

# MISSISSIPPI HISTORY

## NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

SPECIAL ISSUE

Volume 53, No. 5

### Newsletter Highlights Local Projects

In the spring of 2011, the Department of Archives and History began visiting local historical and genealogical societies around the state to learn more about grassroots preservation, museum, and genealogical efforts, and to let those groups know about services the department offers that could aid those projects. Trey Porter, director of Community Relations, met with more than a dozen groups throughout the year and has more site visits scheduled for 2012. If you would like to invite a member of the MDAH staff to attend a meeting of your group, call 601-576-6809 or email [porter@mdah.state.ms.us](mailto:porter@mdah.state.ms.us).

This special issue of the *Mississippi History Newsletter* focuses on some of the projects being carried out by groups across the state, such as the recently



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## MHS Meeting Theme “War of 1812”

The 2012 meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society will be held March 1–3 in Columbus on the campus of Mississippi University for Women. The theme of the meeting will be the bicentennial of the War of 1812, and presentations will examine the battle for the southern frontier, Mississippi’s American Indians, the Natchez Trace, and local history projects

A public reception at the historic Greek Revival townhouse Whitehall will begin the meeting on Thursday, March 1 at 5 p.m. On Friday evening, March 2, author Robert V. Haynes will give the banquet address, “‘Some Dark Mysterious Business’: Aaron Burr in Mississippi Territory” Haynes’ book *The Mississippi Territory and the Southwest Frontier, 1795-1817* won the society’s McLemore Prize for book of the year in 2010.

At the March 2 luncheon Daniel P. Jordan will pres-

Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the nonprofit organization that



The Yazoo County Historical Society received the MHS 2011 Frank E. Everett Award for its outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Mississippi history. MHS awards committee chair William Parrish (left) presented the award to YCHS secretary-treasurer Sue Patterson, vice president John E. Ellzey, and president Bettye Crout.

ent “Our History Matters.” A native Mississippian, Jordan is president emeritus of the

owns and operates Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Prentiss Society Aids with Cemetery

### Fundraiser Organized to Repair Damage Draws Hundreds to Tour

What began as a way to raise money to pay for repairs to vandalized grave markers in the Booneville City Cemetery turned into a community event so successful that plans have already been made to hold it again. On October 14, 2011, some three hundred people attended the Prentiss County Genealogical and Historical Society’s first Historic Booneville Cemetery Tour.

The twenty-acre cemetery, located near the

center of the town on King Street, has more than four thousand interments. The oldest grave is that of Sarah Price from 1855. More than 225 veterans are buried there, and the cemetery also features a separate potter’s field—or pauper’s section—in the back corner.

On June 4, 2011, about forty markers in the cemetery were vandalized. Much of the damage was minor, but the oldest markers suffered the most. No money was available to make repairs, so members of the PCG&HS decided to organize a fundraiser. Soon city government, local schools, Boy and Girl Scout troops, and many other businesses, individuals, and groups were pitching in.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## MHS MEETING, continued from p. 1

Nancy Carpenter, executive director of the Columbus-Lowndes Convention and Visitors Bureau, will lead a double-decker bus tour of historic downtown Columbus. Winners of the McLemore Prize, the Betersworth Award for outstanding history teacher, and other awards will be announced on March 3 at the awards luncheon. The B.L.C. Wailes Award will be presented at the banquet on March 2.

Registration for the annual meeting is \$35 for MHS members and \$60 for non-members. Additional costs are \$23 for the March 2 luncheon, \$43 for the March 2 banquet dinner, and \$23 for the March 3 awards brunch. Reservations for the Friday luncheon and banquet and Saturday awards brunch should be made by February 27. Call 601-576-6849 or email [mhs@mdah.state.ms.us](mailto:mhs@mdah.state.ms.us) for more information.

Rooms are reserved at the Fairfield Inn and Suites, 2011 Sixth Street North in Columbus, 662-241-1990, until February 15, 2012; when making reservations, be sure to specify the MHS rate of \$84 plus tax per night.

