

THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

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This column takes as its starting point the previous issue of the *Southern Register*. There we included the text of my speech on the occasion of the university's 175th anniversary in which I suggested that Barnard Observatory had never really been an observatory. But as a dear friend pointed out, that's just plain wrong. This building was home to the Physics and Astronomy Department, complete with *two* functioning telescopes, until 1939. How then could I possibly have said I work in an observatory that was never an observatory?

The most obvious explanation—a burst of ungovernable revisionist history—doesn't get it quite right. My observations about Barnard Observatory were less about the building and more about the story I was telling. I wanted to talk about the poignancy of working in a space that fell short of its creator's ambitions, to talk about the power of an imperfect vision both to humble and to inspire. In the interest of making a larger point, I told a story that was simultaneously untrue (the building *was* an observatory, after all) and true (it was never the observatory that Barnard aspired to create).

When I was a child, of course, I was cautioned against "telling stories"; that phrase meant fibbing, as in "don't tell me a story about how that gate got left open." Yet we make sense of the world around us by the stories we tell ourselves and each other. I was at a funeral recently where conversation turned to why a relative had parted from his church home in the late 1960s. Within thirty minutes of each other, two people told me definitively what had happened. The first said he left after the priest made derogatory comments about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the second said he was offended because the priest brought a cup of coffee into the nave. I have no problem accepting that both of those things are true: he did have a strong sense of social justice, and he was an absolute stickler for protocol.

For all of my twenty-six years at the University of Mississippi, it has been the case that two things have been simultaneously true: the campus is a warm, supportive space filled with a diverse group of eager, hard-working students,

faculty, and staff participating actively in our mission as a world-class research university, and it is an inwardly-focused space that depends upon outdated narratives of race and privilege to catalog who really belongs here. That old but powerful story was on full display when, on May 2, a small group of pro-Palestinian student protestors was met by a large crowd of their fellow students shouting them down, resorting in some cases to racial slurs and violent, intimidating gestures. I watched this encounter unfold, horrified, from an upstairs window in Bondurant Hall where I and several other unsuspecting colleagues were meeting. Interspersed with obscenities and chants of "USA" was the "Hotty Toddy" cheer, and to me—and certainly to the students at whom it was aimed—the message was clear: this is our campus, and you don't belong here.

The current situation in the Middle East understandably stirs strong emotions, but what I saw on May 2 wasn't a passionate conflict about US policy. The "counter-protesters" had no coherent agenda; certainly they weren't there to defend Israel. That the day's images and subsequent rhetoric of approval—traceable all the way to the top of state government—overlay so neatly the footage from 1962 is eerie and deeply troubling. Either people don't clearly recall our history or they absolutely do, and the latter is more terrifying. Equally troubling is that—despite the UM Creed, which safeguards the dignity of individual members of our community—the students doing the jeering clearly assumed campus culture would support their behavior. But racism and a healthy learning environment are actually two things that cannot coexist.

At the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, many of us feel a particularly urgent responsibility in such moments. "The South" is our business, and in the events of May 2, we recognize elements that are particular to the history of our region and our institution, even as they also reflect a broader national context. Despite summer's siren song, groups of faculty, staff, and graduate students have already met to discuss how we might share our expertise, our deep historical knowledge, and our interdisciplinary tools for studying the patterns that emerge in such charged moments. Classes in the humanities, the social sciences, and Southern Studies are vital in shaping how we interact with one another, especially when we witness people weaponizing "the South" of past eras to define the present. In response to such efforts we say simply: you can't have this campus. We care about it too much to let only one story stand.

See you in the fall.

Katie McKee

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REGISTER STAFF

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Graphic Designer: Susan Bauer Lee

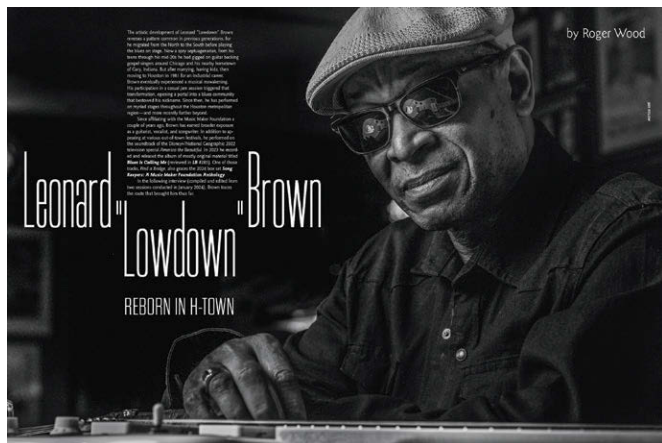
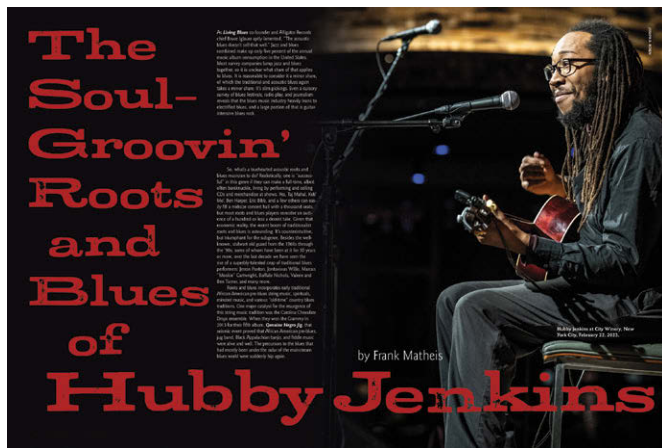
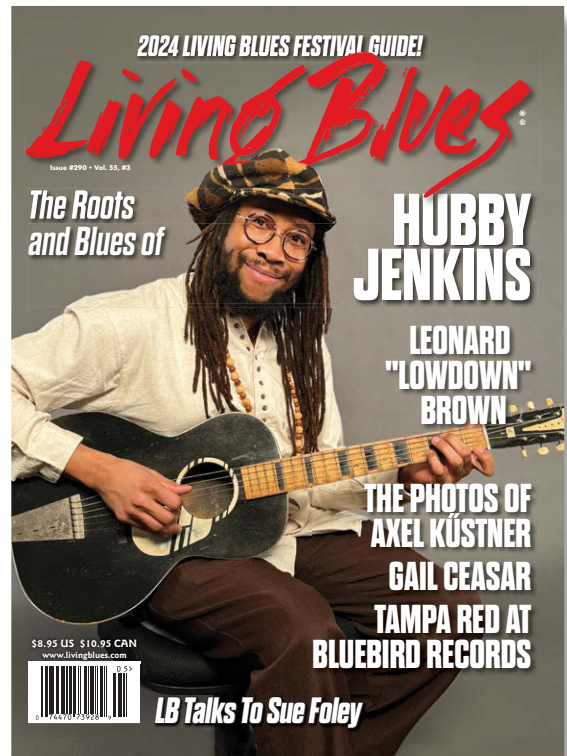
Living Blues News

This issue's cover artist, thirty-eight-year-old, New York-based Hubby Jenkins, is one of the rising wave of younger artists reinvigorating roots-based acoustic music and making it hip again. An early member of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, Jenkins has mastered several instruments and prewar styles, taking the sounds of the past and molding them into the future of acoustic blues. As blues master Phil Wiggins noted, "I absolutely love playing with Hubby."

With a name like Leonard "Lowdown" Brown, you've got to be good. And he is. Brown grew up in gospel, but after moving from Chicago to Houston in 1981 he started exploring the local blues scene. After mentoring from some of the local elders, Brown settled in as one of the top local players. On the heels of his first release in 2023, Brown is now ready to step out to a wider audience.

Photographer and blues researcher Axel Küstner first came to the United States from his native Germany in 1978 to explore the rural blues scene that remained in the Deep South. With sound engineer Siegfried A. Christmann and a portable recording machine, he crisscrossed the backroads of the South, recording and photographing dozens of traditional blues artists. Küstner recently shared his photo collection with *Living Blues*, and we are presenting a photo essay of some of his best work.

This issue's Let It Roll article looks at slide guitar master Tampa Red. One of the most popular and most recorded



prewar blues artists, Tampa had a string of hits. We take a look at his relationship with producer Lester Melrose and explore his October 11, 1937, recording session for Bluebird Records.

The blues festival season is kicking into high gear. Here in Mississippi, we just had Juke Joint Festival over in Clarksdale and there are dozens more events coming over the summer. Included in this issue is our big annual *Living Blues* Festival Guide with blues festivals from all over the nation. You can also go to our website for information on more than 130 international blues festivals and nearly 100 early season US festivals you can consider for next year.

It is *Living Blues* Awards time again! There is a sample ballot in the issue for the thirty-first annual awards. Please go to www.livingblues.com and vote for all your favorite artists and releases.

As I have been noting for several issues now, we are struggling to keep doing what we do for the blues world. Costs have gone through the roof and are not coming back down. Please consider donating to the *Living Blues* Foundation to ensure we can continue bringing you the blues like no one else does. We now offer the option of a recurring donation. You can set up a monthly, quarterly, or yearly gift. Please go to umfoundation.givingfuel.com/livingblues and make a donation to help us preserve another fifty-four years of the blues.

One of the last of the classic 1950s New Orleans-based blues artists (and one of the last bluesmen who released a 78 r.p.m.) has died. Clarence "Frogman" Henry, best known for his wonderful recording "Ain't Got No Home" died in New Orleans on April 7 at the age of eighty-seven. A full obituary will be in the next issue.

