

# Winn Parish



is located in north-central Louisiana, 50 miles north of Alexandria and 100 miles south-east of Shreveport. There are 972 square miles in the Parish of Winn.

Winn Parish was officially created by the state legislature in 1851 from lands originally belonging to the bordering parishes of Rapides, Natchitoches and Catahoula. Official organization was completed in 1852. In 1869 Winn Parish gave up part of its original area for the formation of a new southern neighbor, Grant Parish. Winnfield, the parish seat since its organization is located in the geographical center of the parish. The parish was named after Walter O. Winn, the representative who sponsored the legislation to establish the parish.

The Natchez Trace, or Old Buffalo Road, or St. Augustine Trail, or King's Highway, or Three Notch Trail, used by the Indians for centuries prior to white man's arrival provided the main springboard for permanent settlement and growth. This was a much traveled route across the southern part of the United States and was the vital connecting link in the commerce between the eastern part of the United States, Texas and Mexico.

When Louisiana seceded from the Union in 1861, Winn Parish, which voted against secession but followed the rest of the state in furnishing nine companies of men to the Confederacy and many to the Union cause as well. Following the Civil War with little or no organized government in much of the South, Winn was referred to by early historians as the "Free State of Winn."

Beginning around 1900, Winn Parish attracted many lumber companies, creating towns and logging camp communities. The growing, manufacturing and marketing of timber, in all forms, is still one of the principal occupations in the parish. The year 1900 was also the beginning of a new era for the agricultural interests of Winn Parish. In that year the Arkansas Southern Railroad was built from Ruston to Winnfield, being attracted by the increasing importance of lumber interests. Oil was discovered in the parish in the early 1930s, and with it a huge salt dome five miles west of Winnfield. These industries also provided an incentive for growth.

Winn Parish is not only the home of three Louisiana Governors, Huey P. Long, Earl K. Long, and O.K. Allen but Governors Jimmie Davis and John McKeithen's families resided in Winn Parish shortly before their births. Others have figured prominently in both the state and national political arena. Winn Parish has boasted a secretary of state, Will Strong, a state treasurer, A.P. Tugwell, several congressmen who were born in Winn, Riley J. Wilson, Speedy Long, Gillis Long, George Long and A. Leonard Allen, a U.S. Senator, Huey Long and a U.S. Senator-elect, O.K. Allen. Because of its political history, Winnfield was a natural selection as home of the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame.

