

Served Up On a Silver Platter: Ross Barnett, the Tourism Industry, and Mississippi's Civil War Centennial

by *Matthew Reonas*

When Ross Barnett assumed office as governor of Mississippi in early 1960, among the many state boards and agencies that he looked to fill with his friends and political supporters, one in particular captured his imagination. Established in late 1958 by his predecessor James P. Coleman, this advisory commission had been tasked with the planning of the state's commemoration of the Civil War Centennial but had languished because of a lack of both funding and support. Once in charge, however, Barnett quickly established a budget and a legislative mandate and then molded the commission into a dynamic public relations agency that served several inter-locking purposes during the first two and a half years of his administration.¹

¹ The most thorough treatment of the Civil War Centennial is Robert J. Cook, *Troubled Commemoration: The American Civil War Centennial, 1961-1965* (Baton Rouge, La., 2007). However, other authors devote considerable attention to the Centennial in their larger studies of American historical memory and patriotic commemoration. See John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 206-26; Richard M. Fried, *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!: Pageantry and Patriotism in Cold War America* (New York, 1998), 122-37; and Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991), 587-610. For a treatment of the Centennial in Mississippi within the larger framework of the contested legacy of the Civil War, see Sally Leigh McWhite, "Echoes of the Lost Cause: Civil War

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Underscoring the post–World War II South’s hunger for the affluence of modern American life, Barnett recognized the Centennial chiefly as an economic development opportunity and consequently utilized his revamped commission to advertise Mississippi as a travel destination for white northerners interested in the Civil War. Travel tourism had become a major source of revenue for the state during the 1950s and promised even grander returns during this time of heightened national awareness. Further, with established attractions like the Vicksburg National Military Park and the Natchez Pilgrimage, Mississippi appeared to be in position to realize significant monetary benefits from the expected surge of vacationers heading south. Anxious to capitalize upon these prospects, the state’s fledgling tourism industry offered its unfettered support.²

Barnett and other state boosters reasoned that a well-planned Centennial program would serve a larger promotional purpose by strengthening Mississippi’s public image in the American mind. Such publicity in turn, it was believed, would support Barnett’s two major goals for his administration: industrial development and the defense of segregation. An aggressive industrial recruitment agenda indeed proved to be a hallmark of Barnett’s governorship and the Centennial simply provided him with another avenue for advancing the Mississippi brand of low taxes, cheap labor, and weakened unions to potential northern investors. By hosting northern whites on home ground and treating them to lavish displays of the South’s famed “hospitality,” he and other state leaders felt that they could validate Mississippi’s racial order with a sympathetic audience, thereby countering much of the negative press the state had received in the national media. Middle- and upper-class suburban travelers from the North, after all, carried with them their own anxieties and fears about civil rights back home. Coming

Reverberations in Mississippi from 1865 to 2001” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mississippi, 2002), 188-238.

² For an exploration of the complex roles of tourism in the twentieth-century South, see Richard D. Starnes, ed., *Southern Journeys: Tourism, History, and Culture in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa, Al., 2003). On the Natchez Pilgrimage, especially its use both as a tool of economic development and cultural hegemony, see Jack E. Davis, *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930* (Baton Rouge, La., 2001), 51-82. For other compelling views on the early intersections of southern historical memory and heritage tourism, see Stephanie E. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2005), and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 183-226.

to Mississippi in search of the “moonlight and magnolias” of the Old South, they were not inclined to either question the romanticized tours offered at the plantation homes they visited or protest the whites-only policies encountered in restaurants and hotels. The Centennial, then, presented Barnett with the possibility to sell Mississippi not only as a great place to visit and perhaps do business, but also as an orderly, harmonious society without the racial turmoil that had characterized its portrayals in major newspapers and magazines. It was, as one of his supporters enthusiastically declared, “an opportunity handed to us on a silver platter.”³

This sort of ambitious program was strikingly absent during the earliest planning in Mississippi for the Centennial. Indeed, at the behest of President Dwight Eisenhower and his national Civil War Centennial commission, Governor James P. Coleman had established an advisory group in October 1958 to explore appropriate commemorative, rather than commercial or propagandist, themes for the event. Coleman had an abiding interest in the history of the state, and would later serve as president of the Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) 1971-72 and as a member of the board of trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). Not surprisingly, he sought out people who shared similar concerns. Showing considerable political deference to the Confederate tradition, he appointed several members drawn from the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), a move that kept him in the good graces of these declining but still symbolic groups. More indicative of his views on the larger purpose of the Centennial, however, Coleman reached out to key members of Mississippi’s historical establishment to take on a leadership role. These included Charlotte Capers, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History; William McCain, president of then-Mississippi Southern College and a former director of MDAH; William Winter, former president of the Mississippi Historical Society,

³ “An opportunity . . .” from “Presentation to A&I Board by Ned O’Brien, Jackson, Mississippi, 12 May 1960,” in “A-Miscellaneous” file, Box 00707, Records of the Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (collection hereafter cited as MCWBTS). McWhite, “Echoes of the Lost Cause,” 200, likewise identifies this propagandist theme for the Centennial in Mississippi, writing that, “Creating sympathy for the South or even more explicitly the Southern position on segregation was not merely a side benefit of the Centennial, this goal was in fact a major incentive for the commemoration.”



Left to right, William Winter, Charlotte Capers, James W. Silver, John K. Bettersworth. Courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

current state tax collector, and future governor; Pearl Guyton, member of the MHS board of directors and author of the popular school textbook *Our Mississippi*; Edwin Bearss, chief historian at the Vicksburg National Military Park; and Frank E. Everett, Jr., a Vicksburg attorney and amateur historian.⁴

Of these individuals, Winter and Everett most closely mirrored Coleman's own progressive image in state politics. Everett, in fact, nominally represented the Mississippi Economic Council, but in actuality fit more the role of a gentleman scholar. He had served as the first president

⁴ For biographical information on Coleman, see "James Plemon Coleman" file, Subject Files, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (collection hereafter cited as Subject Files, MDAH). On the membership of Coleman's commission, see "News Release from the Department of Archives and History," n.d., and "Mississippi Centennial Commission," n.d., both in "Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States 1958" file, Box 00731, MCWBTS; as well as "Centennial Group Elects Everett," Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, October 15, 1958, clipping in "Civil War Centennial—Secession Day" file, Subject Files, MDAH.

of the re-organized MHS in 1953, helped establish the Warren County Historical Society, and eventually published several local histories. After Winter, citing his work load as a public official, declined the commission's chair, Coleman turned to Everett, an equally esteemed member of Mississippi's polite society, to head the group's efforts.⁵

In his short tenure, Everett led this core membership in pressing a decorous and appropriate set of goals for the Centennial, including support for memorial services, educational activities, and historical publications. Neither he nor his colleagues envisioned a large or boisterous celebration, but wanted rather a commemoration that honored the dead, reflected on the momentous events of the war years, and promoted patriotic principles and a general sense of "Americanism" in the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. As white southerners, they certainly did not intend to question the prevailing racial order or the basic tenets of the Lost Cause mythology, but neither did they envision the Centennial as merely a public relations tool to stimulate economic development or promote hard-line segregationist goals.⁶

Faced with a sluggish economy, however, Coleman also had appointed several advocates in the state's travel industry to his advisory commission, including Sidney Roebuck, a former state highway commissioner and longtime tourism promoter; Ned O'Brien, the head of the Agricultural and Industrial (A&I) Board's Travel Department; and Gladys Slayden, who represented the Garden Clubs of Mississippi, which, at the local level, operated pilgrimage tours in Natchez, Columbus, and her own hometown of Holly Springs. These members viewed the Centennial in more pragmatic terms than the heritage enthusiasts and voiced their opinions loudly. Ned O'Brien, who had worked with the Jackson Chamber of Commerce before moving to the state's centralized development agency, felt that the event could be used to publicize Mississippi's recent economic progress, strengthen the state's image in the rest of the nation, and attract tourists. "The Centennial," he explained, "should be both keyed to history and the idea of 100 years of progress. [It] should serve to advertise Mississippi and not fight the war over again." Sidney Roebuck concurred, reminding the others that "Mississippi, along with

⁵ "Frank E. Everett, Jr." file, Subject Files, MDAH.

⁶ On the Cold War context of the Centennial and the need for a cultural consensus during this era, see especially Fried, *The Russians Are Coming!*, 122-37, and Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 37-50.

Virginia, was the focal point of the great conflict, and as a direct consequence the national attention would be focused on these two states.” To these men, the Centennial offered more than just an opportunity to decorate graves, clean old monuments, or subsidize dry histories; it was an unparalleled opportunity to both build the state’s tourism industry and sell the pro-business Mississippi brand at the national level.⁷

The majority of the commission resisted this idea of turning the Centennial into an exercise in public relations, choosing rather to support their own goals for the commemoration. The heritage organizations, for instance, primarily sought to rekindle interest in the Confederate tradition and boost their own sagging numbers, while the professionals wanted to pursue an educational program that included publishing histories and memoirs, creating museum exhibits, and building archival collections. In preliminary discussions, however, these groups acquiesced, if only slightly, to the demands of the tourism lobby. A Jackson paper reported that the commission had decided to “include a note of the state’s progress” as part of its overall mission, an important though not very sound endorsement of an economic emphasis. But tourism leaders wanted more and grew increasingly frustrated with the commission leadership and the direction of planning.⁸

For his part, Governor Coleman refused to intervene directly, mostly trusting his appointees to devise an inclusive program. Without an appropriation and with only semi-official status, however, they proved able to define their goals for the Centennial only in the broadest of terms, while the lack of effective oversight allowed the internal divisions within the commission to continue unresolved. Coleman was not in a position to give much thought to the situation, especially with the rising civil rights crisis and the 1959 state elections increasingly occupying his attention. The state legislature also seemed particularly uninterested in doling out

⁷ On these tourism advocates, see “Sidney T. Roebuck” file, Subject Files, MDAH; “Program—12th Annual Meeting, Mississippi State Chamber of Commerce (Mississippi Economic Council), April 6, 1961,” in the “M-Miscellaneous, April 1961-December 1961” file, Box 00715, MCWBTS; and “Mrs. Everett (Gladys) Slayden” file, Subject Files, MDAH. Quotes from “News Release from the Department of Archives and History,” n.d., and “Mississippi Centennial Commission,” n.d., both in “Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States 1958” file, Box 00731, MCWBTS.

⁸ “Include a note ...,” from “Centennial Group Elects Everett,” Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, October 15, 1958, clipping in the “Civil War Centennial—Secession Day” file, Subject Files, MDAH.

any additional appropriations that might serve as electoral fodder for political opponents. As the campaign season approached, Mississippi's Centennial commission continued to operate in an atmosphere of administrative indifference.

