



The Mudcat

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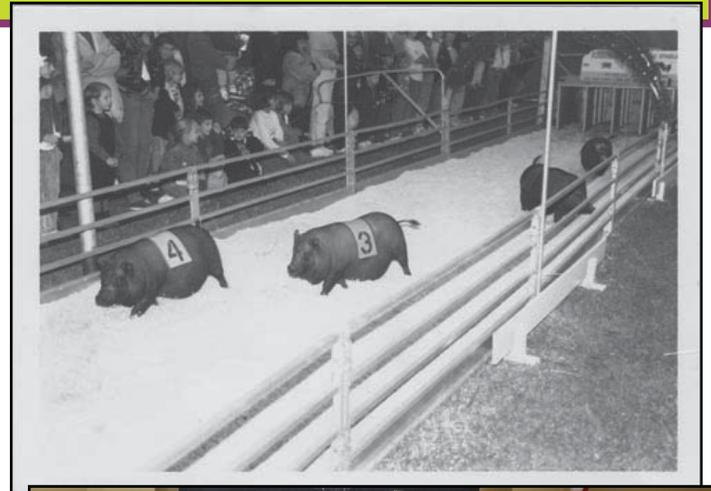
It's Your State Fair!

In the nineteenth century, state fairs began appearing across the nation. At state fairs, agriculture was promoted through the competitive exhibition of livestock and display of farm products.

The first Mississippi State Fair was held in Washington near Natchez in 1858. In 1887, the Mississippi State Fair Association was established. Since that year the fair has been held in Jackson. Since 1904 (with the exception of 1918) the fair has been held annually. After **industrialization**, fairs expanded to include amusement rides, games, entertainment, races, and displays of industrial

products. With so many things to do and see, the event drew large numbers of fairgoers. In 1915, a race between an ostrich and a horse attracted more people than could be seated—the ostrich won the race in less than a minute!

For twelve days every October, the State Fair is held in Jackson. It is a family-friendly event that people from all over the state look forward to. Attendance increases annually, and in recent years the fair has drawn over 700,000 visitors through its gates. Even though food, rides, and entertainment have become a prominent part of the fair experience, it still reflects the importance of agriculture in Mississippi. At recent fairs, there have been exhibits related to agriculture and lifestyle, including photography, canning and baking, sheep, goats, **horticulture**, and arts and crafts.



Pig races at the 1990 state fair (top). Pig races continue to be a popular sight at the State Fair today. The Old Capitol Museum includes an exhibit about the State Fair (bottom). MDAH Archives and Records Services.

So how come... the state fair wasn't held in 1918? There was a Spanish influenza epidemic and large gatherings of people were prohibited in order to halt the spread of the disease.

So how come... President William Howard Taft is remembered in Mississippi State Fair history? Taft was the first sitting president to visit the city of Jackson, where he attended the 1909 State Fair.

The Hummingbird Migration Celebration

Hummingbirds are known for their unique characteristics. They have jewel-like colors and perform acrobatic movements while flying. Hummingbirds can fly backwards and upside down. They can also hover mid-air while they are feeding. Hummingbirds can easily adapt to different environments. They can survive cold, heat, aridity, and humidity. These traits are demonstrated annually at the Hummingbird **Migration**

Celebration in Holly Springs.

For over a decade, on the weekend after Labor Day thousands of people visit Strawberry Plains Audubon Center in Holly Springs to see ruby-throated hummingbirds as they migrate from Canada to Central America for the winter. Mississippi is a popular area for the hummingbirds to stop and



Hummingbird Festival, 2015. MDAH Museum Division Education.

refuel before taking a 500-mile nonstop flight over the Gulf of Mexico. At Strawberry Plains, visitors can observe the hummingbirds up close, see them feed, and watch **bird banding**. Some guests even get the chance to release hummingbirds back into the wild!

So how come... hummingbirds return to the same feeder, plant, or place each year? They are creatures of habit and trust that the same food source will still be there to enjoy.

Natchez Pilgrimage Tours

Among many things, Natchez is well-known for its elegant and beautiful **antebellum** homes and mansions. Every year, “pilgrims” visit the city’s Spring and Fall **Pilgrimages**, for a chance to step back in time and catch a glimpse of the opulent Old South. Many of the mansions are open to the public throughout the year, but during the Pilgrimage guests are also allowed to tour private homes that are not usually open.

Natchez was the political, social, and economic center of early Mississippi. Before the Civil War, Natchez was

one of the richest cities in America, with river **commerce** contributing to its thriving economy. The mansions and estates reflected the wealth and status of the townspeople.

During the Civil War Natchez escaped destruction, but in the 1920s, Natchez began to go into economic decline. In the 1930s, some Natchez citizens saw a need for a renaissance of Old Natchez.

