

Natchez celebrates

Saturday's
events
honor state's
pride

6A



Carolyn Vance Smith +
Eudora Wolty, June 1990
Photo by Emily Smith



Emily Smith
Heather Nexill
Susannah Byrne

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Natchez celebrates



EUDORA WELTY and former Mississippi Gov. William Winter share a warm moment at the Carriage House Saturday night.

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Lecturers critique Welty's works

But talks won't alter the way she writes

By LEONARD KRANSDORF
The Natchez Democrat

NATCHEZ — The lecturers talked about the way fantasy is weaved with reality in the writing of Eudora Welty.

And Welty listened.

They discussed Eudora Welty's images of the Natchez Trace and how those images were incorporated into her writing.

And Welty listened.

Through their talks the three scholars paid homage to Welty and her writing to the audience at the Natchez literary celebration Saturday at The Natchez Eola Hotel.

And, in the audience, Welty listened.

"It is in a sense like people giving a written critique but instead they do it verbally," said Welty, after hearing the views expressed by university professors Michael Kreyling, Suzanne Marrs and Peggy Prenshaw.

The three speakers analyzed several of Welty's works with special emphasis on the relationship to the Natchez Trace, in association with the theme of the literary event, "The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy."

"There really is no right and wrong, because each of them view the writing in a different manner," Welty said. "I know each of them personally, and I am honored they have taken the time to explore my writing and tell what they feel about it."

But, the author stressed, it does not hamper her writing.

"When I sit down I don't think about what others will say. I just write what I feel and let it sit out there," she said. "People can develop their own opinions."

Welty said she does not often attend such programs because she does not want to make the speakers uncomfortable.

"But it is interesting to listen and see how they come to their points of view and the images they are able to develop from what they read."

The three speakers said they each had different feelings knowing the subject of their talks would be listening.

"It makes you a little self-conscious," said Marrs, associate professor of English at Millsaps College.

"I was a little nervous and so made extra sure that I quoted her works exactly right," said Kreyling, professor of English at Van-

derbilt University. "But I know the type of person she is. And we may talk about it later and either agree or disagree, but she is always willing to discuss it."

Prenshaw said she was not too nervous because she believes she is doing a service.

"We each have our roles to play. Mrs. Welty does her role real well by writing such interesting and well thought out literature, and then I come into the picture and lay my thoughts out."

Saturday's activities began with a talk by Don Doyle, chairman of the department of history at Vanderbilt University.

He spoke on the subject of "The Mississippi Frontier in Faulkner's Fiction and In Fact."

Doyle said he believes much of what Faulkner wrote in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County was based on his life in Lafayette County in Mississippi.

"He would just sit and listen for hours at the courthouse and around the kitchen table," Doyle said.

Saturday was the final day of the event, which was sponsored by Copiah-Lincoln Community College.

The Natchez

SUNDAY, JUNE 10, 1990

Vol. 126, No. 138

Serving Natchez, Vidalia

B.B. Hosch
&
Carolyn Vance Smith



Sim Callon

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JOHN GUICE, a literary celebration lecturer, takes a moment to relax in the shade Saturday.



DOUG LEWIS, John James Audubon lecturer, talks with Beverly Biggs Wiener of Houston.

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WILLIAM WINTER, former governor, introduces members of the Wright family at Saturday's dedication ceremonies.

The Natchez Democrat

TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 1990

Vol. 126, No. 139

Serving Natchez, Vidalia and the Miss-Lou

Opinion

The Natchez Democrat

Trace literary festival offers taste of future

From the ceremony marking Rosalie's status as a national landmark to the lunch at Kings Tavern, the first Natchez Literary Celebration was a winner.

It was a tribute to much more than the literary ties to the Natchez Trace.

It was even more than a tribute to such stars as Richard Wright and Eudora Welty.

This first celebration was a prelude to many more to come but was able to transcend even that.

The festival gave Natchez another glimpse of what can be when people combine their talent and energy for a common goal.

This weekend the community got a taste of a future where the first question was "why not?" rather than "why?"

Next year, June 5-8, they'll do it again with literature and heritage at the core of the jubilee.

But we don't have to wait for these spectacular weekend events to display the spirit which makes them work.

For a community with the right spirit, every day is a winner.

Festival planners look to next year

By LEONARD KRANSPOFF
The Natchez Democrat

Natchez — It took a lot of work and time but now that the first literary festival in history, organizers are working a collective sigh and looking ahead to next year.

"I think this just shows that the residents of Natchez were able to pull together to make this a success," said Carolyn Vance Smith, one of the organizers of the "The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy" festival. "The Natchez Trace State Park and others are already being

made to plan next year's festival which is set for June 5-8.

In addition to the number of people who attended this year's festival Smith said there is expected to be a substantial contribution made to the Natchez Historic Park Foundation.

"Right now we don't have an exact amount but we expect it to be five figures," Smith said.