The society thanks its sponsors for their generous support: Dixie Butler, Joe and Carolyn Fant, Gene and Leigh Imes, Stephen D. Lee Foundation, Dick and Jo Anne Leike, the Columbus/Lowndes County Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Columbus & Lowndes County Historical Society, and the University of Southern Mississippi Foundation.

### THURSDAY, MARCH 1

3–5 p.m.—**Registration**, Fairfield Inn and Suites, 2011 Sixth Street North, Columbus

5–6:30 p.m.—**Welcoming Reception**, Whitehall, 607 Third Street South, Columbus

### FRIDAY, MARCH 2

8–10 a.m.—**Registration**, Parkinson Hall, Mississippi University for Women

*The Friday luncheon and banquet and all presentations will take place in Parkinson Hall unless otherwise noted.*

9 a.m.—**Battle for the Southern Frontier: The War of 1812 in the Mississippi Territory**, Clay Williams, director, Old Capitol Museum, and J. Michael Bunn, executive director, Historic Chattahoochee Commission

10:30 a.m.—**Mississippi's American Indians and the War of 1812**, James F. Barnett,

Jr., director, MDAH Historic Properties Division

11:15 a.m.—**Zachariah McGirt and the Creek Indian War**, Charles Lowery, professor emeritus, Mississippi State University, and Sara Bradford Lowery, Starkville

12 noon, **LUNCHEON**

**Our History Matters**, Daniel P. Jordan, president emeritus, Thomas Jefferson Foundation

1:30 p.m.—**The Natchez Trace and the War of 1812**, Tony L. Turnbow, president, Natchez Trace Parkway Association

2:15 p.m.—**The Bicentennial of the War of 1812: Living History for All Mississippians**, Daniel Kimes, northern district ranger, Natchez Trace Parkway, National Park Service

3–5 p.m.—**Double-decker Bus Tour of Columbus** led by Nancy Carpenter, executive director, Columbus/Lowndes Convention Center and Visitors Bureau

6 p.m.—**President's Reception**, Puckett House.

7 p.m., **BANQUET**

**"Some Dark Mysterious Business": Aaron Burr in Mississippi Territory**, Robert V. Haynes, professor emeritus, Western Kentucky University

### SATURDAY, MARCH 3

8 a.m.—**Annual Business Meeting**, Parkinson Hall

9:15 a.m.—**Returning Is Such Sweet Sorrow: Mississippi Soldiers and Civilians Transition from War to Peace**, Rebecca Zimmer, University of Southern Mississippi

10 a.m.—**Undergraduate Student Research Panel**, Charles M. Yarborough, Mississippi School for Mathematics & Science, moderator

10:45 a.m.—**Deep Roots and Wide Branches: MUW's Influential Role in the History of Women's Education**, Bridget Smith Pieschel, MUW

11:15 a.m.—**Columbus and Lowndes County Historical Society: Preserving Local History**, Lillian Wade, president

12 noon—**Awards Brunch**, Pope Banquet Room, Hogarth Dining Center

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE, continued from p. 1

completed improvements and interpretive work at Ingomar Mound and a living history tour that's helping raise money for repairs to a local cemetery. It also features stories on the upcoming annual meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society and the Department of Archives and History's records services, historical markers, and other outreach programs useful to historical societies.

One such program is the department's Speakers Bureau, which offers presentations on dozens of topics for groups large or small, younger or older. The subjects covered vary from ways to conserve your family photographs and beginning genealogy—including presentations on African American and Native American family research projects—to the history of quilting in Mississippi, the Natchez Indians, early baseball in the state, and the use of mules during the Civil War. We also offer professional presentations to groups on starting a local archive or museum, managing records—both historical and electronic, collection oversight, emergency preparedness, and much more. For a complete list of topics and details online, go to [mdah.state.ms.us/education/speakers\\_bureau.php](http://mdah.state.ms.us/education/speakers_bureau.php).

