

MISSISSIPPI HISTORY

NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Spring 2018

Volume 60, No. 1

Dozens of Quilts in Special Exhibit

Oldest Piece Crafted Nearly Two Hundred Years Ago

The first special exhibit in the Two Mississippi Museums explores life in the state through quilts in the MDAH collection. *Stories Unfolded: An Exhibit of Mississippi Quilts* features thirty-eight quilts and two quilt tops that were stitched over the course of nearly two centuries by a diverse array of quilters. The exhibit is on display in the FedEx and Medgar and Myrlie Evers exhibition halls on the second floor of the museum complex until October 2018.

“When Patti Carr Black was director of the Mississippi History Museum, she made collecting folk art, including quilts, a priority,” said MDAH Museum Division director Lucy

Allen. “As a result of her efforts, we hold more than two hundred quilts in the collection.”

The oldest quilt on display was made by Mary Stovall in Hinds County between 1830 and 1845. Stovall used factory-made indigo-dyed cotton to hand stitch the quilt, which features a Princess Feather and Eagles pattern. Because her husband and sons fought in early American wars, the eagles in the design are thought to represent her family’s military service.

Among the more recently made quilts is Geraldine Nash’s “The Hands That Picked Cotton Now Help Pick Presidents,” made in 2008. Nash was inspired by a similar phrase civil rights leader Charles Evers used as he campaigned for mayor of Fayette, Mississippi, in the 1970s.

Other renowned Mississippi quilt makers represented in *Sto-*

ries Unfolded include Martha Skelton, Tammy McGrew, and

\$16 plus tax.

Stories Unfolded is free and



The circa-1830s Princess Feather and Eagles quilt made by Mary Stovall.

Hystercine Rankin. An exhibition catalog is available in the Mississippi Museum Store for

open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

MSU President Keenum Joins MDAH Board

Mark Keenum, president of Mississippi State University, is the newest member of the board of trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Keenum was elected to the board in February and confirmed by the state senate in March.

“Keenum’s work to bring the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library to Mississippi State University shows his commitment to supporting and making accessible historic resources—a commitment particularly significant to MDAH,” said Kane Ditto, president of the MDAH board of trustees. “He has been an outstanding steward of the

historic structures on the campus of MSU. His experience as a university president and longtime public servant will serve the department well.”

Keenum was named the nineteenth president of Mississippi State University in 2009 after a long career in public service. His accomplishments at the university include increasing enrollment,



expanding the campus through multiple construction projects, and acquiring the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana—a vast collection of documents relating to the life and times of President Abraham Lincoln. Keenum has also expanded the MSU Promise Program, which provides need-based scholarship assistance to Mississippi students whose families have limited financial means.

Keenum served on the staff of U.S. Senator Thad Cochran in Washington, D.C., from 1989 to 2006, first as a legisla-

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tive assistant for agriculture and natural resources and then as chief of staff. In 2006 Keenum was named the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services for the United States Department of Agriculture.

Keenum succeeds Jack Garner, who retired after nineteen years on the board as the senior member. During his tenure, Garner served as the vice-president of the board and as a member of the National Register Review Board.

A Grenada native, Garner is the former president of the Ramey Agency, an advertising firm in Jackson. He spent twenty-five years in banking, and led the effort to restore the First National Bank of Jackson building. When Garner was a board member of the Margaret Walker Center, he assisted in having Ayer Hall restored to house the research center. An accomplished artist, Garner's work is included in many private and corporate collections as well as the Mississippi



Jack Garner, left, walks a part of the Corinth battleground with a National Park Service ranger and MDAH board president Kane Ditto.

Museum of Art's permanent collection.

Garner served on the Governor's Mansion Committee,

and he was a founding member of the board of directors of the Foundation for Mississippi History, serving as treasurer from 2005 to 2017.

"The department relied heavily on Jack Garner's leadership in preservation projects across the state," said Ditto. "He has provided stability on the board through the construction of the William F. Winter Archives and History Building, the restoration of the Old Capitol Museum, and the opening of the Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum—and has been instrumental in the success of each one of those."

Members serve six-year terms. The other members of the board are Kane Ditto, president; Reuben V. Anderson, Jackson; Nancy Carpenter, Columbus; Valencia Hall, Natchez; Betsey Hamilton, New Albany; Web Heidelberg, Hattiesburg; Hilda Cope Povall, Cleveland; and Roland Weeks, Biloxi.

