

MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

MDAH
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
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Educator Jasmine Holmes gave a tour during the Freedom Summer Free Weekend at the Two Mississippi Museums.

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HII Ingalls Shipbuilding sponsored free admission to the Two Mississippi Museums for Juneteenth.

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The Two Mississippi Museums hosted the annual Mississippi Makers Fest thanks to generous sponsors such as Nissan.

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Kate Slayter Taylor purse.

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Photograph from Freedom Summer.

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Lanterns on the Levee manuscript of William Alexander Percy.

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Honoring Elbert R. Hilliard



Elbert R. Hilliard, who died in March at age 87, led this department for thirty-one years. His legacy is immense. After his retirement in 2004, he continued to come to work every day as a volunteer, dressed in a suit and tie.

As the agency's fifth director, Hilliard worked with the Mississippi Legislature to make the State Antiquities Law one of the strongest preservation laws in the country. He

initiated a historic preservation grant program. Under his leadership, MDAH established a state government records management program. He served as secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Historical Society and editor of the *Journal of Mississippi History*.

Initial planning for the new Museum of Mississippi History began during Hilliard's tenure, as did the fundraising that carried that project to completion. Hilliard was excited about our plans to replace the Eudora Welty Library with a public park that will enhance the visitor experience at the Two Mississippi Museums.

We have major projects underway at Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and recently completed the stabilization of Windsor Ruins. These properties were acquired by MDAH under Hilliard's leadership. Hilliard, and his successor, H.T. Holmes, laid the groundwork for the department's growth and expansion over the past decade.

But perhaps Hilliard's greatest legacy is his passion for the stories themselves. Hilliard had a deep knowledge of Mississippi history and MDAH's archival holdings. He expected MDAH to meet a high standard of historical rigor in our work; he sought to instill in us his love of Mississippi history (yes, he quizzed us). To continue this work, we have appointed Brother Rogers to a new position, MDAH historian. Brother will continue to lead the Mississippi Historical Society, edit the *Journal of Mississippi History*, and oversee the historical marker program. He will nurture a deep understanding of our state's history among department staff and ensure historical rigor in our exhibits, programs, and publications. In short, he will follow in Hilliard's footsteps.

Katie Blount
Director

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Two Mississippi Museums Commemorate 60th Anniversary of Freedom Summer

Close to 700 people visited the Two Mississippi Museums free of charge during the first weekend in June thanks to sponsorship by Higher Purpose Co. The free admission weekend was the first of many events at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum marking the 60th anniversary of Freedom Summer.

“We are grateful to Higher Purpose Co. for making it possible for people to visit the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum free of charge,” said Katie Blount, director of MDAH. “Visitors learned about the importance of Freedom Summer and its impact on the Civil Rights Movement.”

Higher Purpose Co. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing economic opportunity with a focus on Black entrepreneurs.

Launched in June 1964, the Mississippi Summer Project was a volunteer campaign designed to help Black Mississippians register to vote and enhance their education by enlisting the help of college students from across America.

During Freedom Summer, three civil rights workers—James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner—were murdered. The combined efforts of civil rights groups, college students, local people—and media coverage of the violence—led to the passage of national legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to help dismantle Jim Crow segregation.

MDAH is also marking Freedom Summer by producing a series of short videos. Find these and other videos at youtube.com/MDAH/Video.



Thomas Foner Freedom Summer Papers (Z/2312), MDAH

FREEDOM SUMMER: 60 YEARS LATER EVENTS

Friday, May 31- Sunday, June 2	Freedom Summer Free Weekend featuring free admission, themed tours, and a scavenger hunt sponsored by Higher Purpose Co.
Sunday, June 2	Anderson UMC Choir concert
Wednesday, June 12	History Is Lunch: Modupe Labode and John Spann
Friday, June 21	A Talk with Dave Dennis Sr.
Tuesday, July 2	Themed Tours: Medgar Evers' Birthday and 60th Anniversary of Civil Rights Act
Wednesday, July 10	History Is Lunch: Leslie-Burl McLemore
Thursday, July 11	History Happy Hour: Freedom Summer
Wednesday, July 24	History Is Lunch: Bruce Watson
Thursday, July 25	Themed Tours: Emmett Till's Birthday
Wednesday, August 7	History Is Lunch: "Mississippi Burning case files"
Sunday, August 11	Sunday Screening: "An Ordinary Hero" with Joan Trumpauer Mulholland and her son, filmmaker Loki Mulholland

Visit the website 2mm.mdah.ms.gov for times and details!



Two Mississippi Museums director Michael Morris (right) and partners from Higher Purpose Co.

FREEDOM SUMMER:
60 YEARS LATER

Scholars Conduct Research in Three Collections

Three graduate students earned fellowships from MDAH this year to research in collections about religion, Eudora Welty, and Medgar and Myrlie Evers. Part of MDAH's Religion Initiative and funded through Lilly Endowment Inc., the Religion in Mississippi History Research fellowship seeks to encourage research regarding the role of religion in Mississippi history. In December 2022, Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded a \$2.5 million grant to the Foundation for Mississippi History, enabling MDAH to expand public understanding of religious history in Mississippi. The Welty and Evers fellowships both invite a researcher to use the archives and resources of MDAH to further expand academic research on Eudora Welty and the Evers Family.

Summer King, inaugural fellow for the Religion in Mississippi History Research Fellowship, is a graduate student at the University of Mississippi. She will shed light on Bishop Charles Harrison Mason and his work in starting an interracial Pentecostal movement in Mississippi during the earliest part of the twentieth century and the height of the Jim Crow era.



