

# MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

**MDAH**  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
ARCHIVES & HISTORY

A Publication of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

November 2022

Volume 64, No. 3



Myrlie Evers leading visitors into the Two Mississippi Museums on opening day, December 9, 2017.

**1 Mississippi  
2 Museums  
5 Years  
Free Fun Weekend**

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### In Memoriam

# Remembering Ron Miller

On September 2, 2022, we lost a giant in Mississippi's historic preservation movement—and a dear friend. Ron Miller began working at MDAH in 1972 as an architectural historian. He oversaw the restoration of Historic Jefferson College before serving as director of Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. He left MDAH in 1979 to become the first director of the Historic Natchez Foundation, which under his leadership became the strongest grassroots preservation organization in the state and a national model for local preservation work.



After thirty years at the Historic Natchez Foundation, Ron came back to MDAH to head our disaster-recovery field office on the Gulf Coast, where he administered a \$26 million federal grant program for restoring historic properties damaged by Hurricane Katrina. He left the Historic Natchez Foundation in the capable hands of his wife, Mimi, who shared his passion for history and his dedication to Natchez. During the six years he worked on the Coast, Ron drove home to Natchez nearly every weekend until he retired in 2014.

The stories of Native Americans, French, Spanish, and British colonists, enslaved Africans and their descendants, were important to Ron and Mimi, and they dedicated their lives to preserving and studying them through buildings, artifacts, and documents. Mimi still does, working daily in her office at the Historic Natchez Foundation alongside Carter Burns, who succeeded her as director and serves on the MDAH Board of Trustees.

To generations of MDAH staff who traveled frequently to Natchez for surveys, research, events, and site visits, Ron and Mimi offered friendship, counsel, hospitality, and delicious home-cooked meals. They shared our passion, and they supported and elevated our work. Again, Mimi still does.

No one cared more about historic preservation than Ron Miller. His loss is immeasurable, but his legacy lives on in the work we do together.



Director  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History



Dignitaries cut ribbon on December 9, 2017, opening day of the Two Mississippi Museums.

## Community Foundation for Mississippi Sponsors Free Weekend with Funding from W. K. Kellogg Foundation

1 Mississippi. 2 Museums. 5 Years. Since the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Museum of Mississippi History opened in 2017, more than half a million people have visited.

The Two Mississippi Museums' exhibits, programs, and staff have won multiple awards in the tourism and museum fields.

“We set out to create an extraordinary museum experience to match the rich history of Mississippi,” said Katie Blount, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. “We invite people to come celebrate our fifth anniversary with us during a weekend of fun programming for everyone.”

The celebration begins on Friday, December 9, with free admission and continues Saturday with free admission, trackless train rides, live music, food trucks, guided tours, and a party with champagne. Admission will also be free on Sunday, with a showing of *The Muppet Christmas Carol*.

The Mississippi Legislature funded construction of the \$100 million Two Mississippi Museums along with generous support from private donors. A significant early contribution from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation was critical to attracting additional support from others.

“The Two Mississippi Museums preserve the painful stories and truths of our ancestors and are a testament to the deep resolve we have to healing our communities,” said Rhea Williams-Bishop, director of Mississippi and New Orleans programming for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. “We are excited to celebrate the museums' anniversary and help ensure everyone can learn our rich and complex history.”

The anniversary celebration will also give visitors an opportunity to see the special exhibit *The World of Marty Stuart* before it closes on December 31.

The free weekend is sponsored by the Community Foundation for Mississippi through funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

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– Rhea Williams-Bishop, director of Mississippi and New Orleans programming, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation



## Two Mississippi Museums Host Summer Camps for Elementary, Middle Schoolers

In June and July, the Two Mississippi Museums presented History Exploration and Freedom School summer camps for elementary and middle-school students.

“Our inaugural season of camp at the Two Mississippi Museums was such a success because of our incredible team of educators who worked hard to plan educational opportunities mixed with lots of summer fun,” said Rachel Myers, deputy director of the Two Mississippi Museums—the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. “On our last day of Freedom School Summer Camp, we were all so proud to watch campers touring visitors through the galleries. Campers knew that these were their stories and felt empowered to share them with others.”

