

# MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

**MDAH**  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
ARCHIVES & HISTORY

A Publication of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History

March 2023

Volume 65, No. 1



Pictured (from left) are Rev. John Scott; Valencia Hall, alderwoman, Natchez; Rev. Rusty Anderson; Rev. Clifton Marvel; Rev. Thomas Morris, General Missionary Baptist State Convention (GMBSC); Rev. Isaac Jackson Jr., GMBSC; Rev. Dennis M. Grant, GMBSC; Congressman Bennie Thompson; Katie Blount, MDAH director; Rev. Melvin White, GMBSC; Rev. Reginald M. Buckley, GMBSC president; Rev. Otis Davis, GMBSC; Rev. CJ Rhodes, GMBSC; Rev. Douglas Logan; Rev. Marcus Cheeks, president, Mississippi Baptist Seminary & Bible College; Dan Gibson, mayor, Natchez; Tracy Cusic.

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CHPG funds from the Legislature will restore nineteen historic buildings.

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#### Eudora Welty Digital Archives Launches Online

Material accessible on the MDAH website includes correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, and other media related to Eudora Welty.

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# Future Success Depends on Securing Financial Support from Private Sources

We love our newsletter readers. Many of you are donors, partners, elected officials—all of you are friends. I want to say a special word of thanks to those of you who have contributed financially to our work.

Over the last year, you helped us reach our initial goal of \$5 million to underwrite field trips to the Two Mississippi Museums through the William and Elise Winter Education Endowment. You supported public programs like Mississippi Makers Fest and exhibits like *The World of Marty Stuart*. You made it possible for tens of thousands of people to visit the museums on free days. And so much more.

Your support elevates our work, and as our reputation grows, we are able to attract new donors. We secured a \$2.5 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to promote greater understanding of the role of religion in public life. We also received a significant pledge from an individual donor for an exciting project that we will announce soon.

Our success in fundraising strengthens our case when we request state money at the capitol. Legislators appreciate our initiative in securing funds from sources other than our state appropriation.

But what's most important about the money we raise privately is that it gives us room to grow. Why not have a big vision when we have donors and supporters who will help us realize it? When we are able to innovate, to move in new directions, we are also able to attract smart and passionate volunteers, interns, and employees, who further expand our reach and step up our game.

With your help, we are telling our stories in new and exciting ways, and we are reaching new audiences. Please know how proud we are of the work we do together, and how grateful we are for your support.



Katie Blount

Katie Blount  
Director  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

# MDAH to Strengthen Religion Programs with Support of \$2.5M Lilly Endowment Grant

Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded a \$2.5 million grant to the Foundation for Mississippi History to help the Mississippi Department of Archives and History build and promote programs, activities, and projects focused on the understanding and interpretation of the role of religion in Mississippi history and culture.

This major grant will allow the Two Mississippi Museums to begin offering free admission to faith-affiliated tour groups in Mississippi—groups who attend churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, house churches, and more.

Support from Lilly Endowment will also enable MDAH to broaden its audience and engage the public in new and exciting ways. For example, MDAH will invest in capital improvements at Historic Jefferson College near Natchez and at the Huddleston Memorial Chapel at Natchez College, a historically Black college open from 1884 to 1989.

In addition, the grant will make MDAH's archival collections related to religion more accessible to the public with a research database.

MDAH announced the grant at press conferences in Jackson (photo below) and Natchez (photo on cover).



Pictured (from left) are Mike Espy, board member, Foundation for Mississippi History; Bishop Ronnie C. Crudup Sr., senior pastor of New Horizon Church International; Cary Stockett, pastor, Galloway United Methodist Church; Valencia Hall, alderwoman, Natchez; TJ Taylor, board member, MDAH; Katie Blount, director, MDAH; Spence Flatgard, board president, MDAH; Dan Gibson, mayor, Natchez; Tom Espy; and Sarah Carter-Smith, alderwoman, Natchez.

“We are grateful to Lilly Endowment for this major support,” said Katie Blount, MDAH director. “The foundation’s generosity will help more Mississippians experience these museums. Building an endowment to underwrite field trips for Mississippi students was paramount to our initial vision. With the recent passage of the five-year anniversary of the Two Museums, Lilly Endowment helps to build on that momentum and expand our educational outreach.”

“Museums and cultural institutions are trusted organizations and play an important role in teaching the American public about the world around them,” said Christopher Coble, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for religion. “These organizations will use the grants to help visitors understand and appreciate the significant impact religion has had and continues to have on society in the United States and around the globe. Our hope is that these efforts will promote greater knowledge about and respect for people of diverse religious traditions.”

Lilly Endowment made the grant through its Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative, a nationwide effort to help museums and other cultural institutions improve the public understanding of religion.



