

## Portrait ceremony scheduled for June 30 in Magnolia

June 26, 2017

Four former judges and a district attorney will be honored during a portrait hanging ceremony at 10 a.m. June 30 at the Pike County Courthouse in Magnolia.

The ceremony will honor the late Circuit Judge J. Gordon Roach Sr., the late Circuit Judge Joe N. Pigott, the late Circuit Judge Mike Smith, U.S. District Judge Keith Starrett and the late former U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton.

Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Jim Kitchens, a former district attorney in Pike County, will preside and act as master of ceremonies.

Pike County Circuit Clerk Roger Graves, who arranged the portrait ceremony, said, "It's just so important to know what these judges have done and what Dunn Lampton did as DA and federal prosecutor, and the impact they have had on the court system. I am thrilled to get to see this event transpire."

The portraits will hang in the Circuit Courtroom. Portraits of Judges Roach and Pigott will be moved from another location in the courthouse. The other portraits were recently donated by families.

"We are going to hang these in the courtroom because this is where they spent all of their time," Graves said.

Judge Pigott likely would have frowned on hanging portraits on the courtroom wall, Graves said, recalling an admonition years ago. "Judge Pigott told me when they renovated the courthouse that the paneling in the courtroom was very expensive. He pointed out how all the wood grains perfectly matched." Judge Pigott didn't want anything put on the walls "but he's not here to fuss at me. What went into purchasing that paneling is important, but it's more important to have these judges' and district attorney's portraits hanging in the courtroom where they spent so many days of their lives."

Justice Kitchens, who encouraged Graves to gather and display all of the portraits, noted that for a long time, all of the judges in the district were from Pike County. Circuit Judge Michael Taylor of Brookhaven, who was appointed to the court in 2005, was the first judge from outside Pike County to serve on the 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit bench since 1968. The 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court District now includes Lincoln, Pike and Walthall counties. Copiah County used to be included, but was moved to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Circuit Court District when it was created by judicial redistricting in 1994.

"I practiced before all of these judges," said Justice Kitchens. Lampton served as assistant district attorney under Kitchens when Kitchens was district attorney.

Judge Roach was appointed to the circuit bench in 1968 during the illness of Judge William Watkins of Tylertown, Justice Kitchens recalled. Judge Watkins died later that year, and Gov. John Bell Williams appointed Judge Roach to fill the unexpired term. Judge Roach was elected and served through 1974.

Judge Pigott's career of public service spanned nearly four decades. He served as Pike County prosecuting attorney 1955-1962. Gov. Ross Barnett appointed him as district attorney in 1963 in the 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit District. He served as district attorney for nine years, returning to full-time private law practice in 1972. He was elected circuit judge in 1974, and served until his retirement in June 1992.

Gov. Kirk Fordice appointed Judge Starrett July 1, 1992, to the judicial vacancy created by Judge Pigott's retirement. He served as a circuit judge of the 14<sup>th</sup> District for 12 ½ years.

President George W. Bush appointed him to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi on Jan. 1, 2005.

Judge Smith served as board attorney for the Pike County Board of Supervisors before being elected circuit judge in 1994. He took office in January 1995 in the newly created second judgeship for the district. He retired from the bench June 30, 2006. He died Jan. 1, 2014.

Lampton became an assistant district attorney of the 14<sup>th</sup> Circuit District in March 1976. Gov. William Winter appointed him interim district attorney when Kitchens stepped down as district attorney to return to private law practice in January 1981. Lampton was elected district attorney later that year and served until 2001, when President Bush appointed him as U.S. Attorney for the 45-county Southern District of Mississippi. Lampton retired Jan. 31, 2009. He died Aug. 17, 2011.

####