Along with Smith, others who worked on the project were Becky Hildway and Kenneth Fryler.

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The Natchez Democrat

THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 1990

Vol. 126, No. 141

Serving Natchez, Vidalia and the Miss-Lou

Natchez, Miss

Natchez hosts first Heritage Festival

By KEITH BRITT
The Natchez Democrat

NATCHEZ — The Broadway river bluffs will come alive with music and Southern cuisine July 6-7 when the inaugural Mississippi Heritage Festival kicks off.

Miami Dolphin football player and Natchez resident Hugh Green is one of the organizers of the upcoming festival and announced plans Wednesday in a press conference at Natchez City Hall.

"The festival is a one of a kind and has never been presented in this city," Green said. "There will be great food, great music and a place where people can socialize and

enjoy themselves."

The festival will feature the music of Dorothy Moore, Jessie Robinson, the Knee Deep Band with Big Daddy and "Frankly Scarlett." Other talent from around the state and Natchez such as rap music, gospel and rhythm and blues artists also will perform.

And sprinkled between the three entertainment stages will be food booths with hamburgers, fried chicken, barbecue and other area delicacies.

Green said the festival, which is being organized by his Mississippi Heritage Foundation, gives him a chance to help his

community.

The foundation's board of directors include George Dunkley, associate director of minority affairs for the Natchez Convention and Visitors Bureau; Bill Bonecane, local businessman; Thomas "Boo" Campbell, Adams County supervisor; and Everett Sanders, a local attorney.

"I'm very interested in the community and what happens around me," he said. "With some of my ideas and some of George's, we've come up with something that covers Natchez from A to Z. And each year we want it to keep growing."

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Andrew Jackson's "supposed" marriage to Rachel Donelson Roberts and John James Audubon's phantasm foliage painter shocked some listeners at the recent Natchez Literary Conference.

Jackson fell in love with Rachel Donelson Roberts while he boarded with her mother in Nashville, Tenn. Rachel was married, but her husband, Capt. Lewis Roberts, had left her, and rumors were flying that he was returning to Nashville to reclaim his wife.

So Rachel decided to leave Nashville and travel to Natchez with Jackson, said Dr. Robert Remini, professor of history and research professor of humanities at the University of Illinois.

"Why she would leave Nashville, where she had a small army of brothers and brothers-in-law, to travel with the man she was to be accused of living with remains a mystery," said Remini, who was lecturing on "Andrew Jackson's Adventures on the Natchez Trace" at the recent Natchez Literary Celebration in Natchez.

"And now we get to Andrew Jackson's supposed marriage to Rachel," said Remini.

"Supposed, nothing," came an indignant stage whisper from an outraged woman in the audience. And there was an accompanying discontented rumble from the sea of gray-haired listeners.

"I didn't say they weren't married," Remini said. "I said there's no proof." When Andrew Jackson returned to Nashville after escorting Rachel to Natchez, he learned that Roberts had obtained a divorce. He didn't wait for proof, but immediately set off for Natchez and married Rachel. They lived in Natchez a while, then returned to Nashville, where they learned that Roberts had no divorce, only a bill of divorcement, which made it possible for him to obtain a divorce.

"He and Rachel remarried in 1794 when Roberts finally got a divorce; that is documented in the Harvard University Library," Remini said. The professor traveled all the way to Spain in an effort to document Jackson's first marriage to Rachel because Louisiana was under Spanish rule at the time of their "supposed" first wedding.

"I never found any documented proof," he said. "There doesn't appear to be any evidence of a marriage" before the one in 1794. "But why isn't there some record, since the Spanish are notorious for keeping such detailed records?"

The folks who made up Remini's audience didn't seem to want to hear anything negative about the Southern general. Remini's revelation that Jackson was a slave trader didn't meet with quite the indignation that greeted his "supposed marriage" theory; in fact, the murmur that rippled through the audience was mild in comparison. But the same woman had another stage-whispered comment: "We all had slaves then, for Lord's sakes."

Ella Lucas, who had traveled with her husband from Hattiesburg, Miss., for the literary conference, placidly crocheted through most of the lectures. The filet crochet doily slowly took shape while Remini and others spoke of Jackson, Natchez and the Trace.

"I do these for wedding presents, and I'm way behind," Lucas confided. "They're marrying faster than I can crochet."

Remini perhaps is best known for his

three-volume study of Jackson. "People always ask, 'Why did you pick Andrew Jackson?' But I really think he picked me.

"I wanted to study New York and research 20th-century urban history," Remini said.

Then a teacher was asked to recommend a student to research Martin Van Buren, and he recommended me. I was a graduate student, and I began my dissertation on Van Buren. And there was Andrew Jackson sitting, waiting. I became intrigued by this man, and I never did get back to Van Buren."

Douglas Lewis, curator of sculpture and decorative arts for the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., threw another curve to the assembled crowd, but it was received with much less animosity than the Jackson-Roberts marriage theory.