Brett J. Bonner

Introducing the

Bachelor of Arts in Southern Studies Graduates

Ridge Gibbs
Feagin Hardy
Alyssa Jordan
Drew McCrory
Brennan Seidel

Master of Arts in Southern Studies Graduates

Amireah Bishop
Max Conrad
Laura Conte
Jacob Fennell
free feral
Sarah Morgan Johnson
Julia Kraus
Cosmo McGee
Riley Moran
Fred Nettles
Caroline Nolte
Jalon Young

Master of Fine Arts in Documentary Expression Graduates

Michelle Bright
Lucy Gaines
Jai Williams



Prizes in Southern Studies

Graduate Achievement Award for the Humanities

Julia Kraus

Gray Prize for Outstanding Undergraduate Paper

Nia Brooks for “Dirty South Punks: Exploring Complex Identities” completed in Simone Delorme’s SST 402 class

Coterie Prize for Outstanding Undergraduate Paper

Emily Jenkins for “The Education of Joe Christmas: Lessons in Shame, Identity, and Self-Protection,” completed in Jay Watson’s ENG 460 class

Sue Hart Prize for the Best Work at the Intersection of Gender and Region

Feagin Hardy for her Honors College thesis, “Failures of Imagination: Womanhood and White Supremacy in the Interwar New South,” directed by Ryan Parsons

Peter Aschoff Award for a Study of Music

Jai Williams for her film *Big T. Williams/Delta Blues, Delta Blood*

Sarah Dixon Pegues Award for a Study of Music

Lucy Gaines for her film *AJ Haynes/Evidence*

Lucille and Motee Daniels Award for the Best Graduate Paper by a First-Year Student

Wayne Dowdy for “From Race Massacres to ‘Fiscal Irregularities’: Evolutions in Political Violence and the Reproduction of Planter Power in the Mississippi Delta,” completed in Jimmy Thomas’s SST 598 class

Ann Abadie Award for the Best Documentary Project

Julia Kraus for her MA thesis and accompanying podcast, “Mapping In/Exclusion: Queer Identity in Oxford,



JIMMY THOMAS

Left to right, from top: Max Conrad, Fred Nettles, Jacob Fennell, Feagin Hardy, Laura Conte, Lucy Gaines, Michelle Bright, Cosmo McGee, and Julia Kraus

2024 Graduates

Mississippi,” completed under the direction of Ryan Parsons

Lucille and Motee Daniels Award for the Best MA Thesis

Max Conrad for “Dixieland do Sul: Brazilian Racial Democracy and the Recontextualization of Transnational Confederate Symbols,” volume 1 in SST and volume 2 in Anthropology, directed by Marcos Mendoza

Outstanding MFA Award for the Best MFA Thesis Project

Michelle Bright for “Tennessee’s Mississippi: An Audio Documentary” completed under the direction of Andy Harper



Our Southern Studies students had a busy spring—and some will have a

busy summer—presenting their work at conferences.

Cosmo McGee

- “The Magnolia State of Mind: Mississippi’s Journey to Changing the Meaning of ‘Mississippi,’” Forum on Race and Ethnicity, University of Mississippi
- “The Most Southern Place on Earth? Finding and Deconstructing ‘The Mystique of the Delta,’” Southern Studies Conference, Auburn University at Montgomery

Jacob Fennell

- “American Addictions, American Revisions: Mississippi Lessons on National Nightmares in Kiese Laymon’s *Heavy: An American Memoir*,” Society for the Study of Southern Literature, Gulfport, Mississippi, 2024

Julia Kraus

- “Reflecting on the Art of the Unexpected,” Fall ’23 Sarahfest Artist-In-Residence Roundtable
- “Documenting Ex-/Inclusion: The Intersections of Queerness and Religion in Lafayette County,” Isom Student Gender Conference, University of Mississippi, 2024
- “Cat’s Search for Meaning,” Mississippi Philosophical Association Annual Conference, Columbus, Mississippi, 2024
- “From Chamoun’s to Cedars: Tracing Lebanese Immigrant Integration through Cuisine,” presented at the Auburn Southern Studies Conference, Montgomery, Alabama, and at the University of Mississippi Forum on Race and Ethnicity, 2024

Jai Williams

- “Hold Me Close, but Let Me Go: Exploring Black, Same-Sex Female Relationships in the Plantationocene and Beyond,” NYU Atlantic History Conference, 2024
- “Spatiality, Subtleties, and the Subversive Voice: Kara Walker’s *A Subtlety*, *Marvelous Sugar Baby* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*,” American Literature Association, Chicago, Illinois, 2024
- “This Land Is Our Land: The Erasure and Reclamation of Black Land Ownership in the US South,” Southeastern American Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, 2023

Laura Conte

- “A Post-Structural Reading of *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*,” Isom Student Gender Conference, University of Mississippi, 2024



JIMMY THOMAS

Shaping a Career and a Culture

Charles Reagan Wilson Accepts Lifetime Achievement Award

The Mississippi Historical Society presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Charles Reagan Wilson, retired University of Mississippi professor and former director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture (1998–2007), at the society’s annual meeting in February.

Wilson, who retired in 2014 after more than thirty-three years at the university, said the award is special because of his longtime involvement with the society. “I started attending the Mississippi Historical Society annual meetings almost as soon as I came to Mississippi in 1981,” he said. “I have very fond memories of those meetings and the people I met. I developed some deep friendships with other historians and people from other universities across the state and the South. For that organization to give me the award after being involved with it in so many ways over the years—it means all the more to me.”

Wilson led the Southern Studies academic programs from 1991 to 1998 and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture from 1998 to 2007. During that time, he helped establish both the Southern Foodways Alliance and the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, which has since changed its name to the Alluvial Collective.

Katie Blount, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, was in the second class of the Southern Studies master’s program back in the early 1980s. She called Wilson “one of our state’s most distinguished historians.” Wilson has a love of southern oddities, a fascination with death rituals, and a passion for teaching, Blount said. “Distinguished scholar, gifted writer, authority on southern culture and history, collector of gewgaws,

Charles Reagan Wilson gives an acceptance speech during the Mississippi Historical Society’s annual meeting, where he was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award.



PHOTO BY SRIJITA CHATTOPADHYAY/OLE MISS DIGITAL IMAGING SERVICES

entranced by death—I still don’t feel like I’ve given you a full picture of the mind of Charles Wilson, but I’ve done the best I can,” she said.

Wilson has written several books on southern history and culture, but he said that his proudest achievement is his work on the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, an encompassing look at what cultures, traditions, and history make up the southern identity. “That encyclopedia was our signature piece, announcing to the world that we were an institute that was serious about looking at the South and about providing research and teaching,” Wilson said. “The South has had a rich history, and out of that has come a rich culture, world-class artists, musicians, chefs, writers. It’s important to study this rich heritage to see where we are today and to see where we want to go in the future.”

After the first encyclopedia, published in 1989, Wilson swore to never work on another encyclopedia

project. In the early 2000s, however, he and colleagues at the Center and at the University of North Carolina Press began work on *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* that, by the publication of the first volume in the series in 2013, had grown to include twenty-four volumes on different subjects.

The encyclopedia shaped not only Wilson’s leadership on campus for nearly a decade, but influenced the Center itself, he said. “That encyclopedia really established the Center’s approach, its focus on history, music, art, and culture,” Wilson said. “With the Center, I hope it will continue to be a place where people can come to cross boundaries and lines that can divide us. I hope the Center will always be a place where people with all sorts of views will be able to come together and promote a better future for the South.”

Clara Turnage

Center Faculty and Staff Receive Awards from the College of Liberal Arts

Students, teachers, staff, retirees, and alumni were honored by the University of Mississippi College of Liberal Arts at a campus ceremony on April 25.

“The College of Liberal Arts awards ceremony celebrates some of the outstanding individuals who make our university a special place,” said Lee M. Cohen, dean of liberal arts. At the ceremony, Cohen noted, “Today we honor some of the best the College has to offer. The College of Liberal Arts is a thriving group of faculty, staff, students, and alumni who play a pivotal role in advancing the path of excellence of the University of Mississippi. I am grateful for the opportunity to gather and celebrate.”

In addition to the awards such as the Cora Lee Graham Award for Outstanding Teaching of First Year Students, Liberal Arts Outstanding Teacher of the Year, and University of Mississippi Humanities Teacher of the Year, a tenured awardee is recognized for exemplary performance in sustaining communities, through research, scholarship, and/or creative achievement at the national/international level while serving as a faculty member at the University of Mississippi. This year, the Sanford and Susan Thomas Senior Professor Research Award in the Social



Left to right: Bert Neal, Kell Kellum, Afton Thomas, and Jimmy Thomas (not pictured: Rebecca Lauck Cleary)

Sciences went to Jodi Skipper, associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies.

Faculty are not the only ones recognized. Staff members also received awards, including the Teamwork Award, presented to a group within the College that has demonstrated exceptional collaboration and teamwork. This year, the teamwork award went to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture’s staff: Rebecca Lauck Cleary, communications specialist; Kell

Kellum, operations assistant; Bert Neal, administrative coordinator; Afton Thomas, associate director for programs; and Jimmy Thomas, associate director for publications.

“Our exceptional staff uphold the mission of the College in countless ways. They support and advise our students and work alongside faculty and administrators to provide the expertise necessary for the day-to-day functioning of a complex university, which is vital to our success,” Cohen said.



