

# Decatur County named for Maryland commodore

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In 1873 Decatur County got its start by an act of the Legislature and it was named for Commodore Stephen Decatur.

Commodore Decatur was a leader in the War of 1812. He was born in Sinnepaxent, Md., and rose to national prominence as a war hero. He was killed in a duel with Commodore James Barron on March 20, 1820.

Some today might remember him as the author of the phrase: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations, may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."

Although the county was started in 1873, it wasn't until Nov. 1, 1879, that the Decatur County convention of voters was held in Oberlin, on the south side of Beckwith and McCall's Store. Edwin Knowles acted as the chairman.

Four men were selected on a temporary basis including Edward Stillson as county clerk and Frank Kimball, John B. Hitchcock and George W. Shoemaker as commissioners.

The names were recommended to Gov. St. John.

John Neve was appointed to be the census taker and the numbers showed the population of the county to be 2,561.

Word was sent from the governor's office in December 1879 that the men would serve

as temporary officials for the county. The men served for two years.

In February 1880 the men stepped down and a special election was held.

Those elected were Clerk N.G. Addleman and commissioners Frank Kimball, H.C. Johnson and Henry Claar.

The county was described in an article in the Centennial Edition of The Oberlin Herald published in 1979 as well wooded and well watered.

"The timber lands range from one quarter to one half mile in width and the general varieties are ash, box elder, cottonwood, elm and willow."

Streams in the county run from southwest to northeast and include the Beaver, Prairie Dog, Tom Cat (later called Big Timber), Long Branch and the two forks of the Sappa Creek. Eventually all of the streams empty into the Republican River in southern Nebraska.

Today county officials are elected every four years. Current officials are Commissioners Gene Gallentine, Stan McEvoy and Ralph D. Unger, Clerk Colleen Geihlsler, Treasurer Jean Hale, Register of Deeds Kari Ketterl, Judge John Bremer, Sheriff Ken Badsky, Clerk of the Court Janet Meitl, County Attorney Steve Hirsch and Appraiser Alan Hale.





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