

MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Mississippi Department of

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In Memoriam

Historic Year for MDAH

Recently, we have all experienced change in every aspect of our lives. For MDAH in particular, the COVID-19 pandemic forced closure of our offices, museums, and historic sites. Nevertheless, the work of the department never stopped. I am proud of our staff's resourcefulness and creativity as we continued throughout the shutdown to share Mississippi's stories through online resources. As you will see from the newsletter, we adapted and carried on.

MDAH was proud to participate in a ceremony July 1 to retire the former state flag. The flags that flew over the House and Senate and the large flag that flew in front of the capitol are now in our collections storage area. Our exhibits staff is planning an exhibit that will tell the story of the state flag. The governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker will appoint members to a commission that will select a new flag to go on the November ballot. MDAH board president Reuben Anderson has accepted the first appointment, and our staff will provide assistance to the commission.

Also, in the midst of the pandemic, we are witnessing widespread protests against racial inequality in the United States. The Two Mississippi Museums provide context for understanding today's events. As Reuben Anderson said when we announced our reopening plans: "Our archives and museums document and teach about the history of racial injustice in America from the days of slavery through the Civil Rights Movement. By helping build a shared understanding of our history, we are strengthening our resolve, uniting our people, and paving the way for a brighter future together."

In these challenging times, we are happy to be on our campus, masked, safely distanced, and working hard. But we miss our visitors—come see us!



Katie Blount
Director
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Katie Blount



Former Official State Flags Retired, Come to MDAH

On June 30, Governor Tate Reeves signed House Bill 1796, which established a commission to redesign the Mississippi state flag. The legislation mandated removal of the former official state flag within fifteen days.

On July 1, Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann and House Speaker Philip Gunn presented MDAH with the last flags to fly over the state capitol. The flags will be added to the permanent collection.

“We are grateful to the state legislature for presenting

these flags from the capitol to us for our historic collection,” said Katie Blount, director of MDAH. “We will begin planning for an exhibit about the state flag for the Museum of Mississippi History.”

The governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker will appoint members to a commission that will select a new flag to go on the November ballot.

MDAH board president Reuben Anderson has accepted the first appointment to the commission. MDAH will provide staff support to the commission.

Museums, Sites Reopen with Safety Measures for COVID-19

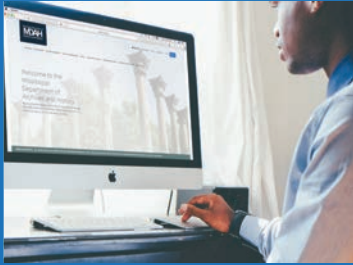
On July 7, MDAH reopened the Eudora Welty House & Garden, Museum of Mississippi History, Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, and William F. Winter Archives & History Building in Jackson, and the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians in Natchez.

“We are excited to reopen our museums and welcome the public at this historic moment,” said Reuben Anderson, president of the MDAH Board of Trustees. “As our nation deals with COVID-19, economic hardship, and the legacy of racial injustice, MDAH has an ever more important role to play.”

In a continuing effort to stem the spread of COVID-19, each site will limit the number of visitors inside. Visitors will be required to wear masks, and masks will be available on site. All the public spaces have been sanitized, and thorough cleaning will continue every day. Staff will be on site to ensure that social distancing guidelines are maintained. Visitors are encouraged to purchase their tickets online to the Eudora Welty House & Garden, Museum of Mississippi History, and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

“We are especially eager to welcome visitors to our brand new exhibit at the Two Mississippi Museums—*Mississippi Distilled*—which explores our state’s tumultuous relationship with alcohol,” said MDAH director Katie Blount. “When it is safe to gather in larger numbers, we will celebrate this exhibit with public events.”





Newly Designed MDAH Website Serves Public Better

MDAH launched its new website in June 2020. The new site will help users easily explore the digital archives and online catalog, plan a trip to historic sites and museums, order a state historical marker, and nominate a building to the National Register of Historic Places.

“We are excited to roll out the new website and share Mississippi’s stories with people around the world,” said Katie Blount, director of MDAH.

