

Section

4

Editorials
Real Estate

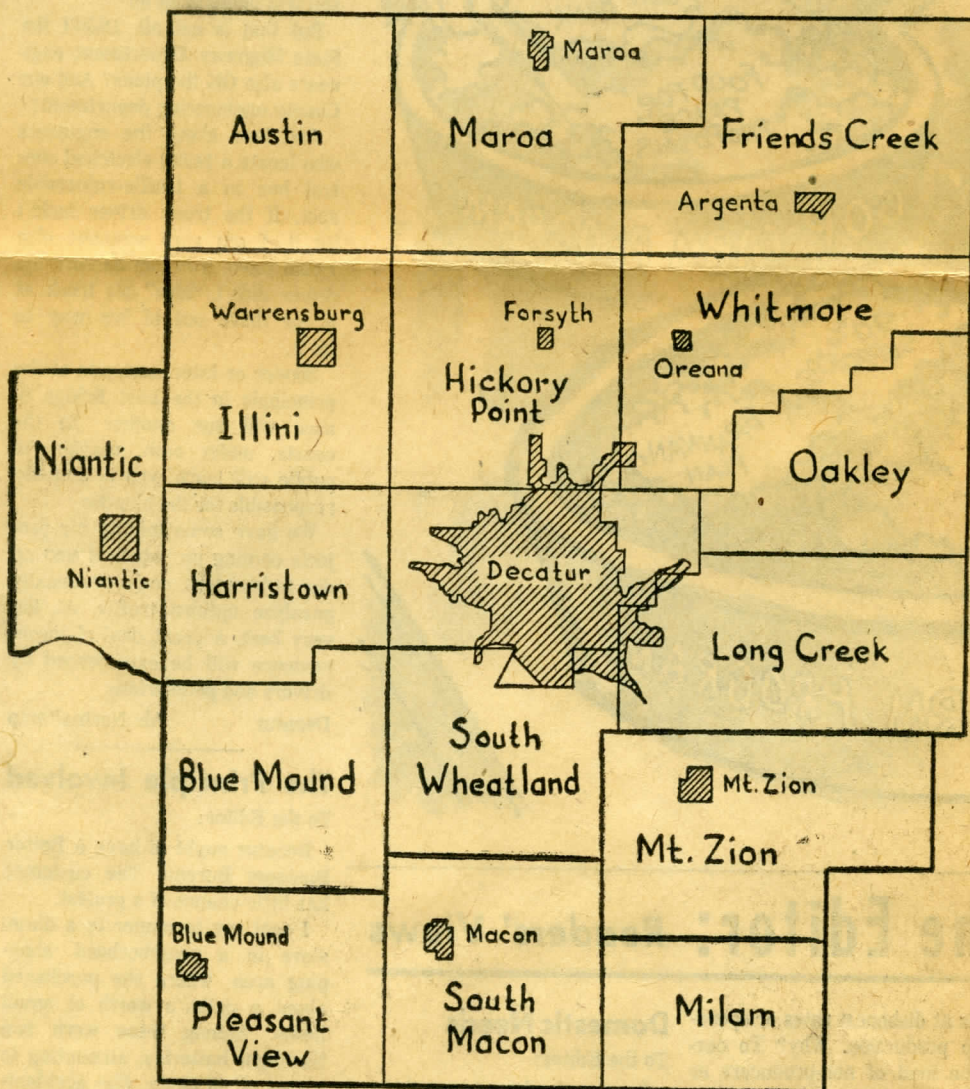
Herald

Decatur Herald, Founded 1880

10/25/60

MACON COUNTY

Townships - Cities - Incorporated Villages



League of Women Voters

How Local Government Works

Booklet Helpful to Area Residents

By JIM A. RICHSTAD
Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers
Editorial Writer

MACON County residents daily feel the effects of county, township and city government on their activities. While perhaps not as dramatic as the state and national governmental activ-

The League outline includes descriptions of the judicial system: the circuit court, county court and justice of the peace courts.

The booklet next describes the 17 political townships: Austin, Blue Mound, Decatur, Friends Creek, Harristown, Hickory Point, Illini, Long Creek, Maroa,

tricts, park districts, townships, judicial districts and sanitary districts. The cumulative voting system is also explained.