## More than \$3M in Preservation Grants Awarded

The MDAH Board of Trustees recently awarded more than \$3 million on behalf of the Community Heritage Preservation Grant (CHPG) program to nineteen projects. The CHPG program, authorized and funded by the Mississippi Legislature, helps preserve and restore historic properties.

**Natchez Institute**, Natchez, Adams County—\$300,000

**Y&MV Depot (Natchez Depot)**, Natchez, Adams County—\$143,750

**Sherman Line Rosenwald School**, Gillsburg, Amite County—\$40,000

**Vaiden High School**, Vaiden, Carroll County—\$62,184

**Bennett Auditorium**, Hattiesburg, Forrest County—\$235,015

**Forrest County Agricultural High School**, Brooklyn, Forrest County—\$73,367

**Hinds County Armory**, Jackson, Hinds County—\$324,368

**Kemper County Courthouse** (pictured above), DeKalb, Kemper County—\$218,001

**Lafayette County Courthouse**, Oxford, Lafayette County—\$213,562

**Dentzel Carousel and Carousel House**, Meridian, Lauderdale County—\$239,840

**Merrehope**, Meridian, Lauderdale County—\$306,385

**Canton Rosenwald School**, Canton, Madison County—\$183,798

**Trolio Hotel**, Canton, Madison County—\$184,000

**Byhalia High School**, Byhalia, Marshall County—\$200,039

**Carnegie Auditorium**, Holly Springs, Marshall County—\$196,367

**M&O Railroad Depot**, Aberdeen, Monroe County—\$98,353

**Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation—Academy Building**, Vicksburg, Warren County—\$136,180

**Eupora School Complex—Administration Building**, Eupora, Webster County—\$78,235

**Yazoo County Courthouse**, Yazoo City, Yazoo County—\$214,124

## Emmett Till Traveling Exhibit will be at Two Mississippi Museums

The *Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley: Let the World See* exhibit will be at the Two Mississippi Museums April 1 through May 14.

“Through this exhibition, we invite people to bear witness to the painful history of racial violence in the United States, and to explore the transformative actions of a grieving mother,” said Pamela D.C. Junior, director of the Two Mississippi Museums.

When he was fourteen years old, Emmett Till joined his cousin, Wheeler Parker, on a trip to the Mississippi Delta to stay with family. Before Emmett boarded the train in the summer of 1955, his mother Mamie warned Emmett that Mississippi and Chicago were two different worlds, and that he should remember that things were different in the Jim Crow South.

While in Mississippi, Emmett Till was kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by white supremacists. Mamie bravely shared her son’s story with all who would listen—and fueled a movement that changed the nation.

*Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley: Let the World See* was a collaborative effort between the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley Institute, the Emmett Till Interpretive Center, the Till family, and The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis. It is recommended for ages ten and up.



# Program Highlights



Commissioner Andy Gipson discusses the Department of Agriculture and Commerce during *History Is Lunch*.



Hezekiah Watkins, a Freedom Rider, and Marc McClure, superintendent at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, unveil a historical marker honoring the riders.



Indigenous textile artist and fashion designer Tina Benevente leads textile program at Grand Village.



Amanda Furdge performs in MLK Night of Culture at the Two Mississippi Museums.



Veterans Day Ceremony honors the late Brigadier General Martha Jo Leslie at the Two Mississippi Museums.



Visitors tour the Mississippi Governor's Mansion during Christmas By Candlelight.

# Eudora Welty Digital Archives Launches Online; Project Funded by NEH, Welty Foundation

The Eudora Welty Digital Archives launched on the MDAH website in January. This digitization project was funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities with a matching contribution from the Eudora Welty Foundation.

The Eudora Welty Digital Archives represents only a sample of Welty-related material housed at MDAH and features selections of correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, and other media related to Eudora Welty (1909-2001), master of the short story and one of America's greatest authors.

"MDAH is grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for their generous grant, which allowed for the construction of the world's most extensive digital archive of Eudora Welty materials," said Katie Blount, director of MDAH. "We are excited to share this incredible resource with researchers and fans of Eudora Welty."

Eudora Welty had a long relationship with MDAH, making her first donation of manuscripts, papers, and photographs in 1957, and continuing to donate

throughout her life. In addition to documents, the collection includes the house where Welty lived most of her life and wrote her greatest works, her furniture, art, and books, and the garden in which she worked alongside her mother.

The digital archives includes this photograph of Welty at about six years old sitting on a wicker bench holding two rabbits she had been given for Easter.  
© Eudora Welty, LLC.



The collection is accessible on the MDAH website at [da.mdah.ms.gov/series/welty](http://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/welty).