John Rash and Melanie Ho

ANDY HARPER

KATIE MCKEE

From Consumption to Production

Southern Studies Seminar Students Showcase Capstone Projects

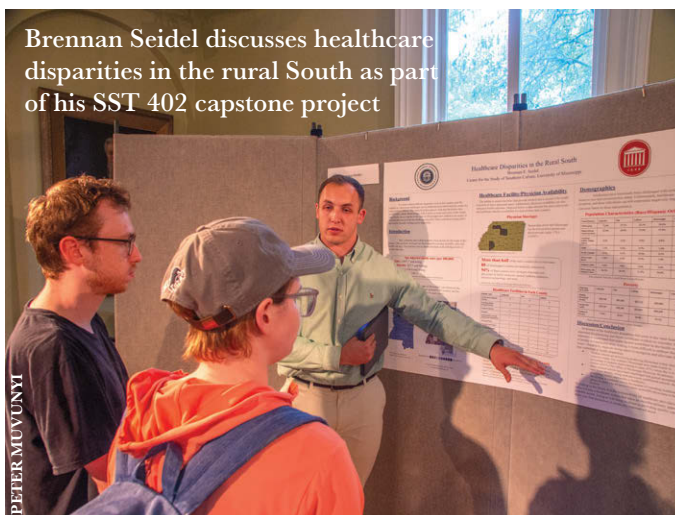
For the first time, students in Darren Grem’s SST 402 seminar class showcased the projects that they’ve worked on this semester. Held in the foyer of Barnard Observatory, ten students had a wide variety of ideas about southern culture.

For their project, Abby Stewart and Avery Agee, both from Atlanta, included photographs and an interview with Dennis Van Oostendorp, owner of Oxford restaurant the Luv Shak, established in 2015. “We were looking for a restaurant that wasn’t well known in Oxford, and we honed in on the Luv Shak,” Stewart said. Their poster display featured a selection of images highlighting the restaurant’s Italian-inspired cuisine as well as personal testimonies from customers.

Margi Troxler of Knoxville showcased her project, “Southern Journalism(s): A Comparative Analysis of *The Bitter Southerner* and *Southern Living*.” “I focused on the how the magazines’ writing is for different audiences, and how even their podcasts have different styles,” Troxler said.

Vaughn Beyer showed how Lynyrd Skynyrd has left a lasting impact on southern culture, from statues to landmarks dedicated to the rock band.

Grem said he hoped this event taught them about public engagement instead of just them simply writing a paper that only a professor would see. “They all showed growth, and I wanted them to transition from academic consuming to academic producing,” Grem said. “There is a short, written component, but the public presentation was the largest part of the project, which made them



Brennan Seidel discusses healthcare disparities in the rural South as part of his SST 402 capstone project

think about how they could effectively convey it to the public.”

Will Walker, J. P. Hogan, and Ridge Gibbs decided on a photographic essay about duck hunting, with the goal of illuminating the roots of duck hunting in the South, showcasing their passion and love for the sport.

Jacy Waltman, a marketing and communications major who is minoring in Southern Studies, worked on a project titled “Memory and Modernity: Shubuta, Mississippi, and the Myth of a ‘Ghost Town.’” “I looked at urbanization and industrialization and the perception versus reality of a community,” Waltman said “I really enjoyed Dr. Grem’s class, and it really gave me a creative outlet and challenged me intellectually.”

Kylie McGlocklin and Gracie Miester delved into southern identity and social dynamics as they explored tradition and modernity in the Reese Witherspoon film *Sweet Home Alabama*. “We picked apart the northern and southern stereotypes, and how Hollywood has portrayed the South in inaccurate ways,” Miester said.

Allison Barnett produced the twenty-six-minute documentary film *Keeping*

Ghosts Alive, about nearby Holly Springs. She looked at the town from the perspective of its race relations, as the birthplace of civil rights activist Ida B. Wells, and as the site of Jim Crow brutalization. “I really enjoyed this class because it was a lot of independent study and it was exciting to be able to play to my strengths,” said Barnett, who interviewed four Holly Springs residents to discuss how they see the town.

Brennan Seidel explored healthcare disparities in the rural South by studying three counties in Mississippi and investigating the challenges they face, with the hopes of sparking discussion about those challenges.

Kate Ridenour asked the question “Is out-of-state bad for Mississippi?” and assessed recent enrollment trends at the university. Her answer: “No, but it could get bad.” She proposed turning Baptist Memorial Hospital into a teaching hospital and requiring those students to teach here, which would create jobs and pay for their education.

Merritt Tompkins spoke with people in a nearby church for her project, “‘Walk in Love’: A Study on the People of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Water Valley, Mississippi.” She attended church services there for two months and came to understand their uniqueness as a “rural progressive church and the ways in which their members are deeply involved in their community.”

This is the last time SST 402 will be offered, as SST 401 will be offered year-round starting this fall with three sections taught by various professors.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Keeping the Blues Alive

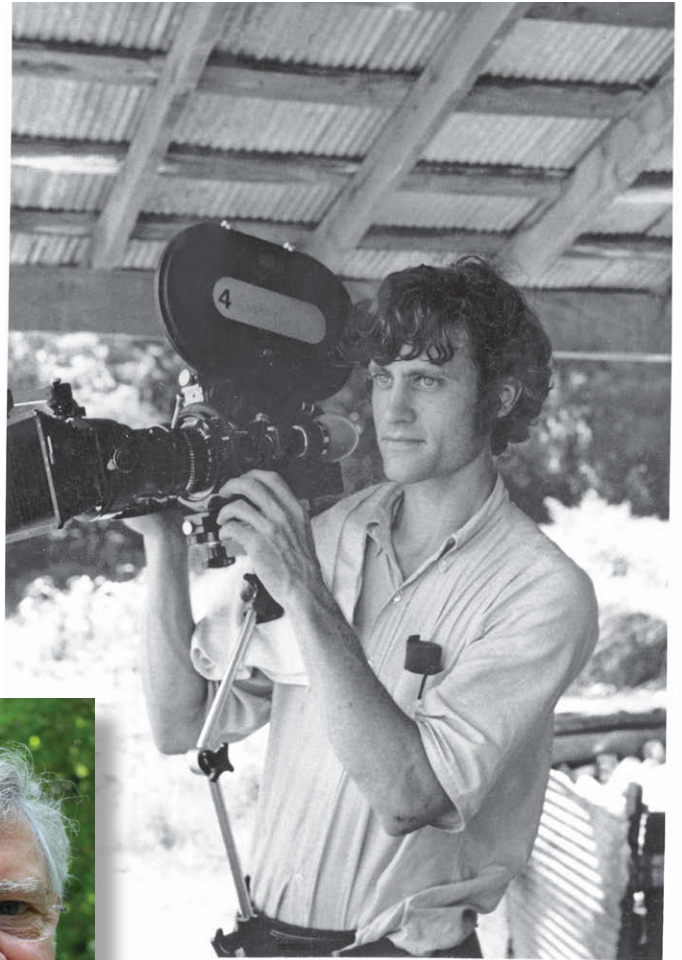
Bill Ferris Celebrated as New Blues Hall of Fame Inductee

This year's inductees into the Blues Hall of Fame's five categories—Performers, Non-Performing Individuals, Classics of Blues Literature, Classics of Blues Recording (Single), and Classics of Blues Recording (Album)—demonstrate how the blues intersect with a wide variety of American music styles: soul, blues, R&B, and rock 'n' roll. The new Blues Hall of Fame inductees aren't just exceptional musicians; they also are educators, innovators, entrepreneurs, and activists determined to leave their mark on the world.

This May, the Blues Foundation in Memphis, Tennessee, inducted the Center for the Study of Southern Culture's founding director, William Ferris (1978–1998), into the Blues Hall of Fame. Ferris has long been a major contributor to the blues in his roles as an author, folklorist, professor, lecturer, and administrator. He began recording, photographing, and filming blues musicians, gospel singers, and storytellers in Mississippi in the 1960s, creating a historic body of work that has since been the basis for many books, films, university classes, and multimedia presentations.

Ferris documented the music and stories of local residents on his family's farm in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and later did extensive fieldwork elsewhere in the Delta. Few of the musicians he met had ever recorded or been interviewed before. Notable among them was Leland bluesman James "Son" Thomas, who became an icon in Mississippi and internationally famous for his Delta blues and clay folk sculptures. While other researchers often focused on artists' musical careers or techniques, Ferris sought to examine the lifestyles, folk traditions, and stories of his subjects and the meaning of the music in their lives and in their communities.

Ferris earned several college degrees, including a PhD in folklore from the University of Pennsylvania, and taught at Jackson State University and Yale University in the 1970s. He cofounded the Center for Southern Folklore in Memphis with Judy Peiser and directed the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, where he also hosted the *Highway 61* radio show and released recordings on the Southern Culture label. Through his negotiations, the university acquired *Living Blues* magazine, as well as donated materials, including B. B. King's record collection, which forms the core of the J. D. Williams Library's Blues



Archive. He served as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities from 1997 to 2001 and took a position at the University of North Carolina in 2002 as a professor and associate director of the Center for the Study of the American South.

The Blues Hall of Fame selected Ferris's first book, *Blues from the Delta*, as a classic of blues literature in 1998. His 2009 work, *Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues*, expanded on this study. The Dust-to-Digital box set *Voices of Mississippi: Artists and Musicians Documented by William Ferris* won a Grammy Award in 2019 and has led to several *Voices of Mississippi* multimedia presentations around the country, with live music from Bobby Rush, Sharde Thomas, Luther and Cody Dickinson, and others.

The Blues Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony was held this year in conjunction with the Blues Music Awards.

