

03.2000.1 Bartholomew County Courthouse

Bartholomew County

6-29-2011

Marker Text

Side One:

County formed by Indiana General Assembly 1821. Thirty acres of land were purchased, and John Tipton donated thirty acres, for county seat. State commissioners named county seat Tiptona—after Tipton; local elected commissioners renamed it Columbus. Tipton served as state representative, Indian agent, and United States senator.

Side Two:

Second Empire Style Courthouse, designed by Isaac Hodgson, completed 1874, is county's fourth courthouse. Constructed of red brick with white limestone trim. Foundation is rusticated blue limestone. Original slate roof replaced 1953 with standing-seam copper. Extensive remodeling 1968; interior restoration completed 1998. Listed in National Register of Historic Places 1979.

Report

The significance of this marker on side one is the creation of Bartholomew County and the story of its county seat. The second side focuses on the courthouse building. Although the majority of the marker text has been confirmed with primary sources, there are discrepancies that will be addressed in this report.¹

The first discrepancy relates to the line, "John Tipton donated thirty acres, for county seat." A review of primary sources did not clarify whether the sixty total acres were donated or sold. The deed record for John Tipton to John Farquar, the county agent, for the purpose of using the land for a seat of justice, records the sale of 30 acres "in consideration of the sum of [a] thousand dollars," on April 9, 1822.² Four months later on August 9, 1822, the deed record for Luke Bonesteel to John Farquar records the sale of 30 acres in "in consideration of the sum of two thousand dollars" to be used as a seat of justice.³ The marker text states that first,

“thirty acres of land were purchased,” and then the other thirty acres donated by Tipton, but the deed records for both men are similar in nature. They are typical of the standard warranty deeds for sale of land. On the other hand, the *History of Bartholomew County, 1888-1976*, notes that some historians believe that the “consideration” of the sum was a valuation of the land, therefore, a donation.⁴ Since the term “consideration” was used in both Tipton and Bonesteel’s deeds, presumably one could not have purchased and the other donated. Some secondary sources, including an 1888 county history, claimed that Tipton sold rather than donated the land for the seat of justice.⁵ George Pence, who wrote an article on the makers of Bartholomew County, read through the Bartholomew County commissioners court records and the county’s deed records; he found no evidence that Tipton donated his land.⁶ In 1843, the sale of land between John Tipton and John Farquar in 1822 was rerecorded in the Bartholomew County Deed Book I. This deed was copied from the original record, with other deed records from 1843 sandwiching it. The 1843 copy was the same as the original 1822 copy except for one word: the sum for consideration was “**two** thousand dollars,” not “[a] thousand dollars.”⁷

Secondly, no sources were located to verify the following line of the marker text: “State commissioners named the county seat Tiptona.” On January 8, 1821, the *Journal of the Senate, of the State of Indiana being the Fifth Session of the General Assembly* created Bartholomew County as a new county out of Jackson and Delaware counties.⁸ The fifth session ended on January 9, 1821, without mention of the county seat. According to the Bartholomew County Commissioners court records, the Bartholomew County Commissioners first met at the house of Luke Bonesteel in the town of Tiptona on February 15, 1821.⁹ The county commissioners repeatedly use the name Tiptona in the first pages of the county commissioner court records.¹⁰ No record has been located showing that the Indiana General Assembly created a state commission on this issue.

While no sources were located showing state involvement in officially naming the town of Tiptona, the locally elected commissioners did change the name. The Bartholomew County Commissioners court records show that on at a meeting on March 19, 1821, they changed the name from Tiptona to Columbus.¹¹ Although some secondary sources have spelled “Tiptona,” as “Tiptonia,” the court records recorded it as “Tiptona.”¹² For more information on John

Tipton as an Indian agent, state representative, U. S. senator, and his early exploits in Indiana, see *The John Tipton Papers, The History of the State of Indiana from the Earliest Explorations by the French to the Present Time*, and the *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*.¹³

Most information on the second side of the marker was verified by primary sources such as newspaper articles, the *National Register of Historic Places*, and commissioner court records.¹⁴ While secondary sources concur with the claim that the standing courthouse was the fourth in the county, the investigation of primary sources on this point was outside the scope of this review.¹⁵

¹ Main primary sources used to confirm most of the marker text include contemporary newspaper articles, county deed records, county commissioner records, and the Journal of Senate of the State of Indiana.