The big winner in the 1959 elections was Ross Barnett, the Jackson attorney and businessman who rode a powerful segregationist platform to victory in the race for governor. The son of a Confederate veteran, Barnett had worked his way up from hardscrabble beginnings in Leake County to



become one of the state's top corporate lawyers, and achieved in his early sixties his last major goal: the governor's office. He had run previously in 1951 and 1955, losing in the latter campaign to the more progressive Coleman. By marshaling his supporters in the hill country, tapping into the surging Citizens' Councils movement, and reaching out to whites in the Delta with an aggressive message, he proved strong enough to win the 1959 contest and even pulled along a number of legislators with him. Once in office Barnett quickly turned to putting his friends and supporters into the many state boards and commissions over which he had appointive authority. Coleman's Civil War Centennial commission in particular attracted his attention.⁹

⁹ For biographical information on Barnett, see Erle Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross: A Political Portrait* (Baton Rouge, La., 1980); Walter Lord, *The Past That Would Not Die* (London, 1966), 139-43; and "Ross R. Barnett July 1962-September 1963" file, Box 00708, MCWBTS. Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross*, 63-88, discusses Barnett's 1955 and 1959 gubernatorial campaigns. Earl Black, *Southern Governors and Civil Rights: Racial Segregation as a Campaign Issue in the Second Reconstruction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 170-71, covers the 1959 election. More recently, Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, N.J., 2007), puts Barnett's term in office within the framework of the larger conservative backlash in Mississippi against "liberal" America.

On one level, it is not surprising that Barnett grasped at the Centennial with such eagerness. As a diehard segregationist he saw it as one more opportunity to galvanize support among white Mississippians for the cause of “massive resistance” against civil rights and integration. The Confederate tradition had a long history of bolstering the white power structure, and Barnett once again attempted to utilize the old myths in service of his defense of the “southern way of life” and his fight against federal encroachment on “states’ rights.” This connection between the past and present sometimes seemed all too easy. In a speech given on the hundredth anniversary of Mississippi’s secession from the Union, Barnett framed this momentous decision (and by extension the entire Civil War) as “a choice between safety gained at the expense of sovereign rights and hardship invited by firm adherence to basic freedoms and principles.” Further, he contended, it was “to the eternal credit of our Mississippi forebears that they chose the way of certain hardship because it was the way of honor.” Such “devotion to principle, adherence to faith, and courage in adversity,” he reasoned to his audience, could serve “our generation equally well.”¹⁰

This rhetoric linking the bitter memories of the Civil War and Reconstruction to the modern fight against civil rights certainly added to the general agitation of white sensibilities at a critical time. Indeed, the importance of such a historical consciousness cannot be downplayed, especially in the “closed society” of Mississippi in the 1950s and early 1960s. Still, such talk only went so far, and the power of the Confederate tradition, in the end, proved weak and inflexible. Indeed, Barnett’s own choices during the Centennial further eroded any consensus that remained. For, more than anything, he envisioned the Centennial as

¹⁰ “A choice between ...,” from “Commemoration of Mississippi’s Secession from the Union, January 9, 1961,” news release, n.d. (January 1961), in the “Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States News Releases” file, Box 00731, MCWBTS. A collection of Barnett’s speeches located in the “Speeches” files, Box 00721, MCWBTS, provides many excellent examples of his connection of the Civil War with the fight against civil rights. For more on the various uses of the Confederate tradition in southern society, see the classic works of Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (New York, 1985); and Charles Reagan Wilson, *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause* (Athens, Ga., 1980). James W. Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York, 1964), 150-51, saw the myths of an antebellum “golden age,” the Confederate struggle, and Reconstruction as props for white supremacy in Mississippi, and McWhite, “Echoes of the Lost Cause,” 191, clearly places the Centennial celebration in Mississippi within the Lost Cause framework, claiming that it was utilized to bolster “a sense of regional identity and loyalty among white southerners.”

a public relations bonanza that would put Mississippi on the national stage, driving expanded tourism and, hopefully, increased economic development.

To put Barnett's views in context, the tourism industry in the South had only recently emerged as an important segment of the regional post-World War II economy, but its potential seemed unlimited. As the respected southern historian Thomas D. Clark (himself a native Mississippian) succinctly remarked at the time, "A well-loaded station wagon coming down the road from Pennsylvania headed for a ten-day Mardi Gras-garden tour in New Orleans and Natchez [could] quickly be translated into economic terms comparable to a small crop of cotton, or a good thinning of pulpwood." And, Clark argued, these northern tourists overwhelmingly bought into the "almost inexhaustible resource of ante-bellum romance and atmosphere" that the South had to offer. In benighted Dixie, middle class northern vacationers could "thrust themselves back into an imaginary world" where they could dream "for a fleeting moment" that they too had owned "slaves and run plantations." Likewise, in a region where "every scorched place on the woodwork of an old house and every bullet mark is now a profitable scar," Civil War tourism, Clark portended, promised to be "one of the most profitable, and continued revenue-producing business adventures in southern history." It was this very sentiment that Barnett intended to capitalize upon with his Centennial program.¹¹

Just as important, though, Barnett hoped the Centennial would help economic development on an even broader scale by adding to the pro-business brand he had already started to promote with relocating northern industries. In large part Barnett had inherited this drive for industrialization from his predecessors, but he also articulated it as one of the primary goals, alongside the maintenance of segregation, for his administration. At the time of his election in 1959, Mississippi still lagged woefully behind the rest of the nation in manufacturing capacity and consistently ranked last in per-capita income. With the economy in such a precarious position, it is no wonder that Barnett, like other governors before and after, made industrial recruitment a high priority. Indeed, the critical observer Walter Lord commented that, "Whatever might be said of Ross Barnett on racial matters, he was a bear on get-

¹¹ Quotes from Thomas D. Clark, *The Emerging South*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), 140, 143.

ting business, and his administration featured an all-out drive to bring new industry into the state.”¹²

Erle Johnston, Barnett’s publicity manager in the 1955 and 1959 gubernatorial campaigns and later the publicity director and head of the state Sovereignty Commission, likewise endorsed this view, writing that although Barnett always would be remembered for his stand on segregation, “the most ambitious and greatest achievement of his 1960-1964 administration was the expansion of industry in Mississippi.” While in office, Barnett traveled extensively to the North and Midwest on business recruiting campaigns, and wherever he went, Johnston recalled, “he talked Mississippi—its advantages, its people, its natural resources, and most of all, its opportunities for the future.” Under his administration, the state’s economy did experience substantial gains, with the value of manufactured goods in the state rising from just under \$700 million in 1960 to more than \$1 billion in 1963, and the number of employees in manufacturing increasing by almost twenty thousand. Retail sales grew by more than \$320 million in the same span. Barnett’s efforts obviously met with at least limited success.¹³

In fact, he achieved a number of major structural reforms early in his term. Most of these were embodied in his “Program of Economic Development,” a package of bills submitted to the legislature with the intent of strengthening the economy and making the state more competitive in the search for new industries. In compliance with this program the legislature lowered the state income tax, revised workmen’s compensation laws, and struck hard at labor unions with a right-to-work law. Further,

¹² On the southern drive for economic development, including considerable analysis of Mississippi, see James C. Cobb, *The Selling of the South: The Southern Quest for Industrial Development, 1936-1990*, 2nd ed. (Champagne, Ill., 1993). Also see Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York, 1991). Ralph J. Rogers, “The Effort to Industrialize,” in Richard Aubrey McLemore, ed., *History of Mississippi*, v. 2 (Hattiesburg, Miss., 1973), 240-49, concentrates on the state of Mississippi’s economy from the 1930s onward. Writing in the early 1970s, Rogers noted that in each year since 1950, Mississippi had ranked last in per-capita income among the states. For more detailed information see also Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, *A Review of Mississippi’s Economy, 1960-1968* (Atlanta, June 1968). “Whatever might be said . . .,” from Lord, *The Past That Would Not Die*, 243.

¹³ Quotes from Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross*, 6, 69. Numbers from Jack A. Corkran, ed., *Mississippi Statistical Abstract: 1970* (Starkville, Miss., January 1970), 228, 241, and 311. An excellent snapshot of Mississippi and its economy in 1964-65 is presented in Godwin Publishing Company, *Mississippi* (Jackson, Miss., 1965).

legislative leaders ratified Barnett's demands for large appropriations in the areas of research and development. The A&I Board received \$1.85 million for expanded operating expenses, while another \$850,000 went toward the establishment of a state-run research park. State colleges benefited from \$20 million in bonds for expanded facilities and infrastructure improvements, and a number of other bills promoted port, forestry, warehousing, and corporate development.¹⁴

Perhaps the most intriguing of the bills passed by the state legislature as part of this Program dealt with the Civil War Centennial. Barnett realized that to effectively develop and promote the event, the state would need a well-organized commission with adequate funding. He emphasized this point with the legislature, which subsequently approved a pair of bills that provided for the establishment of an official agency—the Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States—with a \$200,000 appropriation for the biennium 1960-62. This was the largest single state appropriation in the Deep South for the Centennial, and second only to Virginia nationwide. Barnett had big plans for the event, far beyond simple commemorative goals, and he wanted the funds in order to see his vision realized.¹⁵

He was not alone in viewing the Centennial in economic terms. The national Civil War Centennial commission, under the initial leadership of advertising executive Karl Betts, actively encouraged tourist travel, “believing that a close-up view of living history is by far the best means



COACH TOUR 2 — FOUR DAYS
JACKSON AND VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI

Leave any Thursday morning on the streamliner CITY OF NEW ORLEANS (from Chicago at 7:45 AM, Champaign at 9:50 AM, St. Louis at 10:20 AM, or Carbondale at 12:48 PM) and arrive at Jackson, Mississippi the same evening 9:00 PM. Overnight at King Edward Hotel. Friday morning is spent touring the State Capitol and Old Capitol Museum at Jackson. Leave at 1:25 PM by bus for Vicksburg to visit the National Military Park, Court House, museum and evening pageant, returning to Jackson Saturday afternoon. Overnight King Edward Hotel. Sunday morning breakfast at the hotel and then head for home on the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS leaving Jackson at 10:20 AM.

COSTS (Chicago \$94.77, Champaign \$87.46, St. Louis \$80.80, and Carbondale \$77.17) including round-trip coach fare including tax, hotel accommodations (2 to a room), dining car meals and breakfasts at hotels, sightseeing, and 2 pageants. Single rooms are \$6.00 extra.

¹⁴ “Governor Ross Barnett’s Program for Economic Development as Enacted by the Mississippi Legislature Regular Session 1960,” in the “Ross R. Barnett July 1962-September 1963” file, Box 00708, MCWBTS.

