

The Journal of Mississippi History

Volume LXXVI

Spring/Summer 2014

No.1 and No. 2

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The Journal of Mississippi History (ISSN 0022-2771) is published quarterly by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 200 North St., Jackson, MS 39201, in cooperation with the Mississippi Historical Society as a benefit of Mississippi Historical Society membership. Annual memberships begin at \$25. Back issues of the *Journal* sell for \$7.50 and up through the Mississippi Museum Store; call 601-576-6921 to check availability. *The Journal of Mississippi History* is a juried journal. Each article is reviewed by a specialist scholar before publication. Periodicals paid at Jackson, Mississippi. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Journal of Mississippi History*, P.O. Box 571, Jackson, MS 39205-0571. Email journal@mdah.ms.gov.

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Ross Collins and the Incunabula*

by Martha Swain

In 1954 Mark Ethridge, editor of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, wrote to a former United States Congressman from Mississippi, “It must strike you as anomalous that the prime contribution to the country’s literature was sponsored by a Congressman from a ‘country district’ in Mississippi which Mencken called ‘the Sahara of the Beaux Arts.’”¹

Rosser A. (Ross) Collins of Meridian was the congressman, and the priceless book was a Gutenberg Bible, printed sometime in 1494 or 1495 and purchased along with some three thousand other valuable incunabula for the Library of Congress in 1930 at the cost of \$1,500,000. Ethridge could have added that perhaps an even greater anomaly was that later as chairman of the House Armed Forces Appropriations Subcommittee, the “country congressman” was better known as the “father of the B-29 bomber.”

Ross Collins was born in Collinsville (Lauderdale County), Mississippi, on April 25, 1880, and inherited a love of literature and learning. His grandfather, John Burroughs Collins (1812-1866), migrated from Kentucky to the Pine Springs community in Lauderdale County intent upon farming. But, as a local historian wrote, “John was more a reader than a farmer.”² He undoubtedly was primarily self-taught, studied law, and became an elected sheriff and justice of the peace, adjudicating

* Incunabula: early printed books, especially books printed before 1500 (*Webster’s Dictionary*).

The author is grateful to Leigh McWhite, political papers archivist, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi, for her assistance in locating Collins material. She also wishes to thank Dr. Charles Westmoreland, Jr. of Delta State University for his helpful suggestions to give greater attention to Collins’s cultural instincts and Nancy Traylor-Heard of Mississippi State University for assistance with the final manuscript.

¹ Mark Ethridge to Ross Collins, June 15, 1954; Ross A. Collins Papers, Box 9, Library of Congress (hereinafter LC). H. L. Mencken was the acerbic columnist for the Baltimore Sun.

² Mary Ellen New White, *The First Hundred Years of the Pine Springs Community of Lauderdale County, Mississippi* (Meridian: Lauderdale County Department of Archives and History, Inc., 1992), 31.

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Ross Collins with an autographed copy of Winston Churchill's Blood, Sweat, and Tears, courtesy of the Ross A. Collins Collection at the J.D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi

many local disputes. He began a school in the community, taught there, and kept it open during the Civil War.³

John's son, Nathaniel Monroe ("Dink") Collins, born in 1840, became a general store owner and created a school in the community now known as Collinsville. Ross was his son. Presumably the earliest learning of young Ross came through the books accumulated by his grandfather and father, but by the record he later provided to an archive, he was educated in the Meridian public schools.⁴ He attended Mississippi Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Mississippi State University) at Starkville, but after one year transferred to Kentucky University (now Transylvania University) in Lexington, where he could receive

a liberal arts education. After graduation in 1900, he attended the University of Mississippi, where he studied law in 1901. His literary proclivities must have made an impression upon his law classmates. When they spoofed one another by naming the man they most resembled, they dubbed Collins "the irrepressible Hamlet."⁵ Collins married Alfreda Grant, and the couple had two children, a son named Melville (perhaps for Herman Melville) and a daughter named Jane (for Jane Austen?).

In 1912 Collins became attorney general of Mississippi and remained in that post until 1920. Late in his tenure as attorney general, he broke with the pugna-cious governor Theodore G. Bilbo (1916-1920) and became involved in infighting with his former allies who threatened Collins's political ambitions. As a result of the shifts, when Collins ran for governor in 1919, he came in last in a field of four, losing to Bilbo's protégé Lee Russell. Collins turned his sights to Congress and was elected in 1920 and to six successive Congresses (March 4, 1921-January 3, 1935). That run ended with his candidacy in 1934 for U. S. Senator and defeat by Bilbo.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ross Collins vertical file, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), Jackson; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), 768-769.

⁵ Ole Miss, 1911.

Collins returned to Congress and served from January 3, 1937, to January 3, 1943.

Politics pure and simple cast Collins in competition with Lester Franklin, a perennial candidate for public office from Tupelo, and Bilbo for popularity with the poor farmers of northeast Mississippi. According to Turner Catledge, the Mississippi-born managing editor of the *New York Times*, Collins adopted a “backwards drawl to profess ignorance as far as he could” for fear that people would learn of his “cultural instincts.”⁶ His liberal bent was almost fatal to his run in July 1920 against Webb Venable, also of Meridian and the incumbent representative from the 5th District, when he stated at Newton during the campaign that the radical pronouncements of the anarchist Emma Goldman came under free speech protection. Therefore he believed that the federal government had no right to deport her.⁷ Perhaps as attorney general he had disagreed with U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer’s massive deportation of aliens during the Red Scare.

The saga of the Congressional purchase of the incunabula began in 1926 when St. Paul Abbey in Austria, which had become so fiscally distressed after World War I that it had to sell its Gutenberg Bible to Otto Herbert H. F. Vollbehr, described by *Time* as “an eccentric German tycoon,” for \$350,000.⁸ Vollbehr had begun his collection in response to the advice he had received to begin a hobby as a means to help him recuperate from injuries incurred in a railway accident in Turkey. The Bible became the centerpiece of the acclaimed Vollbehr Collection of incunabula, described by Pierce Butler of Chicago’s Newberry Library as “an imminently well-chosen selection of the whole literature printed before 1501.” Butler did not believe that the collection, which included works of Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny, and Boccaccio, ranging from the subject of law and medicine to witchcraft and wood-working, could be duplicated by any other collection for less than \$2,500,000. The collection preserved “a vivid record of the intellectual and social life of Europe before the Protestant Reformation.”⁹

⁶ Chester Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 20; Turner Catledge, interview with author, March 20, 1973, transcript in Special Collections, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University, Starkville.

⁷ *Winston County (Mississippi) Journal*, August 13, 1920.

⁸ *Time*, July 7, 1930.

⁹ Lawrence E. Tomlinson, *Gutenberg and the Invention of Printing: An Anniversary Review* (Washington: Judd and Detweiler, 1938), 50; Butler report on the Vollbehr Collection (April 1926) in Collins Papers, Box 6, LC; *Time* 56 (July 7, 1930), 17; “Pierce Butler,” *Dictionary of American Biography*, IV (New York: Oxford University Press), 98-99. For a full description of the collection and its provenance, see Frederick A. Ashley, *A Look Back: The Story of the Vollbehr Collection and Incunabula* (Lexington: Washington and Lee, 1934), copies in Collins Papers, Box 10, LC.



The Gutenberg Bible at the Library of Congress, courtesy of the Ross A. Collins Collection at the J.D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi

Portions of the Vollbehr Collection went on display in August 1926 at the National Arts Club in New York City, later at the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago, again in St. Louis, and finally at the Library of Congress. On display were 250 items with some 3,000 available for inspection elsewhere at the National Arts Club, which advertised the Vollbehr Collection as containing ten percent of all known books published before 1501. Whatever institution or community that acquired the collection would be famed “so long as books are known and the printed word is cherished.”¹⁰ George Parker Winship of the Widener Library at Harvard, who prepared the exhibition catalogue, described the collection as one to “make visible the fifteenth century as a whole from the Rhine to the Tagus, and one that was never [to] be done again as well as Dr. Vollbehr has done it.”¹¹

In March 1929 Vollbehr gave the Library of Congress a collection of some 20,000 woodcuts from early illustrated books as a goodwill contribution to honor the anniversary of the birth of Carl Schurz, the German-born U. S. statesman of the

¹⁰ “Earliest Printed Books Form a Rare Treasure,” *New York Times Magazine*, August 29, 1926. For an account of the Bible’s history, see Edwin Emerson, *The Gutenberg Bible in Vellum in the Vollbehr Collection* (New York: Tudor Press, 1928).

¹¹ Booklet in Frederick Melcher Collection, LC.

nineteenth century.¹² Prominent newspapers already were calling for the purchase for the Library of Congress of the famed Vollbehr Incunabula Collection, including the Gutenberg Bible. Pleas went forth for contributions to the Library's trust fund to permit the purchase, but it was unlikely that citizens or institutions could raise the necessary funds.¹³

On November 26, 1929, Vollbehr announced through the *New York Times* that he intended to sell his collection at auction as soon as a catalogue was available. Financial reverses compelled him to sell his collection, and he had made numerous contacts to do so. According to one writer on the subject, Vollbehr was "a promoter operating in high gear." He anticipated the sale would occur in the spring of 1930.¹⁴ One week later, on December 3, 1929, Ross Collins made his move by introducing in the House of Representatives a bill (HR 6147) that authorized the secretary of the treasury to pay \$1,500,000 to purchase the Vollbehr Collection for the Library of Congress.¹⁵

Collins recalled, "I began to receive a surprisingly large number of letters from all sections of the country – an upsurge of sentiment from the bookish people of the nation." Herbert Vollbehr wrote, "My chief aim is that this collection shall be preserved and remain intact," and he expressed his willingness to accept \$2,500,000. Adolph A. Oko, librarian of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, endorsed Vollbehr's asking price, and added his support of Collins's "moving thought" that the collection be named for Dr. Herbert Putnam, who had served as the Librarian of Congress for thirty-three years. George Winship, the Harvard assistant librarian who had appraised the collection in 1926, believed that no other collection could ever place the Library of Congress on an "unquestioned" par with European national libraries. Edward F. Stevens, director of the (Detroit) Pratt Institute School of Library Science concurred that the collection was one that contained the "choicest specimens of the most notable presses" and would be a "great tribute" to Putnam's three decades of distinguished service. Frederick Melcher, editor of *Publishers' Weekly*, also estimated the worth of the collection at \$2,500,000 and stated that it presented a "complete picture of the state of culture in that most important period." To his credit Putnam hesitated to join the host of supporters because of the awkwardness

¹² *New York Times*, March 3, 1929.

¹³ *Baltimore Sun*, May 13, 1929; *Washington Post*, March 4, 1928, p. 30; *New York Times*, May 13, 1919.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, November 26, 1929; Frederick R. Goff, "Uncle Sam Has a Book," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 25 (Summer 1981), 123.

¹⁵ *Congressional Record*, 71 Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 1 (December 3, 1929), 62.

of Collins's intent that the acquisition be consummated in his honor.¹⁶

On February 7, 1930, Collins made an inspired speech in Congress for which he had spent thirty days in preparation with the assistance of two "vastly intelligent men" in the House Reading Room in the U. S. Capitol. In a sweeping history of the Library of Congress from its inception by an act of Congress in 1800, the purchase of the library of Thomas Jefferson in 1815, the physical construction of the present Library in 1897, and on to the directorship of the Library under Herbert Putnam, Collins elaborated upon the vast benefits that the Library provided to the members of Congress and that would accrue to the national citizenry if the purchase of the Vollbehrr Collection were made. In lamenting the failure of Congress to appropriate funds to purchase the libraries of George Washington and the historian George Bancroft, Collins pleaded that Congress now seize the opportunity to "still further add to the greatness and richness of its Library." Such an opportunity would never come again for the acquisition of "these cradle books," which otherwise would be returned to Europe and sold at auction. He concluded, "It is a matter of grave doubt if the foreign governments will ever allow another Gutenberg Bible to leave their borders."¹⁷

Collins was able, the *Chicago Evening Post* reported, to hold the interest of the House for one hour. The speech, a Californian wrote, was steeped in "research and erudition," a "fine piece of belles lettres," and "a noble contribution to our best American literature." The publisher Alfred A. Knopf wrote Collins, "I could not conceive of the cause being better put." Newton D. Baker, a former secretary of war under President Woodrow Wilson, praised the speech as a "most fascinating historical survey," and another admirer even compared Collins's outpouring with the "pithy utterances of Woodrow Wilson during the war."¹⁸ "Intellectual preparedness is what [Collins] favored most," said the *Wilmington (Delaware) News*. From England a rare book seller extolled the speech as "the very high water mark of culture," while a Canadian admirer doubted that "so remarkable an address ever before fell on the

¹⁶ Vollbehrr to Collins, January 17, 1930; Oko to Collins, January 21, 1930; Stevens to Collins, January 21, 1930; Melcher to Collins, January 25, 1930, all in Collins Papers, Box 6, LC; Putnam to Collins, February 5, 1930, in Collins Scrapbook, III, LC. On Herbert Putnam, see Jane A. Rosenberg, *Herbert Putnam and the Library of Congress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998) and "For a Greater Library," *Nation* (May 21, 1930), 590.

¹⁷ Collins's account, March 7, 1930, Collins Papers, Box 9, LC; *Congressional Record*, 71 Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 3 (February 7, 1930), 3251-56.