EXCAVATING THE PAST

Class Offers Students Opportunities to Teach, Discover History of Holly Springs

University of Mississippi students are getting a firsthand look at discovering and sharing archeological findings with the community through the annual Behind the Big House event.

In April, students who enrolled in ANTH 415: Historical Archaeology helped guide more than five hundred students through the historic Hugh Craft House's site excavation in Holly Springs as a part of this year's Behind the Big House program. "It's important for students and young people to have access to these historical sites and learn about them," said Jodi Skipper, associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies. "We want the local community to be involved, but why would the community want to preserve this history if they don't know about it? That's why they need this kind of access."

Behind the Big House began in 2012 to include stories about slave houses

in Holly Springs during the annual Pilgrimage Tour of Historic Homes and Churches, where visitors gather to learn about antebellum and historic homes and structures. This year's event lasted three days and hosted K–12 students from five schools in the surrounding area. Students from Southern Studies, anthropology, and other majors across campus also volunteered to help guide the event.

The UM students helped set up informational tables and posters, showed findings, and displayed historically accurate items such as children's toys and tools. "It was really fun to see the different interest levels between the students," said Cecilia Pullman, a senior anthropology major from New Albany who created corn husk dolls for the event. "They seemed really into it. I think that's why this is an important project: people can just walk up and learn something new. I hope it planted

a seed, and now that they've seen the Craft House, I hope they get even more curious."

Brook Eisenhuth, a junior anthropology major from Dickson, Tennessee, and Wes Newton, a senior anthropology major from Guntown, Mississippi, showed visitors the excavation units where researchers have found artifacts. "I loved seeing the community engagement from Holly Springs," Newton said. "It was really nice to see the community come together like that for this project."

Skipper and associate professor Carolyn Freiwald joined the Behind the Big House team in 2013, where they have since uncovered pottery, bones, and other evidence of life in the 1800s. Ron Counts, associate director of the Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute and research associate professor of geology and geological engineering, has helped conduct geophysical surveys to help researchers see remains of buildings that are no longer there. "This year he also brought a drone for some aerial photography, much to the delight of the schoolkids taking the tour on Thursday," Freiwald said. "This was his third year, and it's fantastic instruction for our students and cross-campus collaboration."

Students who helped coordinate the event spent the rest of the semester learning about and categorizing the artifacts—such as animal bones, pottery, and nails—that have been found on the property. "This class gives them the opportunity not just to have an applied project, but to also learn several skills and have hands-on work in the field," Skipper said. "It's field experience in a class, and some folks don't get that type of experience until their master's program."

Clara Turnage



Wes Newton (center), a senior anthropology major from Guntown, stands near a dig site at the Hugh Craft House's enslaved quarters and kitchen excavation site in Holly Springs during the annual Behind the Big House program.

From Cooking to the Classroom

Alexandra Santiago Keeps Passion for Food Alive in Academic Pursuits

After more than eighteen months of building a business, Alexandra Santiago made the decision to close her popular “Tex-Mex-issippi” restaurant, Sleepy Cactus, in order to return to school.

In December 2023 she announced on Instagram that her breakfast tacos—with their distinctive gold foil wrappers—would be available at Heartbreak Coffee on the Oxford Square. Meanwhile, she would be busy a half-mile away, completing a bachelor’s degree in university studies at the University of Mississippi.

It was a big shift for Santiago, who moved from San Antonio, Texas, to Oxford in 2009 to study early childhood education. But she soon left school to pursue her passion in the kitchens of some of Oxford’s most famous restaurants.

Having learned how to cook alongside her grandmother as a toddler, and then later from cookbooks and food television, Santiago was a quick study when it came to the culinary arts. Her education courses, on the other hand, had been a struggle.

Santiago’s academic counselor let her retake a required—but dreaded—college algebra course multiple times, even after she passed. At the time, Santiago reflected, “There was no ‘Hey, do you maybe want to explore something else that you might like more than education? Which you seem to hate?’”

It wasn’t until she saw her partner, Kakky Brown, return to school for a master’s degree in counseling, that Santiago realized just how close she had been to finishing her own degree. She had only twenty-seven credit hours left to graduate, which she could earn in less than a year



Alexandra Santiago

through the university’s Complete to Compete program.

Not only that, but watching Brown pursue her master’s made school actually seem appealing. It signaled a major change in her outlook. “I had grown up,” Santiago said. After twelve years working in the service industry—not to mention starting and managing her own restaurant—Santiago knew she had the drive and determination to accomplish whatever she set her mind to. She also had a better sense of what she actually liked.

“While working at City Grocery Group, I participated in two years of the Southern Foodways Alliance’s fall symposium, and I started to learn about how cool the food was in the South because of the diversity in the region,” she said. “I listened to SFA’s podcast, I got their magazine, and I read their books. I had been doing my own independent study of southern food for years.”

That independent study led her to

coursework at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Having graduated this May, she plans to start the master’s program in Southern Studies in the fall with the hope of working with the SFA as a way to keep thinking about food when she’s not in a kitchen.

In addition to two courses for the education concentration for her bachelor’s degree, Santiago has taken courses in gender studies, Southern Studies, and studio arts.

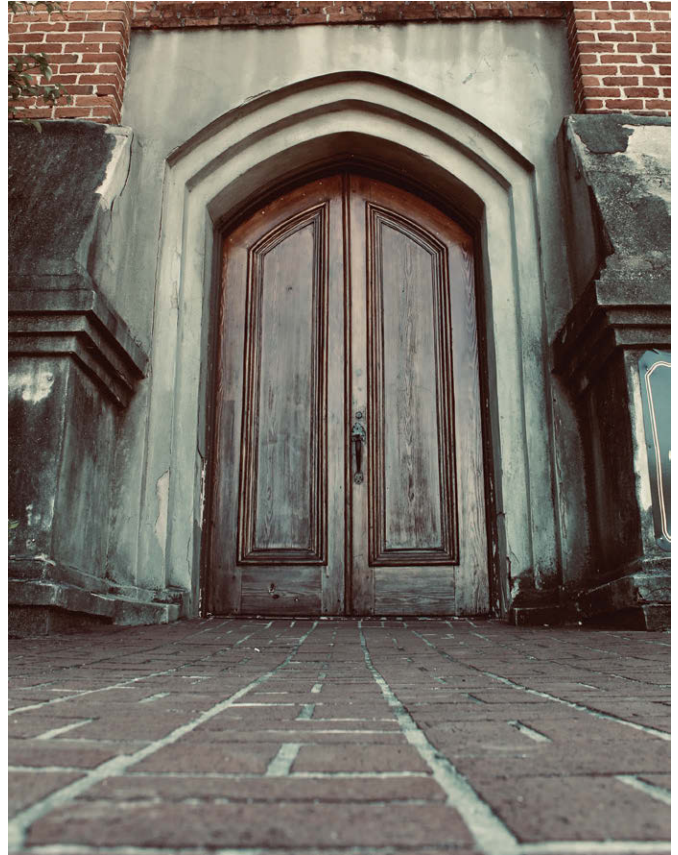
Center director and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies, Kathryn McKee, highlighted Santiago’s characteristic curiosity and passion for learning: “Alexandra stayed after class the other day to continue the discussion,” she said. “I said, ‘Are you working on a project about this?’ Her answer: ‘No, I just like to know things.’ What better response could we hope for from any student, current or future?”

Aileen Lambert

Photographing the South

SST 534: Documentary Photography

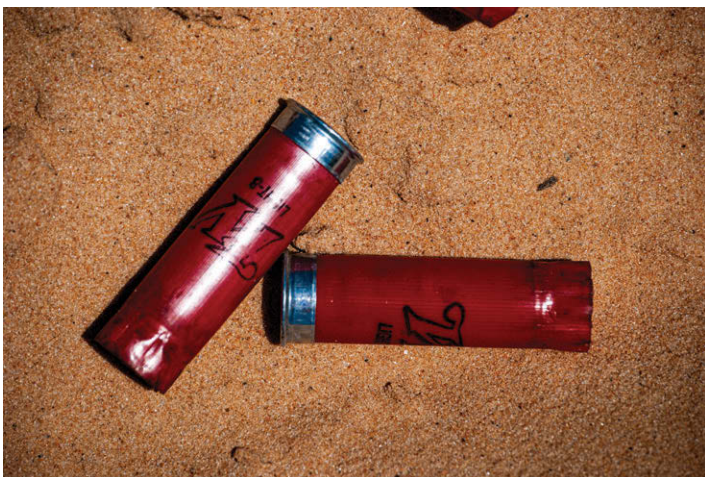
During the spring semester, students enrolled in the course SST 534: Documentary Photography with Brooke White had the opportunity to explore different forms of documentary expression. The course culminated in a portfolio of documentary photographs that focused on the contemporary South. Throughout the course, students examined the idea of “place” and took photographs in and around Oxford and Lafayette County. Each participant was encouraged to discover their own visual language and to convey their impressions of the US South. The exhibition showcased the work of eight students and displays the diversity of visual approaches they took to capture their impressions of the region. Student photographers in this exhibition included Alyssa Adair, Bill Daley, Madelyn Godfrey, Anna Morrison, Baxter Petersen, Jackson Steinert, and Olivia Whittington.