¹⁵ See the copy of House Bill #193 in Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, *Mississippi’s Greatest Hour: A Manual for Local Observances of the Centennial of the War Between the States* (Jackson, Miss.: 1960), MDAH. On the funding of various southern state commissions, see Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 65, 69.

of creating a lasting impression,” while many of the other southern states, especially Virginia, expected and organized for a large tourist influx. Still, Barnett’s conception of the event as an unparalleled public relations opportunity is unique, since he wanted to bring outside visitors to the state not only for purely economic reasons but for political ones as well. Seeing a hospitable, orderly Mississippi, Barnett supposed, not only would build tourism, burnish the state’s reputation, and encourage industrial investment, but would also project an air of legitimacy to the “southern way of life.” In an indirect fashion, then, the Centennial could help Barnett sell the states’ rights agenda that he desperately hoped would forestall the downfall of the segregated South.¹⁶

In this mode of thinking, it appears as no great surprise that during the same legislative session that provided \$200,000 to promote the Civil War Centennial celebration, Barnett and his supporters secured twenty-one new pieces of pro-segregation legislation and an appropriation of \$350,000 for the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission to further its campaign of “advertising Mississippi’s position in the segregation and states rights[.] battle.” A large portion of these Sovereignty Commission funds eventually went as direct subsidies to the promotional activities of the statewide Citizens’ Councils organization, while the rest supported a reinvigorated publicity push on the part of the commission itself, especially through the speakers’ bureau organized by Erle Johnston. Although lacking an explicit connection to these propagandist activities, but not needing one either, the Centennial clearly fit within Barnett’s wider thinking on public perception and the struggle against civil rights. For him the Centennial had the potential to bring a big return on a number of different accounts.¹⁷

¹⁶ “Believing that ...,” from “Centennial Observance Unfolds: A Summary Report, May 1961,” in the “Civil War Centennial 1961” file, Box 00732, MCWBTS. On the influence of travel boosters and advertisers at the national level, see Kammen, *Mystic Chords*, 593-96. On tourism in the South during the Centennial, see Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 221-24, and Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 63-65. Cook underestimates severely the influence of the economic development impulse on Mississippi’s Centennial planning and largely misses its importance for the rest of the South as well.

¹⁷ On Barnett’s utilization of the Sovereignty Commission, see Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States’ Rights* (Jackson, Miss., 2001), 64-139, and Erle Johnston, *Mississippi’s Defiant Years, 1953-1973: An Interpretive Documentary with Personal Experiences* (Forest, Miss., 1990), 101-03, 111-20. On the bills passed in the 1960 legislative session, see Katagiri, *Sovereignty Commission*, 64-66, and Johnston, *Defiant Years*, 97-100. “Advertising ...,” from “Report to the Mississippi

Having secured legislative authority and an adequate appropriation, Barnett immediately set about organizing a new commission that would adhere to his chief priorities for the event. In fact, he unceremoniously dumped all but three members of Coleman's original sixteen-member commission, retaining only Charlotte Capers (from MDAH, an *ex-officio* appointment), Gladys Slayden, and Sidney Roebuck. These last two clearly reflected Barnett's economic and public relations concerns. Slayden, a farmer and recently elected state representative from Holly Springs, had actually authored the bill for the new Centennial commission, and her political connections, as well as her involvement in the pilgrimage movement, added to her stature. Roebuck's stance, of course, was well known.¹⁸

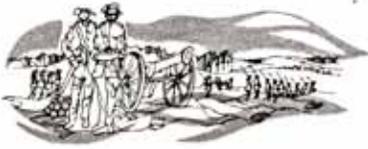
Several of the new appointments represented Barnett's interests in "good ole boy" patronage politics, for which he earned a reputation



Vote to Re-elect
SIDNEY T.
ROEBUCK
HIGHWAY
COMMISSIONER

State Legislature on Activities of the State Sovereignty Commission" (1960), Records of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, MDAH, quoted in Katagiri, *Sovereignty Commission*, 65.

¹⁸ On the commission's initial formation under Barnett, see "Civil War Centennial Group is Organized," Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, May 26, 1960, in the "Civil War Centennial" file, Subject Files, MDAH, and "Civil War Centennial Commission Appointed," Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, May 24, 1960, clipping in the "Civil War Centennial—Secession Day" file, Subject Files, MDAH. In her review of the Centennial in Mississippi, McWhite, "Echoes of the Lost Cause," 188-238, omits mention of this important transition. Likewise, Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 70, reports the Mississippi commission's makeup as it existed in 1958-59 under Governor Coleman but appears to assume that the membership remained the same under Barnett. Although both authors quote Executive Director Sidney Roebuck extensively, neither discusses the significance of his elevation to this position, nor is there discussion of the relevance of the other appointments.



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Thursday—After breakfast at the King Edward Hotel, you will leave at 9:30 AM by bus to visit the Old Capitol Museum repository for Civil War memorabilia and the State Capitol building, the most important and prominent public building in the state. At 1:30 in the afternoon you travel to Natchez, arriving at 3:30 PM where you will see beautiful ante-bellum homes, including Stanton Hall, Arlington and Elmcourt. Overnight at the Eola Hotel.

Friday—Breakfast at the Eola Hotel and at 9:00 AM leave by bus to see more historic ante-bellum homes. Leaving Natchez at 10:30 AM, you will travel to Port Gibson, the third oldest community in the state, and then to Vicksburg. After checking in at the Hotel Vicksburg you will leave at 2:30 PM for a guided motor tour through Vicksburg National Military Park, which is the most perfectly preserved of any of the world's major battlefields, returning to the hotel at 5:30 PM. At 8:15 in the evening there's a pagant "Guns Boats Roads the Bend" at the air-conditioned City Auditorium.

Saturday—Breakfast at the hotel and at 9:00 AM to the Old Coorhouse Museum to view one of the country's finest collections of Civil War memorabilia. At 11:30 AM you return to Jackson. You have the afternoon to see historic Battlefield Park, the excellent wildlife museum, the municipal zoo, or just loaf. Overnight at the King Edward Hotel.

Sunday—Breakfast at King Edward Hotel and a few hours for church and sightseeing, and at 10:30 AM you step aboard the City of New Orleans for the joyful journey home. Luncheon and dinner in the modern diner and then . . . Carbondale at 6:22 PM, St. Louis at 8:40 PM, Champaign at 9:30 PM, and Chicago at 11:40 PM.

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while in office. Byrd Mauldin of Pontotoc had been a major supporter of Barnett's gubernatorial campaign and sat as a member of the state Democratic Executive Committee. Florence Sillers Ogden from the Delta was a power in her own right as a newspaper columnist, planter, and vocal opponent of civil rights, but her brother also just happened to be Walter Sillers, the omnipotent speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives for more than twenty years. Kathleen O'Fallon, a farmer and newly elected legislator from Wilkinson County, had the backing of the local Citizens' Council, which reached the pinnacle of its power in Mississippi politics under Barnett. Some of these new members, including Slayden, Ogden, and O'Fallon, had legitimate connections to the state's heritage organizations as well, and Ogden even served as an at-large advisor to the national Centennial commission. The most important of Barnett's appointees to his new commission shared a com-

mon view of the Centennial not as a sober commemoration but rather as a public relations windfall.¹⁹

Sidney Roebuck, the veteran state bureaucrat and tourism advocate, emerged as Barnett's hand-picked man to lead the Centennial effort, serving as executive director, a salaried position and the most influential one within the new Centennial commission organization. The son of a Baptist minister, he grew up in the lean surroundings of rural Attala County but worked his way through various colleges and eventually earned a law degree from Cumberland University. In 1931 he was elected to the state legislature, and in 1937 Governor Hugh White—originator of the state's "Balance Agriculture with Industry" (BAWI) program—appointed him to the state Highway Commission. Roebuck subsequently won election to this commission in his own right and served until 1951, the last eight years as chairman. After his retirement from state service he took a corporate job as director and attorney for the First National Bank of Newton but continued to be heavily interested in economic development issues, especially those involving travel tourism. By the early 1960s he had become a major leader in Mississippi's growing tourism industry, serving as a member of the A&I Board and as president of both the Mississippi Travel Council and the Mississippi Automobile Club (AAA). Under no illusions as to why Barnett had appointed him to the new commission, Roebuck remarked to the publisher of a national travel magazine that, "Frankly, [my experience] accounts for the fact that I am serving as Executive Director of the Centennial."²⁰

Roebuck's appointment did indeed set the tone for the new commission, and Barnett reached out to other leaders in Mississippi's tour-

¹⁹ On Mauldin, see "Byrd Mauldin" file, Subject Files, MDAH, and Johnston, *I Rolled with Ross*, 78. For some interesting material on Ogden, including examples of her writing, see "Florence Sillers Ogden" file, Subject Files, MDAH. Ogden's worldview, especially her opposition to civil rights, is prominently featured in Elizabeth Gillespie McRae, "White Womanhood, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Massive Resistance," in Clive Webb, ed., *Massive Resistance: Southern Opposition to the Second Reconstruction* (New York, 2005), 181-202. Brief biographical information on Kathleen O'Fallon is found under the O'Fallon legislative entry in *Mississippi Official and Statistical Register, 1960-1964* (Jackson, Miss., n.d.). On the influence of the Citizens' Councils in Mississippi during Barnett's term in office, see Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-1964* (Urbana, Ill., 1971), 319-47.

²⁰ "Sidney T. Roebuck" file, Subject Files, MDAH. "Frankly . . .," from Sidney Roebuck to Robert K. Farrand, June 30, 1961, in the "H-Miscellaneous April 1960-December 1961" file, Box 00712, MCWBTS.

ism industry to provide additional support. Laz Quave, the mayor of Biloxi—the state’s major beach resort destination—was asked to serve, as was John Holland, the mayor of Vicksburg. Holland, a car salesman turned politician, was a natural choice; well-known and with an easy personality, he not only sat on the executive committee of the Mississippi Municipal Association but his city also held one of the nation’s premier Civil War attractions in the Vicksburg National Military Park, which already drew hundreds of thousands of visitors to the state each year. His election as commission chairman almost seemed a foregone conclusion. Gladys Slayden, the legislator and pilgrimage leader, was elected vice chairman.²¹

Barnett made one major addition to this team. George Godwin had grown up in Mississippi’s small-town newspaper business and had initially intended to follow in his father’s footsteps. But seeing the potential of mass media, he made the move into the field of public relations in the 1920s, serving first as the advertising manager for Mississippi Power and Light and then gaining an appointment in 1936 from Governor Hugh White to the state Advertising Commission. Godwin then went into business for himself, establishing an agency that quickly became the dominant firm in Mississippi. In fact, Godwin’s influence in advertising and public relations circles eventually gave him an incredible amount of power in shaping state economic policies, and, according to the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, over the years he functioned as an “unofficial advisor to six administrations, major private corporations, and public area development organizations.” During the 1940s, he helped establish the centralized A&I Board and then followed this success by directing the 1950s “Buy in Mississippi” initiative, Barnett’s 1960 “Bill of Rights for Business and Industry,” and, even later, the 1964 “Agriculture-Industry-Commerce” program.²²

Godwin’s business leadership also shaded over into politics, and he went as a delegate to the national Democratic conventions of 1944 and

²¹ On Holland, see the brief biography in the “Program—12th Annual Meeting, Mississippi State Chamber of Commerce (Mississippi Economic Council), 6 April 1961,” in the “M-Miscellaneous April 1961-December 1961” file, Box 00715, MCWBTS.