Over the next five years one of the department's largest projects will be overseeing construction of the new Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Museum of Mississippi History. Groundbreaking for the museums is expected to happen summer 2012, and the museums will open in 2017 as the centerpiece of Mississippi's bicentennial celebration of becoming a state. The museums, alongside the restored Old Capitol Museum and William F. Winter Archives and History Building, will serve as a gateway to heritage tourism, directing hundreds of thousands of visitors to historic sites across Mississippi.

*H.T. Holmes, director  
Mississippi Department of  
Archives and History*

# Societies Partner on County Records Project

Staff from the Department of Archives and History have worked with local historical societies across the state on two surveys of county records. The societies partnered with their local officials and MDAH to identify and catalog official records that date as far back as 1763.

MDAH began the Territorial Records Inventory project in 2010. The yearlong, \$100,000 initiative focused on the records of the fourteen counties that pre-date Mississippi statehood. The department's Local Government Records Office coordinated the project, with the goals of identifying and inventorying the records in those counties and helping local officials care for them going forward.

Following the success of the initial survey, the department launched the County Records Inventory in 2011. The ongoing project focuses on Mississippi counties formed between 1818 and 1833 and their pre-1920 records. These older official records can provide invaluable data for historians and genealogists.

"Daily business generates new records every day for county clerks to process, and clerks have limited time and resources to care for old records," said Tim Barnard, Local Government Records Office director. "This is an area where the department and local historical societies can help."

Societies who have participated in the projects include the Historic Natchez Foundation, Greene County Historical Society, Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, Inc., Marion County Historical Society, and Vicksburg and Warren County Historical Society.

The **Historic Natchez Foundation** has partnered with Adams County since 1992 to house and manage most of the county's pre-1900 records. MDAH staff worked with the foundation to train student volunteers in the

care and handling of historic archival material.

"Adams County courthouse records at the Historic Natchez Foundation include circuit and chancery court case files, court minutes books, probate papers, inventory books, chattel mortgages, voting precinct ledgers, land rolls, naturalization records, teacher payment records, and an assortment of personal papers and objects that are associated with case files, including evidence in nineteenth-century murder trials," said Mimi Miller, HNF executive director.

The **Greene County Museum and Historical Society** oversaw a conversion of the old jail on the top floor of the courthouse into a museum, then worked with county officials to have many records of historical interest moved into the new climate-controlled space. Although Greene County lost all its records in a courthouse fire in 1874, many important older records still exist there, including a variety of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century docket books and court minutes. Through this project, MDAH was able to provide an accurate inventory of those older county records and help improve storage conditions.

The **Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, Inc.**, preserves and makes available to researchers inactive Lauderdale County records and many early records from the City of Meridian stored at the Raymond P. Davis Annex Building. The department's inventory found that most of the older records were in good condition. The county archives, established in the 1980s, was a pioneer in preserving local government records and has provided a model for other groups to follow. County staff and historical society volunteers jointly operate the archives.

The records in Marion Coun-

ty date to the county's founding in 1811. Over time the number of records in the courthouse grew and eventually many older ones were moved to large, portable

county clerks and museum staff.

To date, records in thirty-three counties have been inventoried, including Adams, Amite, Attala, Carroll, Claiborne, Clarke, Copi-



**MDAH Records Management Specialist Sumner Holmes evaluates records at the Lauderdale County circuit clerk's offices.**

storage containers. The department worked with county officials and the **Marion County Historical Society** to inventory and evaluate those records, including a docket book from the Civil War that was signed by Union officers on their way through Marion County.

Most of the books that were stored in the containers are now in the care of the society. The records that land researchers use regularly are still in the clerks' offices. Both sets of records are of interest to historical and genealogical researchers and are available to the public.