¹⁸ *Chicago Evening Post*, March 21, 1930; Lincoln Wirt (San Francisco) to Collins, April 1, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, I, LC; Newton D. Baker to Collins, April 24, 1930, in Collins Scrapbook, II, LC; W. H. Wright to Collins, April 30, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, III, LC; Alfred A. Knopf to Collins, May 26, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV, LC.

ears of a deliberative body.”¹⁹

The speaker of the house referred Collins’s bill to the House Committee on the Library, and hearings began on March 10, 1930. A number of witnesses discussed the ramifications of the purchase. Herbert Putnam, one of the first to speak, described the tenuous position in which the Vollbehr purchase placed him and informed the lawmakers that he was reluctant to advance a purchase that would be made in his honor. Privately Putnam told Frederick Melcher of *Publishers’ Weekly* that he would “be delighted to see the bill passed upon the initiative of Congress itself.” However, he noted that he had already placed before Congress a request for \$6,500,000 to construct a new annex for the Library, a plea he did not want to jeopardize. Robert Luce, a Massachusetts representative and the House Committee chair, addressed the difficult decision of favoring the request for the purchase of the incunabula over the customary work of the Library. Whether public or private funds should be expended for such a collection was an overriding question before the committee.²⁰

Hebrew Union College librarian Adolph Oko, who had earlier supported the purchase, had no objection but questioned the expense of cataloguing and maintaining the collection. Collins estimated the initial cost of these expenses at only \$5,000, a figure Oko discounted. Winship of Harvard, however, ended the discussion when he pointed out that each of the items in the collection was already adequately described and required only a translation of Vollbehr’s methods.²¹

By March 4 Collins had sent a letter seeking support for his bill to a number of congressmen and senators, literary patrons, private school headmasters, college presidents, church leaders, historians, library associations, and even German consulates in the United States. He received numerous responses of support. Utah senator William H. King wrote, “You have presented some very important and significant data.” King’s assurance of his “very best attention” hinted that Senate support was forthcoming. So did a similar statement from Washington senator Clarence C. Dill. House colleagues Emanuel Celler of New York and Morris Sheppard of Texas wrote Collins of their support of his “worthy project.”²²

Collins was sanguine about passage of the bill for he saw absolutely no opposi-

¹⁹ *Wilmington News*, May 23, 1930; Maggs Brothers (London) to Collins, February 28, 1930; Lewis Blake Duff (Niagara Falls) to Collins, March 13, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, II, LC.

²⁰ Hearings, U. S. Congress, House Committee on Library, 71 Cong., 2nd Sess., 1930; Herbert Putnam to Frederick Melcher, March 7, 1930, Frederick Melcher Collection, LC.

²¹ *Hearings*.

²² William H. King to Collins, March 4, 1930; Clarence C. Dill to Collins, March 6, 1930, Emanuel Celler to Collins, March 8, 1930; Morris Sheppard to Collins, March 3, 1930, all in Collins Scrapbook, I, LC.

tion to it. A groundswell of letters boosted his optimism. One proponent wrote, "Would it not be possible to deny ourselves the pleasure of owning a second-rate battle cruiser in order to obtain these, the greatest books on earth?" Fervent supporter Carl Keller of Boston believed the millennium would arrive if such a purely cultural proposition should appeal to Congress.²³

Accolades in the press added to Collins's confidence that the bill would pass. *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* saw no reason why Congress could not spend \$1,500,000 for incunabula and classics if it could spend \$4,500,000 for a battleship. The *Miami Herald* echoed that the purchase would "symbolize our desire for parity in culture as well as in cruisers." Repeating that theme in alliteration, the *Saturday Review of Literature* intoned, "Let us have parity in scholarship as well as ships, in culture as cruisers, in books as battleships." Said the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, the Library of Congress should have "the pick of the lot among foreign cradle books."²⁴

Eminent historians endorsed the purchase. Charles A. Beard wrote Collins that he always gave "special attention to your remarks knowing that I shall find substance and wit." The University of Chicago's William E. Dodd, however, offered a slight dissent and preferred that the Library of Congress income be designated for the collection of the private papers of America's great leaders. Dodd's remark led Collins to return to his argument that the purchase of the Vollbehr Collection would remedy the egregious failure of the Library of Congress to acquire the papers of Washington and Bancroft. Collins wrote a Virginia congressman "it would be a great calamity not only to the Library but to the American people as well for Congress not to acquire this great collection."²⁵

It surely pleased Collins that praise for him also included kudos for his home state. "God bless the state of Mississippi for sending such an advocate to Congress," wrote a non-Mississippian, while a Meridian constituent admitted, "It isn't the sort of thing that one would ordinarily expect from our state." "How on earth did they come to elect you?" asked an astonished Franklin Bache, a Philadelphia philosopher and Benjamin Franklin descendant.²⁶ "You have compelled me to make a mental apology to Mississippi," wrote still another, an Alabamian, who added, "there is

²³ Collins to Frederick Melcher, March 14, 1930, Melcher Collection, LC; Frost Woodhall (Miami) to Collins, March 14, 1930, Carl T. Keller to Collins, March 13, 1930, both in Collins Scrapbook, II, LC.

²⁴ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 18, 1930; *Miami Herald*, March 20, 1930; *Times-Picayune*, May 4, 1930; E. Paul Sanders, "The Vollbehr Collection," *Saturday Review of Literature* (March 15, 1930), 832-33.

²⁵ Charles A. Beard to Collins, March 13, 1930; William E. Dodd to Collins, March 15, 1930; Collins to R. Walton Moore, March 18, 1930, all in Collins Scrapbook, I, LC.

²⁶ Charles Frankenberger to Collins, March 17, 1930; Leroy R. Stevens (Meridian) to Collins, March 28, 1930; Franklin Bache to Collins, n.d., all in Collins Scrapbook, II, LC.

something more than Bilboism still coming from a state that developed Prentiss, Davis, Lamar, and George.²⁷ “It is especially refreshing to me to see this kind of activity come from Mississippi,” wrote a Washington, D. C. admirer, and the dean of the University of Mississippi Graduate School, Alexander Bondurant, predicted to Collins that “scholars yet unborn will rise up to call you blessed.” A William Morrow book company executive surmised that “it must be a pleasure to argue for ideas which are above the contests of party.” Harry Ayers, the well-known editor of the *Anniston (Alabama) Star*, wrote to Collins, “It is a source of consolation to know that there is a representative from a neighboring state whose intellectual appreciation is sufficiently developed to enable him to be motivated in belief of such a commendable cause.”²⁸

By early May, Collins was less optimistic about his proposal, for the House Committee had yet to release its report to the full House. He feared that House Republicans would adhere to President Herbert Hoover’s insistence upon economy as the Great Depression that began in 1930 deepened. Louis Ludlow, an Indiana congressman, was sensitive to Hoover’s call for cutbacks as were other fiscal conservatives. Collins wrote a supporter of the bill that “all administration forces in Congress are hard bent on holding down appropriations and the outlook for this legislation is not good at the present session.”²⁹ Furthermore, Collins was disturbed by reports that wealthy Texans, unnamed by Collins’s informant, were prepared to buy the collection for the University of Texas.³⁰ In spite of favorable sentiment from across the nation, Collins was leery that, if Simeon Fess in the Senate and Robert Luce in the House persisted in holding up their reports, the collection would be lost to the United States.³¹ Senator Fess had predicted to constituents in the late spring that Collins’s proposal was not likely to gain authorization; rather he hoped that an “enthusiastic capitalist” would make the purchase. A Boston supporter wrote Collins that he surmised that “mere books, particularly old ones which almost nobody can read, must leave most Congressmen or Senators as cold as the South Pole.” Regarding the likelihood that Congress would purchase the Vollbehr Collection, Neil Harris,

²⁷ William Vizard (Mobile) to Collins, May 14, 1930, referring to Seargent S. Prentiss, Jefferson Davis, L. Q. C. Lamar, and James Z. George, Collins Scrapbook, III, LC.

²⁸ John W. Blodgett (Washington, D. C.) to Collins, April 21, 1930; Alexander Bondurant to Collins, April 2, 1930; John Macy (of William Morrow) to Collins, April 24, 1930; Harry Ayers to Collins, April 26, 1930, all in Collins Scrapbook, I, LC.

²⁹ Louis Ludlow to Dr. Frederick D. Kershner (Butler University), April 30, 1930, copy in Collins Scrapbook, III, LC.

³⁰ Marcellus E. Foster (Houston) to Collins, April 29, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV; Collins to O. A. Kennedy (Ogden, Utah), May 5, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, II, LC; New York Herald Tribune, May 6, 1930.

³¹ Collins to William A. Shirley, May 6, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV, LC.

a University of Chicago historian, wrote reflectively in 1996, “with unemployment rolls growing daily, with state and local governments unable to meet their most basic contractual obligations, such a transaction actively sponsored by a rural Mississippi congressman, seemed a conjunction of improbables.”³²

Near the end of May, Collins wrote his House colleagues to urge committee chair Luce and committee members Bernard Snell of New York and John Tilson of Connecticut to release their report on his bill to the full House for debate.³³ Tilson favored the bill, and Luce had expressed his support, but inexplicably on June 4 the committee submitted the bill without recommendation. Its rationale was that the House as a whole should assume responsibility for such an expenditure.³⁴ However, discussion of the bill was limited to a litany of pros and cons that Luce thought should be considered before the House members voted. He raised the question whether the House should consider the purpose of the Library of Congress to serve the executive and legislative branches and not scholarship in general, as the Library had done for countless historians and interested citizens for many years. Moreover, should Congress question an expenditure of \$1,500,000 beyond its annual appropriation for the Library, and should it examine the appropriateness of a Library acquisition of cultural resources in competition with private collections? His remarks seemed merely perfunctory and repetitive and obviously had no bearing on his colleagues in light of the House’s passing the bill unanimously on June 9, 1930.³⁵

As soon as his bill cleared the House, Collins fired off a round of letters to members of the Senate. “Your colleague Ross Collins is a wonder,” a Bostonian wrote to a Wisconsin congressman. Collins knew through access to their correspondence that the Republican majority whip in the Senate, Simeon Fess, who was also chair of the Senate Committee on the Library, was on record in opposition to the expenditure. Fess was convinced that the \$1,500,000 could be better spent on more practical and useful books. Massachusetts Senator Frederick H. Gillett agreed that the sum of over \$1,500,000 for “a mere curiosity like the Gutenberg Bible” was not a proper expenditure for the federal government to assume. Senator Gillett, described by *Time* as “the only possible obstacle,” dropped his objection to the purchase although he demurred, “I think the precedent a bad one [but] I will not object to the passage

³² Simeon Fess to George Phieffer, April 19, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, III; Fess to Charles L. Miller, May 3, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV, LC; Carl T. Keller (Boston) to Collins, May 13, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, III, LC; Neil Harris, “Public Funding for Rarity: Some American Debates,” *Libraries and Culture* 31 (Winter 1996), 50.

³³ Collins’s letters in Collins Scrapbook, IV, LC.

³⁴ *Washington Evening Star*, June 4, 1930; House Report 17696, 71 Cong., 2nd Sess.

³⁵ *New York Times*, June 10, 1930.

of the bill.”³⁶ Fess and Gillett were minority voices on the Senate Library Committee that favorably reported its bill on June 16, 1930.

Herbert Putnam, who no longer had reservations about the purchase of the Vollbehrr Collection since the House had removed his name as the honoree, had made the sole appearance before the Senate committee. Putnam, who now had assurance that the Library addition he wanted was to be funded, conjectured that passage of the bill would dispel the view that Congress was interested only in materialistic matters. The Senate passed the bill sponsored by Connecticut senator Hiram Bingham by a unanimous vote on June 24, 1930.³⁷ Funds would come through the second deficiency appropriations bill, signed by President Hoover on July 3. Collins remarked at the conclusion of the final official act that consummated the largest book sale of all history, “The gratitude of the entire people of the land is due the Seventy-first Congress for its wisdom in the purchase... not a voice was raised against this Act.” He added, “It seems especially fitting that the whole public share in the purchase.”³⁸

In mid-July 1930 that part of the Vollbehrr Collection in storage in New York City, said to be the most valuable book shipment ever made in America, arrived over roads with armed guards. In August Vollbehrr himself traveled to the Austrian monastery to arrange for the delivery of the Gutenberg Bible to the U. S. legation in Vienna. The chief of the Library of Congress Music Division, then in Austria, transported the three-volume Bible to France where Herbert Putnam received it to bring to America aboard the *Leviathan*. And thus the Gutenberg Bible arrived at the Library of Congress to repose there until today except for a period of time when it was transported to Fort Knox for safekeeping during World War II. By Neil Harris’s account the Library of Congress through its purchase of the Vollbehrr Collection had quadrupled its collection of incunabula.³⁹

Numerous congratulations poured into Collins’s office. “I am, of course, delighted that the bill went through,” New York governor Franklin D. Roosevelt

³⁶ Carl T. Keller (Boston) to William H. Stafford, June 10, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV, LC; Simeon Fess to George F. Bowerman (Librarian, District of Columbia Public Library), June 12, 1930; Frederick H. Gillett to Carl T. Keller, June 14, 1930, both in Collins Scrapbook, V, LC; Collins’s round of letters, June 10, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, IV.

³⁷ *New York Times*, June 25, 1930; *United States Daily*, June 25, 1930; *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 1930; Senate Report 965, 71 Cong., 2nd Sess.

³⁸ *Washington Post*, July 5, 1930. Collins quoted in Frederick W. Ashley, “Vollbehrr Incunabula and the Book of Books,” copy in Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University (Dallas).