²² “George William Godwin” file, Subject Files, MDAH. “Functioned as . . .,” from Godwin Obituary, Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, August 16, 1968, clipping in the “Godwin” file, Subject Files, MDAH. On the often contradictory roles of southern economic leaders like Godwin during the Civil Rights era, see Elizabeth Jacoway and David R. Colburn, eds., *Southern Businessmen and Desegregation* (Baton Rouge, La., 1982).

1948. A staunch opponent of civil rights for African Americans, he joined the “Dixiecrat” revolt in the latter year and during the 1950s joined as a charter member of the Jackson Citizens’ Council, sitting on its governing board until his death in 1968. This confluence of boosterism and hard-line segregationist philosophy crested during the years of Barnett’s governorship, and the Centennial provided a ready-made showcase for both agendas. Godwin, whose agency handled the A&I Board’s advertising account, had a grand apprecia-



George Godwin, courtesy GodwinGroup.

tion of these possibilities. Like Barnett and Roebuck, he saw it as the “one great opportunity to bring more business to Mississippi than we have ever had before.” And like them as well, he saw the Centennial as an opportunity to secure a better image for Mississippi in the national press, lessening the damage caused by ongoing media debacles such as that which surrounded the Emmett Till murder in 1955. By portraying Mississippi as a racially harmonious society to northern tourists, Godwin hoped to give credence to Barnett’s “way of life” brand of politics, which played to the latent fears and anxieties of white conservatives across the country. Barnett and the boosters, it seemed, could have it both ways, and Godwin, although only serving in an advisory capacity, proved to be the guiding hand for statewide planning, attending almost every meeting during the first two years of the new commission’s existence. Indeed, he had a vested interest in the Centennial on a number of levels, not the least of which was purely financial. His ad agency, for instance, handled over \$10,000 worth of commission print jobs—letterhead, press releases, manuals, and booklets—from July to December of 1960 alone.

A multi-faceted Centennial operation, then, was not only good business for the state, but for him personally as well.²³

When Mississippi's new Centennial commission began work in the late spring of 1960, the booster lobby held sway, as Governor Barnett had intended when he made his appointments. Indeed, their concern with the Centennial's public relations opportunities dominated almost every aspect of the commission's work. Following a pattern already established by other economic development programs in the state, the new commission promoted organization and activity at the local level, sponsored a few key events designed to secure maximum publicity, and advertised all of these Centennial efforts heavily. Success was measured not by intangible educational or commemorative benefits, but by calculable increases in tourist numbers and tax revenues.

This is not to say that the new commission completely abandoned any pretense of commemoration. Indeed, members with heritage and historical interests did have a voice in Barnett's commission, and they succeeded in giving the Centennial what they considered to be the "proper" memorial and educational emphasis. In *Mississippi's Greatest Hour*, a booklet published in the summer of 1960 for local communities, the commission, clearly under the influence of these members, promoted a wide variety of activities that had little to do with tourism, public relations, or economic development. Local committees were urged to hold special religious services, mark and clean the graves of Confederate soldiers, and preserve old documents and artifacts. Educational programs for the state's youth, such as art, essay, and musical contests and historical field trips, also received encouragement.²⁴

Other commission publications likewise reflected this strong historical concern. In late 1960 the commission published *Mississippi in the War Between the States*, a small booklet that provided a wealth of information to interested organizations and private citizens. Charlotte Capers contributed a brief summary of Mississippi's role in the Civil War, and Ed Bearss wrote a piece on the siege of Vicksburg. The pamphlet also included short biographical essays on Jefferson Davis and historical

²³ "One great opportunity . . .," from "Civil War Centennial Group is Organized," Jackson (Miss.) *Daily News*, May 26, 1960, clipping in the "Civil War Centennial—Mississippi" file, Subject Files, MDAH. On Godwin's financial involvement with the Centennial commission, see the "Godwin Advertising Agency" file, Box 00712, MCWBTS.

²⁴ *Mississippi's Greatest Hour*, 6, 26-36.

sketches of Holly Springs, Port Gibson, and Jackson, along with lists of skirmishes and battles, the names of Mississippi military units, and the location of state historical markers.²⁵

Later, at the behest of ex-Governor Coleman, the Centennial commission printed 2,000 copies of the *Journal of the Secession Convention* and distributed them to state officials, public libraries, chapters of the UDC and SCV, and local Civil War round tables. The commission also authorized the writing of a special Centennial history of Mississippi in the Civil War. Frank Everett, the former chairman of Coleman's Centennial commission, suggested Ed Bearss as a possible author. Bearss had already written a series of articles for state newspapers detailing the various Civil War campaigns in the state, and Everett argued persuasively for their compilation into book form. "This will be a permanent historical contribution to the knowledge of the war in Mississippi," he contended, "and will endure longer than our pageants and temporary events worthy as they are." The commission unanimously agreed to this plan, and Bearss, quite graciously, agreed to do the work at no charge to the state. *Decision in Mississippi* came out in the summer of 1962 and, like the *Journal of the Secession Convention*, copies went primarily to organizations such as the UDC, SCV, Civil War round tables, and to state newspapers and public libraries.²⁶

These publications, and the institution of a "proper" emphasis for the Centennial, obviously represented the labor of the few commission members, such as Capers, Ogden, and O'Fallon, with a strong heritage agenda. Roebuck, Godwin, and the other members of the booster crowd supported these efforts. Most had Confederate forebears and, like the others, no doubt viewed the Centennial as a good opportunity to promote traditional southern, and American, values in this especially threatening era of Cold War terror and racial unrest. A few historical publications

²⁵ Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, *Mississippi in the War Between the States* (Jackson, Miss., 1960), MDAH, 3-34.

²⁶ On the *Journals*, see "Reprint of Secession Journal Recommended," Jackson (Miss.) *State Times*, March 3, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS, and Minutes of the Commission, December 21, 1961, in Box 00734, MCWBTS. "This will be . . ." from Frank Everett to Sidney Roebuck, February 16, 1961, in the "E-Miscellaneous January 1961-June 1964 and undated" file, Box 00711, MCWBTS. On Bearss's book, *Decision in Mississippi*, see the "Edwin C. Bearss" files, Box 00708, MCWBTS. For commission discussion of the book, see Minutes of the Commission, July 11, September 19, October 21, and December 21, 1961, and January 24 and July 10, 1962, in Box 00734, MCWBTS.

and a stated memorial and educational purpose, moreover, served to legitimize the commission in the eyes of the public, allowing its leaders to pursue their economic and public relations goals within an “appropriate” commemorative framework. “We all have a great opportunity,” insisted chairman John Holland in a letter to state mayors, “to not only properly commemorate the Centennial but to bring thousands of visitors into our respective communities and greatly increase ... our travel or tourist volume.” As explained in *Mississippi in the War Between the States*, the Centennial, though not a “commercial venture,” did nonetheless offer “an opportunity to sell Mississippi and Mississippi’s story to our fellow Americans.” The state could bolster its national image, the boosters insinuated, and still commemorate the Centennial with the proper level of reverence and respect.²⁷

Despite such equivocations, Roebuck and Godwin certainly had their priorities in order from the start. First and foremost, they sought to organize and develop support at the local level, seeing this as a crucial prerequisite for a successful Centennial. Other state economic development initiatives, such as the A&I Board’s Hospitality Month and MERIT programs, relied heavily on community participation, and these provided a ready blueprint for the commission in its own efforts at community involvement. The Hospitality Month program dealt exclusively with tourism development while the MERIT program encompassed a wide range of civic improvement activities aimed at making towns not only better places to live, but also, ideally, good places to locate new businesses. In both, the A&I Board functioned as a coordinating and advertising organization while the local communities did most of the work. The board simply did not have the resources to micromanage efforts in every individual municipality, but it did advertise and promote such local efforts. “It is our job,” explained the board’s executive director in a June 1960 news release, “to tell the Mississippi story to more and more people and to get them into our state.” From that point on, however, the task of selling a particular town fell into the “hands of the individual Mississippians” that tourists and businessmen met.²⁸

²⁷ Chairman John Holland to Mayors, n.d., in the “Mississippi–State Director” file, Box 00717, MCWBTS. *Mississippi in the War Between the States*, 3. For a similar construction, also see *Mississippi’s Greatest Hour*, 6.

²⁸ “Special Report #4 from the A&I Board, 3 June 1960,” in the “Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board” file, Box 00716, MCWBTS. On the MERIT program, see Godwin,

Roebuck, Godwin, and the other boosters envisioned a similar role for the Centennial commission, and, indeed, promotion of the Centennial at the local level consumed most of their energy in the latter half of 1960 and the first months of 1961. As part of these efforts, Godwin's company hurriedly published *Mississippi's Greatest Hour* as a guidance manual to spur local organization. Although the short booklet, as noted earlier, emphasized the commemorative and educational aspects of the Centennial, it reflected on the event's economic incentives as well. In particular, it urged interested citizens to form local Centennial committees and "Mississippi Grey" units and, once established, to plan activities that could be advertised in the annual calendar of events. The staging of pageants, marking and preservation of historic sites, and development of Civil War exhibits in local museums or libraries were all cited as potential endeavors that would be attractive to tourists. For less imaginative local committees, the booklet even provided a formulaic program for a "rededication" day that included morning tours of a town's historic sites followed by a parade and ceremony in the afternoon. Dances, music concerts, and plays could serve as evening entertainments.²⁹

In addition to the wide distribution of this manual, Roebuck oversaw an extensive outreach campaign intended both to draw attention to the Centennial's economic opportunities and to promote organization at the local level. Beginning in the summer of 1960, a bevy of letters consistently emphasizing the economic potential of the Centennial went out to civic leaders across the state. In one, Frank Wallace, the commission's information director, apprised the mayor of Crystal Springs that, "The tourist industry is presently contributing \$369-million yearly to [the] Mississippi economy," and that, "Governor Barnett has set a goal of tripling this for his administration." The Centennial, Wallace intimated, figured prominently in these plans. Beyond simple tourist dollars, though, Wallace impressed upon the mayor the opportunity offered by the Centennial to attract new business to the state, another important subject for Barnett. "We can document cases of industry following the tourist," he wrote: "The shirt sleeved visitor who is received with courtesy today, may be a man who can make the decision to move a five hundred job industry to Mississippi tomorrow." Coming from an

Mississippi, 91-92.