Made possible through funding from the Foundation for Mississippi History, the camps served thirty-seven students, three-quarters of whom attend local public schools. For two weeks fourth- and fifth-grade students engaged with subjects ranging from First Peoples to the importance of the Mississippi River to farm mechanization. They enjoyed tours of the collection, where they watched conservators at work.

Middle-school learners focused on the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. Students listened to personal stories of guest speakers such as Emerson Billy of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and Reena Evers-Everette, executive director of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute.

## Nissan Foundation Gives \$50,000 for Field Trips to Two Mississippi Museums

The Nissan Foundation recently donated \$50,000 to support field trips to the Two Mississippi Museums.

“We are grateful to the Nissan Foundation for their steadfast support,” said Katie Blount, director of MDAH. “This year’s increased donation to the field trip program demonstrates their commitment to making a difference for Mississippi school children.”

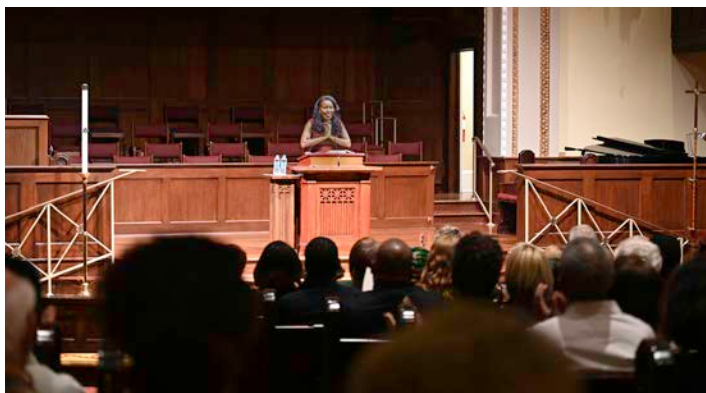
The foundation’s support since the museums opened in 2017 has also included multiple free admission days.

“We are proud to make a grant to the Two Mississippi Museums, where students have the opportunity to learn the history of the twentieth century’s most important social movement,” said Chandra Vasser, vice president for diversity, equity, and inclusion for Nissan Group of the Americas. “We must understand that history in order to build a more equitable society today.”

The funds will be used to defray costs such as admission, travel, and on-site lunches for students. To make reservations or learn more about field trips to the Two Mississippi Museums, contact Stephanie King, group tours coordinator, at [sking@mdah.ms.gov](mailto:sking@mdah.ms.gov).



# Program Highlights



Author and National Humanities Medal winner Isabel Wilkerson delivers the Medgar Wiley Evers Lecture.



Author Candacy Taylor and Two Mississippi Museums director Pamela D.C. Junior discuss *The Negro Motorist Green Book* exhibit during *History Is Lunch*.



US Country 96 Program Director Traci Lee speaks with solo country musician Hannah Everhart and KK and Jenna Johnson of Track 45 at the Two Mississippi Museums.



MDAH archaeologist Dakota Street demonstrates pottery production techniques during Archaeology Expo.



Visitors and presenters engage in conversation during the Entrepreneur Fair at the Two Mississippi Museums.



Author Ron Rash delivers the Bettye Jolly Lecture at the Eudora Welty House & Garden.

# The Defenders Documentary, #TeamNick Social Media Campaign Win SEMC Gold Awards

MDAH received five Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC) Awards, including two Gold Awards in technology categories for *The Defenders: How Lawyers Protected the Movement* and #TeamNick social media campaign.

“We are very pleased to receive these awards as they reflect MDAH staff’s creativity and hard work,” said Katie Blount, MDAH director. “This is an incredible honor, and it just motivates us to keep working hard and to reach a wider audience.”

*The Defenders*, a documentary showcasing the work of lawyers during the Civil Rights Movement, premiered at the Two Mississippi Museums in February. It was co-produced by Jackson-based Red Squared, LLC.

