



Quitman County Mississippi

**Civil Rights.
Civil War.
Music Legends.
All in one place.**

*Quitman County
Mississippi*

220 Chestnut St, Marks, MS 38646

Telephone: 662-326-2661

www.quitmancounty-ms.org

Produced in partnership with Visit MS

Welcome to Quitman County.

Deep within the Mississippi Delta, Quitman County offers you everything from blues legends to country music greats, archeological treasures and civil rights icons, and a landscape that captures the best of the Delta's rich agricultural legacy and a sportsman's mecca. In these 400 square miles, you'll find fascinating sights and sounds to carry you on a timeless journey from pre-history to today's cultural and natural attractions.

Quitman County Music Legends



Country music legend **Charley Pride** was born in Sledge in 1938, one of eleven children. As a youngster he listened with his father to the "Grand Ole Opry" on the radio and sang along. Pride's distinctive baritone voice brought him great success, and throughout his career he recorded 52 top ten singles, 28 of which were No. 1 hits, including "Kiss an Angel Good Morning." He was voted Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year in 1971, and was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2000, making him the most successful African American artist of the genre.

Like its sister counties around the Delta, Quitman County claims a number of outstanding blues artists among its natives:



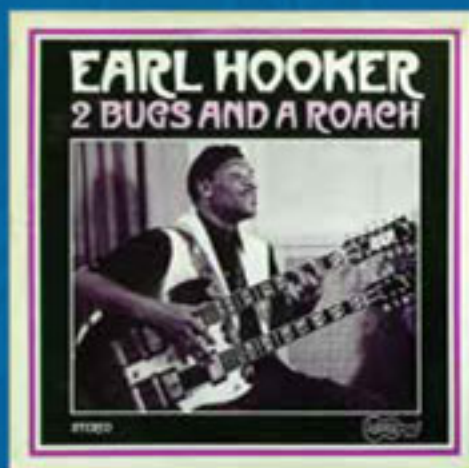
John Lee Hooker

(c. 1917-2001) grew up in the Vance and Lambert areas before eventually settling in Detroit. There he made his first recordings, and in 1949 his single "Boogie Chillen" reached



No. 1 on the R&B charts.

By 1970, John Lee had moved to California and begun working with rock musicians, notably Van Morrison and Canned Heat, with whom he collaborated on several albums and tours. Hooker continued to tour the U.S. and Europe throughout the '70s and '80s, but it was the release in 1989 of his album, *The Healer*, that catapulted him back to million-seller status and began what was the most successful period of his career.



Earl Hooker lived only 41 years but gained fame for his slide guitar technique, heard most frequently accompanying Sonny Boy Williamson, Junior Wells and John Lee Hooker. Expanding on the urban styles of

T-Bone Walker and Robert Nighthawk, Earl Hooker was one of the pioneers of the electric guitar.

James Edward "Snooky" Pryor, born in Lambert in 1929, was a legendary harmonica player who pioneered the "amplified harmonica" style using a small palm microphone. He taught the method to young students at Clarksdale's Blues Museum and at his own Blues Academy in Lambert.

Johnny Billington, known around his hometown of Crowder and across the Delta as “Mr. Johnny,” shared his skills with admiring students for more than twenty years at the Delta Blues Museum and the Blues Academy in his adopted town of Lambert.



Albert “Sunnyland Slim” Luandrew was born on a farm near Vance in 1907 and played blues piano until his death in 1995. He performed with many of the genre’s legends in the Memphis Beale Street neighborhood after moving there in 1925.

An Iconic Quitman County Native

Frederick W. Smith, born in Marks in 1944, founded Federal Express after developing the idea in a Yale business class. He now serves as CEO of this massive multinational corporation, which handles more than 10 million deliveries across 220 countries every day.

Nationally listed Native American sites

More than a thousand years before the Egyptian pyramids began to rise, the inhabitants of lands that would someday make up Quitman County made their mark on the swampy wilderness around the Coldwater, Little Tallahatchie and Big Tallahatchie rivers. When Hernando DeSoto’s 1540 expedition crossed nearby on its way to the Mississippi River, it is estimated that 200,000 members of the Choctaw, Chickasaw and smaller tribes were living in the future Mississippi region. These ancient cultures left behind several groups of mounds, now designated as Denton, Norman, Posey and Shady Grove sites.