²⁹ *Mississippi's Greatest Hour*, 10-19, 24-25.

official state agency, many mayors likely found such arguments hard to resist.³⁰

In addition to this heavy correspondence the commission staff, especially Roebuck, aggressively promoted the Centennial in more than a hundred speeches to civic clubs and fraternal organizations across the state. At a Lion's Club meeting in Vicksburg, he insisted that the town could "reap a golden harvest of dollars and cents" from the Centennial, and at a meeting of the Downtown Optimist Club in Meridian, he urged quick action since the commemoration offered "one of our greatest opportunities to attract visitors to Mississippi and to let them see first hand the progress we have made here in recent years." Such standard stump speech rhetoric resounded in the halls of many a restaurant and meeting hall.³¹

Further, Roebuck's arguments received a major boost in the state's newspapers. One editorialist with the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* gushed about the "golden opportunity during the next four years, to reap a rich harvest of tourism dollars," and contended that even if "most of the tourist loot will be left in the River cities and along the coast," other areas of the state nonetheless had a chance to "pick up some of the traveler booty." To prepare themselves, these small cities and towns could add to or expand local museums, erect roadway signage, publish guidebooks, or encourage local entrepreneurs to open an "Old Plantation Dining Room" with a "big, fat colored mammy" cooking such down-home staples as barbecue chicken, fried catfish, ham, sweet potatoes, and black-eye peas. Even Florence Ogden, in her editorial column "Dis An' Dat," rev-

³⁰ Frank Wallace to Dr. Otho Messer, November 16, 1960, in the "M-Miscellaneous July 1960-March 1961" file, Box 00715, MCWBTS. For further examples, see William J. (Bill) Caraway to Members of the Mississippi Municipal Association, n.d., in the "Mississippi-State Director" file, Box 00717, MCWBTS; Sidney Roebuck to Edwin D. Davis, August 29, 1960, in the "D-Miscellaneous June 1960-March 1961" file, Box 00710, MCWBTS; Sidney Roebuck to Bill Beasley, August 29, 1960, in the "B-Miscellaneous July-December 1960" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS.

³¹ On the efforts of Roebuck and his staff, see "Summary of Operations," n.d., in the "MS Commission-1960" file, Box 00731, MCWBTS. On the Vicksburg talk, see "S.T. Roebuck Addresses Lions on Centennial," Vicksburg (Miss.) *Evening Post*, April 20, 1961, clipping in Box 00735, MCWBTS. On the Meridian speech, see "City Urged to Participate in Civil War Centennial," Meridian (Miss.) *Star*, February 8, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS. For similar constructions, see "Roebuck Urges Greenville to Play Role in War Centennial," Greenville (Miss.) *Delta Democrat Times*, n.d., clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS; and "Says Folks Should Aid in Program," Columbus (Miss.) *Commercial Dispatch*, February 1, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS.

eled in the expected benefits of tourism for the state. "Mississippi has a charm all its own," she mused, with "its natural simplicity, a friendly, open spirit, a strong individuality, [and] a real sense of hospitality," not to mention the "historic mansions, quaint old churches, wide cotton plantations" and "good hunting and good fishing." She advised the people at the local level to "give the tourists what they want," namely "romance, moonlight and magnolias."³²

Although many local politicians and businessmen, especially in those established tourist towns, found this vision of the Centennial appealing, the commission leadership did encounter some hesitancy. "We can't see where we have too much to celebrate," snarled the *Wayne County News* in early 1961. "Our cities were overran (sic), our goods stolen and many of our brave soldiers were killed, and those who [survived] came home to a prostrate country operating under Yankee bayonets." Further, the editorialist continued, "we are still having trouble with the damn Yankees and being pushed around by integrationist fanatics." Indeed, much of the concern about the Centennial centered on fears that northern tourists coming South during the event would increase racial strife. Roebuck moved quickly to forestall or assuage such fears. "These tourists," he wrote to one community leader, "will be the best people from the Northern states. Those whom we classify as undesirables will not come to a Southern state to commemorate the War Between the States." In fact, Roebuck argued that the Centennial would actually better relations with the North by giving sympathetic northern tourists a first-hand look at conditions in the South. "If we gain no other objective than to get these people here in our midst," he declared at an event in Pascagoula, "and let them learn of us, to know our ways, and to understand our motives, then the time, money and effort spent by the state and the various communities will be worth while." In this subtle

³² "Other States Show How We Can Gain Tourist \$s," Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, September 18, 1960, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS. For other similar assessments of the value of the Centennial to the tourism industry in Mississippi, see "Tourist Invasion is Predicted," un-attributed newspaper, n.d.; "Spruce Up for Tourists," Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, January 15, 1961; "Much Can Be Done," un-attributed Biloxi-Gulfport area paper, January 28, 1961; "State Tourists Bring Dollars to Mississippi," Aberdeen (Miss.) *Examiner*, February 16, 1961; "No State Has More to Offer for CW Centennial Observance," Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, February 19, 1961, all clippings in Box 18075, MCWBTS. Ogden's remarks from "Dis An' Dat" column titled "Invite Tourists, Make Them Welcome to Magnolia State," un-attributed newspaper, n.d., in "Tourism" file, Subject Files, MDAH.

way, Roebuck projected the Centennial as a positive good in trying to win the public relations battle in the larger struggle over civil rights.³³

For the most part, such arguments proved effective, and the Centennial commission's promotional efforts at the local level enjoyed a high level of initial success. At a meeting of the A&I Board in November 1960, Roebuck reported that "at least, sixty-five communities have recognized the true significance of the Centennial and have organized local Civil War Centennial committees—to help see that our visitors are not disappointed when they come to Mississippi." At the same meeting, George Godwin predicted that these local committees would become permanent and that "their work, added to our pilgrimage groups and to our natural attractions such as the beautiful Gulf Coast, will give us a permanent billion-dollar tourist volume down through the years." By the early spring of 1961, the number of Centennial committees across the state had reached one hundred fifty, while seventy-three "Mississippi Grey" units, costumed in cheap, gaudy, mass-produced reproduction uniforms, stood ready to march in parades, ceremonies, and other events. Although reasons for involvement at the local level varied considerably, to Roebuck and Godwin this outpouring of interest in the Centennial seemed to validate their vision, planning, and hard work.³⁴

With the state's communities thus organized to exploit the economic opportunities offered by the Centennial, Roebuck, Godwin, and the other boosters turned their attention to developing a few key activities that would gain national publicity. The re-enactment of the state's secession from the Union, identified as a specific goal in the commission's "Statement of Policy," served this distinct purpose. In *Mississippi's Greatest Hour*, the commission's leaders explained that the Secession Day ac-

³³ "We can't see ...," from *Wayne County (Miss.) News*, January 12, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS. "These tourists ...," from Sidney Roebuck to Bill Beasley, August 29, 1960, in the "B-Miscellaneous July-December 1960" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS. "If we gain ...," from "The Meaning of the Civil War Centennial—A Re-dedication to Our Fundamental Ideals," undated speech given at Pascagoula, in the "Mississippi—State Director" file, Box 00717, MCWBTS. For a similar construction, also see Sidney Roebuck to Jim B. Collier, July 7, 1960, "C-Miscellaneous 1960" file, Box 00708, MCWBTS; and Sidney Roebuck to Hon. Thomas G. Abernethy, August 11, 1960, in the "A-Miscellaneous" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS.

³⁴ Quotes from "Presentation to the A&I Board by Sidney Roebuck and George Godwin, November 10, 1960," in the "Civil War Centennial Commission-1961" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS. On organizational numbers, see "Summary of Operations," n.d., in the "MS Commission-1960" file, Box 00731, MCWBTS.

tivities in Jackson would be a “proper observance,” but noted that the parade, pageant, and dances associated with the event also would have “an appeal for the kind of media—television, magazines, metropolitan newspapers—that can stir nationwide interest in our state.” They boldly proclaimed “Here is an opportunity for Mississippi to capture the imagination of the whole country at the outset of the four-year period of commemoration.” In addition to their publicity value, the re-enactment and parade also offered the chance to draw a huge influx of visitors—and their dollars—into the city. Downtown storeowners looked forward to a booming business on Secession Day and even distributed facsimiles of Confederate money in local papers to be used as coupons.³⁵

Events in Vicksburg, with the state’s most popular Civil War attraction, also figured prominently in the commission’s program. Among the most successful of these were the “special weeks” held in the spring and early summer of 1961 to honor northern and midwestern states with monuments at the National Military Park. George Godwin had advanced this proposal with the thought that such ceremonies would foster a spirit of national unity and sectional reconciliation in line with the larger goals of the national Centennial commission. Sidney Roebuck, writing to the national commission’s executive director, Karl Betts, remarked that some of the northern states were indeed “gratified” by the program since it seemed to offer them “an opportunity to participate in the Centennial in a constructive way.” But in the end it was the lure of increased tourism and free publicity that interested Godwin and Roebuck the most.³⁶

³⁵ *Mississippi’s Greatest Hour*, 12. On the storeowners’ expectations, see “State’s Proud Past To Be Relived,” Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, March 26, 1961, clipping in the “Civil War Centennial–Secession Day” file, Subject Files, MDAH. For general newspaper coverage of Secession Day, see the assorted clippings in the “Civil War Centennial–Secession Day” file, Subject Files, MDAH. State leaders actually held a small, closed ceremony at the Old State Capitol on January 9, 1961, the true anniversary of Mississippi’s secession, but organizational problems and expectations of poor weather led to the postponement of the more public celebration until March.

³⁶ For discussion of the Vicksburg ceremonies, see Minutes of the Commission, May 27 and September 14, 1960, in Box 00734, MCWBTS. On the purpose of the ceremonies, see Sidney Roebuck to Don Gerlinger, August 5, 1960, in the “Wisconsin State Chairman” file, Box 00724, MCWBTS; Sidney Roebuck to Mrs. John Bottom, July 19, 1961, in the “B-Miscellaneous May-December 1961” file, Box 00707, MCWBTS; and Frank Wallace to Lyon G. Tyler, Jr., October 24, 1961, in the “Virginia State Representative” file, Box 00722, MCWBTS. “An opportunity to participate . . .,” from Sidney Roebuck to Karl Betts, February 14, 1961, in “Wisconsin State Chairman” file, Box 00724, MCWBTS. The Vicksburg events ran from March 26 to July 8, 1961, and honored New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode

The Centennial commission vigorously promoted the “special weeks,” seeing in them a fine chance to get the Mississippi brand on a national stage. Sidney Roebuck, John Holland, and commission information director Frank Wallace made high profile visits to the interested states to extend invitations to the governors, legislatures, and citizens at large, while Governor Barnett announced broadly in a proclamation featured in northern papers that “Mississippi offers the visitor an endless array of historic sites, markers and monuments and a calendar of events, including exciting pageants, unequaled by any other state” The commission’s 1961 calendar of events, a print piece distributed widely to travel companies, media outlets, and individual travelers, listed the “special weeks” in bold type and included photographs of all the non-southern state monuments.³⁷