New Book Tells Story of History, Civil Rights Museums

A new book highlights some of the artifacts featured in the Two Mississippi Museums and documents the history of the project. *Telling Our Stories: Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum* was created by the Department of Archives and History and published by the University Press of Mississippi.

"*Telling Our Stories* shines a light on all the people who made this project possible," said MDAH director Katie Blount. "This project was the centerpiece of the state's bicentennial celebration only because of the community partners, movement veterans, scholars, state officials, and others who helped it succeed."

Mississippi's story comes to life through artifacts such as a circa-1840 cotton gin, a contemporary Choctaw beaded medal-

lion necklace, a banner from the state's first black Masonic lodge, a boll weevil trap used in Grenada County, a chess set molded from bread by a Freedom Rider at Parchman penitentiary, and a clock that stopped at the moment Hurricane Katrina flooded a Biloxi home. Never before have these objects been gathered together in one place or publication.

"The construction of these museums allows us to showcase in new ways artifacts that we've been collecting since 1902," said MDAH Museum Division director Lucy Allen. "*Telling Our Stories* shares how our stories are told through these artifacts."

Telling Our Stories is available for \$25 plus tax in the Mississippi Museum Store—which also sells pottery,

jewelry, and handmade crafts by artists from across the state, along with classic and contemporary books on all aspects of Mississippi history. Call



601-576-6921 to order a copy.

Properties Added To National Register

A historic African American library, a Jewish synagogue, and two Jackson elementary schools have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On the recommendation of the Mississippi National

president of the Utica Normal and Industrial Institute. The Myrtle Hall Library was also the first home of the Delta Blues Museum.

Built in 1946, B'nai Israel Synagogue is located at the

of school architecture, which refers to concentrating the different functions of the school in certain parts of the building. The school is still in use.

Pearl Spann Elementary School was one of three white schools built with money from a 1956 bond referendum in response to Jackson's growing population following WWII. The one-story, cluster-designed school was completed in 1958 at the start of the school year and named after a longtime Jackson educator, Susie Pearl Spann. Pearl Spann Elementary was designed in the Modernist or International style by the architecture firm Overstreet, Ware, and Ware, and still serves Jackson students.

The National Register of Historic Places was established by Congress in 1966 to help identify and protect historically significant properties. National Register properties enrich our understanding of local, state, and national history by representing significant events and developments, the contributions of notable people, and important types of buildings and architectural styles. Na-

properties through tax benefits, grant assistance, and protection from demolition or development.

National Register listing does not restrict a private owner's use of the property, unless development of the property involves federal funding, federal rehabilitation tax credits, or participation in some other federal program. There are no requirements for public accessibility, and information about sensitive sites can be restricted from the public.

The Department of Archives and History is the official State Historic Preservation Office in Mississippi and handles all requests for National Register information and assistance. Congress established the National Register of Historic Places in 1966 as a list of federally recognized properties especially worthy of protection and preservation.

Mississippi has more than 1,200 National Register properties, including archaeological sites, battlefields, bridges, buildings, cemeteries, forts, houses, and historic districts. For more information call



The circa-1946 Temple B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg.

Register Review Board, the United States Department of the Interior approved the addition of Myrtle Hall Branch Library for Negroes, Coahoma County; Temple B'nai Israel, Forrest County; Hattie Casey Elementary School, Hinds County; and Pearl Spann Elementary School, Hinds County.

During most of the era of segregation, the Myrtle Hall Library for Negroes was the only public library for African Americans in the Mississippi Delta. In 1929 a group of Clarksdale African Americans formed a committee, raised \$1,000, and lobbied the city for a library to be built near the Myrtle Hall School—one of two African American schools in the city. The city of Clarksdale set aside \$2,000 to construct the one-story building. Speakers at the library's dedication in 1930 included L.J. Rowan, president of Alcorn College; B.A. Green, mayor of Mound Bayou; and William Holtzclaw,

corner of Mamie Street and 12th Avenue South in Hattiesburg. Jewish immigrants first began arriving in Forrest County in the 1890s and first worshiped in the home of early Jewish settler Maurice Dreyfus. In 1900 the congregation occupied the top floor of the Odd Fellows Building in downtown. The congregation officially organized in 1915. The temple has been used continuously since construction by Congregation B'nai Israel.