All are on private property. The Archeological Conservancy maintains an office in Marks which can provide more information.



Antebellum and Civil War History

Following the signing of the early 19th century's Indian treaties, this region became part of four pioneer Mississippi counties. The vast Delta swamplands were still largely uninhabited when General U.S. Grant's ill-fated Yazoo expedition wound its way through the area in the winter of 1863. Dynamiting the Mississippi River levee at Yazoo Pass, his flotilla of 20 boats, carrying 6000 Union soldiers, wound its way through Moon Lake and into the Coldwater River, intent on reaching the Tallahatchie and Yazoo River systems and sneaking into Vicksburg by the "back door."



When the expedition was halted at Fort Pemberton, near Greenwood, the entire armada had to back upstream, enduring sniping and sabotage from Confederate guerillas throughout their journey. Much of this slow retreat took place in modern-day Quitman County.

Postbellum History

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War, an enterprising planter named Thomas B. Hill carved out a 5000-acre cotton plantation from the

John A. Quitman

forests along the Coldwater River. The riverboat stop that would be known as "Hill's Landing" was acquired by a German Jewish immigrant, Leopold Marks, in the immediate postwar period. While serving in the state legislature, Marks pushed through a bill that created Quitman County from parts of Tunica, Coahoma, Panola and Tallahatchie counties. The county was named after John A. Quitman, governor of Mississippi from 1835 to 1836 and from 1850 to 1851.



The small community of Old Belen was renamed Marks in 1906, and it was incorporated the next year with a population of 350 souls. Chosen as the county seat in 1910, it boasted a new court house by 1911. More merchants joined Mr. Marks in business and the town grew into a thriving Delta farm center, with a hospital, a large hotel and several blocks of downtown businesses surrounded by fine residential areas.

Railroad History

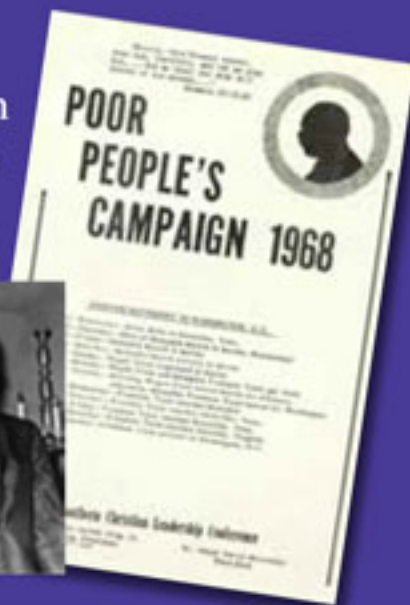
The entire Mississippi Delta developed rapidly with the arrival of several railroad companies in the years after Reconstruction. These well-financed companies built levees and drained the swamps, leading to the rise of the Delta's cotton economy. The Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad stretched a line from Tutwiler in Tallahatchie County to Lake Cormorant in DeSoto County in the early years of the 20th century, passing right through the new county seat of Marks.

Freight and passenger trains steamed through daily, leading to the development of local industry. Riverside Oil Mill was opened in 1941 and grew to be one of the South's premier soybean crushing operations. The Kentucky-Tennessee Clay Company also utilized the readily accessible rail lines to build its mining and refining business. Many of the existing architectural structures in Marks are remnants of the railroad's heyday, including the Savoy Hotel and the former depot.

Civil Rights History

Because this part of the Delta was not heavily settled in the pre-Civil War era, plantation slavery was not a major factor in the development of African American life in the region. As the wetlands were drained and forests cleared in the later decades of the 19th century, African American families became more numerous and worked largely under the sharecropper system. Two critical early churches in this community were Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church (1865) and Belmont Baptist Church (1867). Marks was chosen as the site for one of Sears Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald's schools for African-American students in 1936; that building is one of the few remaining Rosenwald schools in the South, still functioning as part of Quitman County Middle School.