In 1931, the Mississippi State Federation of Garden Clubs held its annual meeting in Natchez and the Natchez Garden Club offered a special guided tour of

several antebellum homes. The tour was very popular and became an annual event to help bolster tourism. In 1976, due to the popularity of the Spring Pilgrimage, the Fall Pilgrimage was initiated. Today, the Pilgrimage has been extended from one week to one month. In recent years, the Pilgrimage has expanded further to highlight the lives of African Americans and the contributions they made to antebellum Natchez.



Scenes from the Natchez pilgrimage. The Natchez Tableaux performance (top). A woman at the gates of Stanton Hall (bottom). MDAH Archives and Records Services.

Investigate More

There are festivals and fairs throughout Mississippi all year long! Which one will you visit?

One Giant House Party

Established in 1891, the Neshoba County Fair started as a two-day meeting of local farmers and their families and has expanded into an eight-day event. At the fair, families camp on the grounds in over 600 cabins. The fellowship of the camping families is a central part of the fair experience.

Attractions at the fair include horse races, exhibits, an antique car parade, and amusement rides. It is also a **forum** for Mississippi politicians. Since 1896, notable politicians have delivered speeches during the event including President Ronald Reagan, congressman Jack Kemp, and astronaut and senator John Glenn.



Neshoba County Fair horse racing. MDAH Archives and Records Services.

Choctaw Fair

Each July the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians celebrates and shares their heritage and culture at the Choctaw Indian Fair. Attendees have the opportunity to enjoy the Choctaw Indian Princess Pageant, traditional Choctaw food, dance, tribal art, and much more, including a competitive **stickball** tournament. Learn more at <http://www.choctawindianfair.com/>

The Great Delta Bear Affair

In 1902, President Teddy Roosevelt visited the Delta to hunt black bear. Roosevelt went on the hunt in Sharkey County with Mississippian Holt Collier as his guide. After failing to come across a bear, Collier tracked and captured an adult bear. Despite the crowd of hunters encouraging Roosevelt to shoot the tied-up animal, he refused.

The news traveled

across the country. A toyshop owner in New York asked Roosevelt if he could name the stuffed toy bears in his shop “Teddy’s Bears” and Roosevelt agreed. Eventually, all stuffed toy bears became known as teddy bears.

Today, the Great Delta Bear Affair is an annual community event that includes musical entertainment, food, seminars, and impersonators of Roosevelt and Collier. Learn more about this event and the famous hunt at <http://greatdeltabearaffair.org>

Roosevelt button, circa 1902. MDAH Museum Division Collections.



Columbus Spring Pilgrimage



Costumed pilgrimage participants at a Columbus home. MDAH Archives and Records Services.

The annual Columbus Spring Pilgrimage is a popular celebration of the town’s heritage. For sixteen days, visitors explore history, architecture, culture, and food. Antebellum homes, including Waverly Mansion and the

birthplace of author Tennessee Williams, are open for tours, which are often led by costumed guides. The celebration also includes a picnic, marathon, parties, carriage rides, cook-offs, live entertainment, and cemetery tours.

Show What You Know!

Vocabulary

Antebellum: before the American Civil War.

Bird Banding: attachment of a small tag to the leg of a bird to study its movement, survival, and behavior.

Commerce: buying and selling of goods.

Forum: a public place to gather and share ideas.

Horticulture: to grow a garden, orchard, or other plants.

Industrialization: the transition from an agricultural based society to one with manufacturing and advanced technology.

Migration: to move from one country, region, or place to another.

Pilgrimage: a journey to a holy place or to pay respect to a person or place.

Stickball: a traditional Native American game where players move a ball across a field with handcrafted sticks. Modern-day lacrosse is based on it.

Can you find all these words below?

Antebellum
Bird Banding
Commerce
Forum
Horticulture

Hummingbird
Industrialization
Migration
Natchez
Neshoba County

Pilgrimage
State Fair
Stickball
Teddy Bear

Z H R A E B Y D D E T B Y H M I R
N O I T A Z I L A I R T S U D N I
T R M N S F O R U M N Y L M L E I
T T S I B D I R D U C L O M L I I
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B C M A O Z R A M N G D I U N O M
N G M O T S G E A A T A T T S G L
C B M L N E T A Y T B M A U L A I

Create a Catfish Competition

How would you like to see a catfish of your own creation on the cover of the *Mudcat*? If you're an artist—or even if you're not—craft a cool catfish graphic, send it in to the *Mudcat*, and **YOUR** catfish could win a coveted spot on the cover of the next issue! Send all entries via mail or email to:

Outreach Programs Coordinator, Museum Division, MDAH
P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571
Phone: 601-576-6997 or outreachprograms@mdah.ms.gov

Congratulations
to Sarah B. of
Starkville for her
winning Mudcat!

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<http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/learn/students/the-mudcat-newsletter/>