John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* were drawn by Audubon and his partner, Joseph Mason, said Lewis in his seminar, "The Trace of the Old Southwest in *The Birds of America*." J.J. Audubon's Drawings and Writings From the Natchez District."

Audubon did the birds, and Mason usually did the plants and foliage during Audubon's Natchez period, Lewis said.

Not only did Lewis credit Mason with the foliage, but he also praised him as being responsible for the interesting composition of the drawings. And he termed Audubon's birds "rather pedestrian."

Mason added movement and energy to the drawings, and Lewis said he thinks Mason actually should be credited with the Audubon style.

Audubon's yellow warbler, cardinals, tufted tit mouse, Carolina chickadee and yellow-billed sapsucker sit amid Mason's lush flowering blackberry, red maple, wild water-lily, silver pine, trumpet vine and magnolia, according to Lewis' theory.

Natchez resident Doris Burt had turned out to bear hometown boy D. Clayton James, now a military historian at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va., speak on "The Role of the Natchez Trace in the Development of the Nation."

Burt is president of the Musical Arts League in Natchez, and a piano teacher. "I was forced back into teaching by some very talented children," she said. "But it keeps me busy. My husband is dead, and teaching keeps me from sitting around feeling sorry for myself."

The Natchez Trace began as an animal path, then turned into an Indian trail, James said. Spanish and French explorers in the 16th and 17th centuries used parts of the Trace, and French Lick, a small trading center, was established at the north end of the Trace at what is now Nashville.

"The Trace was a strategic transportation artery in the American takeover of the Lower Mississippi Valley during the American Revolution," James said. "By the 1790s the Trace had become part of a complex circle of trade, and it was the principal artery for slaves sent from Alexandria, Va., to New Orleans, from the upper to the lower South. Slave trade is one of the dark sides of the Trace's history."

Travel on the Trace may have been more frustrating — with bandits, Indians, and snakes — but it was less dangerous than travel on a steamboat because steamboats caught fire — sank in collisions with other ships or with sunbathers. The death toll of antebellum

steamboat travel far exceeded that of overland travel on the Trace.

"And if the steamboat signified the beginning of the end for the Trace, the Illinois Central Railroad guaranteed its demise," James said. "The Trace was a victim of the Transportation Revolution from 1815 to 1860. But it's also part of a very rich heritage that Mississippi shares with the nation."

Two highlights of the three-day literary conference were the designation of the antebellum mansion Rosalie as a Registered Historic Landmark and the dedication of antebellum Melrose to the National Park Service.

The bright green lawn of Rosalie was dotted with ladies in colorful summer dresses and men in lightweight slacks and shirts who had come to see the mansion become a National Historic Landmark.

"This is utterly charming," said Evelyn Nixon of Clarksville, Tenn., who, with her husband, was making her first visit to Natchez. "It's fun to be somewhere like this."

"The Natchez Trace has a bit of mystique; it's not magic, it's mystique, I suppose. I'm going to do some research on the Trace's Western Spur; not everyone wanted to go to Nashville. I'm just going to explore; it's a good excuse to find out more about our forefathers," she said.

"Now I'll always have a feeling for Natchez because I'll remember that Grant had his headquarters here at Rosalie," said Nixon, a transplanted northerner. "Only as we become involved in the history of our country do we learn to enjoy it and appreciate it."

By KIMBERLY BROWN

Newspapers writer

BOOKS

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Book/Magazine B.R., LA June 17, 1990

'Scandals' shock literary conferees



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Those attending the Natchez Literary Conference gather outside the antebellum mansion Rosalie

Photo by Kimberly Brown

Letters

Sunday, June 17, 1990

NATCHEZ DEMOCRAT, Natchez, Miss. *5A

Melrose giant rip off for park?

To the editor:

Your headline of Saturday, June 9, 1990 should have read "Oh, what a rip off it was" instead of "Oh, what a day it was."

The sale of Melrose to the American taxpayers was nothing less than a giant rip off, even with the two million "donated" by the Callons.

How can it be a part of the Natchez National Historical Park when it is at least five miles away (as the crow flies)? Rosalie a part of the park? Yes, it is at the park, but Melrose?

Not only a rip off of the American taxpayer but an insult to the intelligence of a moron like me.

Clara Oliver
Natchez resident

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Lecturer finds 'awesome' show

To the editor:

Participating as a lecturer in "The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy" proved to be one of the highlights of my quarter-century academic career during which I have taken part in dozens of conferences in virtually every section of this great country. While I have been in larger gatherings of academicians, never have I attended an event that was planned so thoroughly, executed so smoothly, and conducted so graciously. Nor have I seen a community so enthusiastically marshal its financial and human resources in support of a scholarly meeting. Awesome may be the most appropriate description of the sponsoring of the

1990 Natchez Literary Celebration. Natchez truly upheld her heritage of generosity and congeniality.

I commend the leaders of Copiah-Lincoln Community College for initiating a project of such magnitude and I congratulate every person who in any way played a role in this remarkable successful conference. Recognition is also due to the Mississippi Humanities Council for its assistance which proved to be a most worthy use of funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is obvious that *The Natchez Democrat* went the proverbial "extra mile" in covering the spectacular events of last week, and in so doing, rendered a tremendous service to the community and state.