Door, by Alyssa Adair



Flower Cuttings, by Angel Morgan

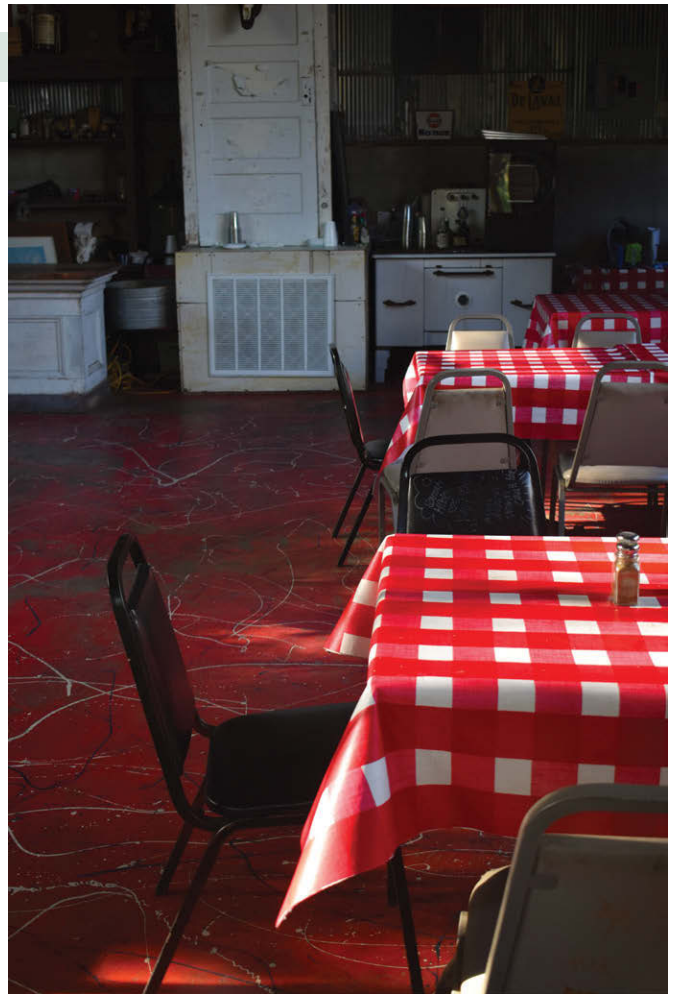


Untitled, by Bill Daley

(left) 12 Gauge Winchester, by Baxter Peterson



Broken House, by Madelyn Godfrey



From the series *Colors of Taylor*, by Anna Morrison



Untitled, by Jackson Steinert



Untitled, by Olivia Whittington



MAGGIE JORDAN

A Literary Mind

Jacob Fennell Earns Southern Studies Master's Degree

Jacob Fennell came to the Southern Studies master's program with an interest in literary studies, and during his two years here, he has flourished into a real scholar.

Fennell, from Gulfport, Mississippi, earned a public policy leadership degree from the university in 2022. Toward the end of his senior year, graduate school popped up on his radar because he developed curiosity about academia. "I wanted to give myself the opportunity to explore that interest in a real, rigorous way," Fennell said. "Given the interdisciplinary study that the Center for the Study of Southern Culture promotes and fosters, I knew that it would be an

excellent place for me to learn and to grow while maintaining my existing roots in Oxford."

At first, Fennell wasn't quite sure what direction his studies would take him. However, in a special graduate seminar class co-taught by Katie McKee and adjunct professor Marc Aidinoff, he learned about the concept of New Southern Studies, a field actively invested in southern texts and cultures as nonexceptional and lodged within greater geopolitical contexts.

That class was a comprehensive course focusing on different ways of studying and understanding the South. It's where he formulated the core ideas of his master's thesis,

"Mississippi's America: Late Southern Writing on National Themes," in which he focused on three contemporary Mississippi authors: Kiese Laymon, Jesmyn Ward, and Mary Miller. "From there, I knew I wanted to examine their literary constructions of the South as a critical political frame for the United States as a whole," Fennell said. "The process of writing my thesis first required rigorous reading and notetaking for both those primary texts and a wide range of theory and applied study of southern literature."

He credits his thesis adviser, Katie McKee, for being an involved and encouraging mentor throughout

Jacob Fennell

MAGGIE JORDAN



every step of the process. “Beginning last summer, Jacob and I met regularly to discuss what he was reading, and it was one of the most enjoyable book clubs I’ve ever been a part of,” McKee said. “Jacob is an insatiable learner. If you suggest he read a chapter in a book, he’ll read the whole book; if you ask him to reconsider a paragraph, he’ll rewrite the page to make it fit. I always looked forward to our conversations.”

Fennell also held two different assistantships, both of which he found to be enriching experiences. For his first year, he worked with Greg Johnson and his staff at the Department of Archives and Special Collections in the J. D. Williams Library. “By helping with the organization of archival materials and working directly with researchers, I gained invaluable knowledge and experience on the function of archives within a university,” Fennell said.

The following year, he served as a teaching assistant in the fall for Adam Gussow, professor of English and Southern Studies, and in the spring, Andy Donnelly, visiting assistant professor in English and Southern Studies. “Doing so provided me with a greater understanding and appreciation for all that goes into teaching a

successful course,” he said. “Both of the professors I worked with have also been beyond supportive of me and my future endeavors.” That includes entering the doctoral program in English here at UM this fall. “Taking my lessons from the Center with me, I will continue to study southern literature and its greater challenges and implications for our world,” he said.

Being a part of the community at the Center was important to Fennell during his time here and one he already looks back on fondly. “I am a firm believer that education is a rare thing to regret,” Fennell said. “If you have any desire to work in higher education in any capacity, or simply want to allow yourself the opportunity to engage in critical study, you should absolutely consider pursuing your MA. Often, I will come into Barnard Observatory with the intention to get work done, only to end up in a series of long conversations with any number of friendly Center folks. Even if it meant needing to catch up later, I never really lamented those days, and I will surely miss them.”

Luckily, he can make the short trek from Bondurant Hall to Barnard Observatory and visit anytime.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Southern Studies Grad Chosen as 2024 Evers Research Fellow

Keon Burns, a 2021 graduate of the Southern Studies MA program, has been named the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Research Fellow for 2024. Burns will conduct research this summer in the Medgar Wiley and Myrlie Beasley Evers Papers housed at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) in Jackson.

By examining the records and correspondence of Medgar Evers during his time as Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP, among other archival collections at MDAH, Burns hopes to gain insight into the role of Black businesspeople, particularly grocery store owners, and their impact as grassroots activists during the civil rights movement.

Burns is currently a dual doctoral candidate in history and African studies at Pennsylvania State University. “I will use the Evers Papers and other MDAH holdings as the basis for a dissertation chapter that builds off my master’s thesis,” he said. “I will use Mississippi and the grocery industry as a case study for the impact of Black-owned businesses on community organizing, resistance, and uplift.”

The Medgar and Myrlie Evers Research Scholars Program is a collaboration between MDAH and the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute. The program seeks to nurture upper-level graduate students and faculty scholars at the beginning of their academic careers to increase their life-long interest in history and to promote continued academic and public appreciation of Medgar and Myrlie Evers’s life and works, the civil rights movement in Mississippi, and the struggle for human rights.

Burns will use the \$5,000 fellowship to cover travel, housing, and other expenses incurred while doing his research at the archives.

Keeping Sweetgrass in the Forefront

Amanda Malloy Spotlights Struggle of South Carolina Basket Weavers

While listening to a conversation about sweetgrass basket making, Amanda Malloy realized there is a threat to the state craft of South Carolina. Although the palmetto and crescent in the state flag may be South Carolina's best-known symbol, sweetgrass basket weaving is just as important. Sweetgrass is native to the coastal dunes of the Carolinas, which provides material for the baskets.

Malloy, a 2017 UM Southern Studies alumna, started working at the McKissick Museum on the campus of the University of South Carolina in 2022. "As part of my job as folklife program director, I coordinated a book signing for Dale Rosengarten, the author of *Row upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry*," said Malloy. "At that event, Rosengarten was also in conversation with contemporary basket maker Antwon Ford. The audience included sweetgrass collectors, basket makers, and harvesters, and the open discussion quickly turned to the increasing difficulty sewers and harvesters have accessing quality sweetgrass. It became clear to me that there was a very real threat to the state craft of South Carolina."

Historically, sweetgrass basket vendors have populated Highway 17 in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, setting up their items in outdoor booths. Today those booths are almost



COURTESY AMANDA MALLOY

Amanda Malloy

completely gone. "Development in Charleston, Mount Pleasant, and other Gullah Geechee communities has either destroyed land where sweetgrass naturally grows or made that land private," Malloy said. "Some governmental agencies like the Army Corp of Engineers have protected land where sweetgrass naturally grows, but it's a difficult plant to transplant as it requires very specific conditions to grow a quality plant, so protection is really the best option. Since learning about all of this, I have been working closely with the Gullah

Geechee community to try to help bring awareness to others about this issue."

In April of this year the museum hosted a panel discussion with basket makers and plant specialists involved in decades-long efforts to replant and grow sweetgrass in the South Carolina Lowcountry. "They discussed where the sweetgrass has gone and brainstormed ways we might collectively work to protect and grow what exists," she said. "In March we hosted two four-hour basketmaking workshops where participants experienced the process of making

a small sweetgrass basket from start to finish. In June I was able to attend a sweetgrass harvest in St. Stephen, South Carolina, at their powerhouse, and I learned firsthand how much effort goes into harvesting the plant.”

Malloy said they continued discussions with makers, harvesters, and land experts with a set of three webinars held last November and December. “It is my hope that these programs not only inform the public about this topic, but perhaps offer a venue to bring stakeholders and community members together to seek solutions,” she said. “These are all small steps, but one of my goals here at the museum is to continue to spotlight this issue until it begins to be resolved.”