Hattie Casey Elementary School was constructed as a white school in 1961 and named in honor of longtime Jackson educator Hattie M. Casey. The school was built in response to the tremendous increase in Jackson's population after World War II along with new suburban development in northeast Jackson. The one-story school is a local example of Modernist or International style. Hattie Casey Elementary School is also an example of the cluster type



Myrtle Hall branch library in Coahoma County.

tional Register listing can also help preserve these important

601-576-6940 or visit www.mdah.ms.gov.

Society Honors Award Winners

During its annual meeting March 1–3 at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson, the Mississippi Historical Society announced its 2018 awards, including best book and outstanding teacher. Longtime MDAH Museum Division director Lucy Allen received one of the society's highest honors, the Dunbar Rowland Award for lifelong contributions to the preservation, study, and interpretation of Mississippi history.

Allen began her career with MDAH in 1978, initially as an assistant curator of exhibits, then later as director of education and programs. She has been director of the Museum Division since 2002. In 2011, Allen was named the Two Mississippi Museums project director, leading a complex, intensive, accelerated five-year process to design the 200,000-square-foot facility.

"More than any other person, these museum buildings are a credit to the vision, commitment, and persistence of Lucy Allen," said MDAH director Katie Blount. "She always envisioned these museums as world-class institutions, and she never shrank from that vision, not when support was absent, not when money was tight, not when time was slipping away. No staff person has done more for these museums, over more years, than Lucy Allen."

The society's award for best Mississippi history book went to University of Mississippi emeritus professor of history Charles Eagles for *Civil Rights, Culture Wars: The Fight over a Mississippi Textbook*. The work examines the controversy that surrounded the 1974 publication of *Mississippi: Conflict and Change*, which was ground-

breaking for its treatment of race and the inclusion of African American history.

"Eagles's book helps the reader to see the much-needed changes that Tougaloo College professor James Loewen and Millsaps professor Charles Sallis addressed in *Conflict and Change*," said Elizabeth Payne, University of Mississippi history professor and chair of the McLemore Prize Committee. "Until Eagles's book, little to no attention had been paid to their pioneering work."

Puckett High School teacher Jennifer Leigh Johnson received the John K. Bettersworth Award, presented to an outstanding history teacher. An instructor with eleven years of school experience, Johnson teaches U.S. history, world history, psychology, and law. Johnson is the 2016-17 teacher of the year at Puckett High School and a member of the Mississippi Professional Educators, Phi Delta Kappa, and the National Council for the Social Studies, as well as the co-sponsor of the National Honor Society at her school.



Charles Eagles, left, receives the McLemore Prize from committee chair Elizabeth Payne.

"Jennifer Johnson is exactly the type of educator we are proud to support," said Chad Daniels, Bettersworth Award

Committee chair. "In addition to her excellent work in the classroom, Johnson spearheaded a collaborative project where her

Society received the Frank E. Everett, Jr. Award for its outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation



Lucy Allen, right, receives the Dunbar Rowland Award from John Marszalek.

students interviewed military veterans from World War II to Desert Storm that culminated in the creation of a commemorative booklet for each veteran."

Allison Collis Greene, associate professor of history at Mississippi State University, received the *Mississippi History Now* Award for her article "The Great Depression and Religion in Mississippi."

Crystal Sanders was awarded the Willie D. Halsell Prize for best article published in the *Journal of Mississippi History* for "Dignity in Life and Death: Undertaker Clarie Collins Harvey and Black Women's Entrepreneurial Activism."

Sanders is associate professor of history and African American studies at Pennsylvania State University.

The Itawamba Historical

of local history.

Michael Ballard posthumously received the William E. "Bill" Atkinson Award for his outstanding lifelong contributions to the study and interpretation of Mississippi Civil War history.

For a complete list of Awards of Merit see the MHS website, mississippihistory.org.

Newly elected officers of the society are Page Ogden, Natchez, president; Chuck Westmoreland, Delta State University, vice-president; and William "Brother" Rogers, secretary-treasurer.

New members of the society's board of directors are Shennette Garrett-Scott, University of Mississippi; LaToya Norman, Hattiesburg; Dierdre Payne, Ridgeland; Christian Pinnen, Mississippi College; James L. Robertson, Jackson; Stephanie Rolph, Millsaps College; Rebecca Tuuri, University of Southern Mississippi; and Marcs Sokolsky-Wixon, Pascagoula.

New Museums Exceeding Projected Visitation

In just four months, more than 100,000 people have traveled to Jackson to visit the Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. The Two Mississippi Museums, which opened on December 9, are exceeding initial visitation projections and continue to attract the attention of the world.