To the citizens of Natchez I extend my gratitude and congratulations.

John D.W. Guice, Ph.D.
Professor of History
University of Southern Mississippi



NEWSLETTER

Mississippi History

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July, 1990

Natchez Landmarks Dedicated

The Natchez antebellum mansion Melrose was officially dedicated as the first acquisition of the Natchez National Historical Park on June 8 in ceremonies held in conjunction with the "Natchez: Its Literary Legacy" symposium. Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., spoke to the large audience gathered on the Melrose lawn. Other dignitaries included Mississippi's United States senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott, Congressmen G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery and Mike Parker, Congressman Jerry Huckaby of Louisiana, and former governor William Winter, who presided over the ceremonies. Secretary Lujan also participated in the dedication of Rosalie on June 7 as a registered National Historic Landmark. Rosalie, which was constructed in 1823, is owned and operated by the Mississippi State Society Daughters of the American Revolution.



The Mississippi Symphony Orchestra performed on the Melrose lawn after dedication ceremonies.



National Park Service rangers on grounds of Melrose, a part of the Natchez National Historical Park.

William Johnson House Update

A bill authorizing the acquisition of the William Johnson House in downtown Natchez for inclusion in the Natchez National Historical Park was the subject of a hearing conducted on June 5 by the United States House of Representatives Interior Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, chaired by Congressman Bruce Vento of Minnesota. Elbert R. Hilliard, Department director, Phillip West, president, Adams County Board of Supervisors, and Congressman Mike Parker testified at the hearing. The proposed amendment to the park authorization bill, which was introduced by Congressman Parker, provides that the William Johnson House and the adjoining building must be donated to the National Park Service. A similar measure has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Cochran and Lott. The William Johnson House, therefore, continues to be a project of the Department's Historic Properties Trust Fund Committee. Contributions to the Historic Properties Trust Fund can be sent to the Department of Archives and History, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205.

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The words "thank you" are mighty little to take on the gigantic job they must do when we at the Natchez campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College acknowledge the extraordinary help we received to produce our first Natchez Literary Celebration, held June 7-9.

Without the services, goods, prayers and cold cash donated by dozens of entities and hundreds of people, the celebration would not have been the smash hit it was.

From the first request last fall for nearly \$10,000 from the Mississippi Humanities Council to the last request on June 9 to hold The Natchez Little Theatre's curtain until Eudora Welty could get there, Natchez's wonderful, caring, generous people came through in their usual splendid fashion.

There is no way we can ever repay everyone who helped us. All we can say is from the bottom of our hearts: "Thank you" and "God bless you."

Among these generous entities which gave so much are the following:

Adams County Board of Supervisors; Adams, Forman, Truly, Smith and Bramzlee law firm; owners of the antebellum houses Barnes House, Brandon Hall, The Briars, The Burn, Cherokee, Dunleith, Elgin, Glen Mary, Hope Farm, King's Tavern, Linden, Longwood, Magnolia Hall, Melrose, Monmouth, Mount Locust, Mount Repose, Rosalie, Selma and Stanton Hall; antique dealers on Franklin Street; ARA Services, Atlanta; F.R. Blakenstein Co.; Britton & Koozer First National Bank;



Top of the Morning

CAROLYN VANCE SMITH
Natchez resident

Also, Brown's Fine Art & Framing Inc., Jackson; Cation Petroleum Company; Canal Street Depos and Market; Chevron U.S.A. Inc., Jackson; The City of Natchez; Concordia Bank & Trust Company; Colonial Dames of America; Copiah-Lincoln Community College Board of Trustees, students, faculty and staff; Elizabeth Wilson Craig Interiors; Creative Photography by Rhett Powell.

Also, Daughters of the American Revolution, Mississippi State Society; Deposits Guaranty National Bank; Fidelity Tire Manufacturing Company; George's Caring Inc., Jackson; Herring Gas Company; The Historic Natchez Foundation; Holy Family Catholic Church Gospel Choir; International Paper; Barbara Kaiser Photography; The Krowe of Phoenix; Natchez Mardi Gras; The Kroger Co.; Maria, West & Baker Inc., Jackson.

Also, Maxwell Printing Corporation, Mississippi Department of Archives and History; Mississippi Humanities Council; National Endowment for the Humanities; The Mississippi Medicine Show; Mis-

issippi Power & Light Co.; Mississippi Symphony Orchestra; Natchez-Adams Chamber of Commerce; Natchez-Adams School District; Natchez Art Association; Natchez Chapter of the Mississippi Restaurant Association; Natchez Coca-Cola Bottling Co.; Natchez Community Concert Association.

