

## HATTIESBURG ZOO IN KAMPER PARK HISTORY

In 1902, John Kamper deeded 40 acres of land to several persons as trustees for the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). This land was A . . . to be improved and used as a public park, to be known and, designated Kamper Park. In 1908, the UDC transferred the same land to the City of Hattiesburg and reiterated the requirement that the park be known as Kamper Park. The UDC and the City of Hattiesburg were to each get fifty percent of all revenues derived from use of the park. The Park Commission was established, which consisted of the Mayor and five citizens, on the part of the city and 6 UDC members who all acted conjointly in all matters pertaining to the control and management of Kamper Park. On September 1, 1913 Kamper Park officially opened as a public park.

On August 31, 1949 a Quit Claim Deed was filed, which included these changes to the previous deed: all revenues derived from use of the park to be placed in the account of the Kamper Park Fund for use by the City of Hattiesburg to maintain and improve the park; a fee of \$100.00 was established to be paid to the UDC every year for 99 years; only non-profit organizations could use the park; the park commission remained the same. This Park Commission was later renamed Kamper Park Advisory Board.

The zoo officially opened Easter Sunday, 1950. The Lion's Club donated a pair of lions in 1954, in 1958 sponsored the drive to get an elephant then shortly afterward donated llamas, elk, buffalo, and an African white goat. The zoo at Kamper Park is only one of several recreational facilities located at the park. The other amenities are a baseball diamond, a walking track, six tennis courts, shelters and pavilion, and a handicap accessible playground.

The Hattiesburg Zoological Society was established by Ordinance No. 2288, enacted 2-24-88, of the City of Hattiesburg, which consisted of 13 members, all appointed by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council. These members acted in an advisory capacity regarding planning, funding, construction, maintenance, and operation of the zoo at Kamper Park.

In 1989, the City of Hattiesburg, hired a person to implement a master plan for the zoo in Kamper Park. Later that year, the city council approved the master plan. In 1990, the gibbon exhibit was opened to the public, followed by the campaign to raise funds for new tiger and lemur exhibits. The tiger exhibit opened in February 1992.

It was determined that a need existed for a group to be formed allowing interested citizens to take an active part in the future of the zoo. Since the original 13 member Hattiesburg Zoological Society could not be expanded, Ordinance No 2403 changed the name to the Hattiesburg Zoological Advisory Board to fit their role more adequately as advisor to the Mayor.

In the fall of 1992, work began to establish the Hattiesburg Zoological Society as a non-profit organization. At this time the city council approved the name change of Kamper Park Zoo to the Hattiesburg Zoo at Kamper Park. Bice Advertising designed a new logo for the zoo and the society. In March 1993, Paul Laughlin, Rick Bice, Everett Harris, Melanie Hunsberger, Andrew Wilson and Ted Tibbett met to draft a list of names of potential board members for the Hattiesburg Zoological Society. In May 1993 the Zoo Society received a 501C3 tax-exempt status by the State of Mississippi. By May of 1994, the society's membership had grown to 300 families.

Between May 1993 and fall of 1995, using the tax exempt status of the zoo society, donations were received to complete the parking area, refreshment center, lemurs (3/11/95), train

depot, prairie dog exhibit, the African Veldt (9/30/95), and the entrance pavilion (2/4/94), with the construction provided by the city of Hattiesburg.

The long-term combined efforts of the community, the society and the city working together for the benefit of the zoo paid off in the spring of 1995 when the state legislature approved \$1.6 million for materials and labor to complete the master plan. The Hattiesburg Convention Commission contributed \$250,000 in matching funds to acquire the state grant.

On January 7, 1997, Ordinance No. 2577 abolished the Hattiesburg Zoological Advisory Board since the Hattiesburg Zoological Society and the Kamper Park Advisory Board fulfilled the duties of this board.

In October 1998, the parking lot, zoo perimeter fence, the Animal Care Center, Education Center, 2 restroom facilities, and the Train House were completed and dedicated. In September 2002 Adam's Place (handicap accessible playground) was opened. In October 2002, the first phase of the South American exhibit opened, which consisted of tapir/llama/capybara, waterfowl island, and howler/macaw exhibits. In August 2003, the new alligator exhibit opened.

On April 6, 2004 the City Council approved an ordinance to charge an admission fee for the zoo. The fees (\$2.00/adult, \$1.00/children and seniors, and children under 4 free) went into effect on May 8, 2004 with the grand opening of the second phase of South America, the jaguar exhibit.