Warren County's ongoing preservation programs with the **Vicksburg and Warren County Historical Society** provided the department access to records in the society's collection in the Old Court House Museum. MDAH staff inventoried records that had been stored in the Old Court House attic since 1940, giving copies of the inventory to both

ah, Covington, Franklin, Greene, Hancock, Holmes, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jones, Kemper, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Madison, Marion, Monroe, Neshoba, Perry, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Warren, Wayne, and Wilkinson. Records from Choctaw, Hinds, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Tallahatchie, Washington, Winston, Yalobusha, and Yazoo will be inventoried in 2012.

Funding for the projects was made possible by grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission through the Mississippi Historical Records Advisory Board, with matching support provided by MDAH.

Historical societies wishing to help facilitate local genealogical and historical research through the preservation of these records should contact Tim Barnard at 601-576-6894 or by email at [tbarnard@mdah.state.ms.us](mailto:tbarnard@mdah.state.ms.us).

# Exhibit Firms Chosen for Museums

The Department of Archives and History continues to move forward with plans to design the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Museum of Mississippi History, gather artifacts, develop exhibits, and construct the museums and museum complex.

In December, following a nationwide search and interviews with the top candidates, exhibit design teams for the museums were chosen. Hilferty & Associates will design the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, and Design Minds will design the Museum of Mississippi History. Based in Athens, Ohio, Hilferty & Associates has more than forty years of experience in interpretive planning and design. The firm has planned and designed exhibitions for large institutions such as the National Museum of the American Indian and the New York State Museum. Hilferty has developed exhibits on the Chickasaw Trail of Tears, the African Slave Trade, the Great Migration, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Hilferty designed Victory to Freedom, the inaugural exhibit for the National Afro-American Museum and the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum at the 18th & Vine Cultural Center in Kansas City.

Hilferty will work with Monadnock Media of Sunderland, Massachusetts, for the audiovisual components of the Civil Rights Museum. Monadnock's credentials include media installations for the Albany Civil Rights Museum and the August Wilson Center for African American Culture.

Hilferty has engaged Dr. John Fleming as a special consultant for the Civil Rights Museum project. Hilferty collaborated with Fleming when he served as director for the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Since then Fleming has served as director for the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the Cincinnati Museum Center at Union Terminal. Recently he has consulted on several civil rights museums, including ones in Birmingham and Atlanta. Prior to his museum work Fleming served on the United States Civil Rights Commission.

Based in Fairfax, Virginia, Design Minds was founded in 1998. They have planned and designed exhibitions for many institutions with large collections of artifacts, such as the West Virginia Department of Culture and History, Indepen-



**Rendering showing the location of the William F. Winter Archives and History Building (at right), Mississippi Civil Rights Museum (center), and Museum of Mississippi History. Architects have not designed the civil rights museum building yet; this graphic only shows the structure's location.**

dence Hall, and the Knight Museum and Sandhills Center in Alliance, Nebraska. Design Minds has developed exhibits for the U.S. Army Basic Combat Training Museum, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, George C. Marshall Museum, and National Archives and Records Administration.

Design Minds will work with Northern Light Productions for the multimedia components of the Museum of Mississippi History. Northern Light has produced interactive exhibits and video for the Louisiana State

Museum, Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Oklahoma Heritage Museum, and Vicksburg National Military Park.

Design Minds has engaged PPI Consulting and Available Light as the audiovisual/systems and lighting consultants respectively. PPI Consulting's credentials include audiovisual installations for the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, and Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Available Light's credentials include lighting designs for the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, the New England Aquarium, and

2005 these have been in storage and inaccessible to the public. These treasured objects will be showcased in the new museums. The Museum of Mississippi History will tell the story of the state from prehistory through the current day. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum will focus on the period 1945–70 and tell the story of the struggle for equal rights and fair treatment under the law.

The two museums will be administered by MDAH and will be constructed side by side on state-owned land next to the William F. Winter Archives and History Building in downtown Jackson. Total cost of the two museums is expected to top \$70 million, with a significant amount of the funding for exhibits coming from private sources.

The Mississippi Development Authority has projected that the two museums will draw 200,000 visitors each year and have an annual economic impact of nearly \$19 million. The two museums will share collection storage and conservation areas, classroom and auditorium space, a parking garage, and store. Savings gained by the shared facilities total \$7.78 million. In addition, operating the museums together will produce significant ongoing savings.