³⁹ *Washington Evening Star*, July 13, 1930; August 18, 20, 1930; *New York Times*, August 19, 1930; September 14, 1930; Goff, “Uncle Sam Has a Book,” 126-27; Harris, “Public Funding,” 52.

wrote. "Your name ought now and forever to be associated with this great gift to the American people," wrote Lincoln Wirt from California. Another admirer thought the congressman to be "rather remarkable for a public man." Dr. Putnam could recall but "few achievements in legislation so definitely creditable to one individual in Congress." Immediately after passage Collins wrote to all those persons who had given him support and contributed to "what may prove to be a true Renaissance in education and culture in our country."⁴⁰

And then there were more expressions of disbelief that such an achievement was that of a Mississippi congressman. "It is a little lad from Mississippi that just put across this important cultural project," wrote Carl Keller, the Boston bibliophile who had written numerous letters to House and Senate members in support of the purchase. Possibly Collins's strongest backer, the *Washington Evening Post*, noted that Collins concealed under "the exterior of a practical man... the broad scholar, lover of learning, student of human culture."⁴¹

In 1930, E. H. Merriam, the lexicographer, wrote to Collins, "I imagine a thing of this kind can hardly be counted upon to help you to reelection in your district."⁴² Collins retained his seat in Congress in 1932, but chose not to seek the post in 1934 because of his hope to unseat Senator Hubert D. Stephens of New Albany. In a long farewell speech to his colleagues on June 1, 1934, he said, "I am voluntarily leaving the House." Likely intended as an opening volley for his Senate campaign, he recounted his loyal support for virtually all New Deal legislation. Still, he added that as "a firm believer in the institution we know as the library," he had proposed legislation to place a library in every county seat in the United States, and he elaborated upon his consistent friendship for the Library of Congress.⁴³

Theodore G. Bilbo eliminated Collins from the Senate race in the first primary. According to Turner Catledge, Bilbo decried in every county in the state, then knee-deep in depression, what a million and a half dollars could do to alleviate distress. Collins reverted to his populist rhetoric and proclaimed that it would have been

⁴⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Collins, June 26, 1930; Lincoln Wirt to Collins, July 7, 1930; Edward R. Stokes to Collins, July 18, 1930; Collins to "My Dear Friend," July 10, 1930, all in Collins Scrapbook, V, LC.

⁴¹ *Washington Evening Star*, July 4, 1930; Keller to Collins, July 8, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, V, LC.

⁴² E. H. Merriam to Collins, July 4, 1930, Collins Scrapbook, V, LC.

⁴³ *Congressional Record*, 73 Cong., 2nd Sess., Part 9 (June 1, 1934), 10234-38. Collins's friend, Clarence Cannon of Missouri, inserted into the *Congressional Record* Collins's remarks of June 1, 1934, that were then printed at no government expense to be circulated, no doubt as campaign literature for Collins.

worth a "billion dollars to secure these sacred books from the heathen Germans."⁴⁴ Bilbo went on to an ultimate victory over the incumbent Stephens. Collins regained a seat in the House in 1936 and remained a champion of libraries including increased funding for the public libraries of the District of Columbia. In 1938 the American Library Association named him an honorary member.⁴⁵

Had Bilbo known what was to be revealed in hearings before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) on November 30, 1934, he would have had a powerful weapon against Collins in that summer campaign. As it was, the reading public was unaware of the hearings until December 16, 1934, when John W. McCormack, a Massachusetts Democrat, made public through the *New York Times* Vollbehr's testimony before HUAC. Vollbehr had spent most of the \$1.5 million on pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda in the United States. In an executive session held in New York City, HUAC committee member Samuel Dickstein, a New York Democrat, interrogated Vollbehr about his disposal of the money paid for his famed collection. The issue had come to the committee's attention after many of Collins's correspondents who had championed the purchase began receiving messages from Vollbehr that defended Germany's aggression in Europe and treatment of Jews who Vollbehr insisted were communists. He justified the seven "Memoranda," as he called his mailings, as an answer to anti-German accounts in the American press: "I see those reports are at least incomplete. They are an injustice to Germany." Contrary to Vollbehr's defense of his mailings, Congressman Dickstein described them as "a direct attack upon certain creeds and races of this country." The exchange between Vollbehr and the congressman was civil, but when the committee chair McCormack made public Vollbehr's testimony, he stated that Vollbehr had "intended to incite American against American." Soon after the hearings, Vollbehr left for Germany but later returned to the United States to sell the remainder of his collection through Gimbel's Department Store in New York City. He left the country in 1939 when World War II began "with the FBI breathing down his neck." He died sometime after the war ended "almost without resources."⁴⁶

In 1940 an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature* caused a brief furor. Burton Rascoe, a *Saturday Review* reader, wrote a blistering criticism of the purchase of the

⁴⁴ Catledge, interview with the author, March 10, 1973, transcript in Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University (Starkville).

⁴⁵ Burton Rascoe, "Uncle Sam Has a Book," *Saturday Review of Literature*, 32 (May 18, 1940), 3-4, 14-15; *American Library Association Bulletin*, 32 (October 15, 1938), 771; Carl Nilam, ALA secretary, to Collins, June 27, 1938, Collins Papers, Box 1, LC.

⁴⁶ *Hearings*, Subcommittee of the Special Committee on Un-American Activities, 73 Cong., 2nd Sess., (November 30, 1934), 709-10; *New York Times*, December 17, 1934. On Vollbehr's subsequent activities, see Goff, "Uncle Sam Has a Book," 127.

Vollbehre Collection, particularly that of the Bible. He charged that the collection was “over-priced” and that Vollbehre had looked upon Americans as “a prize bunch of suckers.” According to Rascoe, the German native had conducted “one of the most impressive lobbies ever staged for any bill,” one that would “stagger any old-time professional lobbyist.” Rascoe further declared that at a cost of \$1,500,000, “Uncle Sam became the proud possessor of a Gutenberg Bible and some early printing do-dads.” Adding fuel to his fire, Rascoe raised the question of whether Vollbehre had used any of the money to establish German credits in America for spy work.⁴⁷

Frederick A. Goff, former chief of the Library of Congress Rare Books and Special Collection Division, wrote a vigorous defense of the Vollbehre acquisition and dismissed Rascoe’s article as a complete “misunderstanding” and a misrepresentation of facts pertinent to the 1930 transaction. Goff, however, did not deny that upon his return to Germany, Vollbehre became “an active propagandist” for the Nazi party. While Archibald MacLeish, librarian of the Library of Congress, condemned Vollbehre for his acts, he did not discount the merits of the acquisition of the Vollbehre Collection.⁴⁸

Among those who decried Rascoe’s article, George Bowerman, head of the District of Columbia library and a devotee of the *Saturday Review* declared, “What a preposterous thing... to be given currency in the pages of the *Saturday Review of Literature*.” He added “no one who has ever sat in Congress has done more to advance library interests than had Mr. Collins.” Pierce Butler responded that it was war hysteria that had promoted Rascoe “to strike at innocent things of permanent social worth.” Butler attributed some of Vollbehre’s ardent Nazism to his large, unwise investment in American gold mines after 1933. Butler diminished Rascoe’s tirade as “almost juvenile in its misstatement of facts.” In a much later footnote to the saga over Vollbehre’s disposal of his money, Elizabeth Snapp, director of the library at Texas Woman’s University, expressed a relief that since the Vollbehre debate, acquisition librarians “have been spared the chore of investigating the political ideology of book dealers and the use to which foreign nationals might put monetary credits.”⁴⁹

Ten years after his sponsorship of the Vollbehre purchase, Collins launched a new

⁴⁷ Burton Rascoe, “Uncle Sam Has a Book,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, 32 (May 18, 1940), 3-4, 14-15.

⁴⁸ Goff, “Uncle Sam Has a Book,” 127.

⁴⁹ George Bowerman to the editor of the *Saturday Review*, May 21, 1940; Pierce Butler, “What Are the Incunabula Worth?,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, June 6, 1940; Elizabeth Snapp, “The Acquisition of the Vollbehre Collection Incunabula for the Library of Congress,” *Journal of Library History*, 10 (April 1975), 160. For exhibit purposes the three volumes of the Gutenberg Bible are rotated by the Library of Congress every three to four months. They have been digitized for viewing on CD discs. *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, July 28 – August 3, 2003.

crusade that won for him national acclaim that far surpassed whatever glory was his in 1930. He was, by 1940, chair of the House Subcommittee on War Appropriations and a strong advocate for a mechanized army. In June 1941 *Reader's Digest* published an article by Collins, "Do We Want a Mass Army?," which addressed the effectiveness of Germany's mechanized army and air power in crushing France in June 1940. The piece won wide circulation and a year later Lee H. Miller, a Scripps-Howard correspondent, called Collins a "sharp-tongued crusader" for his advocacy of replacing foot soldiers and army mules with tanks and air power.⁵⁰

Collins hoped to parley his profound concern for national defense into the Senate seat left vacant by the death of Pat Harrison in June 1941. Although Delta planter James O. Eastland held the seat for ninety days through an interim appointment by Governor Paul B. Johnson, he chose not to announce for the September 23 special election to complete the balance of Harrison's term.⁵¹ Collins ran in that election but narrowly lost to Congressman Wall Doxey of Holly Springs.⁵² Collins fared even less well in the August 1942 regular election for the full term. He billed himself as "the nation's No. 1 defense champion." Eastland plunged into that race and vigorously denounced Collins's claims about his defense record. In the first primary Collins dropped to third in the balloting that placed Eastland and Doxey in the run-off in which Eastland prevailed.⁵³

Despite Eastland's efforts to debunk Collins as a champion of the nation's military prowess, Collins's reputation remained intact. He had led Congress to its first appropriations for the modern tank, but he was best known for his insistence that the nation's air power be strengthened. In 1921 he had witnessed General William ("Billy") Mitchell's demonstration of air power and had become a staunch defender of the beleaguered and later court-martialed general. He recalled, "I went over [to the east coast of North Carolina] to watch the operation and got the idea that the military could use this kind of power." Subsequently, Collins's advocacy of air power won for him the sobriquet "Father of the Flying Fortress," the B-29 bomber. He prized the note written by Major General H. H. (Hap) Arnold, World War II Air Corps chief: "Dear Collins, you brought into being the flying fortress with its

⁵⁰ Collins, "Do We Want a Mass Army?," *Reader's Digest* 38 (June 1941); "Collins Policy Lauded by Author," *Jackson Daily News*, July 8, 1942.

⁵¹ Chris Myers Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggles of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 90.

⁵² Doxey defeated Collins by 818 votes (50.3% to 49.7%). *Mississippi Blue Book Biennial Report Secretary of State to the Governor and Legislature of Mississippi*, July 1, 1943 to July 1, 1945, 206.

⁵³ *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, August 2, 22, 26, 1942.

crew of 8 or 10.”⁵⁴ National magazines and House colleagues deemed him the most outstanding military expert in the country. The columnist Drew Pearson recalled in 1961 that when the Army “hung back” in ordering the Christie tank, Collins himself inserted an appropriation in a military bill.⁵⁵

And yet, Ross Collins always pointed to the acquisition of the Vollbehr Incunabula Collection as his greatest achievement. Even as he pressed for a modern mechanized military, he continued to make lengthy, erudite speeches in the House for federal grants for school libraries. He advanced the development of additional libraries in the District of Columbia that would create “An American Acropolis” in the nation’s capital. In 1955 Lewis Mumford, the Librarian of Congress, wrote to Collins, “We are bringing together the materials on this subject (the Vollbehr Collection), and we hope that someday there will be a good account written.”⁵⁶ In 1962 Collins presented to the Library of Congress Manuscript Division his scrapbooks pertaining to the acquisition of the Vollbehr Collection. Five volumes contain more than 2,000 letters; the sixth is a compendium of newspaper articles and periodical clippings. Acknowledging receipt of the Collins Collection, Mumford wrote “your preeminence in that outstanding acquisition ... will always be profoundly appreciated.”⁵⁷ A decade later the chief of the Library’s Rare Book Collection reassessed the value of the Vollbehr Incunabula Collection; the Gutenberg Bible alone was worth much more than the total cost of the Vollbehr Collection. In view of the wartime destruction of many rarities, the collection was of inestimable worth.⁵⁸

Collins left Congress in January 1943. In 1946 he adopted a “Bilbo retirement plan” to oust the feisty, embattled senator who was already under investigation for shady financial transactions for personal benefit. Collins lost his campaign for the Senate seat. In the words of the *Commercial Appeal*, “It was the first big year

⁵⁴ “Little Man’s Vision Helps to Win a War,” *Miami News*, January 6, 1963 (Arnold note); “Ross Collins at 85 Recalls Conflicts, Accomplishments,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 26, 1965 (Collins’s quotation on Mitchell).

⁵⁵ “Pearson Puts Finger on 2 Mississippians,” *Jackson Daily News*, April 16, 1961.

⁵⁶ Lewis Mumford to Collins, October 31, 1955, quoted by William Matteson, *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 30 (July 1973); Collins, “The Nucleus of an American Acropolis,” *Washington Sunday Star*, April 28, 1940.

⁵⁷ Mimeographed newsletter of the Library of Congress (July 18, 1968), 397, copy in Collins’s Vertical File, Mitchell Memorial Library, Mississippi State University (Starkville). Copies of the letters are in the Ross Collins Papers, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi. Each is designated by scrapbook volume number and page. The Grolier Club in New York City has a small collection of materials relating to the Vollbehr Collection.

⁵⁸ William Matteson, “Seeking the Rare, the Important, the Valuable,” *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 30 (July 1973), 211-27.

of the Negro issue and Bilbo was unbeatable.”⁵⁹ When Collins sought to win the deceased Bilbo’s seat in the special election in 1947 to fill the vacancy, he polled only 623 votes, finishing last in a field of six that was led by circuit judge John C. Stennis of DeKalb.⁶⁰ In retrospect, wrote the *Clarion-Ledger*, “It very well could be that Mississippians who denied him the Senate seat he sought made a serious mistake.” In view of Collins’s defeat in five Senate races, Hansford Simmons, a former Wall Doxey adviser who clearly admired Collins, summarized Collins’s political misfortunes by stating that “there was never an opportune time for Collins to realize his Senate ambitions.”⁶¹

Following his departure from Congress, Collins returned to the practice of law in Meridian. In 1950, at age seventy, he ran again for Congress, but was overwhelmingly defeated by the incumbent Arthur Winstead. He said of his resounding defeat, “I knew I wouldn’t be elected. It was bad advice, and the people that got me to run left me.”⁶² In June 1967 Collins made a tour of his old congressional district. Upon returning home he declined his wife’s urge to sleep by saying that he “just wanted to cry a little.”⁶³

In retirement Ross Collins divided his residences between Meridian and Coral Gables, Florida. He died in a retirement home in Meridian on July 14, 1968, and was interred at Magnolia Cemetery in Meridian.⁶⁴ A year before his death, when Collins was then eighty-seven years old, a writer for the *Commercial Appeal* recalled a statement Collins once made in Congress: “Let us give our people the best facilities for study and research that have ever been amassed; that will enable them to express themselves in works of literature, science and art.” Such deeds Collins insisted would “help us to understand one another...”⁶⁵ It was a fitting statement to summarize what Ross Collins considered his greatest achievement.

