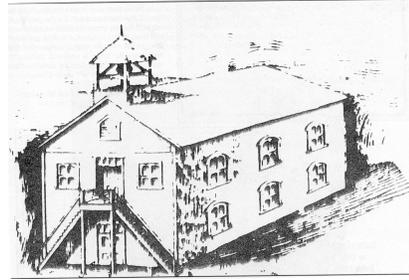


The first courthouse on this site was built on land donated by cattle baron Jacob Summerlin. The County Commissioners awarded the contract for the building on June 15, 1867 for \$3,800. The crude house was framed and sided with rough weatherboard inside and out. This courthouse was used for over a decade before it was sold for \$100 to make way for the next construction.



The second courthouse, a wood frame two-story structure, was completed 1883-84 with a cost of \$9,000. The courthouse stood at Broadway Avenue and Main Street for nearly a quarter century. But continued growth after the turn of the twentieth century, combined with a fear of fire, prompted county officials to consider building a larger and sturdier structure. The courthouse was “dismantled and deserted” in 1908 as workers prepared the property for a more modern structure.

Polk County’s third courthouse was built between 1908 and 1909. The building’s central core was constructed in late 1908 by Mutual Construction Co. of Louisville, Kentucky at a cost of \$83,890. When the courthouse was completed and opened in 1909, it housed all county offices, including the courtroom, Board of County Commissioners, school board and sheriff’s department. By 1926, the county offices had outgrown the building. Two wings were added to the east and west facades.



The Polk County Historical Commission was established in 1937 by the Florida legislature to preserve area history. The group was charged with establishing a suitable museum and archives for the material they collected. After six decades of use it became clear to public leaders a modern courthouse capable of housing courts, the state attorney, the public defender, and clerk of courts was needed. The new courthouse was completed in 1987 and the historical library and museum was located in the old courthouse. On August 7, 1989 the old courthouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Renovations to the old building continued for the next decade at a cost of three million dollars. At

last the Polk County Courthouse re-opened its doors September 19, 1998 as the Polk County Historical Museum.