Construction of the two museums, parking garage, and museum complex is scheduled to begin in 2013 and take three years. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the Museum of Mississippi History are scheduled to open in 2017 as the centerpiece of the state's bicentennial celebration. The new museums—alongside the restored Old Capitol Museum and the William F. Winter Archives and History Building—will form the heart of a state history center that will serve as a gateway to heritage tourism and attract visitors from across the nation and the world.

the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

Hilferty and Design Minds began work on schematic designs in December 2011. In early 2012 a series of community meetings will be held around the state to invite public input on the exhibits of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. Fifteen community meetings were held statewide in 2005 to gather input for the Museum of Mississippi History.

The Department of Archives and History holds the world's finest collection of artifacts related to Mississippi, but since

# Union County Completes Ingomar Mound Project



**Anthropology professor Evan Peacock (seated at center) from the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University demonstrates how stone was flaked to form artifacts during an Archaeology Month event at Ingomar Mound.**

A two-thousand-year-old Native American mound in northeast Mississippi was the centerpiece for a recently completed comprehensive interpretation project undertaken by the Union County Historical Society and Heritage Museum, the Union County Board of Supervisors, the City of New Albany, and the Archaeological Conservancy. Standing about thirty feet tall in the middle of sixty-three acres of green space, Ingomar Mound is the only visible evidence of what was once a large ceremonial center consisting of approximately one dozen mounds. Thanks to the effort of the partnership and a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, visitors to the site can now enjoy interpretive signs, two outdoor classrooms, a one-mile nature trail, and a paved parking area.

"I think it appeals to people that the work is not invasive to the site," said Jill Smith, director of the Union County Heritage Museum, "but allows them the freedom to explore a culture that was here two thousand years ago and to enjoy the surrounding green space."

Objects excavated from the mound complex in 1894 are on exhibit at the museum, which is administered by the society. Artifacts include flint points, pottery shards, a stone hoe, and a small

silver medallion featuring a Spanish coat-of-arms. After being collected by the Bureau of American Ethnology the artifacts were sent to the Smithsonian Institution, which retains them in their collection and loans them to the Union County Heritage Museum on an ongoing basis.

Each October the historical society, in partnership with the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at Mississippi State University, hosts an annual Archaeology Month event. Past activities have included stargazing, flint-knapping, ancient weapons programs, pottery demonstrations, artifact identification sessions, and more.

New partnerships include a project with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, whose staff volunteered to survey the site and help reestablish native grasses, with assistance from the Jamie L. Whitten Plant Materials Center. A local Boy Scout is planning a project to place signs on the site about the native plants and their uses by Native Americans.

The site is open to the public free of charge every day from dawn to dusk. Programs for visiting groups are available by appointment through the Union County Heritage Museum. For more information call 662-538-0014 or email [jill@uchheritagemuseum.com](mailto:jill@uchheritagemuseum.com).

## Society Offers Online History Articles, Bios

*Mississippi History Now* is a free online publication of the Mississippi Historical Society that offers articles on a broad range of topics related to Mississippi and Mississippi history. Launched twelve years ago, the site now has more than 130 richly illustrated articles plus profiles of all Mississippi governors available in its searchable archives, and lesson plans are included with each to make using the information in the classroom easy for teachers.

A profile of Mississippi's new governor Phil Bryant launches the upcoming season. Other scheduled articles include the history of Mississippi University for Women, the 1862 Battle of Iuka, and the Carrollton Courthouse Massacre of 1886. Recent articles have examined the Clyde Kennard case, shipbuilding on the Gulf Coast, reapportionment, state NAACP leader Aaron Henry, nineteenth-century novelist and biographer Sarah Ann Dorsey, rural electrification in northeast Mississippi, and the Vietnamese in Mississippi.