As folklife program director, Malloy coordinates programming related to traditional arts and culture in South Carolina. Programming has ranged in topics from bluegrass music, Native American traditions, quilt making,



COURTESY AMANDA MALLOY

Sweetgrass basket maker Mary Graham-Grant leads a four-hour workshop at the McKissick Museum in which participants create their own sweetgrass basket from start to finish.

foodways, pottery, and more. She said she has enjoyed her time at the McKissick Museum so far. “I also get to spend a lot of my time traveling the state and conducting oral histories with artists, advocates, and tradition bearers. These interviews become part of our Folklife Resource Center, a repository created in 1985 for field notes, images, audio, video, and other documentary materials of value to southern folklife researchers and the general public,” she said. “I also coordinate the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Awards, a yearly award presented by the South Carolina General Assembly to honor practitioners and advocates of traditional arts significant to communities throughout the state.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

To be featured “In the Courtyard,” contact rebeccac@olemiss.edu.

WILLIE MORRIS AWARDS FOR SOUTHERN WRITING call for submissions

We invite authors, editors, and publishers to nominate books published during the **2024 calendar year** for the

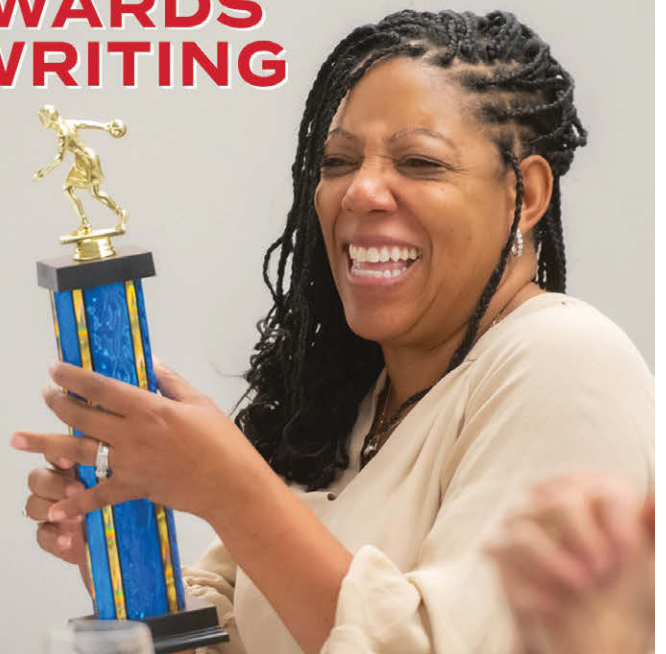
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California Crawfish Dreaming

*In the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta,
Louisiana Red Crawfish Offer a Taste of Home*

**Text by Katie Carter King
Artwork by Molly Brooks**

It's 11:30 a.m. on a breezeless Sunday in late June—Father's Day—and people are hungry. More than 250 festivalgoers wait on hot asphalt in a snaking but orderly queue, chatting with each other in various languages. Two elementary school-aged boys are hard at play, weaving through adult legs, as their parents gulp warming beers. Dozens of vendors line Main Street, hawking everything from grilled oysters to beignets to turkey legs, but few appear interested in their offerings. For the first time in fourteen years, the town of Isleton, California, is hosting the two-day Isleton Crawdad Festival, and crawdads are what people want.



On this side of the Diablo Range, the mountains that form a natural barrier to the cool Pacific air, the June heat is vicious. Although the festival gates opened an hour and a half ago, we're told the mudbug-heavy takeaway boxes—one pound for twenty-five dollars, three for sixty—won't be ready for another

fifteen minutes at least. Founded in 1986, the beloved festival drew huge crowds to the half-square-mile town every summer for twenty years, until small-town infighting between the city council and local chamber of commerce destroyed the event. One local politician even claimed the chamber put “daggers in everything



we do.” But no one is thinking about those harsh words from 2006 today. Everyone is just excited the Crawdad Festival is finally back.

Halfway down the ever-growing line, local attorney Matt Schumacher isn’t bothered by the temperature or the tardiness. He’s enjoying talking with the other crawfish-obsessed as he waits for his son to return with refreshments. The third generation in a career-military family, Schumacher was born on Travis Air Force Base, about thirty miles northwest of where we now stand. Although his family is originally from the Midwest, bases along the Gulf Coast brought them south before moving them west. “There are a lot of

people around here from Mississippi, Louisiana, largely because of Travis,” Schumacher explains.

Isleton, California (population 797), rests at ten feet above sea level, tucked beneath the leveed banks that form the northern edge of Andrus Island, one of almost two hundred islands carved out by the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Bridging the distance between the Bay Area and Sacramento, a dozen half-empty Delta towns dot the soft edges of quiet sloughs, artifacts of bygone economic boom times brought by agriculture and industry. While Schumacher drove down for the day’s festivities from nearby Vacaville, roughly thirty-five

miles north, his son, Matthew, traveled more than an hour to join him for the day. Today, State Route 160 is a parking lot, with cars stretching for miles down the black-topped levee. Tens of thousands of visitors from the surrounding counties have descended on Isleton’s tiny downtown, a fever dream flush with perspiration and Zatarain’s seafood boil.

Standing behind white-haired women in umbrella-capped folding chairs, Schumacher explains to me that while he is not technically from the South, he still considers himself southern. Growing up in a career-military family, his parents moved him and his three brothers all over the country. “Florida. Boston twice. New Orleans. Alabama. New York,” Schumacher said. “I grew up everywhere. But Mississippi was—in air quotes—home.” His grandparents moved to Biloxi from Illinois when his grandfather was stationed at Keesler Air Force Base. After his grandfather’s death in the early 1950s, Schumacher’s grandmother remained. His uncles returned to the Gulf Coast after their own stints in the military; some found work at the nearby Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula. Mississippi became, and remained, the family’s center of gravity.

Schumacher’s father followed the trajectory of the rest of the men in his family: enlisting in the Air Force before spending the bulk of his career as a military contractor. Each summer, Matt and his brothers returned to the Gulf Coast, where equal parts work and play awaited them. Their uncle Larry, a retired master sergeant turned commercial fisherman, would host a large fish fry to herald their homecoming, a backyard party full of just-caught mullet, shrimp, and crawfish. He’d put the second generation to work: “We’d set up the foldable table in the backyard. It was just an assembly line,” Schumacher remembered. “I can still strip shrimp probably faster than anybody in California,” he said, laughing. Sometimes, when the coast was pelted by summer storms, the

"For many transplants, the discovery of Louisiana reds in California waters became a tether to the known in this unknown place."

cousins would run through medians and along roadsides to harvest the flooded-out mudbugs. These moments of camaraderie remained indelible, long after those summers came to an end and long after he grew up and had a son of his own.

Despite what the festival's turnout might imply, northern California has not always been a crawfish-eating destination. While this expanse of western land was once home to three native species, since Europeans began arriving in 1769, crawfish were primarily used as fishing bait—a tool of sustenance, rather than sustenance itself. Even so, all three are now either endangered or extinct. Other species of crawfish are the primary culprits, chief among them the red swamp crayfish, *Procambarus clarkii*. In the Gulf South, these are affectionately termed Louisiana reds.

No one knows exactly how they first came west, but there are plenty of theories, each sounding more folkloric than the last. As Isleton Crawdad Festival founder Susan Ramon explained to me, "In the late 1930s, early 1940s, a Frenchman from Louisiana . . . trucked in Louisiana red crawfish and infiltrated the northern California rice fields." Maybe it happened that way; maybe it didn't. Others suggest they crept up from southern California after a bullfrog farmer in San Diego County imported them to feed his army of amphibians in 1932. No matter how they arrived, armed with oversized vermilion claws and a notoriously

aggressive nature, reds quickly conquered the irrigated and leveed waterways throughout the state.

Since California's incorporation into the continental United States in 1848, white men, typically from New York or New England, had dominated emigration to the Golden State. While industrialists initially enticed Chinese and Japanese laborers to build levees and railroads across the state, rising xenophobia and federal immigration policies curbed this migration after the Civil War. As economic historian James Gregory wrote, "Like the Midwest, California's population was emphatically Euro-American," remaining 90 percent white until the start of World War II.

But as Louisiana reds began to proliferate in the state, so did newcomers with a distinct taste for them. Tasked with outfitting the American military for the Pacific Theater in the wake of Pearl Harbor, the federal government began pouring billions of dollars into West Coast defense contractors and weapons programs. By 1946, California was home to 140 bases, 190 naval shipyards, 18 aircraft manufacturers, and 9 landed vehicle factories. Working-class Americans followed the burgeoning job market like a beacon of economic light, bringing migrants from all over the country but especially from the South. Black southerners went in search of steady employment and racial tolerance—a new life on a golden coast. Whites, too, began to make a small exodus, as farmers across the country

walked away from exhausted soil and rising costs. "Second only to the gold rush," Gregory wrote, "the war remade California."

For many transplants—far from home, often far from family—the discovery of Louisiana reds in California waters became a tether to the known in this unknown place. And as the state's population continued to grow and diversify, this taste for mudbugs remained. Scott Brady, a cultural geographer at Chico State in the Central Valley—the sprawling expanse the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta gives way to—explained last fall, "Different groups have shown up and created foodways that weren't here fifty years ago." When Brady, a native of Thibodaux, Louisiana, first arrived in California in 2000, he would load his wife and sons into the car on Saturday afternoons to drive around rice fields and sloughs, looking for a good place to lay a crawdad trap. After turning down a series of gravel lanes, he says he'd often encounter Hmong and Mexican families congregating around well-producing waters.