More than 10,000 people visited the museums during the grand opening weekend. In January the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided free admission to commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., and some 16,000 people took advantage of the offer.

More than 630 group reservations have been made to the museums, including churches, civic groups, and schools.

“These classes are riding buses for hours to visit both

museums and learn about their state’s history,” said Museum of Mississippi History director Rachel Myers. “Teachers tell us they can’t wait to come back because of their experience.”

“One of the greatest staples of the community during the Civil Rights Era was the church,” said Pamela Junior, director of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. “The church is that piece that continuously shows up in our galleries. Today, we have churches from all over Mississippi coming to see a Movement that the parishioners lived, and to reflect with the younger ones an era that they can only read and hear about.”

The Two Mississippi Museums welcomes groups of up to 200 people; advance reservations are encouraged. Groups of ten or more receive discounted pricing of \$6 per



The line to enter the museums stretched to North Street during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

adult and \$3 per student for one museum and \$10 per adult and \$5 per child for both museums.

For more details or to book a group online, visit www.mcrm.mdah.ms.gov or www.mmh.mdah.ms.gov.

Music Festival, Fiddle Contest at HJC

Historic Jefferson College is hosting the eleventh annual Great Big Yam Potatoes Old-Time Music Gathering and Fiddle Contest on Friday, May 18, and Saturday, May 19. This free event, sponsored by the Mississippi Fiddlers Association, celebrates Mississippi’s musical heritage with traditional string band music played by some of the state’s finest musicians.

“It’s hard not to love this laid-back music festival,” said Historic Jefferson College director Robin Person. “Visitors will find as much music being made at campsites on the grounds as on the stages, and everyone is welcome to sit and listen to those jam sessions, dance, or grab an instrument and join in.”

Events kick off at 6 p.m. on Friday with a potluck dinner, followed at 7:30 by an old-fashioned barn dance featuring fiddle music and called by Bridget Edwards, who

is also site director of the Eudora Welty House and Garden.

On the morning of Saturday, May 19,

contest rules or to register, visit www.bigyampotatoes.com

Live music continues throughout the day on the outdoor stage, and food vendors will be on site. Participating musicians are permitted to camp on the grounds of Historic Jefferson College Friday and Saturday nights.

Historic Jefferson College is administered by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Established in 1802 as the first institution of higher learning chartered in the Mississippi Territory, the site is located in Washington, four miles northeast of Natchez on

Highway 61. The address is 16 Old North Street, Natchez, MS 39120.

For more information, contact Robert Gray of the Mississippi Fiddlers Association at 601-506-6561 or email wurzburg58@gmail.com. To contact Historic Jefferson College, call 601-442-2901 or email info@historicjeffersoncollege.com.



there will be a fiddle contest in the historic West Wing beginning with the peewee fiddle competition for children ages three through eleven and followed by the junior fiddle competition for teenagers. Adult fiddlers will compete after lunch. Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three fiddlers in each division. For more information about

1868 State Constitution at Old Capitol

Throughout this year, the Old Capitol Museum will display Mississippi's 1868 Constitution to commemorate the 150th anniversary of its adoption. Crafted in the House of Representatives Chamber when the building served as the statehouse, the document granted voting rights to black males and set a framework for the creation of a public school system in the state.

"The 1868 Constitution, the state's third constitution, is a fascinating document," said Old Capitol Museum director Lauren Miller. "It's important for all Mississippians to be aware of the political advancements that were made during that era."

In November 1865, Mississippi's first post-Civil War legislature met in the Old Capitol and passed the Black Codes—a series of laws that restricted the legal rights and social mobility of freedmen. In retaliation, Congress refused to seat Mississippi's delegation and, in 1867, passed legislation that placed Mississippi and other former Confederate States under military rule.

Congress forced the states to write new constitutions in order to be readmitted to the Union. In December 1867, Mississippians voted to write a new constitution, and a biracial cast of delegates was elected to the constitutional convention that

began on January 7, 1868.

Among the ninety-seven delegates selected to the con-

vention, at least sixteen were African American, eight of whom were ministers. The other delegates were whites divided into three factions: native white Republicans derisively called



“scalawags,” white Republi-

cans from the North labeled

“carpetbaggers,” and native white conservatives resistant

1, 1869.

In addition to establishing a state-funded school system and extending access to the polls to black freedmen, the 1868 constitution added an oath requiring voters to affirm the civil and political equality of all men, restored the office of lieutenant governor that had been abolished in 1832, and removed the law requiring voters to own property.