Roebuck, Godwin, and the other leaders pursued a heavy public relations agenda with their industry contacts in the North where the idea of the “special weeks” program appeared to receive an enthusiastic response from at least some media types. Herbert Grayson, the publicity director for Wisconsin’s Centennial commission, thought that the events “added incentive for Wisconsin citizens to visit Mississippi,” and he talked positively of working out a promotional program with travel agencies that would send people to “those areas in Mississippi that would be particularly attractive to Wisconsin residents.” Consequently, a few months later the *Wisconsin AAA Motor News* carried in its February 1961 issue a piece on Mississippi as a vacation destination, highlighting the state’s Civil War history alongside the draw of the Gulf Coast, which offered “ample room and unlimited opportunity for swimming, sunbathing and other outdoor recreation at any time.” The “Sunny South” no doubt seemed particularly attractive in the latter part of a hard Wisconsin winter.³⁸

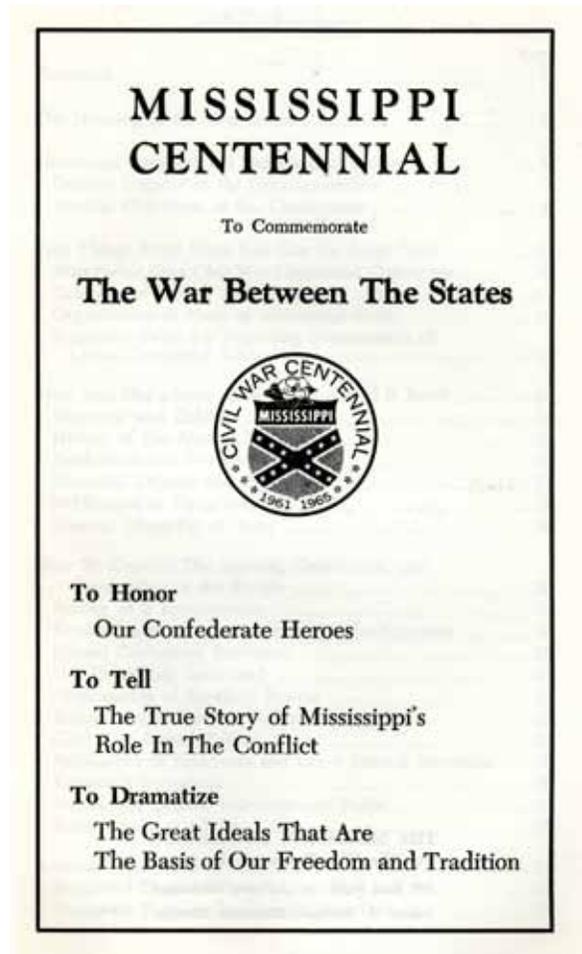
Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, and West Virginia.

³⁷ On visits to the North and Midwest, see Minutes of the Commission, November 9, 1960 and March 27, 1961, in Box 00734, MCWBTS. “Mississippi offers” from “Proclamation: Special Weeks Honoring Fifteen States,” n.d., (1961), in the “Ross R. Barnett July 1962-September 1963” file, Box 00708, MCWBTS. “Mississippi Civil War Centennial 1961 Calendar of Events,” in the “Civil War Centennial” file, Subject Files, MDAH.

³⁸ Herbert Grayson to Sidney Roebuck, November 9, 1960, in “Wisconsin State Chairman” file, Box 00724, MCWBTS. *Wisconsin AAA Motor News*, February 1961, in “Wisconsin State Chairman” file, Box 00724, MCWBTS.

To help facilitate the expected flow of tourists from such cold climes, Roebuck also encouraged the major north-south rail line, the Illinois Central, to put together an exclusive Centennial package. In a December 1960 letter he argued persuasively to one railroad official that “Mississippi plans to roll out the red carpet during the Centennial years” for the anticipated “hundreds of thousands of visitors” coming South. Enclosing the major promotional materials that Godwin had produced, Roebuck also touted the upcoming “special weeks” at Vicksburg,

where he hoped to “have the Governor of Illinois meet the Governor of Mississippi in front of the Illinois monument and shake hands before a lot of cameras.” Swelling with enthusiasm, he estimated that 250,000 people from Illinois would venture to Mississippi in the upcoming year alone and intimated that “Cooperation between your lines and the State of Mississippi can be very profitable to both sides.” Thanks in large part to Roebuck’s lobbying, the Illinois Central did eventually offer four-, five-, and six-day packages into “colorful Mississippi” to coincide with



the “special weeks,” and these excursions included tours of Jackson, the Vicksburg battlefield, and historic Natchez.³⁹

Outside of the bold prospect of increased tourism, this major public relations push for the “special weeks” at Vicksburg coincided with Barnett’s own efforts to launch a pro-segregation publicity campaign through the Speakers’ Bureau of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. Anxious to proselytize white northern conservatives with the “message from Mississippi,” Barnett authorized publicity director Erle Johnston to put together a program that would send well-mannered, articulate speakers to lecture at civic clubs, churches, schools, and other institutions in the North and Midwest. Nominally, these speakers, mostly Johnston himself, served an “educational” purpose for northern audiences whose only views of Mississippi and the South, and the social customs found therein, came from the supposedly biased national news media. By early 1962 the Speakers’ Bureau program had reached thirty-two cities in thirteen states, and Johnston had even arranged for the production of a short propaganda film titled “The Message from Mississippi.” The “special weeks” at Vicksburg, then, seem to have served Barnett’s overarching political agenda, even if in an indirect manner. At least a few northern politicians made the connection outright, however. Writing to Sidney Roebuck, Wisconsin state senator Jerris Leonard expressed his view that if the ceremonies “contributed something to the solidarity of our two states, exposed your citizenry to the fact that conservatives still live in the North and paid honor to both the Blues and Greys who fought at Vicksburg, then our mission was a ‘clean sweep.’” Presumably, many average travelers received the same message.⁴⁰

The Secession Day parade and the 1961 ceremonies at Vicksburg proved to be the largest endeavors taken on by the state Centennial commission, but its leaders also vigorously supported efforts at the local level designed to attract tourists and gain publicity. Towns with already established tourist attractions, of course, leapt at the chance the Centennial offered and staged a number of special events intended to capitalize on nation-wide interest. Vicksburg, obviously, continued

³⁹ Sidney Roebuck to Emmet L. Holmes, December 7, 1960, in “H-Misc. April 1960-December 1961” file, Box 00712, MCWBTS.

⁴⁰ On the speakers’ bureau program, see Katagiri, *Sovereignty Commission*, 74-85, and Johnston, *Defiant Years*, 111-20. “If we contributed ...,” from Jerris Leonard to Sidney Roebuck, May 18, 1961, in “Wisconsin State Chairman” file, Box 00724, MCWBTS.

to play an important role. During the 1961 ceremonies, the local committee had staged weekly performances of the drama "Gunboats 'Round the Bend" (subsidized by \$4,700 in commission funds) and put together a package tour of historic sites "devised to encourage more visitors to remain in Vicksburg to see all that the city offers in charm and historic lore and landmark." Then, in 1962, the local group worked closely with the state commission in organizing the Louisiana-Mississippi Day and Confederate Day events at the National Military Park. Even more, the hundredth anniversary of the siege of Vicksburg in 1963 saw a five-day celebration that included historic tours, lectures by distinguished Civil War scholars, a parade, and a huge fireworks display. During these festivities, more than 55,000 people passed through the Military Park, apparently giving the state commission a good return on its \$2,600 investment.⁴¹

Pilgrimage towns such as Natchez, Columbus, and Holly Springs likewise capitalized on the Centennial to further their brand of antebellum romance and grandeur. Columbus opened three of its homes year-round for the celebration and refurbished the house of Confederate general Stephen D. Lee as a museum, while Holly Springs held parades and dances in conjunction with its annual pilgrimage, an event that a local paper reported "each year brings thousands of visitors from all parts of the country." The local Centennial committee in Natchez, though, had a little more difficulty in establishing its program, as Katherine Grafton Miller, the matriarch of that town's pilgrimage movement, maintained an iron grip on the tourism trade and refused to allow any interlopers. Mary Barker, head of the Adams County group, complained bitterly to Frank Wallace that "you have no idea what the townspeople are up

⁴¹ "Package Tours Offered Here for First Time," Vicksburg (Miss.) *Evening Post*, February 26, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS. On 1962 ceremonies, see "Louisiana-Mississippi Commemoration—Tallulah and Vicksburg, June 2," *Mississippi Civil War Centennial News*, n.d., in the "MS Commission—1962—1963—1964" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS; "Program—Confederate Day in Vicksburg National Military Park, Sunday, August 19, 1962," in the "MS Commission—1962—1963—1964" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS. On the 1962 events at Vicksburg, see the "Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States Report of Activities, March 1962—March 1963," in the "Progress Report" file, Box 00719, MCWBTS. On 1963 ceremonies, see "Final Plans for the Siege of Vicksburg Centennial," *Mississippi Civil War Centennial News*, n.d. (1963), in the "Civil War Centennial Commission 1963" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS; and "Summary of Siege of Vicksburg Centennial," in the "Civil War Centennial Commission 1963" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS. On funding for Vicksburg's various programs, see the Minutes of the Commission, November 9, 1960, February 25, and December 21, 1961, June 6 and October 16, 1963, in Box 00734, MCWBTS.

against with the Garden Club here,” and expressed her own astonishment that “this club exerted such power.” Still, the local committee managed to stage a few successful events, and the Natchez Pilgrimage itself remained a major draw during and after the Centennial years.⁴²

Even towns with a less established tourist trade sought to cash in on the Centennial, spurred on by the state commission’s insistence that “This is an outstanding opportunity to get FREE ADVERTISING FOR YOUR TOWN ALL OVER AMERICA,” and that “It does not matter if there were no battles or Civil War events in your area.” Carrollton set up the law offices of former United States Senator James Z. George (hero of Mississippi’s “Redemption”) as a headquarters and museum from which tickets for the “Parade of Open Homes” and “Tourist Guide Maps” could be bought. Baldwyn, near the Brice’s Crossroads battlefield in northeast Mississippi, held commemorative services each year and, in 1964, staged a reenactment of the battle that attracted 12,000 people. Corinth’s committee in 1961 and 1962 produced a pageant titled “Crossroads of the Confederacy” (funded by \$1,500 from state commission coffers); screened films on the Battle of Shiloh and Corinth during the war years; and conducted tours of the national cemetery, the local battlefield, and historic homes. Justifying the town’s expenditures, the mayor explained, “As a Gateway to the South, we feel that Corinth is in the best position to ‘sell’ Mississippi to tourists.”⁴³

Among these newcomers to the tourism fold, Port Gibson—“A Town Building for the Future on the Historic Past”—similarly used the Centennial to market its historic houses and Civil War history. Along with

⁴² “Columbus Opens 3 Homes Year ‘Round for Centennial,” Jackson (Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*, March 5, 1961, clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS; and “Historic Gen. S.D. Lee Home Will Be Refurbished,” un-attributed newspaper, n.d., clipping in Box 18075, MCWBTS. “Eleven Beautiful Homes Await Fridays’ Opening of Pilgrimage,” Holly Springs (Miss.) *South Reporter*, April 26, 1962. “You have . . .,” from Mary Barker to Frank Wallace, August 4, 1961, in “B-Misc., May-December 1961” file, Box 00707, MCWBTS.

