Nathaniel Ewing was appointed to serve until the election of 1865, at which time Samuel A. Gilmore was re-elected and presided over a judicial district consisting of only Fayette and Greene Counties, since the legislature created a new judicial district consisting of Beaver and Washington Counties, but still identified as the Fourteenth Judicial District.

Alpheus Wilson, following the adoption of the Constitution of 1874, was elected, and served until Judge James Inghram was elected in 1883. The Judicial District was allocated a new judge in 1887, with Judge Nathaniel Ewing being first appointed and later elected to the newly established vacancy.

Greene County became a separate Judicial District, known as the 13th, in 1895 and newly elected judge R.L. Crawford took office in January 1896.