"Over our dozen years we have featured articles not just on the most famous and well-known of the state's people and events, but also the lesser-known but significant moments in Mississippi history. There is truly something for everyone available on the site," said editor Peggy Jeanes. "*Mississippi History Now* is the society's gift to the people of Mississippi and elsewhere, and I hope everyone will take advantage of this treasure trove of information about our state."

*Mississippi History NOW* is published by the Mississippi Historical Society. The Web site is funded entirely through tax-deductible donations from individuals, companies, and foundations, and grants from MDAH, MHS, and the Mississippi Humanities Council. Anyone wishing to support the ongoing work of the site may send contributions to the Mississippi Historical Society, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0571, earmarked for *Mississippi History Now*.

Find *Mississippi History Now* online at [mshistory.k12.ms.us](http://mshistory.k12.ms.us), or by searching for "Mississippi History Now." For more information contact Peggy Jeanes at 601-956-4547 or by email at [pjeanes@earthlink.net](mailto:pjeanes@earthlink.net).

# National History Day Draws State Students

More than 1,500 of the state's middle- and high-school students honed their research and writing skills for the 2010-11 National History Day in Mississippi. Nearly two hundred students went on to participate in the state contest at the University of Southern Mississippi, and thirty-two competed on

in history, students present their work in original papers, Web sites, exhibits, performances, and documentaries. This year's theme is "Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in History."

"Our program has been recognized for its effectiveness in teaching more than merely facts and figures," said Jeff



**Madison Middle School studies teacher Tom Watts and USM professor of history Deanne Nuwer discussed National History Day at the 2011 Social Studies Teachers Workshop at the Old Capitol Museum.**

the national level. Pass Christian's Elizabeth Young won second place in the nation for her documentary on the Louisiana Purchase.

The mission of National History Day is to increase interest in history and help students develop strong research skills. Each year more than half a million students, encouraged by thousands of teachers nationwide, participate in the NHD contest. Students choose historical topics related to a theme and conduct extensive primary and secondary research through libraries, archives, museums, oral history interviews, and historic sites. After analyzing and interpreting their sources and drawing conclusions about their topics' significance

Bowersox, Mississippi's National History Day coordinator and University of Southern Mississippi assistant professor. "Printed materials, mentoring, and expert historians are available to help teachers integrate the project into the work they are already doing in the classroom."

This year 250 students are expected to participate in the state contest on Saturday, February 25, at the University of Southern Mississippi. Volunteers are welcome. For more information contact Jeff Bowersox at [jeff.bowersox@usm.edu](mailto:jeff.bowersox@usm.edu).

A comprehensive guide to implementing NHD in the classroom is available online at [www.usm.edu/history/NHD/Welcome.html](http://www.usm.edu/history/NHD/Welcome.html).

## PRENTISS SOCIETY, continued from p. 1

"It was definitely a great collaboration between the society and the City of Booneville," said Diane Garvin, PCG&HS president. "Mayor Joe Eaton was very supportive and provided us with many resources."

The society wanted to celebrate the rich history of the city, so it decided to stage a living history tour that would highlight the lives of past citizens of Booneville who are buried in the cemetery. Fifteen people were portrayed, including a professional photographer, the city's youngest mayor, a physician, a business owner, and a family of three killed by the great tornado of 1936. Society members and other



**Barbara Shackelford portrayed Jettie Nunley, the town's first professional photographer. She was known as the Prentiss County Pictorial Historian.**

volunteers used local history books published by the PCG&HS as well as other sources to research the lives of the subjects. Students in Amanda Burcham-Garvin's creative writing course at Northeast Mississippi Community College wrote the script.

Once the script was complete volunteer reenactors learned their subjects' life stories and rehearsed their lines. On the day of the tour the actors were stationed at the appropriate gravesites—each supplied with fresh flowers donated by a local florist—and volunteer tour guides, including some members of the city's Board of Aldermen, led the crowds of visitors through the cemetery. Golf carts were available for those unable to walk the entire way.