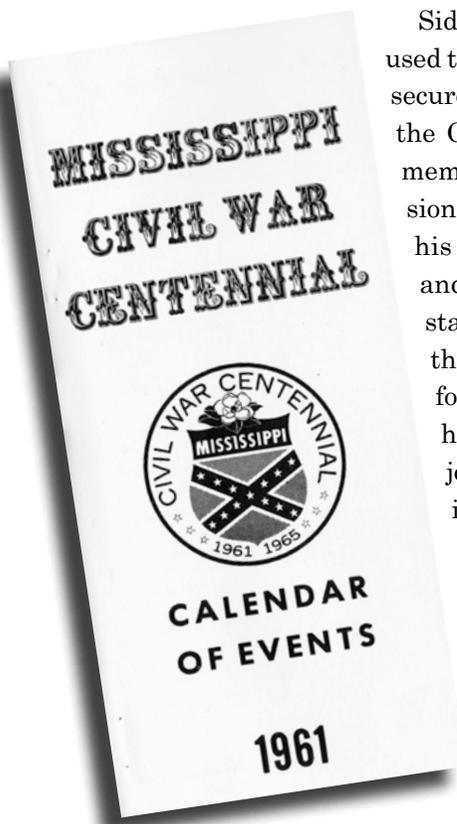
⁴³ “Mississippi Civil War Centennial Bulletin, May 19, 1961,” in the “MS-News Releases” file, Box 00731, MCWBTS. “Pilgrimage Plans Are Now Complete,” Carrollton (Miss.) *Conservative*, April 19, 1962. “Battle of Brice’s Crossroads to be Re-enacted June 7,” *Mississippi Civil War Centennial News*, n.d., in the “MS Commission-1962-1963-1964” file, Box 00732, MCWBTS. On attendance at the 1964 event, see the Minutes of the Commission, June 24, 1964, in Box 00734, MCWBTS. On Corinth, see A.H. Arnold to Sidney Roebuck, May 9, 1961, in the “A-Miscellaneous” file, Box 00707, MCWBTS; and “Plans for 1961 Corinth Program,” in the “C-Miscellaneous June-December 1961” file, Box 00709, MCWBTS. For a discussion of commission funding for Corinth’s program, see the Minutes of the Commission, July 11, August 11, and December 21, 1961, in Box 00734, MCWBTS.

spring pilgrimages, the local committee held an elaborate ceremony for the dedication of the nearby Grand Gulf Military Park in 1962 and then staged a major re-enactment for the centennial anniversary of the Battle of Port Gibson in 1963. Town leaders fully expected the Centennial to boost the tourism trade, and, buying into the argument from the state level, believed that it might lure new industry to the area as well. During the 1963 event ads carried in the local newspaper urged travelers to “visit Grand Gulf State Military Park, and many other intriguing historical and scenic attractions throughout Claiborne County, [and] investigate the industrial and agricultural opportunities we have to offer.” After a large section on the history of the battle itself, a full-page welcome informed visitors that Port Gibson “is a modern and progressive community, which makes it a fine place in which to live and work,” while also noting that businessmen would “find here an atmosphere conducive to profitable industrial operations.” The steady stream of promotional ideas coming from the state commission offices evidently had succeeded in permeating the thinking of many local boosters.⁴⁴

Indeed, such enthusiasm at the local level fueled the state Centennial commission’s larger purpose of “selling” Mississippi to the North and Midwest. But as much as local involvement remained a major component of the overall commission program, the leadership’s greatest efforts went toward advertising and promotion on a national scale. One of its primary tools in this endeavor was a yearly calendar of events that listed the various tours, ceremonies, and parades held in individual towns. The calendars, produced by the hundreds of thousands, also included color photographs of historic sites and monuments, maps of the state divided into convenient driving tours, and lists of historic attractions. The state commission distributed these calendars to national travel organizations and agencies, other state Centennial commissions, newspapers, chambers of commerce, service industry associations, and individual travelers.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Port Gibson (Miss.) *Reveille*, May 2, 1963.

⁴⁵ “Mississippi Civil War Centennial 1961 Calendar of Events,” in the “Civil War Centennial” file, Subject Files, MDAH; “Mississippi Civil War Centennial 1962 Calendar of Events,” in the “Civil War Centennial” file, Subject Files, MDAH; “Mississippi’s 1963 Civil War Centennial Calendar of Events,” in the “MS—State Director undated” file, Box 00717, MCWBTS; and “Mississippi’s 1964 Civil War Centennial Calendar of Events,” in the “Printed Matter” file, Box 00733, MCWBTS. Also see Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, *Mississippi’s Civil War and Antebellum Historical Sites and*



Sidney Roebuck and George Godwin also used their extensive ties to the A&I Board to secure further public relations support for the Centennial. Ned O'Brien, an original member of Governor Coleman's commission, continued to be a valuable ally from his position in the Travel Department and played an important role in shaping state commitments and expenditures for the program that Roebuck and Godwin formulated. In May 1960, for instance, he argued for the board to endorse a major outlay of funds, citing the "terrific impact this commemoration will have on the travel pattern of Americans." In fact, he predicted that Mississippi during the Centennial years would "see the greatest influx of tourists we have ever had." Convinced of its value, the board did end up putting significant resources into the Centennial campaign, spending more

than \$88,000 in February, March, and April of 1961 for ads in national newspapers and magazines such as *National Geographic*, *Redbook*, *Holiday*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In reaching out to millions of readers across the country, these ads demonstrated Mississippi's deep financial investment in the Centennial celebration and the heavy expectations for its success.⁴⁶

Points of Interest (Jackson, Miss., 1962), MDAH. On the distribution of these calendars, see the "Agenda for 24 January 1962," in the "Agenda-Commission Meetings" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS. On calendar numbers see "The Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States [Report]," *Mississippi Civil War Centennial News*, n.d., in the "MS Commission-News Releases" file, Box 00731, MCWBTS; and "Report of Activities: July 1, 1962-June 30, 1963," in the "Civil War Centennial Commission-1963" file, Box 00732, MCWBTS.

⁴⁶ "Ned O'Brien Presentation to A&I Board, Jackson, Mississippi, 12 May 1960," in "A-Miscellaneous" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS. "Mississippi A&I Board-Centennial Ads," n.d., in the "E-Miscellaneous January 1961- June 1964 and undated" file, Box 00711, MCWBTS.

Not surprisingly, the results of such an extensive advertising campaign, capitalizing on an already widespread interest in the Centennial, yielded impressive dividends. Despite an overall slight dip in national tourism numbers during 1961, Mississippi “enjoyed a banner tourist year,” O’Brien proudly reported to Roebuck once the numbers had cleared. Inquiries to his Travel Department had soared to almost 98,000 from fewer than 66,000 in 1960, with more than a quarter of these requests specifically referencing the Centennial. The demand for promotional material was so great that the A&I Board exhausted its 50,000-piece supply of Centennial calendars during the first four months of the year. O’Brien credited much of the success to the work of Roebuck and Godwin. “Because Mississippi was ready with an organized Centennial program,” he gushed, “we were able to lead the nation in both advertising and publicity. Your organization certainly gave us the ammunition for our promotional guns.” Roebuck, not one to shy away from self promotion, no doubt shared these numbers widely.⁴⁷

Other measurements also showed the commission’s promotional work to be a significant success. Visitation at Vicksburg National Military Park, the best gauge of increased Civil War tourism in the state, surged upwards by 17 percent from 1960 to 1961, with almost 959,000 people passing through the park gates in the latter year compared to only 820,000 the year before. In Biloxi, the Beauvoir Shrine, retirement home of Jefferson Davis and a major tourism attraction, likewise saw its overall numbers increase by 15 percent from 1960 to 1962. The newly opened State Historical Museum in Jackson ushered over 78,000 people through its doors in 1961, while visitation along the Natchez Trace jumped by over 150,000 in that first full year of the Centennial. Although the correlation between advertising and actual visitation in the tourism business is notoriously weak, these gains without a doubt reflected a combination of both increased interest and product awareness on the part of travelers to Mississippi. The state Centennial commission could claim, at the very least, some responsibility for the latter.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ned O’Brien to Sidney Roebuck, January 17, 1962, in “Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board” file, Box 00716, MCWBTS.

⁴⁸ Park Superintendent R.K. Rundell to Frank Wallace, January 18, 1962, in “V-Misc.” file, Box 00722, MCWBTS. On Beauvoir numbers, see W.A. Blackledge to Frank Wallace, December 17, 1960, in “B-Misc. July-December 1960” file, Box 00707, MCWBTS, and W.A. Blackledge to Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, 25 May 1963, in “B-Misc. 1963-64” file, Box 00707, MCWBTS. For museum numbers, see Charlotte Capers

Despite such obviously good news for Roebuck, Godwin, and the other boosters, the larger success of the commission's public relations campaign ultimately depended on its ability to alter how the rest of the nation viewed Mississippi, a task which proved to be considerably more difficult than selling a battlefield or historic home tour. The extent of this reliance on positive press can be seen in the reaction of Roebuck to several adverse editorials about the Centennial celebration in the Deep South found in the July 1961 issue of the travel magazine *Holiday*. The core of the argument centered on the lead editorial, "A Word With Our Readers," and a page-length write-up that followed. In the more damaging lead piece the editors took an especially hard jab at the celebratory atmosphere of the Centennial in the South, where, the traveler was warned, he might "encounter certain other sights and sounds and excitements, of a very special nature, which may give him cause for wonder and alarm." Setting the war squarely as a contest over slavery and union, the magazine's editors could find little joy in an event in which "more than two hundred thousand men and boys were killed on the battlefield by gunshot, disemboweling, strangulation, dismemberment, clubbing, or disintegration through the action of explosives." The only positive result appeared to be the fact that afterwards, the "spent and stricken victor" established "as a principle and a law that people should not buy and sell one another" and that "people born or naturalized here should count as citizens and be entitled to their fair share of the personal freedoms which this nation was originally dedicated to bestow."⁴⁹

"Now, a hundred years later," the editors moaned, the "bloody and barbarous" events of the Civil War were to "be re-enacted by men in theatrical costumes, with fireworks," while "the rafters of country clubs are to ring with merry laughter and the clank of imitation sabers." The commercial aspects of the Centennial—"a brisk trade in battle games,

to Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, January 22, 1962, in "Charlotte Capers, Jan. 1962-June 1964" file, Box 00710, MCWBTS. The State Historical Museum housed in the restored Old Capitol opened to the public on March 21, 1961. The restoration of the Old Capitol and the establishment of the museum had been spearheaded by Governor Coleman and overseen by Charlotte Capers, MDAH director. On Trace numbers, see Karl T. Gilbert to Frank Wallace, June 13, 1963, in "B-Misc. 1963-64" file, Box 00707, MCWBTS. Also see "Report of the Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, 1960-1962 Biennium," in the "Printed Matter" file, Box 00733, MCWBTS.