The MDAH digital archives features forty-six individual collections ranging from a 1588 map of southeastern North America to images of Hurricane Katrina’s destruction in 2005. Also included are surveillance records kept by the Sovereignty Commission during the Civil Rights Movement, photographs of daily life for white and black Mississippians, and little-known events such as underground nuclear testing in Lamar County.

Students, teachers, and families can easily access online K–12 lesson plans and education resources. Learners of all ages can watch past episodes of *History Is Lunch*, a weekly speaker series that examines Mississippi-related topics in history.

The new website offers up-to-date information for visiting the department’s many sites such as the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Museum of Mississippi History, and Eudora Welty House & Garden in Jackson, and the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians in Natchez.

Communities and individuals can view historic manuscripts, photographs, and documents online or search for Mississippi Landmark properties. Professional archaeologists, preservationists, and records managers also have access to, and support from, MDAH specialists in those fields.

Visit the new website at mdah.ms.gov.

The Eudora Welty House & Garden has launched a new website that allows visitors to experience the home of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author online. The website features educational resources for students and teachers, photographs of the home, and a calendar of upcoming events.

Visit the new website at eudoraweltyhouse.com.



Anderson Elected Board President

Spence Flatgard of Ridgeland, Edmond E. Hughes Jr. of Ocean Springs, and Helen Moss Smith of Natchez were elected to the MDAH Board of Trustees. Reuben Anderson of Jackson was elected president of the board. Hilda Cope Povall of Cleveland was re-elected vice president. Nancy Carpenter of Columbus was elected to a third term.

Flatgard is a public finance, public law, and government affairs attorney at Watkins & Eager in Jackson. Hughes is vice president for human resources and administration for Ingalls Shipbuilding. Smith serves on the Natchez Convention Promotion Commission and is a leading force for historic preservation in Natchez.

“Judge Anderson has been a leading voice on the board of trustees since 2007,” said outgoing board president Kane Ditto. “He has been a strong advocate for the Two Mississippi Museums and will be an outstanding leader as the department works to bring all of Mississippi’s school children to the museums.”

Ditto of Jackson, Valencia Hall of Natchez, and Roland Weeks of Biloxi rotated off the board. Ditto joined the board in 2005 and served as president since 2008. After the Mississippi legislature provided initial funding for the construction of the Two Mississippi Museums, Ditto spearheaded the fundraising campaign for the project.

Program Highlights



NASA Day at the Two Mississippi Museums



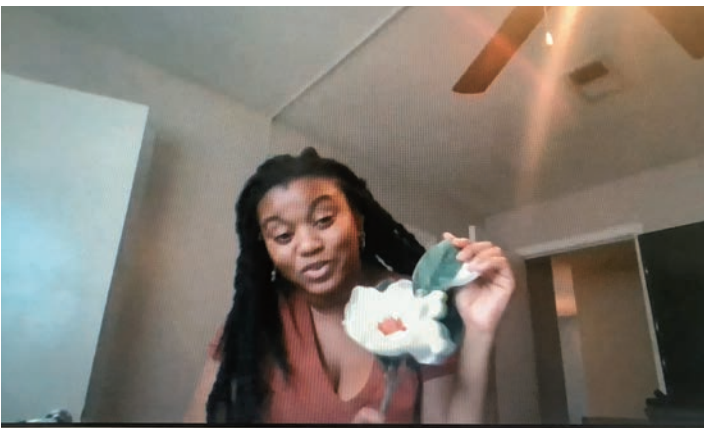
Court on the Road at the Old Capitol Museum



Corn Bread: A Cultural Fusion and Universal Staple at Grand Village of the Natchez Indians



Eudora Welty House & Garden Storytime video for social media during COVID-19 closure



Be A Curator on Facebook presented by the Two Mississippi Museums during COVID-19 closure



History Is Lunch at the Two Mississippi Museums on Facebook Live and YouTube during COVID-19 closure

Teona Williams Named Evers Scholar

MDAH and the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute have named Teona Williams, a doctoral candidate at Yale University, the 2020 Medgar and Myrlie Evers Research Scholar. Williams's research covers African American tenant farmers and civil rights activists who advocated for land cooperatives from the 1930s through the 1980s.