Gabrielle Bowden, fellow for the Eudora Welty Research Fellowship, is a doctoral student at the University of Mississippi. She will examine the influence of Eudora Welty's travel in Ireland on her 1951 publication "The Burning," connecting the short story's dark and comical themes to Irish contemporary writing.

Keon Burns, fellow for the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Research Fellowship, is a dual doctoral candidate in history and Africana studies at Pennsylvania State University. He will examine Medgar Evers's records and correspondence during his time as Mississippi field secretary for the NAACP, gaining insight into the role of Black business owners and their impact during the Civil Rights Movement.



All three fellows will use a \$5,000 stipend to cover expenses incurred while doing primary research at the archives.



MDAH Completes Windsor Ruins Stabilization

Site improvement work continues at Windsor Ruins in Claiborne County, following the \$5.2 million stabilization of its twenty-eight historic columns.

Windsor Ruins is the historic site of the Windsor Plantation, which was completed in 1861 and destroyed by fire in 1890. MDAH manages the site, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Work at Windsor Ruins has shifted from stabilization to visitor accessibility and interpretation of the site. A new pathway takes visitors from the parking area around the perimeter of the historic columns.

New interpretive signs including stories of those who lived, worked, and were enslaved there will be in place by the end of 2024.

The site features a new parking pad and barrier system intended to keep vehicles at a safe distance from the historic columns.



Program Highlights



Visitors sing together during the Mississippi Freedom Seder program at the Two Mississippi Museums.



3rd US Colored Cavalry reenactors bring living history to the Old Capitol Museum Green.



Two Mississippi Museums educator Jerry Knight leads a tour about music during History Happy Hour.



Education specialist Anna Traylor celebrates Eudora Welty's birthday with guests at the Eudora Welty House & Garden.



Visitors play a traditional game of stickball at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians.



Students from Mississippi compete in the National History Day Competition held at the University of Maryland.

HII Ingalls Shipbuilding Sponsors Juneteenth Event at the Two Mississippi Museums

More than 2,200 people visited the Two Mississippi Museums to celebrate Juneteenth. The day-long event was sponsored by HII Ingalls Shipbuilding division and combined free admission to the museums with an evening program of performers, arts activities, and dancing. Support from Ingalls, located in Pascagoula, demonstrates statewide interest in the importance of learning history.

Galleries in the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum buzzed with visitors hunting for artifacts, images, and stories related to Black Mississippians' emancipation after the Civil War.



Two Mississippi Museums director Michael Morris (right) and employees of HII Ingalls Shipbuilding.



Visitors participate in a line dance workshop in the Hall of History led by Aaron Honeysuckle.



Master's Touch DrumLine, LLC performing on the Entergy Plaza.

Makers Fest Drew 5K Visitors to Entergy Plaza

Mississippi Makers Fest 2024 drew a crowd of 5,000 visitors to the Two Mississippi Museums' Entergy Plaza for live music, shopping, and delicious food and drinks. Nissan sponsored the festival and showcased several vehicles built at the carmaker's plant in Canton. Musical performances were by Christone "Kingfish" Ingram, American Blonde, and Hud and the Hurricane. The festival featured hundreds of local vendors showcasing their unique, made-in-Mississippi products.





From the Digital Archives

This photograph of people outside the office of the Congress of Federated Organizations (COFO) on John R. Lynch Street in Jackson was taken in 1964 during Freedom Summer. Explore the digital archives at: da.mdah.ms.gov.

Thomas Foner Freedom Summer Papers
(Z/2312)

From the Collection

This mesh handbag (pictured below) was owned by Kate Slater Taylor. The bag was manufactured by Whiting and Davis, which became the first company to sell mesh handbags in 1876. Members of Taylor's family donated the bag to the historic objects collection. Kate Slater was born into slavery in Alabama in 1858. She later moved to Mississippi, where she married Maurice Taylor in 1885.



From the Archives

The estate of William Alexander Percy has donated the original handwritten manuscript of Percy's 1941 autobiography and bestseller, *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son*, to MDAH. The donation consists of nine notebooks (pictured above) of the manuscript of *Lanterns on the Levee*, sheet music with Percy's poetry set to musical compositions, and some correspondence. While the collection is being processed, researchers may request access by contacting Laura Heller, the archival curator, at lheller@mdah.ms.gov. The Percy Family Papers are currently available for research in the archival reading room of the William F. Winter Archives and History Building.

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Department of Archives and History
Katie Blount, director

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In Memoriam

Elbert R. Hilliard, 1937–2024, former MDAH director, former MHS secretary-treasurer, strengthened the State Antiquities Law, instrumental in the creation of MDAH grant programs that helped to preserve historic structures. (See director's message on page 3.)

Peggy Jeanes, 1942–2023, founding editor in 1999 of the online publication *Mississippi History Now*, for the Mississippi Historical Society, retired as editor emerita in 2013.

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Mark Your Calendar

Sunday Screening: *Okay Mr. Ray!* and *Ray Lum: Mule Trader*
Sunday, July 14, 2 p.m.

Join us at The Two Mississippi Museums for a Sunday Screening of two short films, *Okay, Mr. Ray!* and *Ray Lum: Mule Trader*.

Summer Music Series: Ralph Miller
Sunday, July 21, 3 p.m.

Join us for the July edition of the Summer Music Series at the Two Mississippi Museums with Ralph Miller, a musician from Vicksburg known for his distinct acoustic sound.

Genealogy Workshop: County Records
Saturday, August 17, 10 a.m.

Learn from archivist Joyce Dixon-Lawson how to use resources from the archives to further your genealogy research. This workshop will be held in the William F. Winter Archives and History building. Register at mdah.ms.gov.