⁵⁹ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 26, 1967.

⁶⁰ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 26, 1967; John Ray Skates, “World War II and Its Effects, 1940-1948,” *A History of Mississippi*, ed., Richard A. McLemore (Jackson: College and University Press of Mississippi, 1973), 138.

⁶¹ *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, July 16, 1968; Simmons’s letter to editor in response, *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, August 2, 1968.

⁶² *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 14, 1967; *Jackson Daily News*, June 13, 1950; *Mississippi Official and Statistical Register*, 1949-1951, 347.

⁶³ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 14, 1967.

⁶⁴ “Political Legend Dies at 88,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 15, 1968; *Jackson Daily News*, July 15, 1968; obituary, *Meridian Star*, July 14, 1968.

⁶⁵ *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, July 14, 1967.

Otto Karl Wiesenburg: A Racial Moderate Who Helped Crack the Walls of the Mississippi “Closed Society”

by Charles M. Dollar

For roughly two decades between the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* and the closure of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission in 1974, many black Mississippians defied intimidation, threats of violence and death to secure justice in the courts, equality in education and job opportunities, and the right to vote. Numerous white Mississippians also believed black Mississippians should have these opportunities, but they remained silent because doing so could expose them to fierce disagreement with friends and family, coercion of the Citizens Council, intimidation of the Sovereignty Commission, and the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. Nevertheless, an exceptional minority of white Mississippians ignored these risks and engaged in public discourse about justice and equality for all Mississippians.

Some members of this minority, such as the Reverend Will D. Campbell, the Reverend Duncan Gray, Ira Harkey, Florence Mars, and Professor James Silver are well known. Others who played equally pivotal roles are less well-known and their legacy forgotten.¹ Karl Wiesenburg belongs to the latter group. A transplanted New Yorker who lived in Pascagoula, Wiesenburg became a successful lawyer, a state

¹ The author is writing substantive biographical sketches of an exceptional minority of fifty-four white Mississippians, including Wiesenburg, who publicly espoused social justice, equal educational and employment opportunity, and equal voting rights for black Mississippians. In his 2010 dissertation Benjamin O. Sperry presents profiles of 127 white Mississippians he considered “moderates.” Many of them supported reapportionment of the state legislature, public education, industrial improvements, law and order, or reform of the Mississippi state constitution but opposed desegregation and encroachment of the federal government on state rights, especially pertaining to race relations. See Benjamin O. Sperry, “Caught Between Our Moral and Material Selves: Mississippi’s Elite White Moderates: And Their Role in Changing Race Relations, 1945-1956,” 591-619 (Department of History, Case Western Reserve University, 2010). Twenty-two of the 127 individuals referenced in the Sperry dissertation are included in the exceptional minority list identified by the author.

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legislator, and a fierce opponent of Governor Ross Barnett's handling of the events leading up to and following the enrollment of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi. Author of "The Price of Defiance," a fierce rebuttal based on a constitutional argument to Governor Barnett's "never, never" opposition to integration policy, Wiesenburg became a highly visible symbol of the willingness of a growing number of white Mississippians to challenge the "Closed Society" even though it entailed risks to them and their families.

The son of immigrants Adolph Otto Johann and Martha Mary (Horvath) Wiesenburg, Otto Karl Wiesenburg, was born in Rosedale, Long Island, New York on August 11, 1911. When Karl was five years old, the family moved to 205 East 66th Street in New York City.² He excelled at Public School 74, which was relatively easy for him because he read rapidly and had a photographic memory. As a youth he spent considerable time at the New York Public Library where he read voraciously. After taking some educational tests, he was admitted to Townsend Harris Hall, a prestigious school for bright boys.³ His father died when Karl was sixteen, forcing him to drop out of Townsend Harris Hall to help support his mother. While caring for her, he continued his education by attending classes at the YMCA New York Evening School.

Coast Guard and Pascagoula, Mississippi (1929 - 1935)

After his mother died in 1929, Wiesenburg was unsure what he wanted to do. Years later he recalled he had a wanderlust and after the stock market crash and onset of the Great Depression:

I passed by a coast guard recruiting station. The only thing that I was looking at said the border patrol. I was always wild about the woods and camping and nature, so I decided to get in the, (sic) border patrol, and ignorantly enlisted in the United States Coast Guard.⁴

He reported for duty on December 3, 1929, and was sent to New London, Connecticut, for basic training. One of the first things he had to do was pass a swimming test. Not knowing how to swim, he improvised by diving into the indoor pool and

² H. T. Holmes, "An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 1, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (1976), Jackson, Mississippi.

³ Martha Reed (daughter of Wiesenburg) to Charles Dollar, email message, June 29, 2014.

⁴ Holmes, "An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 1.

getting to the other end of the pool underwater without surfacing.⁵

After completing basic training, he was assigned to a Coast Guard icebreaker where he showed so much aptitude in the operations of the radio room that in June 1930 he was sent to the New London Radio School for training. In February 1931, he graduated as a Third Class Petty Officer Radio Operator and was assigned to the U. S. patrol boat Dexter at the Coast Guard base in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The mission of Dexter was to intercept boats transporting liquor illegally into the United States.

After joining the crew of the Dexter, Wiesenburg began a routine of one week at sea and one week in port. Since his twelve-hour shifts afforded considerable down time, he continued his voracious reading. During his time in port, rather than staying on base, he rented a room from a local resident. In off duty hours he explored Pascagoula, which with a population of about 3,000 and leisurely pace he found attractive. Talking with residents about the future of the town, he began to think the city's development as a port would create jobs and new economic opportunities, and he wanted to be part of this future. Recognizing that a Third Class Petty Officer radio operator, especially one from New York City, would have little influence with the Pascagoula power structure, he decided to become a lawyer, believing this profession would provide a path to his helping shape the future of Pascagoula.⁶

Guided by this vision, he began studying law during his free time, using the twelve- volume Lassalle self-study law course. His rapid reading and photographic memory enabled him to immerse himself in learning law.⁷ Fortunately, he met Dennis A. Maxtel, who also wanted to become a lawyer but had failed the bar exam. Wiesenburg and Maxtel decided to study together, asking one another questions from the back of a Lassalle law study volume and then comparing their answers with the appropriate text. Because of Wiesenburg's ability to recall verbatim sections of text when responding to study questions, they decided Wiesenburg should take the three-day bar exam so he could memorize the questions which he and Maxtel would study later. There was a major problem with this strategy: Wiesenburg was not a high-school graduate, which was a prerequisite for taking the exam. Undeterred, he submitted an application, and a request came for him to appear in Jackson for

⁵ Interview, Martha Reed, daughter of Wiesenburg, May 19, 2014, Pascagoula, MS.

⁶ Karl Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran, December 7, 1941-July 1, 1949," 8, Unpublished and undated memoir of Karl Wiesenburg in possession of the author, courtesy of Martha Reed.

⁷ His daughter described a game that her father would play with her and her sister on Sunday mornings. He would read the Sunday newspaper and then have them ask him questions about content from any page. Invariably, he would provide an exact quote. Interview, Martha Reed, May 19, 2014.

an interview to determine his eligibility to take the exam. During the interview, Harold Cox, secretary of the Bar Examiners, grilled him extensively for two hours and told him that he was probably the most unqualified candidate who had ever applied. Cox added that the examination was based on questions prepared by Harvard University, covered twelve subjects over three days, and Wiesenburg did not have a chance in hell of passing the examination.⁸ Yet Cox must have found something impressive in Wiesenburg's demeanor because he also told him that if Wiesenburg really wanted to take the exam he would certify that he had the equivalent of a high school education.

Wiesenburg returned to Pascagoula where he and Maxtel continued their preparation. Several months later, he was notified to come to Jackson. After completion of the three-day exam, he thought he had done well in some subjects and poorly in others but, on balance, he believed he had failed. Nonetheless, upon his return to Pascagoula he wrote the questions and his responses for Maxtel to study. On March 23, 1933, while at sea he learned he had passed the bar exam. At the age of twenty-one, Wiesenburg could now practice law in Mississippi without the benefit of formal legal education or ever having been inside a lawyer's office or a court room.⁹

Although Wiesenburg had dated several girls, there was no romantic interest until he met Denise Higginbotham, who introduced him to locals and taught him to play tennis and bridge. They fell in love and early in 1934 they became engaged.¹⁰ Shortly after the engagement announcement, he was transferred to Cambridge, Maryland, and then to Wilmington, North Carolina. This reassignment was a temporary separation for them because Wiesenburg intended to return to Pascagoula, Denise, and law after his enlistment expired in December. An avid fan of college football, he organized betting pools on games during the fall of 1934. Adept in setting up spread points, he managed to win almost \$500 from his shipmates. When his enlistment expired, he used some of his winnings to buy a new suit, his first eye-glasses, and a one-way train ticket to Pascagoula.¹¹

A Mississippi Lawyer (1935-1942)

Back in Pascagoula, Wiesenburg rented a room from an elderly lady and a small office for \$20 a month. For another \$25 he equipped the office with a desk, typewriter, and chair. He was now ready to practice law. For the first six months,

⁸ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 12.

⁹ Richard Rubin, "Oral History Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 125 (1988). In possession of the author, courtesy of Martha Reed.

¹⁰ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

his only client was his landlady, who needed a deed of trust; his fee was \$6.50. He spent his time studying old court cases and attending sessions of court to observe the techniques and approaches of local lawyers.

Wiesenburg's first trial involved his defense of Hjalmar Nielsen, charged with murdering his wife Mabel Krebs Nielsen in nearby Mobile, Alabama, after returning from extended sea duty to discover she had married Patrick Doyle on the basis of a fraudulent divorce decree. The consensus of the Mobile legal community was that Nielsen would be found guilty and hanged. No seasoned lawyer in Mobile or Pascagoula was willing to take the case, but Wiesenburg and another neophyte attorney, Orville Brown, took it, largely to gain courtroom trial experience.¹² The two defense lawyers concluded the evidence against Nielsen was overwhelming, so they decided Nielsen should plead not guilty by reason of insanity. They agreed that Wiesenburg should lead the courtroom proceedings. After the testimony of expert witnesses on temporary insanity, Wiesenburg led Nielsen through a recitation of the mental and emotional hell he had experienced, reaching a climax as Nielsen described meeting his five-year-old daughter in a park where she asked, "Daddy, you are my daddy, aren't you? Mother is trying to get me to call Mr. Doyle Daddy."¹³

In the defense's closing argument, Brown stressed the mental influences that had been brought to bear on Nielsen, reminding the jury that if they "had any reasonable doubt as to whether Nielsen knew what he was doing at the time the shots were fired they should find him not guilty by reason of insanity." Wiesenburg's closing argument was brief. He reminded the jury that everywhere Nielsen had turned he had received injustice, not justice. He added, "I cannot believe that twelve intelligent men, representative of Mobile County are going to be party to the ultimate injustice in this case, that is to the taking of the life of Hjalmar Nielsen."¹⁴

The judge instructed the jury it could render a guilty verdict for first degree murder with a sentence of execution; a guilty verdict for first degree murder with a specified prison term to be served; or a guilty verdict for manslaughter with a jail sentence of one year. To the consternation and embarrassment of the city prosecutor and the Mobile community, the jury returned a verdict of guilty to manslaughter.

Even though this trial was the first in which Wiesenburg had participated, it marked the beginning of a successful law practice that eventually made him well-known within the legal community. The marks of a skilled courtroom lawyer were already evident. His "deep, distinctive and resonant voice" along with his ability to examine witnesses, to quote statutes, regulations, and the testimony of witnesses

¹² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54-56.

from memory gave him a commanding presence in the court room.

After his spectacular success in the Nielsen trial, Wiesenburg returned to Pascagoula with the expectation that the case would jump start his law practice. This was not to be for he learned that he had offended virtually all of the influential people in Pascagoula and, as he put it, "I was ostracized, criticized, and crucified. I was advised to leave Pascagoula."¹⁵ His law practice languished, and he and Denise decided to delay their marriage until some of the anger and resentment had dissipated and his law practice could support them.

As Pascagoula's economy gradually improved, Wiesenburg's law practice picked up. In 1938 Ingalls Shipyard opened in Pascagoula, and legal work for the shipyard provided him with a steadily growing income. Also, in 1938 he gained some public visibility and acceptance when he was appointed chairman of the Pascagoula Recreation Commission. A year later he and Denise were married. Wiesenburg continued to promote his vision of Pascagoula as a port for international trade and read widely about commercial shipping ports, visiting a number of them to learn firsthand about their operation. By 1941 he had a clear vision of what the creation and operation of a port at Pascagoula entailed, and he persuaded the Jackson County Supervisors to create the Pascagoula Port Commission. Wiesenburg was the first chairman of the commission, but the outbreak of World II put his plans for the port on hold.¹⁶

U.S. Army Signal Corps (1942-1946)

On May 2, 1942, a group of Mississippi draftees and one volunteer reported for duty at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, for enlistment in the U.S. Army as privates. The volunteer was thirty-year-old Karl Wiesenburg.¹⁷ His explanation for volunteering was that he thought he had leadership abilities the Army needed, he wanted Denise to be proud of him, and his thinking that his service would help him politically.¹⁸ Earlier he had tried to rejoin the Coast Guard but had been rejected because of his poor vision. He thought that he might be able to finesse the Army tests and use his experience with the Coast Guard and his lifelong interest in electronics to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶ Holmes, "An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 5.

