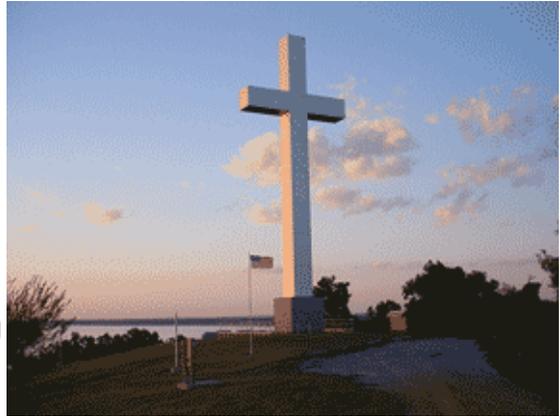


## Fort Jefferson Cross at the Confluence

The story of the cross begins in 1937 when a few members of a community choir, spearheaded by Mrs. Noah Geveden, erected a small wooden cross on a hill at Ancient Buried City (now known as Wickliffe Mounds Research Center) in Wickliffe, KY. Then in 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Noah Geveden furnished the materials to construct a 35-foot pole with cross arms to INSERT the smaller cross. Bill Howle wired it with 325 bulbs. The bulbs were lit during Easter and Christmas each year.



When Murray State University purchased the site in 1981, it became necessary to seek another location for the cross. It was then that the idea was born to build a cross tall enough to be seen from the tri-states of Missouri, Illinois and Kentucky. The cross would be 90 feet tall and lit at night for all to see. Site selection took a long time. The highest point along the river was Fort Jefferson hill and in 1989, the 38-acre property came up for auction. Several citizens, along with the encouragement of Margaret Phillips, who was terminally ill at the time, requested the Wickliffe City Council to purchase the tract and lease two acres as a site for the memorial cross. The City Council purchased the tract on July 26, 1989.

A name for the memorial was decided by seeking suggestions from area residents. Juett Owens, Jr. suggested Cross at the Confluence and several others mentioned Fort Jefferson Cross. On February 13, 1990, a committee selected the name Fort Jefferson Cross at the Confluence because of the location above the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and the idea of "flowing together" of the citizens of the tri-states who would be asked to financially support the construction. The term "Memorial" was added when it was decided that the project would be used to honor the memory of loved ones.

Representatives of the 51 churches in Ballard County were invited to serve on a countywide committee. The first meeting was held at St. Mary Catholic Church on March 8, 1990. Rev. Jack Studie, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Wickliffe, presided with 23 churches represented.

Later a board of directors was selected: John Wood, Chairman; Tom Juett, Treasurer; Joyce Carpenter, Secretary; Terry Simmons, Design Engineer; Richard Overby; Carolyn Rosenstone; Peggy Piper; Teresa Sullivan; and Anita Howie. Later, Keith Kelly was added to the board. The board met on November 7, 1991 at the Barlow House Museum and finalized the design and materials for the project. Soil borings were taken and it was determined that the site would support a 90-foot freestanding cross. A fund raising goal of \$150,000 was set.

On February 22, 1992, the project had raised \$21,762 through memorial gifts, church and group donations, aluminum cans, etc. The board decided that the major fundraiser would be the selling of granite bricks to be placed around the base of the cross. People could purchase bricks to honor loved ones or to have their family names inscribed on the bricks. The location around the cross would allow for the placement of 800 bricks of \$100.00 each. The kickoff date of the fundraiser was Easter 1992.

On October 8, 1993, the board signed a 100-year lease with the Wickliffe City Council and Mayor Syl Mayolo for a two-acre site on Fort Jefferson Hill. By December of that year, \$56,677.00 had been raised.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held on May 22, 1994 with coverage from both TV and newspapers. The board decided to split the project into two phases: phase one would be the construction of the foundation to support the weight of the cross and a deck surrounding the cross; phase two would be the construction of the 90-foot cross. Simmons Engineering of Paducah designed the project and a contract was let on August 16, 1994 to Bass Maintenance of Wickliffe for the construction of phase one, which was completed on October 28, 1994.

During March 1995, Earnest Brown laid the first bricks around the base of the cross. By December 31, 1996, 823 bricks had been sold and the amount raised reached \$150,000.

It was during the fall of 1998 that the board decided to seek a loan from Citizens State Bank to complete the construction. As each year passed, the cost of materials increased and what started out as a \$150,000 project became a \$300,000 project ten years later. So with a lot of faith, board members co-signed a note and the final construction phrase was completed on April 4, 1999.

As more bricks sold, it became necessary to construct a walkway around the outside of the deck leading to an area where a wall of bricks could be added. Jerry Dunn Construction completed this project in 2000.

Finally on August 29, 2002, the board voted to make the final payment on the bank note and all bills had been paid. By this time a total of \$316,405 had been raised for the project.

The Cross site is used for many purposes. There have been weddings, memorial services, candle light services, and the annual Easter sunrise service. It is a popular site to visit for residents and people passing through on Highway 51.