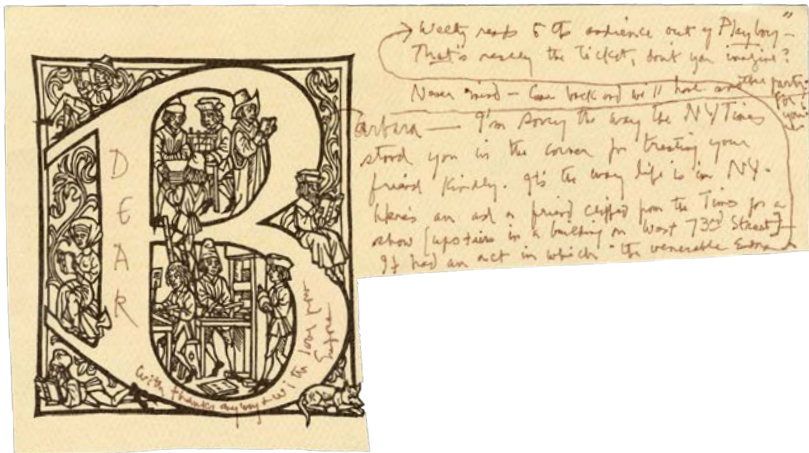
## FedEx Sponsors Free MLK Weekend at the Two Mississippi Museums

The Two Mississippi Museums welcomed more than 3,600 people over the Martin Luther King Weekend. Admission was free Saturday, January 14, through Monday, January 16, thanks to the continued support of FedEx.

Monday evening's Night of Culture featured spoken word and rap, a performance by MADDRAMA, drumming by Alkeulan Music Philosophy, and live painting. The evening was inspired by the Black Empowerment gallery in the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, which celebrates the unity and determination of Black Mississippians demanding their civil rights from 1965 to the mid-1970s, urged on by successes such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The annual event was also included in *Ebony* magazine's list of top eight MLK Day celebrations across the country.

The Two Mississippi Museums also hosted a food drive throughout the free weekend to benefit Stewpot Community Services located in Jackson.

King's involvement in Mississippi included visiting Greenwood in support of Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964, testifying in support of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party during the 1964 Democratic National Convention, and continuing James Meredith's March Against Fear following the assassination attempt against Meredith in 1966.



## Recently Digitized

Eudora Welty sent this undated note to her writer friend Barbara Lazear Ascher to cheer her up. It reads in part: "Here's an ad a friend cribbed from the *Times* for a show [upstairs in a building on West 73rd Street]. It had an act in which 'the venerable Eudora Welty reads to its audience out of Playboy'—That's really the ticket, don't you imagine? Never mind—Come back and we'll have another party for you!" The Eudora Welty Digital Archives is online at [da.mdah.ms.gov/series/welty](http://da.mdah.ms.gov/series/welty).

## From the Collection

This flower bloomed on a rose bush growing in the lower garden at the Eudora Welty House & Garden. The rose bush, which has the botanical name *Rosa 'Lafter'*, is one of 159 roses, camellias, and daylilies that have been entered into an online database. The Eudora Welty House & Garden staff are transferring information from handwritten notes and maps into the database to better track and care for the garden's living collection.



## From the Collection

A *Jet* magazine issue published on September 22, 1955, includes a cover headline about the murder of Emmett Till and a photograph inside of his mutilated body. Visitors to *Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley: Let the World See* traveling exhibit can see this magazine on display at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

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

Mississippi History Newsletter  
Sarah 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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U.S. Postage  
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Permit No. 937

## In Memoriam

*Ineva May-Pittman*, 1935-2023, civil rights veteran, past president of Jackson NAACP Branch, educator, community leader

*William "Bill" James Hanna*, 1952-2022, past MDAH Local Government Records Office director, Jackson's first city archivist, published nation's first guide for a newsfilm collection, collaborated with local officials to salvage records after Hurricane Katrina on Mississippi Gulf Coast, historian, minister

## Mark Your Calendar

### Mississippi Freedom Seder

**Tuesday, March 28, 6 p.m.**

Through a partnership with the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, the Two Mississippi Museums will host a program and meal that combine Jewish cultural traditions with freedom songs and stories from the Civil Rights Movement. Tickets required.

### *Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley: Let the World See*

**April 1–May 14**

Visit this traveling exhibition that explores Mamie Till-Mobley's decisions in the aftermath of her son's 1955 murder in Mississippi.

### Mississippi Makers Fest

**Saturday, May 13, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.**

Mississippi Makers Fest is a day-long celebration of the state's rich and diverse music and art. This free event will take place on Entergy Plaza at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson. Southern Beverage Company is the lead sponsor.