

## JACKSON COUNTY READY TO CELEBRATE NEW VETERANS HALL

by Megan Trotter

Betty Martin, current archivist, takes a walk through the displays at the Jackson County Veterans Hall. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea



**GAINESBORO** -- Jackson County will celebrate Memorial Day this year at the new location of its veterans hall and archive: The old Jackson County Jail.

The veterans hall in Gainesboro got its start six years ago when Glenn Jones started researching his family's history. The records he was given permission to sort through were stored in the basement of the courthouse, where he found them deteriorating. He decided something needed to be done.

"With a committee formed to do something about the problem and a cache of volunteers willing to work, permission was granted by County Mayor, Charlie Hix, for an archive to be established on the third floor of the courthouse where records were cleaned, stored and preserved," said Pamela Walton, volunteer with the veterans hall.

The records were moved up to the third floor, and Jones became the archivist in 2005. He had the idea of hanging photographs of veterans along the narrow hallway, which soon turned into a collection of more than 400 pictures, 27 uniformed mannequins and many displays of war and military memorabilia. It was the first of its kind in the state and became the model for the veterans halls in Putnam and Overton counties.

Though the new upstairs location was an improvement from the records' old home in the basement, veterans hall volunteers quickly realized that it was not the best place for them.

"The archive and the veterans hall needed to be in a fire-safe environment and elderly and infirm veterans and their family members were unable to make it up the steps to the third floor," said Walton.

Jackson County had just finished building a new jail, leaving the old block-constructed building empty. Volunteers reconditioned and remodeled the old jail and transferred all the records and artifacts to this new location.

"Three things could be accomplished by reconditioning and remodeling the building," said Walton. "The old jail would be preserved, the records would be housed in a far more fire-safe environment and the veterans hall would have an accessible home, worthy of those whom it was created to honor."

This year's Memorial Day ceremony in Jackson County will be held at the veterans hall's new location at the old jail, directly behind the Charles Ralph Holland Memorial Library on Short Street. Music by local musicians will begin at 1:15 p.m. and the service will begin at 2 p.m. with a program planned by Lt. Col. Harold Martin. At the end of the service, the public will be invited to tour the new Veterans Hall.

For more information about the event, call (931) 268-3294.

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