⁴⁹ "A Word With Our Readers," *Holiday*, July 1961, clipping in "H-Misc. April 1960-December 1961" file, Box 00712, MCWBTS. McWhite, "Echoes of the Lost Cause," 214-15, analyzes the *Holiday* affair as well.

replica muskets, prettified literary mush, and music-box cigarette lighters (made in Japan) that play *Dixie*—proved particularly repulsive when “some of us even now are being brutally denied certain personal freedoms.” The editors then warned any readers who “felt inclined to attend any of these junketings,” to at least choose ones that showed a “decent respect for the dead, and a proper regard for the living.”⁵⁰

Such blunt commentaries aimed directly at the South’s Centennial efforts and, more damning, at its basic morality in the midst of the civil rights struggle, elicited an immediate response. Choosing to respond to the former criticism rather than the latter, Sidney Roebuck wrote Robert MacNeal, president of the Curtis Publishing Company (which published *Holiday*), that the editorial had done “real dollars-and-cents damage” to the state. “Historical attractions, many of them connected with the Civil War, have been for many years very important, statewide economic assets,” he explained, and their “development and promotion” were being “pursued vigorously as elements in our state’s new, aggressive economic program.” The remarks in *Holiday*, he insisted, only served to retard this work and ultimately harmed the “entire citizenry” since “the state, counties and individual communities derive steady revenue from ... taxes which tourists, like Mississippi residents, pay.”⁵¹

More important than any financial loss, Roebuck contended in another letter to Curtis senior staffer Robert Farrand, the magazine’s statements injured the wider attempt to project Mississippi as a modern, progressive state. In a frustrated frame of mind, he despaired that, “Now all of the good that might have come to the state as a result of advertising in *Holiday* has been lost because of ... vicious statements about the deep south and about the Centennial.” Although he refused to spell out any larger agenda for Mississippi’s Centennial advertising, especially to a member of the national media, it is nonetheless apparent from his hypersensitive response that Roebuck saw tourism, economic development, and the defense of segregation as part of a whole package. The mindset of white Mississippi, “the closed society” as historian James Silver called it, simply could not separate out these at times disparate

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Sidney Roebuck to Robert E. MacNeal, June 28, 1961, in the “Mississippi Commission News Releases” file, Box 00731, MCWBTS. Ned O’Brien from the A&I Board also sent a scathing letter to MacNeal demanding a full apology; see Ned O’Brien to Robert E. MacNeal, June 28, 1961, in “Mc-Misc. June 1960-November 1961” file, Box 00715, MCWBTS.

goals. Faced with an already uphill battle to alter the national perception of the state after a series of public relations disasters that included, most recently, the beating and arrest of Freedom Riders earlier in the year, Roebuck understood the remarks in *Holiday* as an attack not just on the Centennial or Mississippi's efforts to modernize but also, more significantly, on the "southern way of life" itself. Viewed from this perspective, his comments illustrate the internal disconnect, the extreme myopia, that allowed southern boosters to promote economic modernization alongside a reactionary social agenda, all the while expecting the rest of America to accept both equally. It is doubtful that Roebuck gave this aspect of the *Holiday* matter much consideration.⁵²

Pressing on despite such disparaging criticism and the very public foundering of the national Centennial effort on the issue of civil rights, 1962 proved a record year for Centennial activity in Mississippi. The lure of antebellum romance and Civil War drama apparently remained strong, and Roebuck even secured the state commission an additional \$100,000 appropriation from the legislature for its continued promotional work. But selling Mississippi became increasingly complicated after that year. The deadly confrontation between federal marshals and segregationist mobs at the University of Mississippi in the early fall signaled the beginning of the worst period of racial violence in the state during the civil rights struggle and proved to be the downfall of Barnett's public relations program. The state already had drawn considerable condemnation over the previous decade for various outrages, but the catastrophe of Oxford and subsequent events—church bombings, Klan murders, and so on—virtually destroyed Mississippi's national image. In some ways, the state is still haunted by its popular characterization from this period as a land of brutality and backwardness.⁵³

Faced with such devastating coverage, many times worse than anything *Holiday* could put in print, the Centennial effort at the state

⁵² Sidney T. Roebuck to Robert K. Farrand, June 30, 1961, in "H-Misc. April 1960-December 1961" file, Box 00712, MCWBTS.

⁵³ On Commission funding for 1962-64 biennium, see House Bill #1069 in the "Legislature Reports" file, Box 00714, MCWBTS. McWhite, "Echoes of the Lost Cause," 209-14, 217-26, covers some of the major problems at the national level, as does Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 88-119. On the riot at Oxford and its background, see Lord, *The Past That Would Not Die*, 139-232, and Nadine Cohodas, *The Band Played Dixie: Race and the Liberal Conscience at Ole Miss* (New York, 1997), 57-87. Katagiri, *Sovereignty Commission*, 103-15, also covers the integration crisis, as does Johnston, *Defiant Years*, 146-64.

level collapsed in an inglorious fashion. George Godwin never attended another commission meeting after the riot at Ole Miss, and Sidney Roebuck virtually closed down the commission offices in 1963, citing a lack of interest brought on by the Oxford fiasco and the Cuban missile crisis, these events coming virtually back-to-back in the fall of 1962. Declining interest in the Centennial, he wrote Governor Barnett, could be blamed on the “Kennedy administration, with the help of the agitators, the Cubans, and the Russians.”⁵⁴

In reality, national interest in the Centennial already had begun to wane considerably from an early peak of enthusiasm in 1961. Holding the public’s attention beyond a few big events proved incredibly hard, particularly in an era of considerable social turmoil and increasing media saturation, while the cohesiveness that had marked the early Centennial effort at the national level largely had broken down along sectional and racial lines. Among white southerners as well, the remaining years of the Centennial represented a descent into issues that few wanted to commemorate with any great fanfare, namely a steady string of military defeats and the overthrow of slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation. Proponents of civil rights and integration, supported in a lukewarm way by President Kennedy and a national commission now headed by the respected historian Allan Nevins, attempted to turn the anniversary of the Proclamation into a showcase for an alternate view of the Civil War’s legacy, one that would support their own social and political goals. These leaders had realized from the start the propaganda value of the Centennial for the white South and had railed against efforts to dismiss the importance of slavery to the conflict, the result of which, as one publication put it, would give “the racists, the white supremacists ... full and unchallenged control of the Civil War Centennial.” In Mississippi, such careful control over the historical memory of the Civil War by the white establishment certainly came as no surprise to local movement leaders, who likely held similarly critical views but simply lacked the public forum to express them. In the end, the Proclamation anniversary proved less stirring than some national leaders had hoped

⁵⁴ “Kennedy administration ...,” from Sidney Roebuck to Ross Barnett, May 30, 1963, in the “Ross R. Barnett, July 1962-September 1963” file, Box 00708, MCWBTS.

but nonetheless served as an effective counter to the propaganda efforts of certain southern state commissions.⁵⁵

Among white Mississippians there was no great upsurge in heritage and commemorative events after Oxford, as one might have expected from a fully mobilized and committed populace. This demoralization, which Roebuck identified, perhaps could be attributed to the emotional crash after the reality of federal intervention became obvious, but just as strongly points to the relative weakness of the Confederate tradition itself in a transforming South, as well as to the powerful economic motivations behind the celebration at the state and local levels. Indeed, by the end of the Centennial, only about thirty towns had events scheduled in the state commission calendars for 1963 and 1964 and, outside of a few commemorative ceremonies, the majority of these had major tourism attractions to sell. In the long run the tourism industry, it seemed, would go on, while the Confederate tradition continued its long dissolution into meaninglessness. That tourism numbers continued to climb throughout the 1960s and 1970s, despite Mississippi's public image in the nation, offers an interesting comment on what whites in other parts of the country identified as "of interest" to them when they came to the state. Plantation and pilgrimage tours, devoid of African American stories, did not falter in their popularity, and even today continue to be major draws for the southern tourism industry. In an odd way the tourism business continued to support reactionary historical memories of the Old South and the Civil War long after those memories had passed out of the overt consciousness of most white southerners.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ On declining interest in the Centennial among white southerners, see Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 200-11. "The racists ...," from Vanguard Society of America, *The Civil War Centennial and the Negro* (Los Angeles, 1960), 4, quoted in McWhite, "Echoes of the Lost Cause," 209. McWhite, 217-24, also discusses the issues surrounding the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, as does Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 170-85, in his larger analysis of the black response to the Centennial. On this "counter-memory" of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction among black southerners, see Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 35-104.

⁵⁶ For numbers and events, see "Mississippi's 1963 Civil War Centennial Calendar of Events," in the "MS—State Director undated" file, Box 00717, MCWBTS; and "Mississippi's 1964 Civil War Centennial Calendar of Events," in the "Printed Matter" file, Box 00733, MCWBTS. On the continued value of heritage tourism to the southern economy after the Second World War and the ongoing struggle over the past as it is presented at museums and historic homes in the region, see Brundage, *The Southern Past*, 307-15.

That Ross Barnett, the arch-segregationist, unwittingly contributed to this spiraling decline in the power of the Confederate myth adds to our understanding of the complexities and contradictory impulses that marked the emerging South of the post- World War II era. In this sense he deserves something of a second look by historians. Although he cannot escape the infamous national legacy he built for himself with his handling of the civil rights crisis in Mississippi, he does represent a transitional figure in state and regional history. On one hand, his careful use of public relations tactics to promote his segregationist aims during the Centennial years foreshadowed the more sophisticated approaches conservative politicians, beginning with George Wallace, would utilize during the late 1960s and 1970s to bring white southern grievances onto the national stage. Barnett was harnessed to both the past and the present, so that in addition to his inflammatory demonstrations—products of a bygone era of southern demagoguery—he also offered a more modern, politically savvy approach to combating civil rights than is sometimes recognized. Perhaps of greater importance, Barnett's treatment of the Centennial also illustrates the choices that later southern politicians would have to make with regard to the problems of Confederate heritage and the quest for economic development, the choice between battle flags and million-dollar investments. Quite inadvertently, then, Barnett's decision to emphasize tourism and development over an all-out campaign of heritage mobilization ultimately served to undermine the very symbols and way of life he held so dear.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ On the struggle over the Confederate tradition, and especially its symbols, in the modern South, see J. Michael Martinez, William D. Richardson, and Ron McNinch-Su, eds. *Confederate Symbols in the Contemporary South* (Gainesville, Fla., 2000), and K. Michael Prince, *Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys: South Carolina and the Confederate Flag* (Columbia, S.C., 2004).