

## History of Pikeville, KY



**Pike County** was formed on December 19, 1821. Before its formation, it had been in succession, a part of Fayette, Bourbon, Mason and Floyd counties. The county was named for General Zebulon M. Pike, a U. S. Army officer and explorer who discovered Pike's Peak.

The first white explorers known to have visited Pike County were the members of the ill-fated Big Sandy expedition of 1756 led by Major Andrew Lewis. The group camped on the Kentucky side of the Tug Fork River.



The first known permanent settlement in Pike County was made in 1790 at the mouth of Sycamore Creek, on Lower Johns Creek by the family of William Robert Lesley. By 1800 other settlements were being made on the Levisa Fork in the vicinity of what is now Pikeville.

The first session of the county court met on March 4, 1822, at the home of Spenser Adkins on the Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River. On March 25, a permanent county seat was selected at a site to be called Liberty, about a mile and a half below the mouth of Russell Fork. Opposition by settlers north of the Levisa Fork led to a decision the following year to relocate the seat to Elijah Adkins' property at Peach Orchard Bottom, across the Levisa Fork from the mouth of Lower Chloe Creek. After the site was surveyed by James Honaker, a town was laid out in the early spring of 1824 and named Pikeville after the county.



Pike County, located in the heart of the Appalachian coal fields, has been one of the principal coal producing counties in the nation since 1910. Though exploitable coal deposits in nearly every section of the county were known to geologists and others before the Civil War, their large-scale commercial development awaited the coming of the railroads in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Until rail shipping made coal production practical, Pike County's timber was its major economic resource. Excessive exploitation depleted this valuable resource, and today the resurgence of the timber industry is years away.

Mining continues to employ the highest portions of the county's work force. Economic planners see tourism and light industry as Pike County's hope for the future.