

MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

MDAH
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
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Taking the Long View

As you will see in these pages, we are working harder than ever to preserve, interpret, and share Mississippi's stories. Throughout this tumultuous year, we have stayed focused on our strategic plan. I want to share two priorities for the months to come:

- Restoring Historic Jefferson College (see photo) near Natchez and Windsor Ruins near Port Gibson. Once fully restored, Jefferson College will house a new museum that joins with Windsor Ruins and other sites in telling the nationally significant story of the rise and fall of a Cotton Kingdom built on slavery. Plans are also underway to build a new museum at Grand Village of the Natchez Indians.
- Increasing online access to our collections, museums, archives, and expertise. The pandemic highlighted the urgency of this work, and our new digital initiative will transform our public engagement and expand our audience.

We're grateful to be busy and productive, and we'll keep you posted as we make progress on these priorities and others. Thanks for your support.



Katie Blount
Director
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Katie Blount



Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag: Frank Bordeaux, Mary Graham, Judge Reuben Anderson, Sherri Carr Bevis, Betsey Hamilton, Mayor Robyn Tannehill, Tribal Chief Cyrus Ben, and J. Mack Varner. Not pictured: TJ Taylor.

MDAH Provides Support to Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag

Mississippi voters made history on November 3 with the adoption of a new state flag.

The “In God We Trust” flag replaces the 1894 state flag that contained a Confederate battle emblem.

The vote was triggered by passage of House Bill 1796, signed by Governor Tate Reeves in June, which retired the former state flag and established a commission to develop and design a new flag.

MDAH was charged with providing support for the nine-member commission, which held its meetings at the Two Mississippi Museums. The entire process was compressed into six weeks.

Reuben Anderson, MDAH board president and former Mississippi Supreme Court justice, chaired the commission, which began by considering more than 3,000 flag design submissions. MDAH staff processed each proposed flag design and made all available to the public.

The commission narrowed the field of contenders based on historical elements, established flag design

principles, and public input during meetings.

“Our role in the flag selection process helped reinforce the message that MDAH is as much about the future as it is the past,” said Katie Blount, MDAH director.

Making sure COVID-19 safety precautions were in place, MDAH staff operated cameras and microphones to livestream public meetings via Facebook.

To encourage public engagement, MDAH staff moderated a nonbinding online poll for flag finalists and developed a public web page that provided biographies of commission members and included an archive of commission meeting video recordings, flag images, and news releases.

“One of the priorities of the technology department was to establish live feeds of all flag commission meetings from multiple screens onto our social media pages,” said Torome Porter, MDAH information systems director. “This provided the public a fully transparent selection process.”

“
Five thousand years from now our flag will be growing, and showing, and blooming. And we’ll send a message to all of America that we’re open for business. We’ll send a message that we live in the future and not in the past.”

—Judge Reuben Anderson, chair, Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag



African American Fraternal Groups Give \$55,150 to support civil rights history

Two groups affiliated with Sigma Pi Phi, the nation's oldest Black Greek-lettered fraternity, donated a combined \$55,150 to the Foundation for Mississippi History to support the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

“The [museum] galleries provide an opportunity for us to recognize how men, women, and children risked their lives for freedom,” said Dwayne M. Murray, leader of the national fraternity and a trustee of the Boulé Foundation. “We, the men of Sigma Pi Phi, are standing today to make sure that the blood, sweat, and tears of those who came before us will not go unremembered.”

Pamela D.C. Junior, director of the Two Mississippi Museums, thanked Sigma Pi Phi, noting that at least four living members of the Mississippi chapter, known as the Beta Gamma Boulé, are featured in the museum for their role in the Civil Rights Movement. They are John A. Peoples Jr., former president of Jackson State University; Robert Smith, a physician; and attorneys Reuben Anderson and Fred Banks. Anderson is president of the MDAH Board of Trustees, and Banks is the president of the Foundation for Mississippi History.

Two other Boulé members who have died but are celebrated in the civil rights museum are Gilbert Mason, a Biloxi physician, and Jack H. Young Sr., a Jackson attorney.

“This is our heritage we’re preserving here,” said Jonathan Lee, the leader of the Mississippi chapter. “It is incumbent on us to preserve these institutions.”

MDAH Collects Items Related to COVID-19 Pandemic, Anti-Racism

MDAH is continuing to fulfill its mission of empowering people through Mississippi's many stories by collecting artifacts that document today's unprecedented times.