In the spring of 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., visited Marks to rally support for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's "Poor People's Campaign," a nationwide march to Washington, D.C., to raise awareness of



economic disparity and persistent poverty. Dr. King was so moved by the desperate conditions in Marks that he promoted it as the starting point for the campaign's network of traveling groups. His assassination a few weeks later delayed the implementation of the campaign until May, when nine caravans of poverty-stricken protestors began their slow way toward the East coast from several locations.



The above photograph was made by Dr. James Goldman. Many of his photographs documenting the Mule Train appear in "Goldman's Gold," a book he published with Macklyn Hubbell.

One hundred and fifteen Quitman County residents, ranging in age from eight months to 70 years old, left Marks on May 13, traveling in more than a dozen mule-drawn wagons. They crept almost five hundred miles over the next month before reaching Atlanta, where people, mules and wagons were loaded aboard a train bound for Alexandria, Virginia. On June 19, 1968, Quitman County's famous "Mule Train" rolled into the nation's capitol and joined the large protest on the National Mall.

Civil Rights History



(AP Photo)

Valley Queen Missionary Baptist Church 404 Humphrey Avenue, Marks

Dr. Martin Luther King is shown conducting a memorial services for Armistead Phipps at the Valley Queen MB Church in Marks on Sunday, June 12, 1966. Phipps died while taking part in the James Meredith March that Dr. King was leading as it went through Senatobia. King apologized to those gathered for not wearing a tie while in the pulpit, but he had come to the area to lead marches and not funerals.



Silent Grove Missionary Baptist Church 709 First Street, Marks

Eudora AME Zion Church 301 Martin Luther King Drive, Marks

Dr. King spoke at both of these churches in the spring of 1968 to rally support for the Poor People's Campaign (PPC). The Eudora Church also provided meeting space and prepared hot meals for Freedom Riders and PPC organizers.



Cotton Street Neighborhood Sims and Cotton Streets, Marks



This area is where Dr. King visited an impoverished family, getting to their home by boat since the road was under water. He was overcome with emotion and wept after seeing the conditions in which the family lived, and many say this began his transformation into a warrior on poverty after realizing that the father worked hard all day and it still wasn't enough to provide the basics for his family.



Mr. James Figgs (left) and Mr. Ned Gathwright are both natives of Marks who were influential in civil rights leadership and activities in the area.

Points of Interest



Quitman County Courthouse
220 Chestnut Street, Marks

The Quitman County Courthouse in Marks was constructed in 1910-11 and designed by the Chamberlin & Associates architecture firm in the Neoclassical style. It was designated a Mississippi Landmark in 1990.



Rosenwald School
450 Humphrey Avenue, Marks

This is one of the remaining African American High Schools in Mississippi, built in 1936 by the Rosenwald Fund.



Marks Hotel
100 East Main Street, Marks

The historic Savoy Hotel burned to the ground in the early 1930s. The Marks Hotel was built during this same era near the original site of the Savoy.



Quitman County First Hospital
Humphrey Avenue and
4th and 5th Street, Marks

The currently vacant site of 4.5 acres was the location of the Quitman County Hospital, built in 1918 by Dr. J. E. Furr. The birthplace of Frederick W. Smith, CEO and founder of FedEx, the building was destroyed by fire in the early 1960s.



**Shady Grove
Missionary Baptist Church**
1840 Riverside Road, Marks

African American church history in Marks began just after the Civil War with Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church in 1865. Shady Grove served as an elementary school from grades one through eight for the children of sharecroppers and plantation workers.

Illinois Central Coaling Tower
640 Cutrer Avenue, Lambert

In the heyday of rail traffic, locomotives were steam powered and fueled by way of structures such as this coaling tower in Lambert. The original one built in the 1800s was made of wood, but this concrete structure was built in the early 1900s and served its purpose until the mid-twentieth century when the fuel of choice became diesel. Because of the high cost of demolition, a few of these iconic towers remain in place and are often sought out by railfans for photo opportunities.