¹⁷ Wiesenburg volunteered for military service even though he was eligible for deferment (IV-A) because of his previous military duty in peace time. He convinced the Jackson County Draft Board that he should be classified as I-C, eligible for military service with an honorable discharge from previous military service. Classification Records for Mississippi, 10/16/1940 - 3/31/1947, 76, Records of the Selective Service System (1926-1971), RG 147 (National Archives and Records Administration – National Archives, St. Louis, MO).

¹⁸ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 72.

serve in the Army Signal Corps.¹⁹

Determined to be fully engaged in the war effort and not a paper pusher, Wiesenburg minimized his legal training and emphasized his Coast Guard service as a radio operator as he filled out forms and completed other paperwork, including tests. Based on his test results, he was ordered to report to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, to prepare for enrollment in Officer Candidate School (OCS).²⁰ Although he had taken a physical at Camp Shelby, he was instructed to report for a second one. He knew that his uncorrected vision was not the mandatory 20/40 vision and that his corrected vision was not the mandatory 20/20. Suspecting this might be an issue, he decided to fake the vision test by memorizing line characters in the eye test chart and then memorizing the same test lines in reverse order. He read the lines of 20/40 vision and then read the lines of the 20/20 vision line but made sure to deliberately miss-read several characters of the 20/20 vision line. The doctor asked him to read the two lines in reverse order, which Wiesenburg did, while repeating the same mistakes in the 20/20 vision line test. The doctor kept mumbling to himself, "Remarkable." Finally he told Wiesenburg he knew from the prescription for his corrected vision that it was impossible for him to read either the 20/40 or the 20/20 line tests. Crestfallen, Karl thought he could not become an officer. To his surprise and delight, however, the doctor told Wiesenburg that he would certify him as having 20/20 corrected vision because he had never seen anyone who was so determined to go to Officer Candidate School that he memorized eye test charts backwards.²¹

Wiesenburg breezed through the military and academic classes, usually leading the rest of the OCS candidates in test scores each week. After completion of OCS, he was promoted to second lieutenant²² and ordered to report to the 835th Signal Services Company at Camp Crowder in Joplin, Missouri. In February 1943, Wiesenburg's unit took a train to San Francisco where the men boarded a transport ship that eventually dropped them off in Bombay, India. Wiesenburg was assigned to Company B and stationed at headquarters in New Delhi, India, as the leader of a twenty-five enlisted man radio section.

Even though he had no training in cryptography, Wiesenburg also accepted an assignment as a cryptographic officer. The sergeant who managed the cryptographic room, where incoming messages were decoded and outgoing messages were encoded, resented Wiesenburg's intruding into what he considered his domain.

¹⁹ Bill Reed (Wiesenburg's son-in-law and law partner) to Charles Dollar, email message, June 13, 2014.

²⁰ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

²² 10-42, Roster of the United States Army Signal Corps Officer Candidate School. Available at www.armysignalcorps/ocs.com/ww2/42-10.html.

However, Wiesenburg told the sergeant that he had five years of enlisted experience with the Coast Guard and that he knew that sergeants ran the army. He asked the sergeant to train him on encoding and decoding messages on any system used in the cryptographic room. By the time his training was completed the sergeant and other enlisted men were loyal supporters.²³ This loyalty was important when Wiesenburg learned the unit had the highest deficiency reports of all the "crypt units." He employed his skill at what he called "situational analysis" and determined that most of the deficiencies occurred because the sergeant had not taken the time to read regulations. He analyzed the regulations and rewrote instructions in language the sergeant could understand. Within a few weeks efficiency reports of the "crypt section" showed major improvement,²⁴ and Wiesenburg began to acquire a reputation as miracle worker.

His success in improving the efficiency reports led to another assignment. There were two message centers in New Delhi that duplicated operational programs, and Wiesenburg was asked to develop a plan to consolidate them. He prepared a report that was accepted and in November 1943 oversaw consolidation of the two centers.²⁵

Even though Wiesenburg was in a combat zone, he was hundreds of miles from actual combat. He felt guilty about the comforts he enjoyed and began to think about requesting reassignment to an actual theater of war, but other events intervened to send him into a very dangerous zone in China where the Japanese Army was advancing. One of his duties was to decode top secret "Eyes Alone" messages and deliver them to their recipients. Soon he began receiving top-secret messages from the War Department in Washington for Lord Mountbatten, the commander of British troops in Burma and Supreme Allied Commander for South East Asia Command. The deputy to General Joe Stilwell, commander of U.S. troops in India and China who distrusted the British military, learned of these messages and ordered Wiesenburg to share them with General Stilwell. Wiesenburg declined to do this, citing the regulations that prohibited this. He next refused a direct order from the deputy, whose revenge was to arrange for Wiesenburg's immediate transfer to Kweilin, China, which was under Japanese attacks.²⁶

Wiesenburg and a radio team of enlisted men set up a radio station in Kweilin

²³ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 91.

²⁴ In July 1943 the crypto section encoded/decoded about 40,000 messages a day. In September the number increased to 44,000. By March 1944 it encoded/decoded 86,000 messages a day. John Hawkins and Ward Hawkins, "835th Signal Service Battalion, 1942-1946" (1946), 30, Combined Arms Service Library Digital Library, available at <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll8/id/3518>.

²⁵ Wiesenburg, "Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran," 92-93. Also see Hawkins, "835th Signal Service Battalion, 1942-1946" (1946), 29-30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 110-114.

near the air base and began to support radio contact with headquarters in New Delhi. Japanese bombers hit the Kweilin air base at least once a day and often at night, forcing evacuation of the air base.²⁷ By August 1944 Japanese troops were on the verge of entering Kweilin, and Wiesenburg and his team were ordered to retreat to another Chinese city to set up the radio equipment. Japanese troops and air attacks were a constant threat as they retreated from one city to another, each time setting up radio equipment, until they reached Kunming.

In November 1944, Wiesenburg received orders transferring him from Kunming to Assam, India. Getting to Assam was a major challenge because it involved “flying over the hump” (Himalayan Mountains, the highest mountain range in the world) from India to China, and military air transportation had a long waiting list. He learned that civilian pilots flying under contract with the Chinese government sometimes would allow a passenger to sit in the co-pilot’s seat. Anxious to get out of the Chinese War Theater before someone decided that his orders were incorrect or that he was indispensable, Wiesenburg arranged to sit in the co-pilot’s seat on a civilian flight. He went to the airport around midnight to meet the pilot, who was drunk. The pilot got the plane airborne, and for the next three hours Wiesenburg had to keep him awake. Finally, the pilot saw the lights of the airfield and set the plane down in a very rough landing. As the pilot taxied the airplane to the tarmac, both engines stopped running; the plane was out of fuel.²⁸

The colonel, who headed the unit to which Wiesenburg was now assigned in Assam, did not need a signal officer, but he did need a battalion adjutant. Learning that Wiesenburg was a lawyer, he assigned him the job.²⁹ After several months in this position, Wiesenburg had enough points to rotate back to the United States, and he was transferred to Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Back in the States, he boarded a train to Pascagoula, where he was reunited with Denise on May 3, 1945. After a short leave he was ordered to report for duty at Miami as the Trial Judge Advocate of the General Court. On February 1, 1946, he was discharged from the Army with the rank of captain, and he and Denise returned to Pascagoula.³⁰

During Wiesenburg’s Coast Guard assignment he spent considerable time studying Pascagoula as a potential sea port but apparently did not take race relations into account. He was a struggling lawyer in Pascagoula in the 1930s and while he may have personally had questions about segregation, it was not an issue he publicly challenged. And, unlike contemporaries such as Frank E. Smith, Joe

²⁷ Hawkins, 835th Signal Service Battalion, 1943-1946, 50.

²⁸ Wiesenburg, “Sailor, Soldier, and Veteran,” 179-181.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

Wroten, Claude Ramsay, Will D. Campbell, and Ira Harkey, World War II was not a transformative experience for Wiesenburg. During his duty in India he noted the second-class citizenship rigid caste system, including “untouchables,” but did not draw any comparisons between the caste system and the second-class citizenship of blacks in Mississippi. Given his penchant for “situational analysis” and being able to see what others could not see, it is striking that during his military service he apparently asked no questions about race relations in the South and Mississippi. More than a decade would elapse before he would come to grips with segregation in Jackson County and the state of Mississippi.

A Lawyer and More in Pascagoula (1946-1955)

When Wiesenburg returned to Pascagoula, he had three goals in mind: grow his law practice, become the city attorney of Pascagoula, and restart the development of the Port at Pascagoula. He quickly realized all three goals could be achieved by his becoming involved in Pascagoula Post No. 3373 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He set his sights on becoming post commander because he thought it could be a springboard “to advance my ambition to become a force in the civic and political affairs of the city, county, and state.”³¹

Some of his friends organized a successful campaign for his election as post commander. Once in office, he performed a “situational analysis” as he had done in his army service and systematically began rebuilding the post membership and program. Within a year he indicated to his friends his interest in being state commander. Again, his supporters did the arm twisting and persuasion of uncertain delegates at the state convention, and he was elected state commander by acclamation.³²

As state commander he conducted another situational analysis and, after learning that many people considered the VFW an auxiliary of the American Legion, he decided to reorganize it from the ground up. He rewrote the VFW by-laws and breathed new life into it by prohibiting posts from meeting jointly with the American Legion or in buildings the American Legion controlled.³³ In addition, he invited the membership of local posts to join him in a campaign to have Mississippi follow the example of other states that had established a bonus program for veterans’ service in time of war, with a marginal increase for overseas service. This work gave Wiesenburg state-wide exposure, especially when he testified in support of the bonus before a legislative committee. Although the state legislature rejected the proposal,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 221-224

³³ Ibid., 227.

the campaign gave him tremendous visibility in Pascagoula and across the state.

Wiesenburg's tenure as post commander expired at the end of the VFW State Convention in April 1949. Several months previously he had learned the commanding officer of his Signal Service Battalion based in Assam, India, had recommended he receive the Bronze Star Medal for "MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT IN GROUND OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ENEMY India-Burma-China Theater."³⁴ Wiesenburg's arranged for presentation of the medal at the VFW State Convention that ended his term as state commander. Many of his supporters thought he should continue his involvement in VFW affairs at a higher level, but he told one:

This phase of my work is done. It was my intention to move on to new and greener pastures. I intended to take an active part in city and county politics. I would become Pascagoula's City Attorney. I would make Pascagoula an industrial port.³⁵

Wiesenburg continued his law practice and also served as the city attorney for Pascagoula in 1951 and again in 1954-1955. As a member of the Pascagoula Port Commission, he was a vigorous promoter of the development of an industrial port, believing it would be a major stimulus to economic growth in the area.

Mississippi State Legislator and the "The Oxford Disaster - Price of Defiance" (1956-1964)

In 1955 the State Legislature passed private legislation authorizing the Pascagoula Port Commission to issue \$2,000,000 in bonds to fund dredging Bayou Cassotte (Pascagoula Bay), but it did not authorize acquiring land, securing additional funding, or managing port operations. While this private legislation was better than nothing, Wiesenburg concluded that city and county supervisors lacked the vision and will to move beyond this level. The only way to change this situation, he believed, was through legislation that would create a strong port commission. He therefore decided to become a candidate for the state legislature with creation of a strong port commission as his primary goal.³⁶

Wiesenburg kicked off his campaign early in 1955 with a weekly radio program in which he informed voters exactly what he would do if elected. By the time of the primary election, he observed later, he had "kicked all the sacred cows," and the

³⁴ Copy of the award certificate. In possession of the author, courtesy of Martha Reed.

³⁵ Wiesenburg, "Soldier, Sailor, and Veteran," 242.

³⁶ Gordon Henderson, "An Oral History Memoir of Karl Wiesenburg," 5-6 (1965), Millsaps College Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

county board of supervisors and every elected official except one opposed him. He became identified as “anti-establishment.” In making speeches, he would emphasize he was not a politician but that his opponent was. He would then name someone in the audience who supported his opponent and say that if you asked him how he was going to vote he would tell you “Don’t vote for Wiesenburg.” Wiesenburg would then expound on reasons why this individual would not vote for him.³⁷ His approach worked. He was elected as state representative from Jackson County despite the opposition of the county political leadership.

The Mississippi House of Representatives that convened in Jackson on January 2, 1956, was under the control of Walter Sillers, the arch-conservative speaker of the house, generally considered to be the most powerful individual in the state. He exercised this power through a caucus system in which a handful of legislators made decisions about which proposed bills would be enacted and which defeated---all without public discussion. “The truth is,” Wiesenburg opined, “the real decisions in our legislature are made in the King Edward Hotel or in the Robert E. Lee. What takes place on the floor of the legislature is the formalization of agreements made elsewhere.”³⁸

Wiesenburg’s independence and integrity simply did not allow him to be part of the caucus system, making him suspect in the eyes of many of his fellow legislators. He solidified this reputation by joining forty other legislators in opposing the re-election of Walter Sillers as speaker of the house. This resulted in his assignment to minor committees, such as Roads and Bridges, which seldom considered a bill. He never attended these committee meetings and spent most of his time “running a service for the members of the legislature . . . in writing their bills, drafting their bills, preparing their amendments, and things of that type.”³⁹ In 1956 he introduced the Jackson County Port Authority Act which would give the county broad powers to operate the port. With the strong backing of Ingalls Shipyards, the bill became law, thereby achieving Wiesenburg’s long-desired goal of enabling Pascagoula to operate a port authority. In 1958 the legislature also enacted the State Port Act, which he drafted. This act enabled Gulfport and other port cities to become state ports and provided additional funding for the Pascagoula Port Authority. Combined, these two statutes were a major stimulus to the economic growth of Jackson County largely through the creation of new jobs at Ingalls Shipyards, which expanded to meet shipbuilding requirements of the U. S. Navy.