Also, the Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau, The Natchez Democrat, The Natchez Digest, The Natchez Tola Hotel; Natchez First Federal Savings & Loan Association; Natchez Garden Club; Natchez Historical Society; The Natchez Little Theatre; The Natchez National Historical Park Foundation; Natchez Pilgrimage Tours; Natchez Trace Parkway Association; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

Also, Photo Images Inc., Jackson; Piggly-Wiggly Food Stores; Pilgrimage Garden Club; Swisherman Printing Co.; South Central Bell; The Trust for Public Land, San Francisco; Trustmark National Bank, Jackson; United Mississippi Bank; Waste Management Inc.; and Harold Young Photography, Jackson.

And we haven't even named the first of the hundreds of individuals who helped. All were world-class, not only in their positive attitudes but also in their breathtaking professionalism.

(Mrs. Smith is an instructor of English and journalism and Director of Public Information, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Natchez Campus and Co-chairman of the Natchez Literary Celebration — the Editor)

SOUNDINGS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
HARRISON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM



VOL. IV, NO. 2
SUMMER 1990

BILOXI

D'IBERVILLE

GULFPORT/HARRISON COUNTY

PASS CHRISTIAN

NATCHEZ LITERARY CONFERENCE DRAWS PROMINENT AUTHORS

Stanley Hastings, Reference Librarian for the Biloxi Library, was among those who attended the first annual Natchez Literary Celebration in Natchez, held June 7th-9th. A project of the Natchez Branch of the Copiah-Lincoln Community College, this informative and entertaining conference featured a number of speakers and tour guides who focused on the historical and literary wealth associated with the Natchez Trace. Among topics for lecture and discussion were: "The role of the Natchez Trace in the development of the nation," "A trace of violence?," "Minorities and their use of the Natchez Trace," and "The Natchez Trace in Eudora Welty's fiction." Miss Welty was one of several prominent authors taking part in the festival. Others included Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander, Dr. Peggy W. Prenshaw, and Dr. D. Clayton James. Former Governor William Winter presided.

Concurrent activities included tours of the Historical Natchez Collection, "Antiques Row," and the Natchez Institute of Arts; two performances of the musical version of Eudora Welty's "The Robber Bridegroom"; and a ceremony dedicating Rosalie (the DAR Shrine in Natchez) as a Registered National Historic Landmark.

Plans are already underway for the 1991 Natchez Literary Celebration. Information and the agenda for the 1990 conference is available in the Reference area of the Biloxi Main Library, or may be obtained through the mail from: Natchez Literary Celebration, P.O. Box 2282, Natchez, MS 39121.

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Natchez Literary Celebration: a smash hit

By Carolyn Vance Smith

World-class authors and academicians rubbed elbows with world-class politicians for three days at the first Natchez Literary Celebration June 7-9 in Natchez.

"And everyone had a splendid time," said former Mississippi Gov. William F. Winter, director of proceedings for the celebration.

The event, sponsored by the Natchez Campus of Co-Lin, drew such renowned authors as Eudora Welty and Margaret Walker Alexander, both of Jackson. Each presented a portion of the program.

Also present were such academic stars as Dr. Robert Remini of the University of Illinois and Dr. Douglas Lewis of the National Gallery of Art, both of whom gave lectures.

In addition were such politicians as Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan Jr., both of Mississippi's U.S. senators, Thad Cochran and Trent Lott, and three U.S. Congressmen, G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, Mike Parker and Jerry Huckaby.

These joined more than 1,000 others for the occasion of the mansion Malrose to the Nation, a National Park Service southern terminus Parkway.

The three-day celebration featured the theme, "The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy." A series of lectures, tours, dedications and special meals and parties carried out the theme.

"I cannot find words to express my appreciation for the honor that you did me in letting me share in that unique and delightful experience in Natchez," Winter said.

Hundreds also attended the lectures at The Natchez Eola Hotel, and approximately 700 attended the three-night run of Welty's play, "The Robber Bridegroom," set on the Trace.

The long weekend began on June 6, when ARA Services and the Co-Lin Board of Trustees hosted an outdoor dinner in honor of the lecturers and other special guests.

"The tone and mood of that beautiful evening, which was very generously funded by ARA, set the stage for the rest of the weekend," said Dr. Billy Thames, president of Co-Lin.

Thames and his wife, Anne, attended the entire celebration, with Thames on

syndicated columnist Bill Minor, Mississippi Humanities Council evaluator Dr. William Durrett of Belhaven College and Director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History Elbert Hilliard.

"The virtues of the celebration were as diverse as they were numerous," Durrett wrote.

"First credit for the overwhelming success must go to Mrs. Carolyn Vance Smith, Mrs. Becky Junkin Holloway and Mr. Kenneth Taylor, the planning committee, for through a year of careful planning with the scrupulous attention to detail, the committee made what was surely an enormous undertaking seem absolutely effortless," he said.

