

Hartford and Geneva County - Heritage book

Hartford, population 2656, is in Geneva County in southeastern Alabama, just about 8 miles north of the Florida State line. It is at the junction of State Highways 52,123 & 167, only 12 miles east of Geneva (the county seat), and 21 miles west of Dothan. About 5 miles north is the Choctawhatchee River, which flows into the Gulf of Mexico. The climate is classified as humid subtropical, with warm summers and mild winters. Winter snows are exceedingly rare.

Hartford was incorporated in 1896, and the railroad arrived in 1900, which helped the town become known for its pine timber and turpentine industries. Many fine homes built from the yellow heart pine remain standing today. The first major cash crop was cotton, followed by peanuts, soybeans, corn, oats, wheat, vegetables, cattle and calves, hogs and poultry. Agriculture remains the primary industry contributing to the economy of the county, with poultry now the leading moneymaker. Many farms diversify. The traditional crops are augmented by several local mills busily processing peanuts and peanut products, fertilizers, and feeds. Aquiculture and bait farming are also rapidly growing sources of revenue for the area.

Geneva is a fascinating place during the last weekend in April, when it celebrates its popular Festival on the Rivers, at the confluence of the two rivers that flow through the country. To share in the excitement that includes everything from canoe and road races to beauty contest, sky diving and professional entertainment. Ten miles NW of Geneva is the 75 acre public Geneva County lake, the historic Big Oak Tree, a fine new golf course, and other places and sights of interest.

Geneva's industrial products include wholesale foods, clothing, tools, printed materials, bleachers, and ready-mix concrete. Samson has several industries, including a plastic pipe company. Also adding to employment advantages are city and county government offices, utility companies, and educational facilities, among others.

Transportation is provided by an excellent highway network that connects with 1-10, which is only 20 miles south of Hartford. Geneva County has an airfield that accommodates small jet planes, and commercial airport is located in Dothan. A number of motor freight lines service Hartford and the county. A port on the navigable Chattahoochee River is 40 miles away at the Columbia State Dock.

There is always something to do and see in Geneva County. Hartford is proud of its Hometown Holiday Festival held on the second Saturday in December, a time of entertainment and the display of arts and crafts. Samson is the site of the Geneva County Fair

in October, complete with parade, carnival and of course the exhibits and contests. The town also has an interesting museum. Slocomb entertains with annual Tomato Festival held in June, and its Heritage House Museum is well worth a visit.

Hartford is considered to be the Sports Center of Geneva County. Three of its hometown athletes have achieved fame. In 1972, famed pitcher Early Wynn was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In 1934, Millard "Dixie" Howell was the first name to the National Football Hall of Fame, and later to the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. In 1976, Emmett Strickland was inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. The town is proud of its recreational park, which has 3 softball fields, 3 tennis courts, a basketball court, equipped playground, picnic pavilion, concession stand, conference room, and equipment.

The business and social activity of Hartford still centers around its square, a beautiful green lawn with many pecan trees. The focal point is a graceful fountain depicting a curly-headed youth and long-legged water bird. Residents have treasured this lovely fountain for nearly 100 years. Hartford has always been a stable community offering the best of small-town living. Many descendants of early leading families still make their homes here. Of course, some modern changes have been made over the years, making Hartford a fine combination of progressive community with an eye toward the future, and a reflective community with a deep regard for its historic past.

The fisherman finds profitable pleasure in the rivers and lakes, which are from 12 to 120 miles away, providing the best in both fresh-water and saltwater fishing. Party boats can be chartered at Panama City or Destin, Florida, for deep sea fishing excursions on the Gulf of Mexico.

Hunters are amply rewarded almost anywhere in the region. Doves, quail, ducks, and turkey are abundant, and deer are especially numerous.

Nearly every property in Geneva County is within a 10 to 45 minute drive of Dothan, a city of 50,000 with many shopping, entertainment and employment opportunities. Dothan is proud of the "Highlands" - one of several Robert Trent Jones Golf Trails scattered across Alabama. Also, there is a VA Medical facility in Dothan as well as two of the latest in technology hospitals. Fort Rucker Military Base is 10 to 30 minutes away. A scenic drive of only an hour or so will take you to the sugar-white beaches of the Gulf of Mexico, including the Miracle Strip between Fort Walton and Panama City, noted as the most beautiful of all Florida beaches.

Hartford is an attractive town with modern stores, municipal services, and sound Financial institutions. Its homes are well kept, its churches are many, and there is a conspicuous spirit of civic pride among its friendly residents. The county provides a fine educational system from kindergarten through high school. Several two-year and four-year colleges and universities are within 125 to 200 miles of the county. Ample medical facilities are provided by Hartford Retirement Village, Wiregrass Nursing Home in Geneva, and Wiregrass Hospital, which offers the latest in technology and services in a pleasant rural setting - also rated in the top 10 of the state. *Submitted by: The book committee.*