

History of Newton

Newton is the largest and oldest town in Jasper County. Because it was favorably located in the center, it was named the county seat in 1835.

Jasper County was formed in 1831, approved on Dec. 19, 1834 and named after American Revolutionary War Hero Sergeant Jasper. Both he and his close friend, Sergeant Newton, were patriots that saved American prisoners of war from certain death at the hands of British soldiers along the river. Thus, the county and town became their namesakes.

According to a bulletin issued by the Illinois State Library, a post office was established in Newton on

March 20, 1833, not in a building, but in a man's hat. A rider brought the mail from Vincennes, Ind., then went north delivering mail to other towns as he went. He then came back through Newton the next week. During those days, Newton was described as a wide spot in the road. "There was but one dwelling house in the place and a little water oak pole grocery," said Michael Groves, who ventured into Jasper County first in 1836.

By 1841, the town had increased to five families. Lawrence Hollenbock and Samuel Garwood built a saw and grist mill and Benjamin Harris opened the first grocery store in Newton. In 1855, Newton had Miller's Hotel and a small inn known as "The American House."

By 1865, the town had over 300 people, and 10 years later, the population had reached 400.

In 1874, Newton gained access to the outside world via Joe Litzelman's Hack Express, which made a daily trip to Olney and back on what is now Route 130.

Today, Newton has a population of more than 3,000, several manufacturing plants, a county-fed high school of more than 600 students and 13 churches.

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