

Hope, Arkansas

Welcome to Hope, Arkansas, a city full of heritage and history as rich as its soil. Hope is a city economically founded by brick making, birthplace of one of our nation's former presidents, and known for producing some of the largest specimens of watermelon in the world.

The rich clay soil, south of Hope, has been used for many years to produce pottery and bricks. In May of 1901, Norris P. O'Neal traveled to Hope to create Hope Brick Works. The company manufactured bricks for nearly a century, producing its last brick in November 2000. In January 2001, Hope Brick Works was sold. Like concrete to a house, bricks have given Hope a solid foundation upon which to thrive.

In addition to its brick basis, Hope is the birthplace of the 42nd President of the United States. President Clinton was born William Jefferson Blythe III on August 19, 1946, in Hope, Arkansas, just three months after his father died in a traffic accident. His widowed mother remarried a few years later and the family relocated to Hot Springs. During his high school years he took his stepfather's family name, Clinton. Interestingly enough, two men from Hope, Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty and Vincent Foster, Jr., would join Clinton in his White House Administration. Clinton's original home, maintained by the William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Foundation, continues to be visited by tourists from all over the world. When President Clinton accepted his nomination at the 1992 Democratic National Convention, he was quoted saying, "I still believe in a place called Hope." Hope has since used this as an unofficial motto.

Hope is also known for growing and showcasing some of the largest watermelons around. Several of the melons have even been added to the Guinness Book of World Records. The last record was set by Lloyd Bright in 2005 with a 268.8 pound watermelon. The city's watermelon roots began in the early 1920s when John S. Gibson started a watermelon-growing contest to promote the economy. In 1926, the first Watermelon Festival was held and it continues to be celebrated to this day during the second week of August. The watermelon has inspired Hope's official slogan: A Slice of the Good Life.

Hope's rich history, along with its obviously rich soil, has made this small city a famous tourist attraction. Take time to walk around the city, and while you're at it, try a slice of the celebrated watermelon and experience what Hope claims to be the good life.

Source(s):

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