Brady grew up one of five brothers in Louisiana, and on the weekends his father would keep them busy with physical labor. "I think it was so we would stay out of trouble. It kept us occupied in a way that would make us tired," he said. For Brady, bringing his own two boys into northern California's irrigated ditches was an extension of this familial ethos: "They would probably say all kinds of terrible things about how many hours we spent in canals by rice

fields and ditches.” Although he loves crawfish, he suspects only one of his own sons has retained a palate for them, while the other can only taste the sweat of childhood chores.

But for the Schumachers, California crawfish were primarily about fun and family bonding. When Schumacher and his brothers would return to California, armed with Mississippi know-how, they would set out to catch some mudbugs on their own. “In downtown Sacramento, I used to [fish for them],” Schumacher explained. “They’re in all the little creeks.” While the family was stationed at McLellan Air Force Base just north of the state capital, the teenaged Schumacher boys would walk down the railroad tracks before cutting through the golf course to nearby Arcade Creek to lure mudbugs from their silty holes with cheese-baited string.

Today, Schumacher doesn’t really consider himself a crawfish connoisseur. Rather, the experience of eating crawfish—and mingling with others who do—serves to connect him both to

his childhood

summers in Mississippi and to his son. Unlike his father, Matthew didn’t grow up fishing in sloughs and creeks for the southern scuttlers, but instead found and devoured them in the Viet Cajun restaurants that have become increasingly popular throughout California in the last few decades. He also remembers attending springtime crawfish boils when he was a law student at the University of Mississippi. This was the pair’s fifth year in attendance, and Matthew was prepared to eat his father under the table, as he had since he was a kid.

Just when it felt like it couldn’t get any hotter, patience finally paid off. One by one, people began to pass us, their arms heavy with reds. The crawfish had sold out early the day before, and no one was letting their well-earned turn go to waste, with some holding teetering Styrofoam boxes stacked five or six high.

Crustaceans secured, Schumacher and his son made their way a few blocks down to a tent filled with long tables and black folding chairs where big groups laughed together and shared their hard-earned rewards.

“Family style’ is what I call it,” Schumacher later explained. The offerings weren’t the fresh, perfectly spiced crawfish of

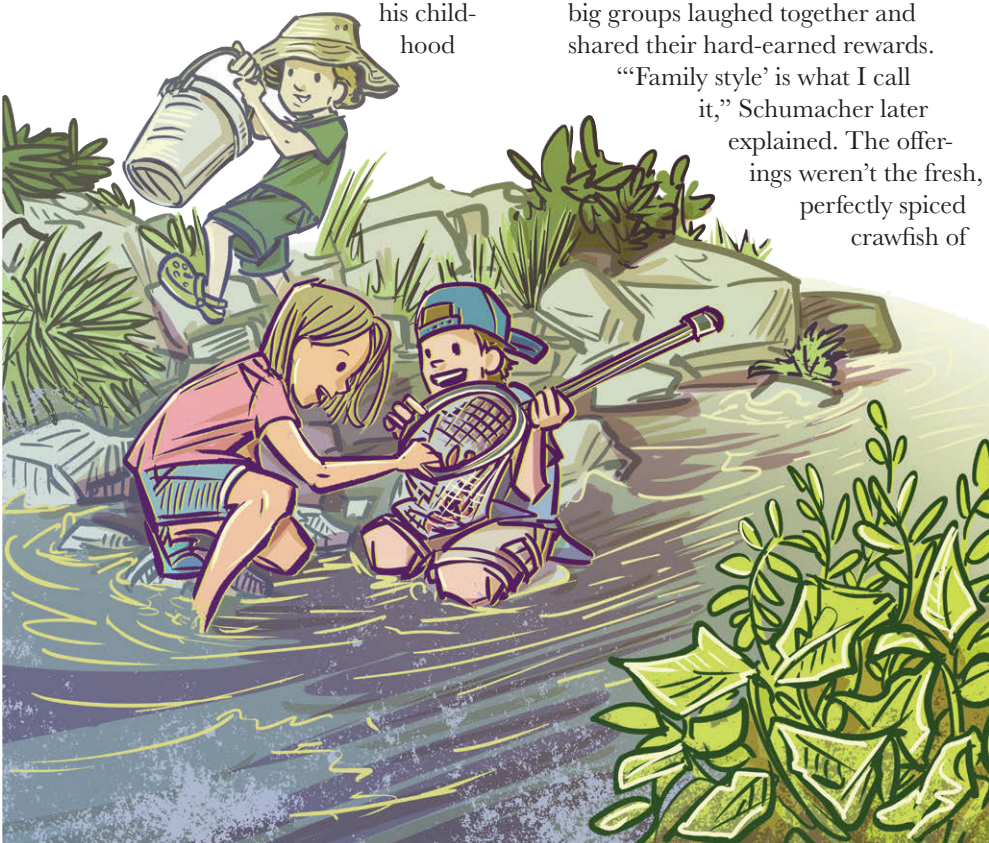
his childhood summers on the Gulf; these mudbugs were mild to the point of bland. Yet Schumacher hardly seemed to mind. “Everybody was just interacting with everybody. I liked it a lot,” he said. “Most of us were just excited [the festival] was back.”

Other attendees were less forgiving. A middle-aged woman cut through the lingering queue and stage-whispered, “I don’t need crawfish *that* bad.” Some complained about the prices. Still more said the mudbugs’ seasoning was a little heavy on the mud, implying they hadn’t been properly cleaned. But many, like the Schumachers, showed up on Father’s Day looking for a hard-to-find taste of home in an unexpected place: eating Louisiana reds under a northern California sky.

The heat broke by mid-afternoon, and once the crawfish ran out, families began to filter out back to their cars. Although they couldn’t have known it then, this would be the last time festivalgoers would be invited to litter the streets of Isleton with bright-red carcasses sucked dry. A private company, The Crawdad Festival LLC, now runs the event. They plan to move it to Cal Expo, the state fairgrounds in Sacramento, with the hope of attracting even larger crowds and providing them with ample parking. It will still happen over Father’s Day weekend, though, just as it always has.

I asked Schumacher recently if he thought he and his son would still go, continue their tradition. He thought for a moment. “Probably. But it won’t be the same.” To his mind, reds—whether at a boil in the South or at a festival out West—are eaten fresh, ideally overlooking the very canals and sloughs they came from. But this June, he’ll still be able to close his eyes in the thick summer heat and get a Styrofoam box laden with mudbugs, seasoned perfectly by the flavor of memory.

This essay was first published in the Spring 2024 issue of Gravy, the Southern Foodways Alliance’s journal.



Maude Faulkner Paintings Find Home at Center

A woman intensely working on her sewing. Three bluebirds on twigs. These are just two of the scenes carefully painted by Maude Faulkner, the mother of William Faulkner, and recently given to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture by Rathel L. Nolan of Brandon, Mississippi.

“I inherited these from my mother, Clyde Little Hartsfield Nolan,” he said. “She was born and reared in

Oxford and spent the majority of her life there. Her father was John Curtis Hartsfield, who was for many years the county sheriff.”

Nolan said his mother and her parents lived in a home on University Avenue near the Methodist Church, and all of the paintings he donated once hung there. Unfortunately, that home was torn down. Clyde grew up with William Faulkner’s children

and her best friend growing up was Malcolm Franklin, Estelle Faulkner’s son from her first marriage.

“My understanding is that Ms. Maude was a prolific painter and made gifts of her art to quite a few of her friends and neighbors,” Nolan said. “She also did stylized paintings of wedding invitations for children of friends getting married. Basically, she would paint a copy of the wedding invitation and embellish it with birds and flowers along the border.”

Nolan said his sister has the one Maude drew on his parents’ wedding invitation. “Of the paintings I donated, the one of the woman with the beer tankard hung in our hallway and I was frightened of it until I was about twelve years old,” he said. “The original work included an owl on the woman’s shoulder. If you look at the painting you can see that there was an owl there, but it was painted over. The painting of the seamstress was a wedding gift to my mother. My father was a career naval officer and the bars on the sleeves of the coat that the seamstress is working on have been altered to reflect his rank at the time of their marriage.”

After the death of his mother, Nolan said he inherited the paintings, but they have been sitting in a closet. “I grew up in Oxford, and my family has resided there for several generations. Although I moved to the Jackson area to attend medical school, I’ve retained a deep emotional tie with Oxford and the university,” he said. “Our children weren’t interested in the paintings, and I wanted to find them a home.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary





CONTRIBUTORS

Brett J. Bonner is the editor of *Living Blues*.

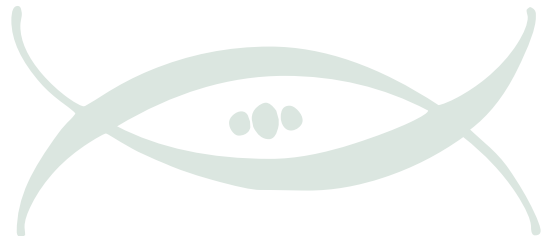
Rebecca Lauck Cleary is the Center's communications specialist. She received a BA in journalism from the University of Mississippi and her MA in Southern Studies.

Katie Carter King, *Gravy's* copyeditor, is a writer and researcher based in San Francisco. A child of the Georgia Piedmont, she is a graduate of the MA program in Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi.

Katie McKee is the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and English.

Aileen Lambert is the LGBTQIA+ programs and initiatives coordinator for the University of Mississippi's Center for Inclusion and Cross-Cultural Engagement.

Clara Turnage is a communications specialist for University Marketing and Communications. She earned her BA in journalism from the University of Mississippi in 2017.



In Memoriam

Daniel Porter Jordan Jr.