The #TeamNick social media campaign followed Chef Nick Wallace’s participation in Season 19 of Bravo’s Top Chef. Wallace is the chef for the Nissan cafe at the Two Mississippi Museums.

MDAH also received two SEMC Silver Awards in publications categories. One was for *The World of Marty Stuart*, a book published in May and produced

by Symmetry LLC and Cronin Creative. The second was for the Mississippi Makers Fest poster. In addition, a poster for *The Defenders* earned an Honorable Mention.

Pictured on the front row from left are: Stephenie Morrisey, MDAH deputy director of programs and communication; Sarah Campbell, MDAH director of programs and publications; and Roderick Red, chief executive officer, Red Squared, LLC.

Pictured on the back row from left are: Tori Rice, MDAH events

director; and Robin Dietrick, managing editor, and Daniel Cook, editorial assistant, at Symmetry LLC. Not pictured: Karen Cronin and Zoé Ishee.



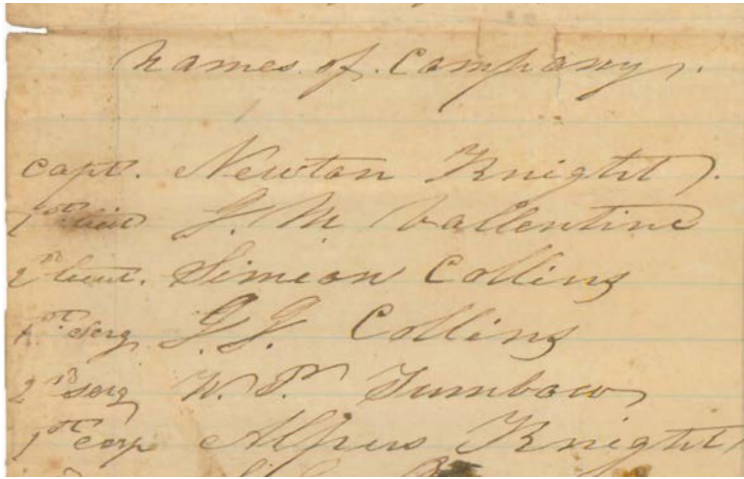
## Web Heidelberg Retires from MDAH Board, TJ Taylor Elected

Web Heidelberg retired from the MDAH Board of Trustees. Arnold “TJ” Taylor of Madison was elected to the board to fill the unexpired term of Edmond Hughes, who stepped down earlier this year. Taylor’s nomination will be submitted to the Mississippi Senate for confirmation.

Heidelberg served on the board twelve years. He has been an active leader in preservation, serving on the boards of the Mississippi Heritage Trust and the Mississippi Historical Society. Heidelberg was president of the Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association in 2011 and has served on the National Register of Historic Places Review Board since 2012. He was involved in the restoration of several properties in the Hattiesburg community, including the Saenger Theater and the Forrest County Courthouse.

“Web’s continued dedication to preserving our state’s historic resources is both remarkable and unwavering,” said MDAH director Katie Blount. “He and his wife, Michelle, will be greatly missed by his board colleagues and the MDAH staff.” Heidelberg and Blount are pictured above.

Taylor is executive director of the Mississippi Cable Telecommunications Association. He formerly served as counsel, policy advisor, and policy director for Mississippi House Speaker Philip Gunn. In 2020 Taylor was a member of the Commission to Redesign the Mississippi State Flag.