² "No. 38," Bartholomew County Deed Book, A, p. 41-42. Microfilm, Indiana State Library.

³ "No. 39," Bartholomew County Deed Book A, p. 42-44. Microfilm, Indiana State Library.

⁴ Bartholomew County Historical Society, *History of Bartholomew County, 1888-1976* (Columbus, IN, 1976), 17.

⁵ *History of Bartholomew County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1888), 573-574 (accessed online at www.archive.org); William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1883), 191-193 (accessed online at Googlebooks); "It Once Was City's Name, Tiptona: How Does It Sound?" *The (Columbus, Indiana) Republic*, Special Progress Edition, June 11, 1968, p. 1, 4.

⁶ Bartholomew County Historical Society, *History of Bartholomew County, 1888-1976* (Columbus, IN, 1976), 17; George Pence, "Makers of Bartholomew County," *Indiana Magazine of History* 12, no. 1 (March 1926): 72-73.

⁷ Bartholomew County Deed Book I, p. 178-179. Microfilm, Indiana State Library.

⁸ Indiana General Assembly, *Journal of the Senate, of the State of Indiana being the Fifth Session of the General Assembly*, (Corydon, Indiana, 1820-1821), 211, 216-217, 219 (accessed online at www.archive.org).

⁹ Bartholomew County Commissioners Court Records, Book 1, February 15, 1821, p. 1-2. Microfilm, Indiana State Library.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2-4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, March 20, 1821, p. 3.

¹² For reference to "Tiptonia," see, Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1883), 191-193; *History of Bartholomew County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1888), 573-574; and for reference to "Tiptona," see Bartholomew County Commissioners Court Records, Book 1, February 15, 1821, p. 1-2.

¹³ Nellie Armstrong Robertson, and Dorothy Riker, eds., *The John Tipton Papers*, vol. 1, 1809-1827 (Indianapolis, 1942; William Henry Smith, *The History of the State of Indiana from the Earliest*

Explorations by the French to the Present Time, vol. 2 (Indianapolis, 1897), p. 776-779; and “Tipton, John,” *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*, accessed June 2, 2011, at <bioguide.congress.gov>.

¹⁴ For reference to hiring Isaac Hodgson, see Bartholomew County Commissioners Record Book G, December 1870, p. 664; for reference to the completion of the fourth courthouse in 1874 and the description of the structure of the courthouse, see “Dedication of the New Court-House,” *The (Columbus, Indiana) Republican*, December 31, 1874, n.p.; for reference to the replacement of the slate roof and remodeling in 1968, see “Modernized Courthouse To Keep Charm,” *The (Columbus, Indiana) Republic*, June 11, 1968, p. 15; for reference to the 1998 restoration, see Cheryl Scott, “Courthouse Celebrates 1st Floor’s New Look,” *The (Columbus, Indiana) Republic*, December 2, 1998, n.p.; and for reference to its listing in the National Register of Historic Places, see Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Columbus, Bartholomew County Courthouse,” *National Register of Historic Places: Annual Listing of Historic Properties, Federal Register, Part II*, (Washington D.C., 1980), p. 17446, 17455 (accessed online at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/listings/Weekly_List_FR-Tuesday-March-18-1980-listingyear1979.pdf>).

¹⁵ Bartholomew County Historical Society, *History of Bartholomew County, 1888-1976* (Columbus, IN, 1976), 23-24; and Bartholomew County Committee of the Indiana Sesquicentennial Commission, “Bartholomew County Courthouses,” (Columbus, IN: Bartholomew County Historical Society, [1971]), p. 1-2.

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