HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Osage Indians ceded their claims to the area making up Christian County in 1808. The Delaware Indians held a land grant from 1818 to 1829. The Indian Trading Post was at Ozark.

Settlers from Ohio came in the early 1820's followed by settlers from Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1830's.

Christian County was organized March 8, 1859 and at the request of pioneer settler Mrs. Thomas Neaves, named for Colonel William Christian, a Revolutionary War hero from her native Kentucky.

It was one of the last three counties in the state of Missouri to be organized.

A Confederate attack was repulsed in August 1862.

In January 1863, General J. O. Shelby approached with his troops and the town was evacuated. Troops burned a blockhouse.

After the Civil War, in the late 1860's and 1870's there was little law and order in southwest Missouri.

By 1883, neighboring Taney County had experienced thirty murders and no arrests. A vigilante group, the Bald Knobbers, was formed there in 1884, for the purpose of banding together to stop the murders and robberies.

In 1885, the Christian County Bald Knobbers were organized. They had broader goals in mind....enforcing morality. They threatened drunks, unwed cohabitants, wife-beaters, etc.

This group originated the Bald Knobber Mask....a full-head cover with eye and mouth holes, and with two horns having tassels on the ends.

Often masked members of the Bald Knobbers poured out on the ground beer and whiskey, whipped offenders of their rules with Hickory sticks and, in 1887, punishing residents who had spoken out against them, started a riot that left two men dead and a third injured.

During the riot, a woman resident ripped off the mask of one of the Bald Knobbers and recognized him. When the man was arrested, he named all twenty-five of the Bald Knobbers who took part.

The famous Bald Knobber trial began August 23, 1887, with national attention. When the trial was over, four Bald Knobbers were sentenced to hang.

That effectively ended the Bald Knobber movement in Christian County.

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In March 1919, after a long, bitter legal struggle, voters authorized \$90,000 for a courthouse. The site was the same as the previous courthouse, which had been razed four years previously. The new court resented the obligation the former court had made five years earlier to Hohenschild's plan, but felt bound by the commitment, particularly since the architect had been paid \$2,150.00.

H.J. Hanson, Sarcoxie, successfully bid for the general contract in June 1919; Earl Hawkins acted as superintendent. Work began in August; cornerstone ceremonies took place on March 16, 1920, and Christian County's present courthouse was completed by December of that year.

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