Since it was located on publicly owned property, the tour was free. However, donations were accepted, and enough money was raised to pay for several repairs.

Another Historic Booneville Cemetery Tour is planned for May 2012. For more information contact Diane Garvin at 662-416-3741.

## Historic Natchez Foundation Welcoming New Deputy Director

On January 19 at 5:30 p.m. at Elms Court the Historic Natchez Foundation will host a cocktail reception to welcome its new deputy director, Trevor Brown, and his wife Makalah (pictured at right).

Brown has worked in the MDAH Gulf Coast office since November 2006 overseeing grant projects in Hancock and western Harrison County. He began as a preservation specialist and became the Gulf



Coast deputy director in 2008. Brown will assume his duties on March 1.

# Historical Societies Sponsor Markers

Anyone who has traveled through a Mississippi town or city or driven along a state highway has probably noticed at least one large, green and silver freestanding marker on the roadside or near a building. For more than sixty years the department's State Historical Marker program has been used to recognize significant people and events across Mississippi. A centuries-old road, a World War I hero, a public servant, a female academy, and the site of a visit by civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., are among the topics of markers that have recently been sponsored by local historical societies.

"The State Historical Marker program provides an excellent way for groups to commemorate significant local people, places, and events," said Jim Woodrick, director of the MDAH Historic Preservation Division. "These markers become a source of community pride and promote interest in further preserving local history."

The **Lincoln County Historical and Genealogical Society** sponsored a marker for St. Stephens Road, the main wagon and trade route connecting the Mississippi territorial capital at Natchez with Fort St. Stephens in Alabama. Planning for the road dates to January 1809, when the Territorial General Assembly appointed three commissioners "to employ a fit person to open a road from Pearl river, where the present Choctaw boundary line crosses the same, the nearest and best way to the Chickesawhay river." When linked with other early roads, the St. Stephens Road stretched through present-day Adams, Franklin, Lincoln, Lawrence, Jefferson Davis, Covington, Jones, and Wayne counties.

The **Tippah County Historical and Genealogical Society** sponsored a marker to

commemorate the heroism of Falkner native Corporal Orvil Lucian Cotten (1896-1992) during the first World War. Cotten was sent to Belgium to maintain communication lines between the 117th and 118th infantry regiments, which in

practice in 1885. He served in the state Senate 1889-96 and in the House of Representatives 1896-97, then as chancery court judge for the sixth district 1897-1903. Byrd was elected to the United States Congress and served in the House from 1903



**Mary Frances Phillips (left), Carroll Montgomery (center, behind marker) and Julius Summers, all members of the Lincoln County Historical and Genealogical Society, unveil the state historical marker for St. Stephens Road. Photo courtesy the Daily Leader.**

September 1918 were sent to wrest control of a major German defensive position known as the Hindenburg Line. During the night of September 27, as fierce fighting continued near Bellicourt, Cotten alone kept the line of communications in repair, working under constant shellfire. Although badly gassed he refused evacuation. As a result of his actions Cotten was awarded the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross, the French Croix de Guerre, the British Military Medal, and the U.S. Major Battle Medal. The marker stands on the grounds of the city hall in Falkner.

The **Philadelphia Historic Commission** sponsored a marker detailing the political career of Adam Monroe Byrd (1859-1912). Byrd was born in Alabama but moved to Philadelphia and opened a law

to 1911. Byrd was buried in the Cedarlawn Cemetery in Philadelphia. In 1928 the Adam Byrd Literary Society was established at Philadelphia High School in his honor. The state historical marker will stand near the site of his home on Pecan Avenue.

