

CURRY

from FRONT

Adair County is known for many things. Bank robberies are probably not one of them. Okay — there was that incident in the 1800s. The James Gang, led by Frank James (as his (in) famous brother Jesse had reportedly called in sick that day), hit the Bank of Columbia on April 29, 1872, killing an unarmed sheriff. Fast-forward 140 years: another century, another bank.

This time, a robber entered the United Citizens Bank branch at 1582 Campbellsville Road. Eugene Earl Gentry, then age 63, allegedly brandished a black semi-automatic handgun while robbing the Highway 55 branch. After getting around \$90,000 in cash, Gentry decided that taking a hostage — and the hostage's vehicle — would be the best way to escape. He proceeded to take branch manager Mike Curry — and yes, I know what you're thinking now — at gunpoint and forced him to flee the scene in Curry's 1998 Ford Ranger pickup.

"He basically just came in and wanted money. And he took me with him and dropped me off down the road," Mike Curry remembers, adding with a smile: "And, you know, that's pretty much it." In hindsight, Curry says: "It wasn't pleasant. I mean, it was scary, but you let your instincts take over and try to make sure you're protecting everybody else in the bank. That's the main thing."

Gentry's robbing career did not last long. One year later, the man from Lafayette, Tennessee, entered Citizens Bank & Trust on Ky. 210 in Campbellsville. Campbellsville Police did not release details about what happened inside that bank, but reports indicate Gentry asked for a loan officer and a specific amount of money — a scenario similar to what had happened at UCB a year earlier.

The Campbellsville bank was not robbed. Police said the suspect briefly spoke with an employee and "exhibited behaviors which caused concern and suspicion." Officers observed a vehicle matching the description provided by the bank and initiated a traffic stop. When officers approached, the driver sped away.

The pursuit led down Hwy.



Nearly 14 years later, Mike Curry still works at the Campbellsville Street branch of United Citizens Bank.

55 toward Adair County and ended when Gentry ran off the highway and crashed between two parked semi-trailers. He was injured in the collision and airlifted to the University of Kentucky Hospital, where he was listed in serious condition that Tuesday night.

After pleading guilty, Gentry was sentenced in October 2014 in United States District Court to 240 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. He was ordered to pay \$90,800 in restitution for the robbery of two Kentucky banks and one count of carjacking in Adair County. He is currently serving his sentence at FCI Butner in Butner, North Carolina.

Part III: The Bank

Back in Columbia, at the moment of the robbery, word spread quickly — within minutes. Joe Pyles, one of the founders of UCB, rushed into the main UCB branch on Jamestown Street.

"Mr. Pyles, who's no longer with us, was up there at the bank and came tearing down the hall toward my office," Matt Loy remembers. "I knew something was wrong, just the look on his face. He told me, 'Come on, let's go,' and I got in his truck. I asked, 'What's wrong?' and he said, 'They got Curry.'"

Loy initially did not understand what Pyles meant. Then he learned someone had taken Mike Curry hostage. "He went flying around the square and tore down the hill in his truck, trying to get out there and see what happened and to take care of Mike," Loy recalls. "But luckily, it all turned out okay. Mike was fine and the guy turned him loose. It had

a happy ending, but it was a stressful few minutes."

Part IV: The Naming
The young horse was unnamed when local horseman Chris Melton purchased her from the Fasig-Tipton Digital Selected Sale. During a golf outing with Mike Curry, Matt Loy, and Bryan Feese, the group shared a laugh about the events of that October day in 2012.

"Chris Melton, who owned the horse at first, didn't know the story about Mike getting taken hostage," Loy says. "He'd never heard it. Once he got us telling the story, it kind of stuck with him. And every time we'd get in a crowd, he'd want Mike or me to tell it again." That conversation on the golf course led Melton to name the filly "They Got Curry."

Long-time client Mike Coombs, a successful businessman and horse owner who races primarily in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and West Virginia, eventually purchased the filly once she was ready to begin her racing career.

Most owners prefer to name their own horses. But once Coombs heard the backstory behind the name, he immediately embraced it.

He sent the filly to trainer Jamie Ness, whose 353 wins in 2025 led all horse trainers in the United States. They Got Curry earned \$19,200 in her debut victory, and her connections believe she has a bright future.

