

COMMUNITY PROFILE: NEW CUMBERLAND, WV



Can you name the county seat of Hancock County?

- (a) Cuppytown
- (b) Vernon
- (c) Brick Bend
- (d) New Cumberland

If you chose d, you are correct. If you chose a, b or c, you are correct!

New Cumberland was originally called Brick Bend because of the many brickyards and pottery works that were located there. The city was actually begun in 1784 and named Cuppytown for its founder, John Cuppy. In 1839, John Cuppy formally laid out the town into 42 lots and called it Vernon, but later changed the name to New Cumberland according to the wishes of the first purchasers of the lots. In 1872, the town was incorporated by the West Virginia state legislature.

New Cumberland wasn't always the county seat though. For many years the competition to be named the county seat went back and forth between New Cumberland and



New Manchester. The act creating the county left the location of the county seat to the electorate, which selected New Cumberland over New Manchester by a narrow margin of thirteen votes. However, the county court had been meeting in

New Manchester and the judges refused to move the court to New Cumberland. A second election in 1850 once again resulted with New Cumberland winning by forty-six votes. The county court was then moved to New Cumberland, but a third election in 1852 resulted in New Manchester receiving one more vote than New Cumberland. The county seat then returned to New Manchester until later returning to New Cumberland.

New Cumberland was the first city west of the Alleghenies to have a furnace for processing iron. The furnace, built in 1794 by Peter Tarr on King's Creek near New Cumberland, has the distinction of being



the place where the cannonballs were made that Commodore Perry fired from the guns on his ships in the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813.

New Cumberland can also boast of having the oldest library in the county. Dedicated on April 25, 1954, the Swaney Memorial Library is a colonial-styled brick building that sits on top of a ridge that overlooks the Ohio River and the town. It is the legacy of a local doctor who had a vision of providing the city's residents with a meeting place.

A mural depicting how the city looked when the library first opened is mounted over the librarian's desk. Measur-



ing 3 ½ feet by 22 feet, the mural was painted by J. Robert Haworth, who was an art instructor at the high school in Weirton, West Virginia. The mural also shows images of the Ohio River Valley history including Native American Indians viewing the town from the other side of the river, the packet boat Betsy Ann and one of the earliest trains that served the community.

The Hancock County Historical Museum, commonly known as The Marshall House, was built in 1887 by Oliver Sheridan Marshall a local attorney who served as president of the West Virginia Senate in 1899. His son, John, served as Assistant Attorney General under President Coolidge. The Marshall family contributed much to West Virginia history.

Most of the building materials used was from Hancock County with just some of the hardware, nails and door hinges coming from Wheeling. Only the Marshall family ever lived in the home. In fact, Mr. Marshall's youngest daughter, Virginia, died in the house in 1996, at the age of 98.

Today, there are approximately 1,099 residents (2000 U.S. Census) in New Cumberland. As with so many other communities along the Ohio River, they have a rich heritage and can be proud of their city.