The State of Mississippi was founded upon the 1817 constitution. Forty-eight convention delegates assembled on the grounds of Historic Jefferson College to draft the document. The 1832 State Constitution—drafted after the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians ceded their lands to the United States—eliminated property requirements for white males to vote, outlawed dueling, and set term limits for elected offices.

“On the second floor of the Old Capitol Museum is the ‘Government and the Constitutions’ gallery, which explores this era of Mississippi in detail,” said Miller.

The Old Capitol, Jackson’s oldest building, is a National Historic Landmark. Located at 100 South State Street, the museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday and 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, free of charge.

Charles Frazier To Sign New Novel at Welty House

Charles Frazier, who won the 1997 National Book Award for Fiction for his debut novel *Cold Mountain*, will sign copies of his new book at the Eudora Welty House and Garden beginning at 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 26.

At 5:30 p.m., Frazier will read from *Varina*. The book explores the chaos and devastation of the Civil War

through the eyes of Natchez native Varina Anne Banks Howell Davis, the second wife of Confederate president Jefferson Davis.

With her marriage prospects limited, teenage Varina Howell agrees to wed the much older widower, with whom she expects a life of security as a Mississippi landowner. He instead

pursues a career in politics and is eventually appointed president of the Confederacy, placing Varina at the white-hot center of one of the darkest moments in American history.

“The book is intimate in its detailed observations of one woman’s tragic life and epic in its scope and power,” said John Evans, owner of

Lemuria Books. “Ultimately, the book is a portrait of a woman who comes to realize that complicity carries consequences.”

Lemuria Books will have copies of *Varina* as well as Frazier’s earlier books for sale on site.

For more information call 601-353-7762 or email info@eudoraweltyhouse.com.

Natchez Powwow Reaches Thirty Years



The thirtieth annual Natchez Powwow was held March 24-25 at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. The weekend's activities featured a stickball game between Choctaw and Natchez Indians (top left), intertribal dancing, and plenty of opportunities for local families to meet the participants.



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

Mississippi History Newsletter
Chris Goodwin, editor

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Katie Blount, director

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MAY-JUNE HISTORY IS LUNCH CALENDAR

Programs in the *History Is Lunch* series are held noon Wednesdays in the Craig H. Neilsen Auditorium of the Two Mississippi Museums unless otherwise noted. There is no admission charge.

For details call 601-576-6998 or email info@mdah.ms.gov.

May 2—Ellen Meacham, Meek School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi, will discuss her new book *Delta Epiphany: Robert F. Kennedy in Mississippi*. Sales and signing to follow.

May 11—Multi-instrumentalist and music historian Tim Avalon will present “The Differences between Bluegrass and Old Time Music” and play examples of each. *Co-sponsored by the Mississippi Historical Society.*

May 16—George Malvaney will discuss his new University Press of Mississippi book *Cups Up: How I Organized a Klavern, Plotted a Coup, Survived Prison, Graduated College, Fought Polluters, and Started a Business*. Sales and signing to follow.

May 23—Author John Cuevas and photographer Jason Taylor will discuss their new book *Discovering Cat Island: Photographs and History*. Sales and signing to follow.

May 30—University of Mississippi assistant professor Brian Foster will present “Race, Culture, and (Un)Making Place in the Rural South.”

June 6—Emory University professor Joseph Crespino will

present “Atticus Finch and American History.” Crespino is the author of *Atticus Finch: The Biography*. Sales and signing to follow.

June 13—Josh Foreman and Ryan Starrett will discuss their book *The Hidden History of Jackson*. ***This program will take place in the Old Capitol Museum.***

June 20—Rebecca Tuuri will discuss her new book *Strategic Sisterhood: The National Council of Negro Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. Sales and signing to follow.

June 27—Stephanie Clanton Rolph will discuss her new book *Resisting Equality: The Citizens' Council in Three Movements*. Sales and signing to follow.

The MDAH Historic Preservation Division is developing priorities and objectives for Fiscal Year 2018 Historic Preservation Fund–assisted programs.

Suggestions and comments from the public in regard to proposed priorities, objectives, and projects are invited.

Annually grants-in-aid are made available through a competitive application process to Certified Local Governments. Historic preservation projects benefiting minorities and the disabled are encouraged.

Address comments or questions to Jim Woodrick, director, Historic Preservation Division, MDAH, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, Mississippi 39205.