³⁷ Holmes, “An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg,” 8.

³⁸ Karl Wiesenburg, “Let’s Look At Our Legislature,” 7, (privately printed, Pascagoula, Mississippi, 1958). Copy in possession of the author, courtesy of Martha Reed.

³⁹ Henderson, “An Oral History Memoir of Karl Wiesenburg,” 21.

Having to be in Jackson for lengthy legislative sessions caused a significant drop in Wiesenburg's income from his law practice. When the legislature was in session, the modest stipend he received barely covered his living expenses in Jackson. Moreover, unlike many of his fellow legislators, he refused to allow lobbyists to buy meals for him. In fact, if he had dinner with a lobbyist he insisted on paying for both his meal and that of the lobbyist.⁴⁰ Consequently, he decided not to seek re-election, but Denise reminded him that during the 1955 campaign he had said that if elected he would be a candidate for re-election. Therefore in 1959 he agreed to seek re-election but without campaigning. To his amazement, in the Democratic primary, which, at that time, was tantamount to election, he defeated two other candidates and won re-election.

In 1955 Wiesenburg had praised Jackson County's "separate but equal" educational facilities and said that integration would upset the delicate balance between whites and blacks. Initially, he presented himself as a segregationist because this was the only way to get things done.⁴¹ He introduced a bill that prohibited riots, explaining that it was directed against the NAACP when in fact a careful reading of the statute revealed it was directed against any riot. During his first term he got to know state representative Joe E. Wroten (Washington County), who believed segregation was morally wrong. Wiesenburg later recalled, "Joe would tell me that my policy of trying to portray myself as a segregationist was just morally and fundamentally wrong."⁴² During his first term he also learned that Jackson County Schools were separate but very unequal and that public funds were not available to upgrade black schools to meet white school standards. After his re-election in 1959, he told Wroten, "You're right. I am not going to pretend I'm a sheep in wolf's clothing." Later, Wiesenburg noted that "From 1960 on every vote that I cast in the legislature, with one exception, was predicated on the basis of giving everybody an equal opportunity to get an education."⁴³

With the inauguration of Ross Barnett as governor in January 1960, the mood and tone of the legislature reflected the Citizens Council's growing influence on the governor and his bellicose "Never, never, never" massive resistance to integration, token or otherwise. Legislators claimed there were communists on the University of Mississippi faculty; they passed resolutions praising Carlton Putnam's *Race and Reason* (1961), which claimed the biological inferiority of blacks required whites to protect their racial heritage by opposing any form of integration or equality; they

⁴⁰ Rubin, "An Oral History Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 69.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 13, 70

lauded retired General Edwin Walker⁴⁴ for his support of Mississippi's stand for freedom and protection of state sovereignty.

Wiesenburg and Wroten opposed resolutions that praised defenders of segregation and legislation designed to thwart integration and otherwise denigrate the federal government. He opposed a bill that called for the Mississippi state flag to be flown as prominently as the United States flag because he was an American first and a Mississippian second.⁴⁵ They also opposed a bill intended to protect public officials found guilty of opposing integration by having the State pay their fines and other expenses. A few years later Wiesenburg opined that future readers "will wonder what sort of legislature was this that passed so much in stupid laws and legislation."⁴⁶

In early January of 1961 William L. Higgs, a native white Mississippi attorney, filed suit in federal district court to enjoin the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission to cease monthly payments to the Citizens Council. The law that had created the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission included a provision allowing any member of the state legislature to inspect its books. Wiesenburg decided to examine the books because he believed the Sovereignty Commission was merely a front for the Citizens Council. After reviewing the commission's records, Wiesenburg issued a public letter to the state legislature showing the Sovereignty Commission had provided \$64,500 to the Citizens Council without documentation of how the funds would be used. He also noted that the commission had sent investigators into all of the state's eighty-two counties to collect information on individuals who were suspected of being sympathetic to civil rights for blacks.⁴⁷ A year later, Wiesenburg voted against a \$250,000 appropriation for the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, declaring:

there was no accounting for money that went to the council now and that it has been used to aid and abet the unpledged elector ticket, engage in a political campaign and elect the candidate of their choice.⁴⁸

In the spring of 1962 as litigation over James Meredith's admission to the University of Mississippi intensified, the legislature continued to adopt resolutions and pass acts, the sole purpose of which was to block integration at the university. Almost

⁴⁴ Commander of the troops President Eisenhower sent to Little Rock in 1957 during the integration of Central High School.

⁴⁵ Richard Rubin, *A State in Agony* (History Honor Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, privately printed, 1988), 68.

⁴⁶ Holmes, "Oral History Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 36.

⁴⁷ *Pascagoula Chronicle-Star*, April 21, 1961.

⁴⁸ Undated newspaper clipping in Mississippi Sovereignty Commission Records, SCR ID #7-0-5-64-1-1-2 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi).

without exception Wroten and Wiesenburg voted “no” on these matters. His house colleagues and newspapers gave him the sobriquet “Red Light Wiesenburg” because “no” votes were cast by pushing a button that activated a red light. Wiesenburg facetiously described his collaboration with Wroten as “the telephone booth caucus” because it was so small all of the members could fit into a telephone booth.⁴⁹ Bill Minor, the Jackson correspondent for the New Orleans Times-Picayune, mentioned Wiesenburg’s statement in a news column, and their opponents in the legislature used “the telephone booth caucus” to deride Wiesenburg and Wroten’s efforts.

Wiesenburg also opposed a bill that would set aside a law requiring the publication of town legal proceedings in the local newspaper. The final version of the bill was restricted to Holmes County and would allow the town of Durant to publish its legal proceedings in Lexington. Hazel Brannon Smith, an unrelenting foe of Governor Barnett, owned the weekly Durant newspaper, and enactment of this bill would have significantly affected her newspaper’s advertising revenue. In a statement to the legislature Wiesenburg called for defeat of the bill, saying:

If the Legislature can enact laws to discriminate and encourage economic reprisal against one newspaper for its views or editorial policies your newspaper may very well be the next subject of legislative attack. The right of freedom of the press is equally as sacred as those other fundamental rights of which Americans are justly proud.⁵⁰

Thanks to Wiesenburg’s efforts and those of other representatives, the senate bill eventually died on the house calendar. Despite the resistance of the legislature and Governor Barnett, on September 10, 1962, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black issued an order calling for James Meredith’s immediate admission to the University of Mississippi. Three days later Governor Barnett delivered a state-wide television address in which he declared “no school in our state will be integrated while I am your Governor.”⁵¹ Wiesenburg heard the speech while visiting with a constituent in Ocean Springs. Later in the day he responded to a telephone query from a reporter for the Gulfport Herald in which he asserted:

What the Governor is suggesting is not interposition, but nullification. I regard nullification as bordering on sedition and

⁴⁹ Yasuhiro Katagiri, “An Oral History with Mr. Joseph E. Wroten,” 32, Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi, Special Collections (1993).

⁵⁰ Memphis Press-Scimitar, April 30, 1962.

⁵¹ Quoted in Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance, James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 283.

treason. Every elected officer of the state of Mississippi has taken a solemn oath to support the Constitution of the United States as well as that of the state of Mississippi. Ours is a government of law and not of men.⁵²

Five days later the governor opened a special session of the legislature that had been convened to address court-ordered legislative reapportionment with a rousing speech in which he repeated his “Never, never, never” defiance of federal power and asserted that he would do everything in his power, “. . . to uphold our customs and traditions.”⁵³ At the speech’s conclusion, Speaker Sillers introduced a resolution that praised the governor for his stand against “political aggression . . . designed to disrupt and destroy Southern institutions and way of living.” Wiesenburg joined Joe Wroten in voting against the resolution. The next day the two representatives voted “no” on a proposed constitutional amendment to give the governor authority over college admissions in the event the trustees of higher education could not make a decision about the pending enrollment of James Meredith. Wiesenburg and Wroten also voted “no” on a bill that prohibited the enrollment of any individual “who had been convicted of a criminal charge or who was facing pending criminal charges.” This bill was directed against James Meredith because Hinds County officials had arrested him and charged him with perjury on the grounds that the voter registration form he signed attested he had lived in Hinds County for at least a year when in fact he had not.⁵⁴

Meredith was scheduled to enroll the next day so the legislature wanted to finalize this bill to ensure it was in place prior to his enrollment. A few minutes before the scheduled midnight adjournment, Wiesenburg called for reconsideration of the bill, which meant that under House rules the bill could not be considered until the next legislative session, at 2:00 p. m. the following day. His goal was to delay final action until after Meredith was enrolled. Claude Ramsay, president, Mississippi AFL/CIO, was in the House gallery viewing the proceedings and reported later:

all hell broke loose. They ganged around his desk, I thought they were going to drag him out of his chair and beat the hell out of

⁵² Quoted in Rubin, *A State of Agony*, 61.

⁵³ Quoted in Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 291.

⁵⁴ Meredith had explained the voter registration official told him not to worry about this because he was a veteran. Nevertheless, on September 20 he was arrested and after a ten minute hearing a Hinds County court found him guilty and sentenced him to one year in jail. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 301-302.

him . . . He is sitting there just as nonchalantly as you please.”⁵⁵

Three years later he described his opposition to the legislation to protect the Mississippi way of life as based on his belief:

The bills were poorly prepared, they were wrong in principle, they were wrong legally, they were wrong morally, they were wrong constitutionally.⁵⁶

After Wiesenburg returned to Pascagoula, he and Denise attended a high school football game. At previous games he would hear numerous people say “Hi Karl.” At this game no one spoke to them, including people they had been friends with for years.⁵⁷ The vice-chairman of the Jackson County Democratic Executive Committee published a letter to the editor of the Jackson Clarion-Ledger in which he deplored Representative Wiesenburg’s opposition to the governor’s efforts to maintain a segregated educational system, writing that Wiesenburg had not represented his constituents’ will and asserting, “I know of no person who is not ashamed of this blight upon Jackson County.”⁵⁸ He concluded his letter, “May God forgive us this sin of electing such a person to represent us.” In contrast, William Melton, a teacher in Clinton, Mississippi, wrote Wiesenburg saying, “. . . I do feel some constraint on my public utterances, letters to papers, etc. I try, therefore, to at least let people like you know privately that there are some people in the state cheering them on.”⁵⁹

The tragic Ole Miss riot on September 30 confirmed Wiesenburg’s earlier grim prediction that Governor Barnett’s actions to block James Meredith’s enrollment would result in anarchy, violence, and bloodshed. Six days after the riot, he joined Joe Wroten in opposing a House resolution calling for the federal government to remove Meredith from the university, withdraw U. S. marshals from the campus, and return federalized units of the Mississippi National Guard to the authority of the governor.⁶⁰ Less than a month later the Citizens Council issued a ten-page brochure, “Operation Ole Miss,” which placed all of the blame on federal officials and praised Governor Barnett’s actions. Shortly thereafter, the Mississippi Junior

⁵⁵ Orley B. Caudill, “Oral History Interview with Claude Ramsay” (1981), 63. Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

⁵⁶ Henderson, “Oral History Memoir of Karl Wiesenburg,” 38.

⁵⁷ Holmes, “An Interview with Karl Wiesenburg,” 26.

⁵⁸ Jackson Clarion-Ledger, October 4, 1962, quoted in Rubin, *A State of Agony*, 61.

⁵⁹ Melton to Wiesenburg, October 9, 1962, Wiesenburg Family Papers, Martha Reed, Pascagoula, Mississippi.

⁶⁰ Charles W. Eagles, “‘The Fight for Men’s Minds’: The Aftermath of the Ole Miss Riot of 1962,” *The Journal of Mississippi History* (Spring 2009), 23.

Chamber of Commerce published a twenty-five page brochure, "Oxford: A Warning for Americans," which absolved the governor of all blame and charged President John F. Kennedy and the Attorney General Robert Kennedy with full responsibility for the riot. The brochure asserted the president and attorney general had failed to allow the governor to obtain a legal ruling from the Supreme Court concerning the authority of Mississippi's sovereignty and right to enforce its own laws under the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution; had authorized 400 U. S. marshals to fire tear gas at students who were peaceably protesting James Meredith's enrollment; and had illegally federalized the Mississippi National Guard.⁶¹

Wiesenburg wrote a rebuttal to these allegations consisting of five short articles published in the editorial page of the *Pascagoula Chronicle* the week before Christmas and subsequently published them as a pamphlet under the title of "The Oxford Disaster - Price of Defiance." He described Governor Barnett as ignoring competent legal advisors that no further legal relief was possible and increasingly coming under the influence of the Citizens Council. ". . . [P]ressed by advisors who continued to cry 'never, never, never' he led his state down a path that inevitably led to riot, destruction and death."⁶²

Wiesenburg refuted the governor's defenders' claim that Barnett's actions were lawful under the U. S. Constitution by citing numerous sections in the Mississippi State Constitution that require conformance to the U. S. Constitution:

- It expressly recognizes that the federal law is the paramount law of the land.
- It vests full management and control of the affairs of the University of Mississippi in the Board of Trustees for the Institutions of Higher Learning. This includes the question of the admission of students to the university.
- The governor of the state has no authority or control of the internal affairs of the University of Mississippi nor can he admit or deny admission of any student.
- It is the duty of the governor of the state to see that law and order is maintained in the state, and to suppress riots and insurrections.
- The governor cannot determine what the law is, or what laws should be obeyed, but he is under his oath of office to enforce the laws of the land as judicially determined by the courts of the land.
- Neither the state legislature nor the state courts can interfere with the enforcement of the final decrees of the federal courts of the United States.

⁶¹ "Oxford: A Warning for Americans," (Jackson: Mississippi Junior Chamber of Commerce, 1962), 7, 9, 15.