While at the Mississippi state archives, Williams will use the papers of Medgar and Myrlie Evers, materials on the Republic of New Africa (RNA), Emergency Land Fund ephemera, and the Tougaloo College Civil Rights Collection.

"I eagerly await the opportunity to explore the *Jackson Advocate* and other associated material of the RNA to document the multiple strands of land ideology that sprouted out of black nationalists movements," said Williams. "I am excited to explore the Medgar Evers papers to understand how the NAACP advocated for black sharecroppers across the Delta."

Williams graduated with a BA in environmental studies and history from Bowdoin College. She holds an MA from the University of Michigan, and she is currently at work on a PhD in the Department of History at Yale University. Her dissertation follows the wide network of Delta farmers and civil rights activists and their collective struggle to establish land cooperatives.



Williams will use the \$4,000 award to cover travel, housing, and other expenses while doing primary research at MDAH. "We're delighted to partner with the Evers Institute on this scholarship," said David Pilcher, director of the MDAH Archives and Record Services Division.

Margaret Pless Named Welty Fellow

Margaret Pless, a doctoral student at the University of Mississippi, has been named the 2020 Eudora Welty Fellow.

Pless will use archival holdings at MDAH to research how Eudora Welty constructed her identity in her writing.



"I want to understand how craft, for Welty, intersected with actual memory," said Pless. "I am especially interested in using the archives to explore Welty's relationship with her mother, a relationship characterized in *One Writer's Beginnings* by secrecy. I want to understand how such secrecy shapes an understanding of self, especially in a figure as public as a writer."

Established by MDAH and the Eudora Welty Foundation, the fellowship seeks to encourage and support research of the Eudora Welty Collection by

graduate students.

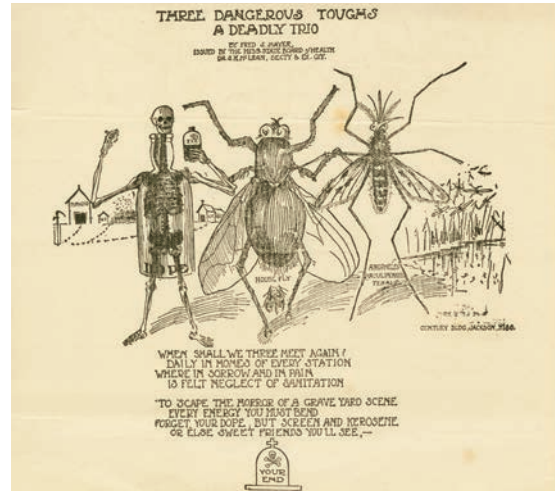
"We're grateful to the Foundation for their continuing support and excited that Margaret Pless will make extensive use of the Welty Collection this summer," said David Pilcher, director of the MDAH Archives and Record Services Division.

After receiving her BA in English and history from Vanderbilt University, Pless completed her MA in English at the University of Mississippi where she is currently working towards her PhD. Pless will use the \$2,000 fellowship to cover travel, housing, and other expenses incurred while doing primary research at the William F. Winter Archives & History Building in Jackson.

Beginning in 1957, and over the course of more than forty years, Welty donated materials to the department, primarily literary manuscripts and photographs. At her death her remaining papers were bequeathed to MDAH and included unpublished manuscripts and 14,000 items of correspondence with family, friends, scholars, young writers, and noted writers.

From the Archive

Dr. Fred J. Mayer, state lecturer on hygiene in 1908 and 1909, created this handout titled “Three Dangerous Toughs: A Deadly Trio.” Aimed at mothers, it includes this warning: “To ’scape the horror of a grave yard scene/ Every energy you must bend/ Forget your dope, but screen and kerosene or else sweet friends you’ll see, -- YOUR END.”



From the Collection

This wooden box, labeled “Report Your Reportable Cases Daily,” held cards for recording cases of thirty-two diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever, and whooping cough. It dates from 1918, and was owned by Forrest County physician, surgeon, and pharmacist John McCallum McInnis.



After National Prohibition was enacted, Mississippi governors frequently called on the National Guard to raid drinking establishments. Featured in the *Mississippi Distilled* exhibit, this photo shows a 1939 raid on Rankin County’s Gold Coast that resulted in \$100,000 in damage to thirty-one establishments.