Mississippi, like the nation, is currently in the midst of a global health pandemic and a new movement for social justice. MDAH archivists and collections staff have begun to gather memorabilia that will preserve the stories of this historic time in Mississippi.

“This is really a crucial change in how we look at collecting,” said Shane Keil, MDAH director of curatorial services. “Much of what we traditionally do involves searching for objects that represent an era in the past. Now we’re looking at current events and searching for objects that will represent this period of pandemic and societal change.”

Local industries have transitioned to manufacture vital safety items such as sanitizers, face coverings, and disinfectant cleaners. MDAH has added several of these limited items to its collections to depict adapting to a pandemic in the state.

“In the early stages of the pandemic, we began to identify certain artifacts that we would like to collect, such as homemade face masks and COVID-19 closure signs,” said Nan Prince, MDAH director of collections. “The Nissan plant in Canton began making face shields for healthcare workers, and we asked them for one to collect.”



Program Highlights



Rob Jay (top) and Rick Cleveland, sports journalists, discuss *Mississippians in the SWAC* for #ManyStoriesSeries.



Robby Lockett, JSU professor, leads a discussion of Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* for #WeltyAtHome.



Joyce Dixon-Lawson, MDAH curator of research and genealogy, presents *Intermediate Genealogy*.



Deanne Stephens, USM professor, discusses the 1878 Yellow Fever Epidemic for *History Is Lunch*.



Marsha Canon, floral designer, presents *Pressed Flower Workshop* at the Eudora Welty House & Garden.



Jesse Robinson (left), blues musician, and Scott Barretta, UM professor, discuss music during *Sounds of Prohibition*.

MDAH Awarded National Park Service Grant to Ensure Return of Remains of Tribal Ancestors

The National Park Service has awarded \$88,822 to MDAH to support efforts to return the Native American human remains in its archaeological collections to present-day Tribes. MDAH will use the money to hire a new collections manager, provide paid internships for Tribal partners, purchase equipment, and train staff.

The Chickasaw Nation and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma supported the grant and will provide guidance as MDAH staff document the human remains and ceremonial objects from graves in northeast Mississippi. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires consultation with Tribes whose ancestors lived on the land where graves were located.

“One of the department’s highest priorities is the proper care of its significant archaeological collection,” said Katie Blount, MDAH director.

MDAH sought the grant after discovering that some of its collection had not been appropriately inventoried. “With this funding, we will properly catalog NAGPRA collections while strengthening our relationships

with Tribal partners through an open dialogue,” said Meg Cook, director of MDAH archaeology collections. “The project allows us to honor and best care for these individuals through the purchase of culturally appropriate curation material (see image). We do not lose sight of the fact that we are working with people—mothers, fathers, and children.”

“Our Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and NAGPRA liaison look forward to working with all of our Tribal partners and MDAH’s compassionate professionals to help facilitate the return of our ancestors,” said Deanna Byrd, NAGPRA liaison for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. “Our ancestors will finally know the peace we envisioned for them.”



Community Foundation for Mississippi Sponsors Popular *History Is Lunch* Series

A partnership with the Community Foundation for Mississippi will fund the development of a podcast and strengthen the *History Is Lunch* lecture series by MDAH. The gift builds on the Community Foundation’s previous \$750,000 donation to the Two Mississippi Museums.

“The Community Foundation has been a strong supporter of the department’s work,” said Katie Blount, MDAH director. “We are grateful for this gift from their John and Lucy Shackelford Charitable Fund, which will allow us to expand our outreach of the popular *History Is Lunch* series and bring in speakers from across the country.”

The *History Is Lunch* speaker series began in 2005 and explores different aspects of the state’s history. The hour-long programs—in a streaming-only format during the COVID-19 epidemic—are livestreamed at noon Wednesdays on the MDAH Facebook page and can be watched there and on the department’s YouTube channel anytime afterward. In-person programs will resume in December.

“We are thrilled to partner in this endeavor,” said CFM president and CEO Jane Alexander. “As many of us are changing the ways we live and interact with one another, it’s more important than ever to invest in programs like these that make our lives worth living.”