Music Trail Markers

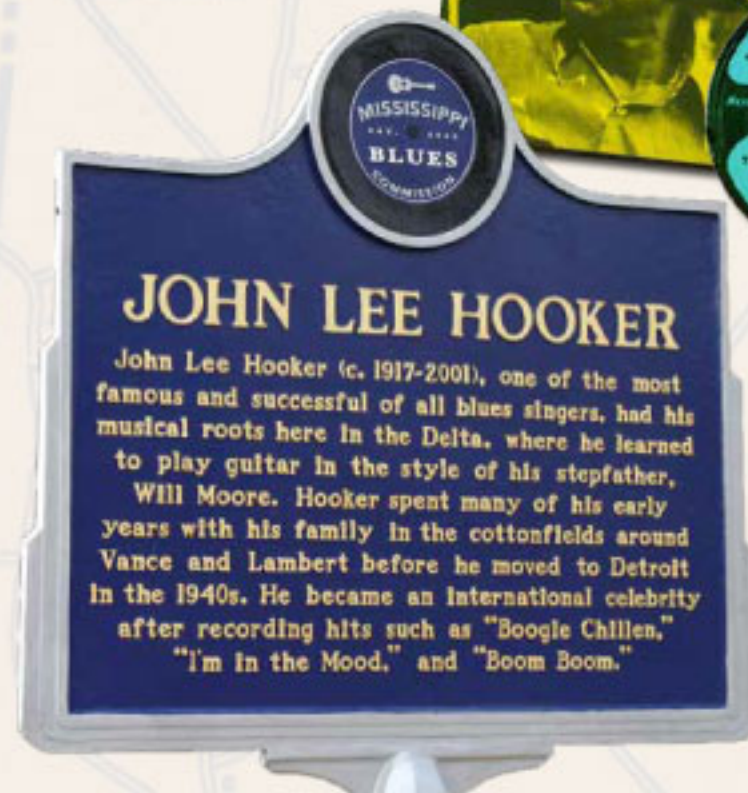
Visitors come from all over the world to see where some of their favorite musicians got their inspiration. Quitman County celebrates its musical heritage with both country and blues legends being recognized.

Country Music Trail

- 1. Charley Pride**
13735 Charley Pride Highway, Sledge
(Highway 3 at Joe Brown Avenue)
34.431439,-90.217093

Mississippi Blues Trail

- 2. Sunnyland Slim /
Quitman County Blues**
8th Street and Darby, Lambert
34.201607,-90.282522
- 3. John Lee Hooker**
Highway 3 at King Street, Vance
34.074568,-90.350208



Special Events

Marks' Mules and Blues Fest

Centered on the "Mule Train," this 2018 event will link the established Mississippi Blues and the Mississippi Freedom Trails and will mark the 50th Anniversary of the Poor People's Campaign. The Marks' Mules and Blues Fest is a tremendous opportunity for this region to showcase their historical treasures, artistic talents through music, art, literature, and their southern style homemade culinary skills.

Check our website for updated information: www.quitmancounty-ms.org



Above are additional photographs made by Dr. James Goldman in May 1968 of the Mule Train.

Sportsman's Haven

The forests and wetlands of this Mississippi Delta region offer unparalleled hunting and fishing resources for outdoor sportsmen. The Mississippi River demarcates the most important flyway for waterfowl in North America, while three rivers run through here, including the Coldwater, the Big and the Little Tallahatchie.

The O'Keefe Wildlife Management Area (WMA) represents one of the few remaining contiguous tracts of timber in the Mississippi Delta, and the area provides enjoyment to hunters and homes for game and non-game species of wildlife. Migratory songbirds and waterbirds are also seasonally abundant on O'Keefe WMA. For more information call (601) 453-5409 or see: www.mdwfp.com.



Amtrak Whistle Stop

Negotiations are underway for an Amtrak whistle stop on its “City of New Orleans” route between Chicago and New Orleans. The future flag stop will be located in downtown Marks. Plans include a covered platform with a waiting area and designated parking for passengers.