Photo credit: ACME Newspictures.

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Katie Blount, director

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In Memoriam

Constance Curry, (1933–2020), civil rights activist, author

Judith Lacy, (1944–2020), former administrator of the Mississippi Court of Appeals, longtime volunteer for MDAH

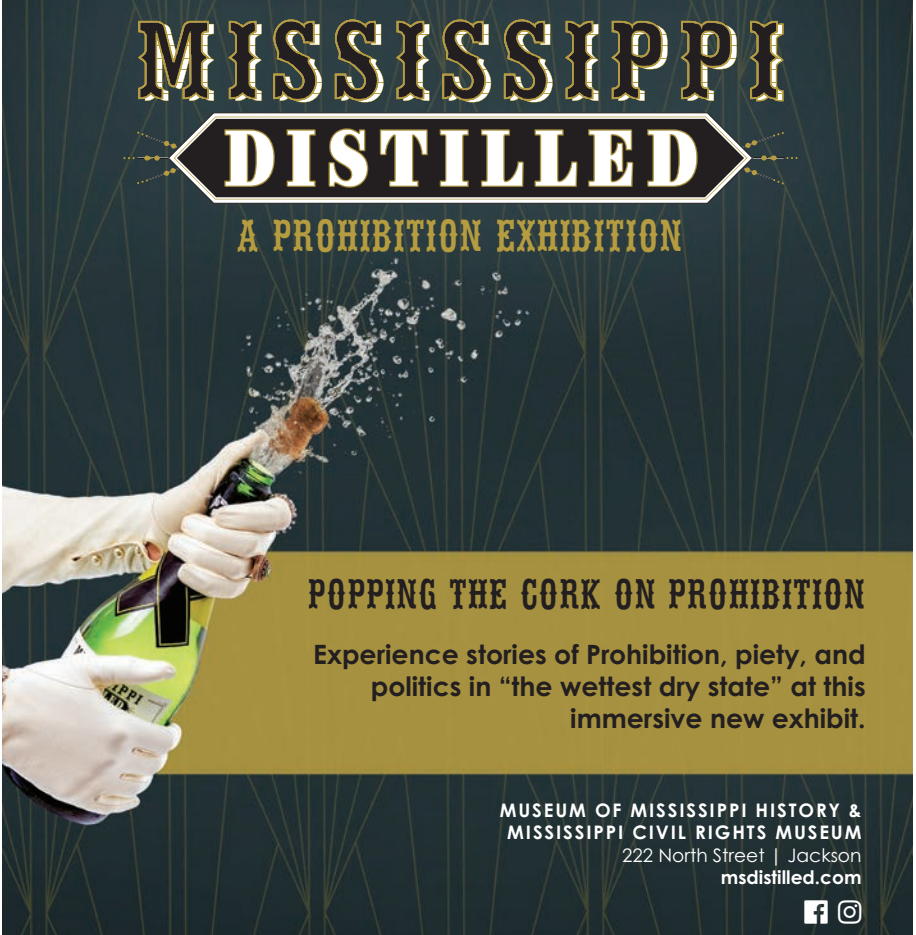
Emma Sanders, (1928–2020), civil rights activist

Dr. Estus Smith, (1930–2020), past vice president of academic affairs at Jackson State University, first African American to serve on MDAH Board of Trustees

Dr. William “Bill” Scarborough, (1933–2020), professor emeritus of history at the University of Southern Mississippi, past president of the Mississippi Historical Society

Harriet Tanzman, (1940–2020), civil rights activist, past board member of the Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement

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MISSISSIPPI
DISTILLED
A PROHIBITION EXHIBITION

POPPING THE CORK ON PROHIBITION

Experience stories of Prohibition, piety, and politics in “the wettest dry state” at this immersive new exhibit.

MUSEUM OF MISSISSIPPI HISTORY & MISSISSIPPI CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM
222 North Street | Jackson
msdistilled.com

The poster features a central image of a hand popping the cork of a green bottle, with liquid spraying out. The background is dark with a subtle geometric pattern. The text is in a mix of bold, serif and sans-serif fonts, with 'MISSISSIPPI' and 'DISTILLED' in large, stylized letters. The overall color palette is dark with gold and white accents.