

Pinellas County

COUNTY SEAT: *Clearwater*

POPULATION: 268,100

INCORPORATED CITIES: *Belleair, Belleair Beach, Belleair Shores, Clearwater, Dunedin, Gulfport, Indian Rocks Beach, Kenneth City, Largo, Madeira Beach, North Redington Beach, Oldsmar, Pinellas Park, Reddington Beach, Reddington Shores, Safety Harbor, St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg Beach, South Pasadena, Tarpon Springs, Treasure Island.*



PINELLAS COUNTY is located on the gulf coast of Florida, and much of the county's 197,760 acres is contained in a small peninsula between Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The county is bounded on the north by Pasco County, on the east by Hillsborough County and Tampa Bay. The county's west shoreline is on the Gulf. Clearwater, the county seat, is situated near the center of the county on Clearwater Bay on the coast, 25 miles north of St. Petersburg and 25 miles west of Tampa.

The elevation of the county, recorded at Clearwater, is an average of 32 feet above sea level, with a maximum elevation of 75 feet above sea level. Average annual rainfall is 54.53 inches, the heaviest rain falling in July, August, and September. Annual average temperature is 73.5 degrees, with an average high of 82.7 degrees in July and an average low of 62.1 degrees in January. Rainfall and temperature vary throughout the county: St. Petersburg, average annual rainfall, 53.24 inches, annual average temperature 73.9 degrees; Tarpon Springs, av-

erage annual rainfall, 51.20 inches, annual average temperature, 71.6 degrees.

Tourists, commercial fishing, citrus, agriculture, and industry are the principal sources of income. One of the State's major year-round resort areas is at St. Petersburg, the county's largest city, located at the southern end of the county on Tampa Bay, with 23 miles of beaches nearby. St. Petersburg entertains annually about a quarter of a million visitors and winter residents. Tourists are a principal source of income to many other communities in the county. Clearwater has three miles of beaches within its city limits.

Pinellas County is one of Florida's leading commercial fishing areas. During 1956, 5,213,686 pounds of food fish were caught and marketed. In addition, 4,539 pounds of non-food fish and 61,969 pounds of crabs, lobsters, shrimp, and other miscellaneous seafoods were marketed here. For over fifty years Florida has been producing virtually all the sponges harvested in the United

States—and the largest sponge market in the world is located at Tarpon Springs.

Although Pinellas County is not primarily agricultural, many farm products are successfully and profitably grown. A 1954 survey showed 758 farms in the county embracing 56,955 acres. The greatest crop in the county is citrus, and in 1955-56 there were 14,000 acres planted to this crop. Oranges are grown here, as well as grapefruit, avocados, mangoes, and other semi-tropical fruit. Citrus is packed and shipped within the county, and citrus concentrate plants operate here. Every type of poultry production is found here, and ranching, with beef cattle and hogs, is on the increase. Gladioli growing is important in the Clearwater area. Kaolin, marl, sand, and mineral water are among the mineral resources. There are 75,100 acres devoted to commercial forest lands.

Pinellas County is rapidly developing into a highly skilled industrial area, and many national electronic concerns are located here. In addition, a wide variety of light industries are spreading throughout the county. The Atomic Energy Commission operates a plant here. One of the world's longest bridges, the Gandy Bridge (U. S. 92), connects the county with the opposite shore of Tampa Bay and furnishes a short route between St. Petersburg and Tampa. Courtney Campbell Parkway (U. S. 60), the world's first causeway of its kind, connects Clearwater with Tampa; public recreation facilities, shelters, and out-of-door ovens, dot the 10-mile length of the causeway. The Sunshine Skyway Bridge, one of the longest in the world, spans Tampa Bay, connecting Pinellas with Manatee County. Three major league baseball clubs hold spring training here, and Greyhound racing and other commercial and public attractions are available for the visitor.

Assessed valuation of Pinellas County was \$725,968,251 in 1956. Retail sales totalled \$378,364,000, and banking resources amounted to \$298,921,000. Effective buying income was \$1,699 per capita and \$417,534,000 for the county in 1956. Total annual wages were \$128,109,966 in 1956.

Practically every kind of salt-water fish can be found in the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay and passes between the Gulf and Bay, including salt-water mackerel, tarpon, snook, redfish, drumfish, kingfish, trout, cobia, jewfish, channel bass, flounder, shark, sheepshead, amberjack, and lady-fish. Fresh-water bass, perch, and bream and other varieties are caught in the many lakes in the county. Quail, duck, squirrel, and rabbit are found in this section.

U. S. Highway 19 is a through highway, crossing the county from north to south. Florida highways 55, 60, 584, 590, 580, 593, 686, 600, 693, 690, 687, 689, and 699 provide easy access throughout the county. Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Airline Railway provide rail service, and air transportation is provided by National Airlines Delta Airlines, Eastern Airlines, and Mackey Airlines. Greyhound Lines, and National Trailways provide bus service.

There are sixty-eight elementary and secondary schools in the county, with an enrollment of 42,008 pupils in 1956-57. There is a public junior college at St. Petersburg. The Stetson University Law School is located here. There are more than fifteen hundred hospital beds available. Three daily newspapers, the Clearwater Sun, St. Petersburg Times, and St. Petersburg Independent, are published in the county. There are eleven weekly papers: Clearwater News, Clearwater Observer, Dunedin Times, Gulfport Citizen, Largo Sentinel, Gulf Beach News, Safety Harbor Herald, Pinellas Record, St. Petersburg Record, and Tarpon Springs Leader.

There are approximately three hundred churches in the county and St. Petersburg ranks third in the nation in church attendance with 65 per cent of the population attending. There are numerous public and private golf courses and other recreational facilities. The county has eleven public libraries, and is noted for cultural activities, with two Little Theatre groups, two symphony orchestras, and free band concerts.

Pinellas County, formed from a part of Hillsborough County in 1911, was named by early Spanish explorers from "Pinta Pinal," meaning Point of Pines. Clearwater is built on the site of old Fort Harrison, established near the end of the Seminole War. The area was first explored by white men in 1528 when Panfilio de Narvaez explored this section. It was settled by permanent settlers in 1842.

Tarpon Springs was founded in 1882 by Anson P. K. Stafford, ex-governor of Arizona,

and received its name from the many tarpon seen swimming in the fresh-water spring bayou located in the heart of the city. Sponge fishing by hooking was introduced here in 1900 but it was not until 1905 that the first sponge divers were brought from Greece. A grapefruit tree, said to have been planted in the county in 1809 by a Spanish nobleman, is still living, a magnificent specimen with a limb stretch of 60 feet. It is the first grapefruit tree in Florida for which there is a written record of planting.