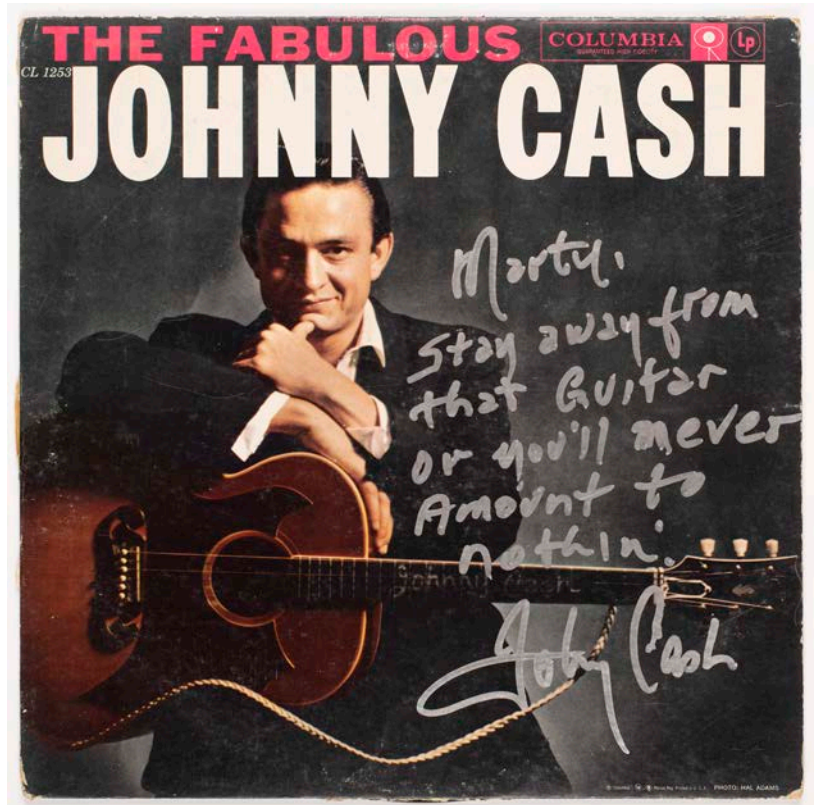


## Recently Digitized

This detail shows six of the fifty-five names Newton Knight recorded on a “muster roll” of the infantry company he organized in Jones County in 1863. The original was donated by Knight’s descendants. During the Civil War, Knight deserted from the Confederate Army and staged a Unionist rebellion that included Black and White residents of Jones County. Due in part to their exploits, the area was sometimes referred to as the “Free State of Jones.” See the documents online at [da.mdah.ms.gov](http://da.mdah.ms.gov).

## From the Exhibition

This is the Rodeo Tailor suit worn by country music star George Jones around 1968. It is part of *The World of Marty Stuart* exhibition. Photo by Mark Geil.



## From the Exhibition

This album titled *The Fabulous Johnny Cash* was released in 1958. Cash inscribed it for Marty Stuart, who performed with Cash in the early 1980s. This album is one of many from Stuart’s collection in *The World of Marty Stuart* exhibition at the Two Mississippi Museums. Photo by Mark Geil.

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A Publication of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

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

Mississippi History Newsletter  
Sarah C. Campbell, editor

For a free subscription to the newsletter  
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Department of Archives and History  
Katie Blount, director

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## In Memoriam

*Doris Adelaide Derby*, 1939–2022,  
prominent civil rights photographer  
in Mississippi; activist, historian,  
educator

*Ronald “Ron” Miller*, 1943–2022,  
first executive director of the  
Historic Natchez Foundation, past  
MDAH architectural historian  
and site administrator of Historic  
Jefferson College and Grand Village  
of the Natchez Indians, spearheaded  
restoration work on Mississippi  
Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina;  
longtime historic preservationist in  
Natchez

## Mark Your Calendar

### Christmas by Candlelight Tour

**Friday, December 2, 2022, 4–8 p.m.**

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

### 1 Mississippi. 2 Museums. 5 Years.

**Friday–Saturday, December 9–11, 2022**

Enjoy free admission, trackless train rides, live music, a  
party with champagne, and a family movie. For details  
visit [mdah.ms.gov](http://mdah.ms.gov).

### The World of Marty Stuart Book History Is Lunch

**Wednesday, December 14, 2022, noon**

Hear country music star Marty Stuart and designer Karen  
Cronin discuss the making of their award-winning book,  
*The World of Marty Stuart*.