

PREAMBLE

Lamar County became the 66th Mississippi county in 1904, established by an act of the state legislature. It was named for Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (LQC) Lamar, who represented the state in the U.S. Senate, served as U.S. Secretary of the Interior, and concluded his government career as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

With its lands once a part of the Choctaw Indian Nation and later Marion County, the establishment of Lamar County was spurred by newly completed railroad lines in the area. The Mississippi Central Railroad, Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, and the New Orleans and North Eastern Railroad all facilitated the establishment of several flag stops and sawmill towns in the early 1900s. Lumberton and Sumrall, two of the county's three incorporated areas, developed quickly in this new economic environment and became important stops along the rail lines.

Lamar County is located in the southwest portion of the State of Mississippi and is rural in character. Incorporated areas include Purvis, Lumberton and Sumrall. The City of Hattiesburg is located on the eastern border and in recent years has expanded into Lamar County.

Lamar County contains 499 square miles with land largely held by private landowners. Approximately 70% of County land area is contained within commercial forests. Historic sites in Lamar County include the site of the 75-round heavyweight boxing match between John L. Sullivan and Jake Kilrain on July 8, 1889, which was the last bare-knuckle fight in the United States; the site is at the corner of Sullivan Road and Kilrain Road. Another historic site is the Salmon Salt Dome, a nuclear testing site at the Tatum Salt Dome. Public lands include a portion of the Wolf River Wildlife Management Area, the Little Black Creek Water Park, and the Long Leaf Trace Recreation Trail.

The last several years have seen tremendous growth in Lamar County. The estimated population in 2007 was 48,557, an increase of almost 10,000 people since the 2000 Census. That number is expected to rise to 82,360 by the year 2030. A strong indicator of growth, the county public school enrollment is expected to increase from 7,700 in 2007 to 10,000 in 2010.

According to employment by industry in 2006, the strongest employment sectors in Lamar County are health care and social assistance, retail trade, and education services. Wesley Medical Center is the largest single employer with 1,266 employees. The second and third largest employers are the Lamar County School District with 1,260 employees and Lamar County with 341 employees. The industrial base is also strong with Cooper Power Systems being the largest such employer at 299 workers.

Recent reports show that Lamar County is the second fastest growing county in the state, second only to DeSoto County near Memphis. With the ever-increasing population and continued rapid expansion, the county must plan for the future. A comprehensive plan will ensure that the residents of Lamar County can enjoy the conveniences of a progressive county yet maintain the peaceful and serene quality of life that the piney woods area is known for.