Plans are now being laid for the second annual celebration, which in early summer 1991 will be co-sponsored by the National Park Service in Natchez.

"We are delighted to have this prestigious group to work with us," Thames said. "We look forward to the 1991 celebration."

Theme for next year's event is "Natchez 1916-1991: Celebrating the Diversity in Literature, Art, and Music." Thames said.

Thames announced later this



TWO PARTICIPANTS at the Natchez Literary Festival await as Jo Barksdale of Jackson gets an autograph from Miss Eudora Welty, Pulitzer-Prize winning author. Judy E. Wiggins, English instructor at Co-Lin Natchez, is on the right.

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Natchez Trace News

EXPLORER

Mr. & Mrs. Marion Smith
Co-Lin Junior College
270 Foster-Mead Road
Natchez, MS 39128

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A chronicle of events and happenings along the Natchez Trace, past and present

Volume 1, Number 2

July 1990

Melrose dedication marks new beginning for stately mansion

by Carrie S. Didiak
Staff Writer

The antebellum Melrose, perhaps the grandest of Mississippi's famous Natchez mansions, stands high and proud in its new role as the centerpiece for a national park.

If the importance of that park can be measured by the notoriety of the dignitaries attending its recent opening ceremony in Natchez, it has stirred some excitement, indeed.

Witnessing and participating in the dedication of Melrose to the Natchez National Historical Park on June 8 were Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan Jr.; Mississippi Senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott; Mississippi Representatives G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery and Mike Parker; former Gov. William Winter, who opened the ceremony; Louisiana Representative Jerry Huckaby; writers Eudora Welty and Margaret Walker Alexander; and



Interior Secretary
Manuel Lujan, Jr.

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Interior Secretary addresses crowd at Melrose ceremony

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mayors, presidents of universities, and many others.

Lujan spoke at the dedication, saying, "Melrose is not just another pretty place. It is part of our past. The Gothic architecture tells an important story of the Old South.

"We stand here today to dedicate this as a historical treasure," he continued. "It is important to preserve our past."

The ceremony was a high point in a weekend-long celebration of the Natchez Trace that included the first Natchez Literary Celebration, which will become an annual affair, and Lujan's dedication of another antebellum house, Rosalie, as a National Historic Landmark. Rosalie was used by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant as headquarters for the Union Army during the Civil War.

Melrose has changed surprisingly little during its 145 years of existence. That's why historians are so excited that it was chosen for the national park.

The home has been sold only twice in the years since its completion in 1845, and each time it was sold with its original furnishings, which were documented in inventories in 1865 and 1883. Amazingly, the original parlor draperies still hang at the windows; the original painted canvas floorcloths still cover the hallways.

Not only the home remains intact; the entire complex still has its original outbuildings, including the working

kitchen, which was detached from the house, the smokehouse, the dairy, privies, cistern houses, stable, carriage house and two slave cabins with their own two-room privy.



Sen. Trent Lott (L.), Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan, Jr., Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, Betty Callon, Rep. Jerry Hackaby, Rep. Mike Parker, John Callon

All in all, it is itself a museum of a long-ago era.

Natchez oilman John Callon

bought the 80-acre plantation in 1976 and spent two years restoring Melrose's 16,000 square feet. Its appraised value before the sale to the National Park Service was \$7.1 million;

the Park Service paid about \$5.2 million, with the Callons donating the remaining 25 percent of its value. The Callons, who also attended the dedication ceremony in June, described their roles as "temporary caretakers."

Preservation efforts commenced before the Callons' arrival, however. Beginning in 1865 (the end of the Civil War), Melrose was the property of Mr. and Mrs. George Malin Davis and their descendants, Mr. and Mrs. George Malin Davis Kelly and Mrs. Dexter Ferry.

Melrose, designed by Maryland native Jacob Byers, was built during the cotton kingdom era of fabulous wealth for attorney and planter John T. McMurran. According to Historic

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Melrose begins new era as a national historical park

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Natchez Foundation Executive Director Ronald W. Miller, testifying at a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee meeting about creating the national park, Melrose reflects the

sophistication of the cotton planters, whose fortunes allowed them to travel extensively.

"Though adapted to the climate of the region, (Melrose and other Natchez) houses are in no way back-

woods essays by the unlearned," Miller told Congress. "Instead, they are academically and classically on a par with architecture anywhere in the nation. . . (and) never fail to meet the expectations of the modern visitor who comes to Natchez to find the real antecedent for the romantic image of the Old South imprinted on our national consciousness by 'Gone With the Wind.'"

The careful preservation of Melrose, he added, makes it one of the top historic house complexes in the nation.

"Rarely does a building of such high quality architecture survive intact with its landscaped grounds, its original interior furnishings and its full array of service buildings," Miller told Congress.

Melrose hasn't "become" a stunner in post-antebellum times. Even in an age and a town where extremely beautiful homes were commonplace, Melrose stood out.