July 22, 1938–March 21, 2024



Interpersonal Activism:

How Local Black Residents Shaped the University of Mississippi and Oxford in the Mid-Twentieth Century

New *Study the South* Essay Published

In studying higher-education desegregation in the US, researchers often adopt the town-and-gown divide framework—a separation between the university or college and local communities. In the case of the University of Mississippi's (UM) 1962 desegregation, many studies focus primarily on the realm of the university: James Meredith, the federal government and its troops, Governor Ross Barnett, and UM administrators, faculty, and students. Others concentrate on White community figures sympathetic to the Black struggle. These works offer important perspectives on the events surrounding 1962 and the people who influenced them. For the most part, however, they concentrate on the campus and the federal government as the loci for efforts to challenge UM's White supremacy. What too often gets left out are interracial interactions in the Oxford-UM community and the influence of Black Oxford's community-building in reshaping racial ideas on and off campus.

In this new essay, "Interpersonal Relationships: How Local Black Residents Shaped the University of Mississippi and Oxford in the Mid-Twentieth Century," oral historian Anna F. Kaplan refocuses this narrative on the actions and the small waves of organizing by individuals in Black communities in and around Oxford: local Black communities that bolstered Black students and their activism in small ways, thereby demanding that White communities on and off campus start grappling with persistent systemic racism. Instead of fighting to fully integrate into White Oxford life, Kaplan shows that Black business owners and students invested in themselves and organized to sustain and thrive on their own, an act of resistance to White supremacy in its own right.

Kaplan's essay was supported by a *Study the South*

Research Fellowship sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. She is a professorial lecturer in history and public history at American University and serves as the president of the Board for Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Her studies focus on twentieth-century US history, specifically memory and the creation and use of public narratives about race. She earned her PhD in history from American University and MAs in oral history and anthropology from Columbia University.

Study the South is a peer-reviewed, multimedia, online journal, published and managed by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. Founded in 2014, *Study the South* (www.StudytheSouth.org) exists to encourage interdisciplinary academic thought and discourse on the American South, particularly through the lenses of social justice, history, anthropology, sociology, music, literature, documentary studies, gender studies, religion, geography, media studies, race studies, ethnicity, folklife, and visual art.

Study the South publishes a variety of works by institutionally affiliated and independent scholars. Like the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, *Study the South* embraces a diversity of media, including written essays with accompanying audio, video, and photography components; documentary photography; interviews with scholars and artists; video projects; and book reviews.

To submit work for consideration to *Study the South*, please email a completed manuscript as a Word document, along with any available illustrations, graphics, video, or audio, to editor James G. Thomas Jr. at jgthomas@olemiss.edu.

The editors of the online Mississippi Encyclopedia have recently added new entries on Jerry Rankin, the leader of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board; the late-nineteenth-early twentieth-century Mississippi politician Hernando De Soto Money; and "Mississippi's greatest minister," Rev. Dr. Cornelius W. Grafton. Here's another recent addition, this one on the Dr. John Banks House.

You can find this and other work online by going to www.mississippiencyclopedia.org.



Welcome to the

MISSISSIPPI ENCYCLOPEDIA

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The Dr. John Banks House

The Dr. John Banks House was the home of the first African American physician in Natchez and a critical site in the civil rights movement. The house is named for Dr. John Bowman Banks, who was born on 14 February 1862 in Louisiana. He studied medicine at Meharry Medical College, a private, historically Black school in Nashville, Tennessee, and graduated in 1885. In 1889 he opened his practice in Natchez.

Banks and his wife, Sarah, had two children: a daughter, Alberta, who became a schoolteacher; and a son, Oliver, who became a doctor. Banks built his house in 1892 at 9 St. Catherine Street, about 1.2 miles east of the Mississippi River. The house is a two-story wood-framed structure that was built in the Queen Anne style. Around 1905 it was remodeled in the Colonial Revival style. Banks was a friend of Booker T. Washington, who stayed at his house as a guest when he visited Natchez in the early 1900s. On 30 December 1911, Banks died in his home at the age of forty-nine. The cause of his death was a cerebral hemorrhage.

During the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Banks's house served as the headquarters for the Natchez Branch of the NAACP. It was also the home of NAACP president George Metcalfe, who lived on the first floor. In 1964, during Freedom Summer, Metcalfe housed visiting civil rights activists at the site, including Dorie Ladner, Annie Pearl Avery, and Janet Jemmott, all members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Avery, who carried a .22-caliber pistol, provided

security for the house. The house became known as "Metcalfe's Boarding House." Local women, such as NAACP secretary Jessie B. Williams, worked at the house in the NAACP office on the second floor, as did Mamie C. Mazique and Mary Lee Toles.

Metcalfe's work in the movement made him a target of the Klan. In late January 1965, night riders fired shots through a window of his home. On 27 August 1965, Metcalfe suffered serious injuries when his car was bombed by the Ku Klux Klan in the parking lot of the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company, where he worked. Soon after the bombing, Charles Evers, who served as the Mississippi NAACP field director, came to Natchez to lead the NAACP. Evers, who was the brother of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, used the Banks house as a hub for the civil rights movement. In the film *Black Natchez* (1967), Evers is shown addressing a rally from the front steps of the house.

The attempted assassination of Metcalfe galvanized the Black community. Among other things, it resulted in protest rallies, boycotts of white businesses, and the establishment of the Natchez Deacons for Defense and Justice, who provided armed protection for civil rights activists and the Black community. Together, these acts of protest led to significant change in Natchez, making the struggle one of the most successful movements in Mississippi. The movement exacted major concessions from the city's white leadership, and it did so without the intervention of the federal government. The Natchez movement became a

model that other Black communities in Mississippi replicated.

Wharlest Jackson Sr., another leader, also had connections to the Banks house. As the NAACP treasurer, he worked in the NAACP office along with Metcalfe, Williams, and others. On 27 February 1967, Jackson died in a Ku Klux Klan truck bombing. The Klan killed him, reportedly, because of his promotion to a job at Armstrong that had traditionally gone to white employees. No one was ever charged with his murder, and the case remains unsolved.

In 2011, Rose Hill Missionary Baptist Church, the oldest Black Baptist church in Mississippi, inherited the house from Banks's grandson, Frank Robinson Jr. The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 2020 it was officially designated as the Dr. John Bowman Banks Museum.

In 2022 volunteers with the Natchez Civil Rights Trail Committee sought to have the house listed as the Natchez NAACP Headquarters on the Mississippi Freedom Trail. Their efforts proved successful as the Mississippi Humanities Council and Visit Mississippi approved the house to be listed on both the Mississippi Freedom Trail and the US Civil Rights Trail.

Roscoe Barnes III
Natchez, Mississippi

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Mississippi Encyclopedia are grateful to the Mississippi Humanities Council for its continued support of this project.

Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference Boasts Largest Program in Its Half-Century History

An unprecedented response to the call for submissions to this summer's "Anniversaries" conference (July 21–25) has resulted in the largest program of speakers in the fifty-year history of Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha. In addition to this year's five keynote lecturers, Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, Catharine Gunther Kodat, Trudier Harris, Claude Romano, and Koichi Suwabe, there will be more than seventy other speakers scheduled. As a result of the bulging lineup, the conference will run a number of concurrent sessions, and a late-afternoon time slot has been added to the daily schedules for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of the conference week. Never before has Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha offered such "bang" for the registration "buck"!

Though the speakers are too numerous to list here, conference goers can look forward to panels and roundtables on the following topics: "Circa 1924: Apprenticeships," "Across Five Continents: International Comparisons," "New Approaches to *Sanctuary*," "American Horror Stories: Ecological Crisis, Plantation Legacies, Settler Colonialism," "Comparative Souths: Feminine, Black, Queer," "Circa 1954: *A Fable* and Its Times," "Translation and Biography," "Aesthetics and Technique: New Perspectives," "Poetics and Genre: New Perspectives," "Law, Ethics, Justice," "Gendering and Ungendering (in) Faulkner," "Teaching and Learning Faulkner in the Digital Age," "Making Meaning in Public and Private: Sites of Antagonism and Aspiration in Faulkner," "Faulkner and the Global South," "Reading Faulkner in Phoenix" (a book club roundtable), "Faulkner in Translation: New Intercontinental Drifts," "Yoknapatawpha and Bois Sauvage: William Faulkner and Jesmyn Ward," "Go Slow Now; or, A Dream Deferred: William Faulkner and Civil Rights," "Faulkner and War: Perspectives from Japan," "Faulkner and Colors," "Faulkner's Animals," "Faulkner in Asia, Asia in Faulkner, and Faulkner and Asian Writers," and "The History of the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference: Origins, Orientings, Outgrowths." The program will also be one of the most international in conference history, with representatives from Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, England,



The graphic features the word "ANNIVERSARIES" in large, bold, orange, sans-serif capital letters at the top. Below it is an oval illustration of a man in a tuxedo and a woman in a white dress dancing. The illustration is framed by a decorative border with sunburst motifs in the corners. At the bottom of the graphic, the text reads: "THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI FAULKNER AND YOKNAPATAWPHA CONFERENCE (A HYBRID EVENT) OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI • JULY 21-25, 2024".

France, Japan, Kazakhstan, Poland, Scotland, South Korea, and Taiwan joining a large cohort of US scholars.

More information and a link to the registration portal and conference store can be found at the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha website, www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner. Contact Mary Leach, Division of Outreach and Continuing Education, at mleach@olemiss.edu for questions about conference registration and logistics. For other inquiries, contact Jay Watson, director, at jwatson@olemiss.edu.

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