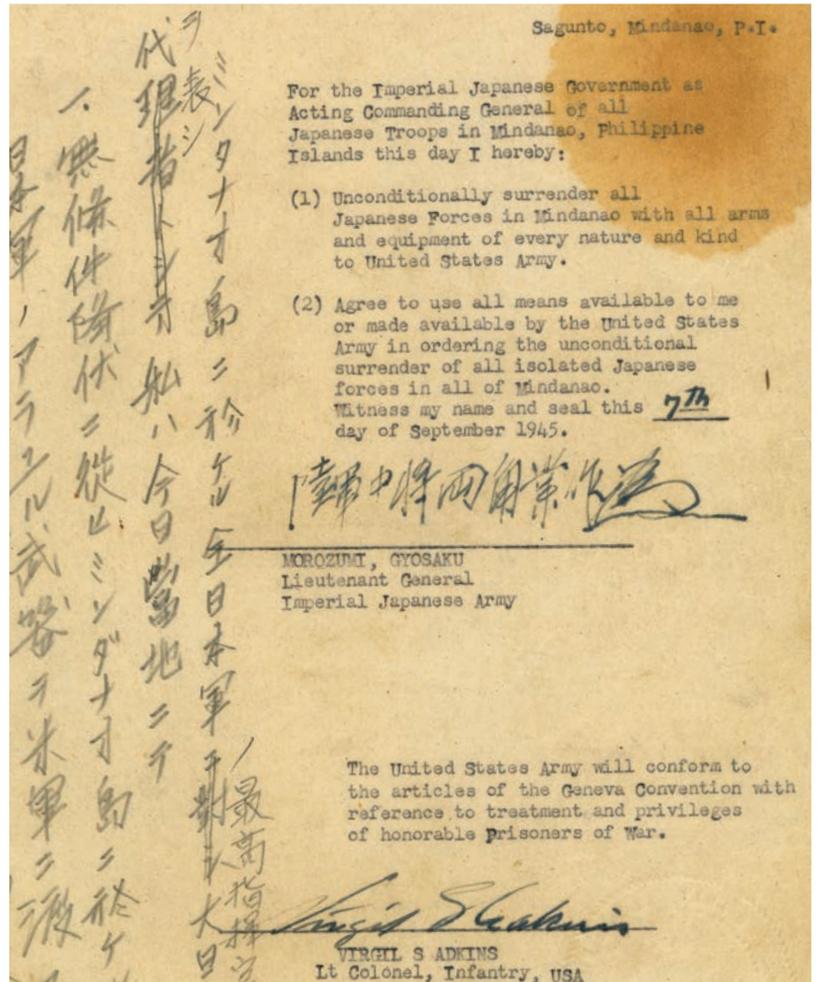


From the Archive

Unidentified participants ride in a Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) parade in Greenville in the early 1900s. This photograph from the Jerome C. Hafter Collection is featured in *Mississippi Distilled: Prohibition, Piety, and Politics*. WCTU members also fought for woman suffrage; 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment.

From the Collection

During Prohibition, women's fashion evolved alongside their increased participation in politics. Dresses like this sleeveless "flapper" style gown became popular. Featured in *Mississippi Distilled*, this circa-1926 dress was from the Dudley Phelps home in Jackson.



Recently Digitized

An original surrender document from World War II, signed on September 7, 1945, in the Philippines by Virgil Sullivan Adkins of Clarksdale for the US Army and Gyosaku Morozumi for the Imperial Japanese Army. From the Adkins (Virgil Sullivan) Collection. See the digital image on the MDAH website.

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Department of Archives and History
Katie Blount, director

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In Memoriam

Edwin Bearss, (1923–2020), author and historian at Vicksburg National Military Park from 1955 to 1966

Thomas Boschert, (1930–2020), past president of the Mississippi Historical Society, retired history professor at Delta State University, US Air Force veteran

Charles Evers, (1922–2020), longtime civil rights activist, brother of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, US Army veteran, first African American mayor of Fayette

Yolande Robbins, (1940–2020), founder and curator of the Jacqueline House Museum in Vicksburg, civil rights activist and historian

Carol Vickers, (1937–2020), sent by MDAH to represent the state's quilters in the Mississippi Pavilion at the New Orleans World's Fair in 1984

Mark Your Calendar

Mississippi Distilled: Prohibition, Piety, and Politics Runs through June 2021

Visit this exhibition at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson to explore the state's tumultuous relationship with alcohol throughout its history.

Christmas by Candlelight Tour

Friday, December 4, 5–8 p.m.

Celebrate the holiday season with a tour of MDAH sites in Jackson.

MLK Holiday Weekend

January 16–19, 2021

The Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson will present a virtual night of culture, a civil rights play, and free admission sponsored by FedEx.

I AM A MAN

January 30–August 21, 2021

This exhibition at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson will feature photographs of key events of the Civil Rights Movement across the South.