The final section of the booklet briefly explains the political party structure in Macon County.

This effort by the Decatur League of Women Voters is a noteworthy contribution to the

Booklet Helpful to Area Residents

By JIM A. RICHSTAD
Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers
Editorial Writer

MACON County residents daily feel the effects of county, township and city government on their activities. While perhaps not as dramatic as the state and national governmental activity, local government deals with problems of immediate concern. Schools, police and fire protection, roads and parks, health and welfare programs and many other day-to-day activities are largely the responsibility of local government.

Since county residents are under a combination of local governments, the overall view of the individual citizen may be confused.

A comprehensive effort to set local government in Macon County in better perspective has been prepared by the Decatur League of Women Voters. The group has published a booklet which outlines the forms of county, township, city and village government.

Local government is the grass roots in the democratic process. It is here that county residents have the most impact with their votes.

When Macon County was formed in 1829, it was governed by a three-man county commissioner's court. The basic unit today is the County Board of Supervisors. The League of Women Voters, quite logically, begins its booklet by describing the Board's duties:

"The County Board of Supervisors (and all county officials) are an administrative arm for the State of Illinois; that is, they carry out state administrative functions within the county. In addition, the Board certifies the tax levy for all county purposes, makes appropriations for all county activities, cares for all county-owned property, selects grand jurors, passes resolutions and ordinances . . . lays out election precincts . . . appoints some of the county administrative officers."

The Board of Supervisors consists of one representative from each of the 17 townships in the county, with 15 assistant supervisors from Decatur to balance the city's large population.

Although there are several boards under the county board, day-to-day county government is handled under the direction of elected officials such as the county clerk, treasurer, recorder of deeds, auditor and superintendent of schools.

The League outline includes descriptions of the judicial system: the circuit court, county court and justice of the peace courts.

The booklet next describes the 17 political townships: Austin, Blue Mound, Decatur, Friends Creek, Harriestown, Hickory Point, Illini, Long Creek, Maroa, Milam, Mt. Zion, Niantic, Oakley, Pleasant View, South Macon, South Wheatland and Whitmore.

The basis of township government is explained in the League's booklet: "The voters of the township meet once a year in the annual town meeting as the legislative body of the township. In this meeting the voters can set rules and regulations for the township . . ." The legislative, executive and judicial organization is described.

The City of Decatur offers another set of government officials and functions. A city manager is the administrative head, and an elected mayor and six-member City Council comprise the corporate authority. Several partly administrative boards and 12 advisory boards and commissions assist the city governors.

City Manager

The booklet describes the city manager's function in these terms: "The city manager . . . is hired by the Council and is responsible to it. All city departments are under his immediate jurisdiction; he is responsible for aiding the Council in setting city policies by submitting facts and figures, conducting studies, making recommendations, and formulating the budget. He has the power to appoint and dismiss all department heads." The eight departments under the manager include finance, city clerk, treasurer, purchasing agent, legal, police, fire, public works, water, planning and development, and health.

Decatur has one court within the city limits, the police magistrate.

Macon and Maroa are the only other incorporated cities in the county, both having an aldermanic form of government. Incorporated villages include Argenta, Blue Mound, Forsyth, Mt. Zion, Niantic, Oreana and Warrensburg.

The League's booklet also includes descriptions of the county's eight school districts, and Decatur's sanitary district and park district.

An especially valuable section deals with election districts, and discusses such things as primary and general elections, city elections, and elections in school dis-

tricts, park districts, townships, judicial districts and sanitary districts. The cumulative voting system is also explained.

The final section of the booklet briefly explains the political party structure in Macon County.

This effort by the Decatur League of Women Voters is a noteworthy contribution to the understanding of local government. The League is a non-partisan organization, and it has faithfully reflected that spirit in the booklet. It is the first written reference book on the local governments in the county.

The booklet is a reference, it does not go into much detail. It does, clearly, give an overview that untangles much confusion concerning the various governmental units that operate in Macon County.

The League's booklet may be obtained from the League of Women Voters. The price is 50 cents.