The **Amite County Historical and Genealogical Society** sponsored a marker for the Amite Female Seminary. The seminary, established in 1853, was one of three private female academies once located in Liberty. Drawing students locally as well as from Louisiana and Texas, the curriculum included literature, history, science, mathematics, modern languages, philosophy, music, and physical education. The school ceased operation during the Civil War when two of its three buildings were burned. The remaining building was

purchased and restored by the city in the late 1960s and was the public library from 1968 until 1975. It was renovated and reopened in 1979 as a museum focused on the county's history. The marker stands at the corner of Clinic Drive and Highway 569 North in Liberty.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last visit to Laurel was commemorated with a marker sponsored by the **Jones County Junior College Historical Society**. On March 19, 1968, King and several aides came to Laurel as part of a two-day, nine-city tour of Mississippi. King spoke to an overflow audience at St. Paul Methodist Church to rally support for the Poor People's March on Washington against economic injustice. In the March 20, 1968, edition of the *Laurel Leader-Call*, King was quoted as saying "we are tired of working full-time jobs for part-time wages." King was assassinated in Memphis on April 4. The Poor People's March continued after his death, reaching Washington on May 12.

Since 1949 the State Historical Marker program has identified and interpreted historic sites across Mississippi. Markers are privately sponsored and funded. Anyone may sponsor a marker. To qualify, a site must have unique historical significance to the local community, the state, or the nation. Each marker's subject and text must be supported with primary source documentation and approved by the MDAH Board of Trustees, which meets quarterly every year. Each marker is a standard size. The cost of fabrication varies by size of the text and ranges from \$1,650 to \$1,740.

To learn more about sponsoring a marker, contact William Thompson by email at [wthomps@mdah.state.ms.us](mailto:wthomps@mdah.state.ms.us) or at 601-576-6946.

# MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Mississippi Department of Archives and History  
P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571

*Mississippi History Newsletter*  
Chris Goodwin, editor

For a free subscription to the newsletter or to submit news, call 601-576-6998 or email [newsletter@mdah.state.ms.us](mailto:newsletter@mdah.state.ms.us)

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H.T. Holmes, director

## IN THIS ISSUE

- **MHS Annual Meeting**
- **County Records Project**
- **Projects and Programs of Local Historical Societies**

## MDAH Board Member Marty Ramage, 1957-2011

Longtime Department of Archives and History board member Martis D. Ramage, Jr., died November 28, 2011, at his home in Tupelo after suffering a heart attack. He was 54 years old.

Ramage served on the board of trustees for more than fifteen years and was a founding member of the board of directors of the Foundation for Mississippi History.

“All Mississippians have lost one of our most valuable citizen leaders with the passing of Marty Ramage,” said former governor William F. Winter. “It was my good fortune to be closely associated with him in the work of the Department of Archives and History. Marty had an incredible range of interests—as a historian, a talented writer, a genealogist, a

highly regarded banking leader, and a loyal supporter of his alma mater, the University of Mississippi. He leaves a huge legacy of unselfish service.”

A frequent patron and meticulous researcher at the state archives, Ramage developed a broad and comprehensive understanding of the work of the Archives and Records Services Division that informed his work on the board of trustees. An accomplished genealogist and lay historian,



Ramage also wrote the definitive work *Tupelo, Mississippi: Tornado of 1936*, and several other books on the history of Tupelo and Lee County. He was a life member of the Mississippi Historical Society and a longtime leader in the North Mississippi Historical and Genealogical Society.

Marty Ramage received his Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Mississippi and later graduated from the Mid South School of Banking and the BAI School of Bank Operations and Technology at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Marty’s professional career included more than thirty years with Renasant Bank (formerly People’s Bank and Trust). At his death, he was Division Vice President in Treasury Management and had

served as state president of the American Institute of Banking in 1996-97.

Ramage was a past member of the Itawamba Community College Board, the ICC Development Foundation, and former Alumnus of the Year. He was a longtime director of Friends of the Lee County Library and a former member of the Library Board. He was also a longtime member of the Board of Directors of the Regional Rehabilitation Center in Tupelo.

Memorials may be made to the Lee County Library, 219 Madison, Tupelo, MS 38802; Sanctuary Hospice House, P.O. Box 2177, Tupelo, MS 38802; First Christian Church, 1590 McCullough Blvd., Tupelo, MS 38801; or to a charity of the donor’s choice.