Joe Pyles stepped away in August 2024. But in a way, his spirit — and that unforgettable shout down a Jamestown Street hallway — will live on every time They Got Curry breaks from the starting gate.

THEATRE

from FRONT

wording but significant in meaning: approval of the liquidation of the Columbia Theatre property. Superintendent Jason Faulkner told board members the conversation has been ongoing for some time. "It is something we've been talking about for quite some time," Faulkner said, "that there needs to be renewed traction in the community for repurposing the historic building."

Faulkner confirmed he has already met with Dr. Ben Arnold, who holds first right of refusal on the property and has expressed interest in taking it back. To move the process forward, Faulkner asked the board for approval to begin liquidation procedures, which would allow the district to start the required bank guarantee process and follow Kentucky Department of Education guidelines tied to the original agreement. The board voted unanimously in favor.

After the meeting,

Faulkner explained to The Adair Progress that the next steps involve carefully following KDE regulations and honoring the conditions set when the property was first transferred. He said he believes returning the theatre to community leadership is the best path forward.

"I think the best thing for the community would be to give it back to the community," Faulkner said. "I think there's a want for people to see it finished." For many in Adair County, that "want" has never fully faded.

The Columbian Theatre once served as a gathering place in the heart of Columbia — a venue for performances, celebrations, and shared experiences. Its empty façade in recent years has been a visible reminder of unfinished plans and stalled momentum. But with last week's vote, optimism has begun to replace uncertainty. Faulkner acknowledged that there are individuals

and organizations who may be able to complete the restoration in a way that benefits the broader community more directly than the school system could.

On the square, where storefronts have seen both change and renewal in recent years, the possibility of lights glowing again inside the Columbian Theatre stirs quiet excitement. While regulatory steps remain and timelines are not yet set, the unanimous vote signaled something more than a procedural move.

It signaled hope. Hope that the long-silent stage may once again echo with music and applause. Hope that a landmark building might be restored not just in brick and mortar, but in purpose. And hope that, in time, the Columbian Theatre will once again belong fully to the people of Adair County — alive, active, and at the center of community life.

CHEER

from FRONT

squad competing, regardless of division — a distinction that set Adair County apart from the field. The day was not without its challenges. One team member battled illness but pushed through to compete, demonstrating the determination and grit that have become trademarks of the program.

Despite the obstacles, the weekend proved both successful and memorable. The team represented Adair County with pride, energy and sportsmanship throughout the event. In addition to earning division champion jackets, the cheerleaders were awarded championship rings for their Grand

Champion finish. The victory marks another milestone for a program that has worked tirelessly to build its reputation. Through dedication and teamwork, these athletes continue to make Adair County proud — both on and off the mat.

BOAT

from FRONT

death or serious injury. Lawmakers say the measure is designed to ensure accountability in the most serious incidents on the water.

The bill would also strengthen penalties for boating under the influence, bringing them more in line with the consequences drivers face for DUI on Kentucky roadways.

In addition, individuals convicted under the law would be required to complete a safe-boating course and pay a \$100 fine to the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources.

Supporters of the bill say the goal is simple: to promote safer waterways for families and visitors who enjoy Kentucky's lakes

each year. With thousands of boaters frequenting Green River Lake and Lake Cumberland during the warmer months, the legislation underscores a clear message — operating a boat while impaired can carry serious consequences. House Bill 168 now awaits action before the House.

Names of Places in Adair County

This cold spell of winter — thankfully we missed any measurable snowfall — may be keeping folks inside. However, the furnace is working just fine at the Adair Genealogy & History Research Center. We are here to assist, or just encourage, family and local history researchers in tracing their ancestors and more. We are busy, always swamped, always willing to help, and always

learning new tricks of the trade, so to speak.

Next week, on Monday, March 2nd, is the next meeting of the Adair County Genealogical Society. This month Mike Watson will present a short program on the names of geographic points in Adair County — creeks, communities, post offices, schools, voting precincts, and more. Not every point in Adair County will be covered, that would

take about a week... so come see what you already know and what you didn't know!

ACGS meeting is open to all, members and visitors alike, and takes place at the Adair Genealogy & History Research Center, 307 Greensburg Street, Columbia, KY, adjacent to the Adair County Public Library. The meeting will convene at 5pm Central Time.

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