"(Melrose), looking for all the world like an English park. . . flanked by grand forest trees stretching away on either side, and half embracing a vast lawn in front of emerald green. . . the place is English all over," wrote an English-born visiting architect, T.K. Wharton, in 1859.

When Melrose's architect, Jacob Byers, died in 1852, his obituary referred to the house as "by many considered the best edifice in the State of Mississippi."

Melrose may be first, but it will not likely be the only acquisition for Natchez National Historical Park. An extensive area along the Natchez bluff overlooking the Mississippi

River may be next.

The proposed area encompasses the site of the 1716 Fort Rosalie, built by Frenchmen who settled the Natchez region then.

Though the 1990 appropriation does not include funds to purchase property around the fort site, it does allow the park service to continue a study of the feasibility of extending the park there.

The 149-year-old two-story brick home of freed slave and diarist William Johnson of Natchez could become the next addition.

Built in 1841, the home belonged to a barber whose diary detailed the life of a free black in the antebellum South. Johnson was born a slave in 1809 and became a barber after his white owner (and probable father) freed him in 1820. He was a prosperous landholder in the 1840s; in 1851 he was murdered.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History is purchasing the Johnson Home, and will donate the structure to the National Park Service.

In an interview with *The Natchez Democrat*, Stuart Johnson, Natchez National Historical Park manager, explained that few national parks are like the one in Natchez, which will be quite different from the ones at the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone.

Picnicking facilities will be built, but camping facilities will not, he said.

For now, Melrose and its gardens and forests and outlying buildings are being shown in daily tours, but development plans include interpretation of the out-buildings and grounds and establishing a visitors' center. "—"

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TRENT LOTT

U.S. SENATOR / MISSISSIPPI

487 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BLDG.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510-2403
AUGUST 1990

SENATORS, SEC. LUJAN DEDICATE NATCHEZ PARK

NATCHEZ, Miss. -- More than 1,000 people gathered in Natchez, Mississippi to watch the pages of history turn in Adams County.

Local, state and national dignitaries turned out to take part in the official beginning of the Natchez National Historical Park. Those attending the event included U.S. Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan Jr., U.S. Senators Trent Lott and Thad Cochran, U.S. Representatives G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery and Mike Parker, former Gov.

William Winter, and Mississippi author Eudora Welty.

The officials watched as antebellum Melrose, a historically significant property of Mississippi's past, was handed over to the National Park Service. The house and accompanying property was formally purchased by the N.P.S. for inclusion in the Natchez National Historical Park on May 15.

During the ceremony, Sec. Lujan emphasized the



NATCHEZ, Miss. — Melrose tour guide Fred Page (right) escorts a crowd including Sen. Trent Lott (right-center) and Sen. Thad Cochran (left) inside Melrose.
Photo courtesy: Natchez Democrat.

importance of preserving symbols of American history.

"Melrose is not just another pretty place. It is a part of our past. The Gothic architecture tells an important story of the Old South," he said.

Melrose, Fort Rosalie, and other historic sites will be included in the Natchez National Historical Park, authorized by Congress on October 7, 1988.

Sen. Lott stressed the importance of expanding and promoting the Park.

"Now all we've got to do is complete the development and make the rest of the world aware of what we have here. I think we will get the next installment of money and Sec. Lujan's presence here is a big plus," Lott said.

The ceremony was held in conjunction with a three-day literary celebration, "The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy."

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The Natchez Literary Celebration
presents

The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy



Natchez, Mississippi
June 7-9, 1990

Sponsored by the Natchez Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College

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The Natchez Literary Celebration
presents

The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy



Natchez, Mississippi
June 7-9, 1990

Sponsored by the Natchez Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College

POST OFFICE BOX 2282
NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI 39121

*The Natchez Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College and
The Natchez Historical Society*

*invite you to a
Luncheon*

Woon, Thursday, June 7

*Honorary Chairman: Natchez Author Alice Walworth Graham
Monmouth*

John A. Quitman Boulevard, Natchez

*R.s.v.p. by June 1: (601) 922-7281 or
Natchez Literary Celebration, P. O. Box 2282, Natchez, MS 39121*

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June 1990

DEDICATION
ROSALIE

Registered National Historic Landmark
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

- Presiding Mrs. Monroe Tate Thigpen
State Rosalie Chairman
Honorary State Regent
Past Vice President General, NSDAR
- Invocation Mrs. Parks Cadman Porter
State Chaplain
- Welcome Mrs. Monroe Tate Thigpen
- History of Rosalie Mrs. William E. O'Hare
Historian, Rosalie Board
Honorary State Regent
- Presentation of Certificate The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior
- Unveiling of Plaque The Honorable Manuel Lujan, Jr.
Mrs. William D. Lum, Sr.
Chaplain, Rosalie Board
- Acceptance of Certificate and Plaque Margaret DeMerville
State Regent
- Remarks Mrs. Dale Kelly Love
Vice President General, NSDAR
Honorary State Regent
- Benediction Mrs. Walter G. Johnson
Honorary State Regent
Past Vice President General, NSDAR

June 7, 1990
5:45 p.m.

