

## 1. HISTORICAL SKETCH

McCreary County, the last of the 120 counties of Kentucky to be created, was formed in 1912 from parts of Pulaski, Wayne, and Whitley counties, and named in honor of James B. McCreary, governor of the state at that time (Acts, 1912, ch. 46, p. 184; Carroll, ch. 34, p. 435, sec. 906m-1).

At the beginning of the twentieth century 1000 people inhabited three towns in the southeastern part of the state: Whitley City, Pine Knot, and Stearns, which were located in two counties, Pulaski and Whitley. These towns were about twenty-five miles from the nearest county seat, and because of poorly constructed roads and inadequate transportation, this situation presented a serious problem. In 1900 a petition was filed in the state courts, asking that a new county be created. A bill to this effect was introduced and passed the house of representatives and the senate, but was vetoed by J. C. W. Beckham, governor of the state at the time it was presented.

No further attempt was made toward the creation of the county until 1912, when the new county was organized with its boundaries so drawn that they would run not less than ten miles from the county seat of any adjoining county, at the same time, however, giving the new county an area of not less than four hundred square miles (Cont. of 1891, sec. 63).

McCreary County is bounded on the north by Wayne and Pulaski counties; on the east by Whitley County; on the south by the state of Tennessee; and on the west by Wayne County.

A commission composed of three county residents was appointed by the governor to select a temporary county seat. This committee chose Pine Knot, and the first governmental transactions were carried on in a church building. (Acts, 1912, ch. 46, pp. 188, 189.).

Pine Knot remained the county seat until November 1914, when, by vote of the people, Whitley City, a town nearer the center of the county, was chosen. The first courthouse was a frame building erected in December 1914. The building was destroyed by fire in 1927 and with it the greater part of the county records. In 1928 the court authorized the construction of a two-story, fireproof, brick building at a cost of \$50,000. The county jail, located at the right rear of the courthouse, is a two-story building of brick and cement construction, erected in 1915. (Fiscal Court Orders, entry 1.).

McCreary County offers sharp contrast between narrow winding valleys and steep forested ridges, and the peculiar formations of hard rock, shale, and sandstone in this region result in great cliffs such as those which produce the famed Cumberland Falls. Bituminous coal is the most important mineral resource of the county, and small amounts of oil and gas have been developed also. Limestone suitable for building purposes is found in certain sections around the valley of the South Fork of the Cumberland River.

Coal mining and timbering are the chief industries, McCreary being one of the outstanding exporting counties in the eastern Kentucky coal field. The forested sections give rise to heavy lumber industry, the center of which