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*The Natchez Campus of
Copiah-Lincoln Community College
and
The Natchez Garden Club*

Buffet Luncheon

Noon, Friday, June 8

*Magnolia Hall
215 South Pearl Street, Natchez*



*Please reply by June 1: (601) 442-7341 or
Natchez Literary Celebration, P. O. Box 2282, Natchez, MS*

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The Adams County Republican Party

Invites You To Attend A Reception

Honoring

Secretary of The Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr.
United States Senator Thad Cochran
United States Senator Trent Lott

"ELGIN"

Home of Dr. & Mrs. W. F. Calhoun

3:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Friday, June 8, 1990

\$25 Per Couple

extra photos of
Eola Hotel

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8:00 p.m.
Cocktails on the lawn.

8:45 p.m.
Waltz performance.
"Inns at Jefferson Military College."

9:00 p.m.
Invocation & Dinner Buffet.

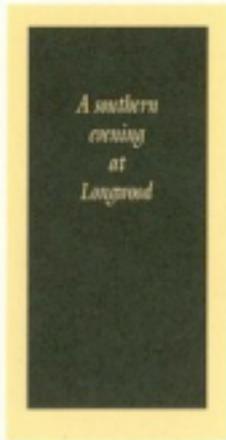
10:00 p.m.
Cordials, dessert and coffee.

Welcoming remarks, Barton E. Hook, Jr.,
President, Depot Guaranty National Bank, Nashville.

History of Longwood, Mrs. Leslie Barnes.
Telling of the Longwood ghost story, Mrs. Jerry Bowman.

10:30 p.m.
Closing remarks.
Barton E. Hook, Jr.

Guests to be presented with a copy of the book,
"The Legend of Longwood."



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1908 - 1960

Richard Wright Historic Marker Ceremony

Gazebo in Bluff Park
Natchez, Mississippi
4:00 p.m., Saturday, June 9, 1990

Welcome and Introduction Mr. George Dunkley
Director of Minority Affairs
Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau

Master of Ceremonies
Natchez Literary Celebration The Honorable William F. Winter
President, Board of Trustees
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Marker Unveiling
Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander
Professor of English Emerita
Jackson State University
The Honorable David Armstrong
Mayor of Natchez
Mr. George Dunkley
Director of Minority Affairs
Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau
Mr. Kenneth H. P'Pool
Director, Division of Historic Preservation
Mississippi Department of Archives and History
Dr. Billy B. Thames
President, Copiah-Lincoln Community College
The Honorable Phillip West
President, Adams County Board of Supervisors

Special Remarks Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander

Musical Selection Holy Family Catholic Church Gospel Choir
Mr. Alvin Shelby, Director

Closing Remarks Mr. George Dunkley

Refreshments Courtyard of Bontura-Evansview
(Pre-Civil War home of Robert Smith,
a free African-American)
Hosts: Historic Natchez Foundation,
Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and
National Society of Colonial Dames
of America in the State of Mississippi

This ceremony is a special highlight of the 1990 Natchez Literary Celebration.

The Adams County Board of Supervisors
The City of Natchez
The Historic Natchez Foundation
The Natchez-Adams County Chamber of Commerce
The Natchez Campus of
Copiah-Lincoln Community College
The Natchez Convention and Visitor Bureau
The Natchez Historical Society

invite you to a
honoring
Mississippi Historic Marker Dedication Ceremony

Richard Wright
1908-1960

the celebrated author born near Natchez
Guest Speaker

Dr. Margaret Walker Alexander, Jackson, Mississippi



This event is a special highlight of the 1990 Natchez Literary Celebrations.
4 x 4 inch p.m.
Saturday, June 9
The Natchez Bluffs
End of Main Street

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extra photos of
Melrose dedication



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THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

REQUESTS THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY AT
THE PUBLIC DEDICATION CEREMONY OF

MELROSE

THE FIRST ACQUISITION FOR THE
NATCHEZ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

6:30 P.M., FRIDAY, JUNE 8, 1990

FRONT LAWN OF MELROSE

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
THE HONORABLE MANUEL LUYAN, JR.
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

CONCERT BY THE MISSISSIPPI SINGERS CHORUS

TOUR OF MELROSE AND A GARDEN PARTY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

*In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the Family Life Center
of the Natchez First Baptist Church.*

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The 1990 Natchez Literary Celebration
presents

The Natchez Trace: Its Literary Legacy



Natchez, Mississippi
June 7-9

Sponsored by the Natchez Campus of Copiah-Lincoln Community College

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Melrose +
Glen Mary
photos



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Eudora Welty

Saturday, June 9, following a 7 p.m. dinner at the Carriage House, Mississippi's Pulitzer-prize-winning author will read from her story, "A Worm Push," which is set on the Natchez Trace.



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