⁶² Karl Wiesenburg, "The Oxford Disaster: The Price of Defiance," 1 (Reprint of articles appearing in the *Pascagoula Chronicle*, December 17-21, 1962).

- The Mississippi Supreme Court has held that the interpretations of the Constitution of the United States by the Supreme Court of the United States are binding upon all officials and constitute the law of the land.

In his discussion of the governor's use of "interposition," which under the reserved powers of the Tenth Amendment asserts the right of a state to interpose sovereignty against "illegal federal action," Wiesenburg noted this legal premise had never been upheld in the United States and specifically that in 1960 the U. S. Supreme Court had rejected this argument. He rejected as without merit the allegation that the attorney general had precipitated the riot because he was unwilling to await completion of judicial proceedings because between May 31, 1961, and September 10, 1962, the Meredith case had been heard by the United States District Court, and three times by the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, and Judge Black's order to immediately admit James Meredith to the University of Mississippi "was issued with the full knowledge and concurrence of all the Justices of the Supreme Court." The Supreme Court is the constitutional court of last resort so how, he asked, "could there be any 'judicial processes beyond the final pronouncement of the Supreme Court of the United States?'"⁶³

In his conclusion, Wiesenburg called for leaders to maintain law and order even when they disagree with court orders. He noted that citizens who advocated "law and order":

have been castigated by some newspapers whose columns are filled with vitriolic denunciation of the federal government.

The time has come for the many citizens who have been afraid to speak out on law and order to make themselves heard we must have law and order, we cannot continue to condone open defiance of our courts.⁶⁴

Supporters of Governor Barnett vociferously objected to the pamphlet. For example, State Senator W. M. Jones of Brookhaven wrote:

There is no way for me to stop you from mailing such trash and filth to me, but I assure you that I consider your article, 'Price of Defiance,' as giving aid and comfort to the enemies of my native state. You can't make that statement, you are not a native Mississippian . . . Even a mongrel dog taken in by a friendly soul

⁶³ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12.

shows more appreciation than you have shown for a State who has taken you in.”⁶⁵

Supporting letters for Wiesenburg came from several members of the state legislature, clergy, ordinary citizens, and attorneys, including William H. Mounger, president, Lamar Life Insurance Company,⁶⁶ and Twelfth District Chancery Judge Billy Neville.⁶⁷

Wiesenburg’s support for law and order was not received well by the Jackson County Bar Association. Early in 1963 two young Jackson County attorneys (Robert Oswald and Merle Palmer) introduced a resolution at a meeting of the county bar association “calling for a return to law and order by the citizens of the state.” One of the two lawyers made a motion to approve the resolution and the other seconded it, but the motion failed because no other lawyer in attendance supported it.⁶⁸ James Ira Ford, a highly respected Pascagoula attorney explained his opposition, saying, “I am first a Mississippian, after that an American. I will support Mississippi.”⁶⁹

In mid-October 1963, the Kennedy Administration was seeking a replacement for Jane Schutt, who had resigned as chair of the Mississippi Civil Rights Advisory Committee to the Civil Rights Commission, and Wiesenburg’s name was suggested. Lee White, special assistant counsel to the president, wrote to Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall for his views. Marshall spoke very highly of Wiesenburg but said “no one associated with the Commission will ever have any credence in Mississippi.”⁷⁰ President Kennedy’s assassination put a temporary hold on any action, but by mid-December White moved forward on the nomination. On December 23, 1963, Peter Sussman, assistant staff director, U. S. Commission of Civil Rights, wrote to Wiesenburg and informed him of the Administration’s desire to nominate him as chair of the Mississippi Civil Rights Advisory Committee.⁷¹ Wiesenburg declined the nomination, writing “the political situation in this state makes it impossible for any person of stature to serve on the Mississippi Civil Rights Advisory Committee.” He also vented his anger and frustration with the Kennedy Administration’s policy

⁶⁵ Jones to Wiesenburg, March 18, 1963, Wiesenburg Family Papers.

⁶⁶ Mounger to Wiesenburg, February 8, 1963, Wiesenburg Family Papers.

⁶⁷ Neville to Wiesenburg, January 7, 1963, Wiesenburg Family Papers.

⁶⁸ Ira Harkey, *The Smell of Burning Crosses*, A White Integrationist Editor in Mississippi (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2006), 210. Robert Oswald to Charles Dollar, email message, June 24, 2015.

⁶⁹ Harkey, *The Smell of Burning Crosses*, 31.

⁷⁰ Marshall to White, November 18, 1963, Box 19, Civil Rights Commission 1963, JFK Library, Boston, MA.

⁷¹ Sussman to Wiesenburg, December 23, 1963, Box 19, Civil Rights Commission 1963, JFK Library.

of placating Senator Eastland:

In Mississippi the national administration has consistently followed the policy of punishing their friends and rewarding their enemies. The offer of the present appointment is one of the few offers that has been made to a loyal democrat in this administration, and this offer is, of course, an invitation to commit social, political and economic suicide.⁷²

After “The Oxford Disaster - Price of Defiance” (1964 - 1990)

As the political dust settled after publication of “The Oxford Disaster - Price of Defiance,” Wiesenburg had a less visible public role in state politics, but behind the scenes he and his friends continued their efforts. In January 1964 he and his old friend Claude Ramsay discussed the Sovereignty Commission’s funding of the Citizens Council. They concluded that litigation was not propitious at the time because the case would be heard by a Hinds County justice who was sympathetic to the Citizens Council. They decided to delay any action until they saw what the legislature did about funding. In the meantime Wiesenburg proposed they solicit several prominent lawyers throughout the state to join the case once they decided to go to court.⁷³ However, no further action was required once they learned of Attorney General Joe Patterson’s opposition to continued state funding of the Citizens Council Forum program. Later that year Wiesenburg worked with Claude Ramsay to prepare a legal challenge to the license renewal of the Jackson television station WLBT. In addition, in November 1963, he agreed to a request from Mississippians for Public Education for a meeting to discuss the status of public education in Mississippi and dissemination of more copies of “The Oxford Disaster - Price of Defiance.” He authorized distribution of the pamphlet, and supporters found funds to pay the printing costs.

In 1967, an interviewer asked Wiesenburg what impact he thought the Voting Rights Act of 1965 would have on state politics.

I think the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is going to have a tremendous impact on the state of Mississippi . . . The threat of Negro registration and Negro voting is going to have a profound effect on Mississippi politics. You’re not going to see near as many of these

⁷² Wiesenburg to Sussman, December 27, 1963, “Commission on Civil Rights,” Box 3, Office Files of Lee C. White, LBJ Library, Austin, TX.

⁷³ Ramsay to Lawrence Rabb, Wiesenburg Family Papers, January 7, 1964.

Negro-baiting speeches and this old business of striding up to the podium and getting your name on the front page of the papers by yelling “nigger” and denouncing everybody you can think of that might sound like a moderate. I think that day is going to disappear in Mississippi, and perhaps in the next generation you may even have genuine participation by Negroes in the political life of Mississippi, but I don’t expect that during my own time.⁷⁴

Wiesenburg remained active in local politics in Pascagoula. He stood for election in 1973 as a city commissioner and received the highest number of votes among twenty-six candidates. He became involved in a movement to replace the city commission governance structure with a mayor and city council structure in which council members represented wards. By 1975, Pascagoula had a city council structure, and Wiesenburg chose not to be a candidate for reelection. For several years he was the attorney for the Pascagoula School System and in 1969 led an effort to integrate the school system that occurred without any incidents. He also concentrated on building up his law practice, becoming a “go-to” lawyer for Ingalls Shipyard, handling labor relations and advising on the non-discriminatory requirements of equal employment⁷⁵ mandated by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In addition, he served as the attorney for the Jackson County Port Authority, the Jackson County Planning Commission, and the Jackson County Board of Supervisors.

In January 1956 when Wiesenburg was sworn in as the Jackson County representative in the Mississippi House of Representatives, he was a self-made lawyer with considerable ability and intelligence but with a local reputation of being a maverick and having a single goal, establishment of a Jackson County Port Authority that would make Pascagoula a sea port. Within two years he had secured passage of a statute that achieved this goal and put the citizens of Jackson County, black and white, on a path to substantial economic improvement. He then joined Representative Joe Wroten and other like-minded white Mississippians in working to break down the walls of the “Closed Society.”

Half a century later, few Mississippians appreciate his contribution to establishing seaports on the Mississippi Coast. Nor do they know about his courageous

⁷⁴ Henderson, “Oral History Memoir of Karl Wiesenburg,” 46.

⁷⁵ Email from Bill Reed (Wiesenburg’s partner beginning in 1976), June 24, 2014. As Ingalls’ lawyer, Wiesenburg was heavily involved in both litigation under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and dealing with the EEOC and other agencies to keep Ingalls out of legal trouble. See undated (1969) Clarion-Ledger newspaper clipping that describes how Ingalls Shipyard was complying with the Department of Defense requirement for non-discrimination employment.

and articulate opposition to the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, the Ku Klux Klan, the Citizens Council, and Governor Ross Barnett's efforts to maintain the Mississippi way of life in which white supremacy and second-class citizenship for blacks had to be protected at all costs. This course of action was not an easy path for Wiesenburg. On one occasion he remarked that he personally was "lax on the principle of segregation" but recognized that getting things done politically during his first term as a state legislator required popular association with segregation. After he learned in 1959 that white and black schools in Jackson County were very unequal, largely because whites controlled the school budgeting process, he became a champion of integrated schools. By 1960 his House colleague, Joe Wroten, of Greenville, Mississippi, had convinced him that segregation not only resulted in inferior black schools but that it was also morally wrong.

Wiesenburg joined other white Mississippi racial moderates including P. D. East, Ira Harkey, Florence Mars, Claude Ramsay, Frank Smith, Hazel Brannon Smith, William Winter, and Joe Wroten, each of whom marched to a different drummer than most white Mississippians. Wiesenburg's drummer called for national allegiance to the United States of America as a citizen and allegiance to Mississippi through residence⁷⁶ except when it conflicted with his national allegiance. For Wiesenburg this allegiance was manifested in a sense of nationhood enshrined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, so he viewed many of the activities of the Citizens Council and legislative initiatives of the Barnett Administration as trampling on the constitutional rights of all citizens of Mississippi. Another factor that contributed to his emergence as a racial moderate was his abhorrence of extremism because it usually led to violence. This conviction on his part is one reason why he was a strong proponent of law and order. Wiesenburg also viewed the Ku Klux Klan as dangerously extremist and considered members of the Citizens Council as educated Klansmen:

who instead of advocating open violence and going around with hoods [went about and talking] such things as states' rights, interposition, nullification and other things, which in my opinion were synonymous with sedition . . . when you got underneath them that had the same mentality as the Ku Klux Klan.⁷⁷

As the firestorm of opposition to equal justice, equal educational opportunities, and equal political rights for all Mississippians burned out in the late 1960s and

⁷⁶ Wiesenburg liked to characterize himself as being an American by allegiance to the United States of America and Mississippian by residence.

⁷⁷ Rubin, "An Oral History Interview with Karl Wiesenburg," 24.

1970s, Wiesenburg withdrew from active participation in politics and increased his engagement with Ingalls Shipyard and other organizations to ensure they complied with the 1964 Civil Rights Act requirement for Equal Employment Opportunity.

Wiesenburg died of a pulmonary embolism on June 19, 1990, at the age of seventy-nine. He could not have planned his death better: he died with key in hand after getting into his car to drive to his office. Years earlier Bill Reed, a son-in-law and law partner, noted his father-in-law acknowledged that during his two terms as a state legislator he made important contributions to civil rights in Mississippi. However, he believed his most important contribution to justice and equality for all citizens in Jackson County was his promotion of economic growth through the Pascagoula Port Authority, which created job opportunities that enabled blacks to break out of poverty and second-class citizenship.⁷⁸ At that time, Ingalls was the largest single private employer in Mississippi, so these opportunities were not limited to Jackson County.

Perhaps the most fitting tribute to his life, and one he would have especially cherished, came from the Jackson County Bar Association several months after his death.⁷⁹

WHEREAS, Karl Wiesenburg's life as a lawyer set an example of honesty, integrity, fidelity, and dedication which is unexcelled in Mississippi and which influenced many younger men and women towards the path of excellence; and, WHEREAS, Karl willingly assisted young lawyers who sought his counsel to understand a complicated point of law, a baffling rule of procedure, or to interpret a complex contract; and, WHEREAS, his life as a citizen of Jackson County was that of a leader who promoted the public good, although often at great personal cost to himself; and, WHEREAS, he was without peer as a man of vision, blessed with the talent to turn vision into the realities we see throughout Jackson County in libraries, schools, community college, public, port and industrial facilities, and jobs; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Jackson County Bar Association hereby memorializes Karl Wiesenburg whose life made such a magnificent difference for the people of Jackson County.

⁷⁸ Bill Reed to Charles Dollar, email, June 24, 2014.

⁷⁹ Copy in possession of the author, courtesy of Bill Reed.

The Legacy of the Child Development Group of Mississippi: White Opposition to Head Start in Mississippi, 1965–1972¹

by Emma Folwell

In recent years, the most pressing debates among historians of the African American Freedom Struggle have revolved around the concept of a long Civil Rights Movement. The details of these historiographical arguments may be new, but they reflect a well-established pattern, for they concentrate on one side of what was a two-sided struggle. As the activities of civil rights proponents become ever more contextualized, white opposition to African American advancement has remained relatively overlooked.² The main debates have left white massive resistance narrowly defined as a decade-long political backlash triggered by the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and ending with the passage of civil rights legislation in the mid-1960s, despite some historians' exploration of the depth and complexity of a segregationist movement that was too diverse and multifaceted simply to be initiated by the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling or halted by the Civil and Voting Rights Acts.³ Studies of pre-*Brown* and post-1964 expressions of white opposition have expanded

¹ The research on which this article is based was made possible by the support of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, the Royal Historical Society, and the British Association for American Studies.

² Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–63. Emilye Crosby and others, notably Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 265–88, critique recent Long Civil Rights scholarship. Crosby emphasizes the importance of local studies in shaping a new understanding of the movement, including the nature and persistence of white resistance. Emilye Crosby, "The Politics of Writing and Teaching Movement History" in Crosby, ed., *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up: Local Struggles, A National Movement* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 1–42.

³ Michael J. Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 81–118; George Lewis, *Massive Resistance: The White Response to the Civil Rights Movement* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 24.

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our understanding of massive resistance to an evolving expression and often violent implementation of white supremacy encompassing political, social, and economic facets. This understanding incorporates white southern opposition to the New Deal, the Southern Manifesto and interposition, White Citizens' Councils, State Sovereignty Commissions, and the Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedoms to anti-busing campaigns, finding national political expression through the Dixiecrat Revolt, Goldwater, Wallace, Nixon (to a certain extent), and Reagan.⁴ One of the most significant aspects of post-1964 massive resistance is its links to emerging national conservatism. Focusing on a single southern state, historian Joseph Crespino has shown how outright opposition gave way to "strategic accommodations" and the segregationist rhetoric of Mississippi governors such as Theodore Bilbo and Ross Barnett softened into ostensibly race neutral language that entrenched white supremacy without the vitriolic racism and violence of "short" massive resistance.⁵ While post-1964 massive resistance saw a marked change in the extent of accommodation, white opponents of African American advancement drew on the mechanisms and methods of massive resistance dating back to the 1930s.⁶

The available historical evidence points unequivocally to the need to contextualize white opposition to civil rights activists as richly as their opponents, for there are clear connections between these distinct manifestations of massive resistance, through expressions of social, political, and economic conservatism, and continuities in the rhetoric and mechanisms of opposition. A focus on segregationist opposition to federal social welfare programs, for example, illuminates clear connections from white southern opposition to the New Deal to opponents of Johnson's Great Society and white southern support for Reagan in his attacks on "welfare queens" and war on welfare. White opposition to the War on Poverty provides an insight into this link at a

⁴ Glenn Feldman, ed., *Before Brown: Civil Rights and White Backlash in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

⁵ Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Woodstock, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 2007). This language was inherited from the rhetoric of earlier Mississippi politicians rather than the suburban Sunbelt, although its importance to the conservatism of the Sunbelt suburbs is clearly illustrated by Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005) and Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁶ At least 1930; Crespino notes that conservative color blindness and racial code words were being used by Mississippi segregationists as far back as 1890. Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 8–9.

significant moment as whites who struggled to find a coherent response to civil rights legislation, the changing nature of the Southern Democratic Party, and the growing conservatism of the national Republican Party, found controversial antipoverty programs a useful target for uniting opposition. Drawing on some of the methods and mechanisms of the earlier expressions of massive resistance, white opponents of the War on Poverty began the evolution of an ostensibly color blind language of opposition to social welfare that would become a central tenet of national conservative opposition to public welfare programs.⁷

Sociologists and historians have begun to explore the often controversial connections between civil rights activists and War on Poverty programs in the South. Studies by Kenneth T. Andrews, Susan Youngblood Ashmore, Kent Germany, and Amy Jordan have deepened our understanding of the era traditionally seen as the demise of the Civil Rights Movement through their examinations of the connections and conflicts between antipoverty programs and civil rights activists.⁸ However, white opposition to antipoverty programs, though widely publicized at the time, especially in Mississippi, has received little scholarly attention.⁹ Head Start in Mississippi, at first in the form of the highly controversial Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), gave meaning to newly-won political rights of African Americans. Developing from Freedom Summer's Freedom Schools, CDGM was established by the outsiders so reviled by Mississippi's white establishment. However, at the local level, Head

⁷ While Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) programs were separate from welfare programs, with emphasis being placed on a "hand up, not a hand out," in Mississippi, the distinction was subsumed under overwhelming racial opposition. In many cases antipoverty programs took the place of welfare programs as a target—even by the late 1960s many of Mississippi's African Americans were still excluded from welfare rolls by the racism of local Public Welfare Departments, while antipoverty programs, especially Head Start, were all black.

⁸ Kenneth T. Andrews, "Social Movements and Policy Implementation: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty, 1965 to 1971," *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 1, (February 2001): 71–95; Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama, 1964–1972* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2008); Kent B. Germany, *New Orleans after the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); Amy Jordan, "Fighting for the CDGM: Poor People, Local Politics and the Complicated Legacy of Head Start" in Annelise Orleck and L. G. Hazirjian, eds., *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964–1980* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2011); and William Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

⁹ The exceptions are Clayson, *Freedom Is Not Enough* and David C. Carter, *The Music Has Gone Out of the Movement: Civil Rights and the Johnson Administration, 1965–1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

Start centers were staffed by local poor African Americans, and it was here at the grassroots that the program had its most significant impact. Employment in Head Start programs meant poor African Americans could register to vote without fear of losing their jobs. More than this it provided African Americans, for the first time with a meaningful measure of power and control over their lives, providing an opportunity to exercise the right and responsibility to think, act, and choose for themselves and their children.¹⁰ Historians of the Civil Rights Movement have focused too much on the impact of outsiders to the exclusion of the equally important African American activists left behind in their wake. Established and operated at the state level by white northern liberals and CDGM-remnants, the grass roots African American Head Start centers were left without funding after the white campaign against CDGM, providing an example of what happened after the outsiders (and the national attention they brought with them) departed.¹¹ These CDGM-remnants, like civil rights activists after Freedom Summer, were left to face white Mississippi's backlash. In the white establishment's attempts to seize control of federal funds coupled with their reluctant acceptance of a limited amount of African American involvement, the evolution of Massive Resistance becomes apparent.

Mississippi serves as an ideal location for such a case study. Not only was the state at the heart of the majority of the manifestations of massive resistance, it was central to the emerging national conservatism and home to one of the earliest and most controversial Head Start programs in the county, a program whose turbulent history and legacy showcases the effects of the presence and departure of outsiders. Mississippi's Massive Resistance, like its contribution to emerging national conservatism, was unique and important but not exceptional. Indeed, the growth of the modern Republican Party in a state lacking the Sunbelt suburbs that scholars have shown to be the natural breeding ground of Republicanism makes Mississippi not exceptional but central. Republicanism in the state drew less on a shared environment than on a basic conservative cultural,

¹⁰ "Fast for Freedom: Some Opinions of These Pre-School Centers," United States National Student Association pamphlet, May 1967, folder 3, box 149, Johnson Family Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of Southern Mississippi.

¹¹ Tom Levin left in 1965, Polly Greenberg in June 1966, followed by John Mudd and Marvin Hoffman in 1967. Polly Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes: A Biased Biography of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), A Story of Maximum Feasible Poor Parent Participation* (London: [1969] Youth Policy Institute, 1990 repr.), 285, 658.

racial, and religious foundation.¹² Mississippi, as the poorest state in the Union, also provides a unique vantage point on the War on Poverty. Its antipoverty programs were diverse and controversial though markedly different from the large, urban, and intensely politicized Community Action Programs (CAPs) that are the usual focus of scholarly attention. Opposition to Mississippi's War on Poverty programs thus illustrates the development of the race neutral language that would become central to emerging national conservatism, while drawing on the mechanisms of post-*Brown* massive resistance, the political discontent of the Dixiecrat Revolt, and white Southern conservative opposition to the New Deal.

In opposing CDGM, white Mississippi—from the political elite to the grassroots—utilized the methods, mechanisms, and rhetoric of earlier phases of massive resistance. Mississippi's politicians drew on the anti-communism elements of the post-Brown massive resistance as well as more successfully utilizing the State Sovereignty Commission to infiltrate, undermine, and report on the CDGM. Local reporters played on the white community's fears of anticommunism and the new threat of Black Power, combining them with New Deal era and Dixiecrat rhetoric opposing social welfare programs and federal intervention. United States Senator John C. Stennis, responding to the demands of his constituents wielded his influence to bring pressure on the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and the White House to defund CDGM.¹³ Local newspapers printed new, almost daily accusations of wrongdoing against CDGM, and the State Sovereignty Commission expanded its spy network to infiltrate the Groups' Head Start centers. Used by Senator Stennis in his press briefings and on the floor of the U. S. Senate, the Sovereignty Commission reports provided a wealth of material for the local media to construct an image of Head Start as corrupt, a waste of tax dollars, and a source of funding of civil rights activism. Local reporters called for responsible Mississippians to run local programs, frequently referring to the lack of judgment of administration bureaucrats and of the generous distribution of tax money, carefully constructed language which not only avoids overt references to race, but which draws on powerful Southern tenets opposing federal interference and concerns over the redistribution

¹² Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 5; Chris Danielson, *After Freedom Summer: How Race Realigned Mississippi Politics, 1965–1986* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 5.

¹³ According to one reporter, "Citizens of Mississippi and the rest of the U. S. will be eternally in the debt of Senator John Stennis of Mississippi for his courageous persistent and successful exposure of the CDGM with the end result that this spurious organization which has been filching public monies for personal aggrandizement and promotion of civil rights has been completely liquidated." "Thanks, John Stennis," *Winston County Journal*, October 27, 1966.

of wealth.¹⁴ The mechanisms of earlier massive resistance were successfully combined with a new language that echoed the conservative rhetoric of United States Senator Barry Goldwater, drawing on his extensive base of support in the state.¹⁵ The Sovereignty Commission and local press employed the massive resistance rhetoric of “outside agitators” and charges of communism, linking their opposition to CDGM to wider national concerns. Charges of communistic activity failed to have any weight with OEO, as accusations were even more unlikely than earlier charges of communism against civil rights activists.¹⁶ With House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in terminal decline and the Vietnam War becoming increasingly unpopular, appealing to anticommunism was less successful. However, such accusations found favor with the local press, who reported frequently on the red influence on OEO programs. In the wake of the Watts riot, local reporters utilized the new national fears of black power, depicting CDGM as “an instrument of the black separatist movement.”¹⁷ One of the most potent aspects of all phases of massive resistance had been the success of politicians and reporters in linking the overt racism of the Deep South with wider concerns. Both the Dixiecrat revolt and opponents of school integration drew on national concerns of the expanding power of the federal government, while anti-Communism provided a rich vein of hysteria to exploit. Now the menace of black power replaced the threat of Communism as local whites seized on fears of black nationalism to articulate grassroots white fears about an outside alien force in a way that had national resonance.

The evolution of the language of massive resistance was one of the most significant and potent legacies of white opposition to CDGM. However, not all of the elements of massive resistance proved as successful; ultimately Stennis’s campaign failed to rid Mississippi of Head Start or the Child Development Group. While the White House was susceptible to pressure from Senator Stennis, OEO director Sargent Shriver’s commitment to support grassroots organizations,

¹⁴ “More Bad Apple Money,” unknown newspaper, March 5, 1966, folder “RS South-east Region,” box 20, Bernard L. Boutin Papers, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library (hereafter cited as LBJL).

¹⁵ In the 1964 presidential election, the first following the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Goldwater received 87.14 percent of Mississippi’s popular vote.

¹⁶ “Memo to File,” May 29, 1967, SCR ID # 6-45-5-25-2-1-1, Series 2515: Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Records 1994–2006, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/result.php?image=/data/sov_commission/images/png/cd06/047421.png&otherstuff=6|45|5|25|1|1|1|46731.

¹⁷ Rowland Evans and R. Novak, “Radicals Fighting to Keep State Poverty War Control,” *Clarion Ledger*, January 30, 1967; Victor Riesel, “Red Influence Seen in Unrest,” *Commercial Appeal*, July 30, 1967.

though weak, was bolstered by his desire to avoid further adverse publicity.¹⁸ Though irreversibly damaged and robbed of its ability to be an instrument for social change, the strength, perseverance, and dedication of CDGM staff ensured the organization's survival albeit with significantly reduced funding.¹⁹ Across the state, CDGM had engaged poor African American communities in Head Start, and those communities were now left without funding and facing the wrath of local whites newly awakened to the potential threat of the War on Poverty. Senators John C. Stennis and James O. Eastland presented a united public front of opposition to the Great Society but having discredited CDGM, they used their influence in Washington to increase Mississippi's share of antipoverty funds. In Mississippi, they mobilized networks of power and influence to wrest control of this money from grassroots African American programs. Eastland drew on his long history of subverting federal funds intended to aid the poor into his own and other rich planters' coffers, while Stennis responded to white constituents concerns by encouraging local responsible people to take control of federal funds in their communities.²⁰ State Sovereignty Commission investigators, unable to secure any further sanctions against the group turned their vicious attention to any Head Start program linked to CDGM, however tenuous the connection. Over the next several years, commission investigators wrote hundreds of reports on these alleged CDGM-influenced programs, undermining CDGM offshoot Friends of the Children of Mississippi and CDGM's state-wide biracial, establishment-approved replacement Mississippi Action for Progress (MAP). The commission provided evidence to successive governors on alleged malfeasance in various African American, former CDGM programs. As white politicians, local officials, and businessmen across the state created their own community action agencies, they clashed with these CDGM-remnants for control of federal funds. While these battles played out differently in communities across the state, poor African Americans tenaciously clung onto

¹⁸ Scott Stossel, *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 462–67.

¹⁹ Tom Levin quoted in Polly Greenberg, "Three Core Concepts of the War on Poverty: Their Origins and Significance in Head Start" in Edward Zigler and S. Styfco, eds., *The Head Start Debates* (Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 2004), 80–81. Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (London: University of California Press, 1995), 347.

²⁰ J. Todd Moye, *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945–1986* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 168. Senator Stennis to Clyde Smith, October 19, 1967, folder 51, box 7, Series 25, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, Mississippi State University (hereafter cited as MSU).

their programs, sometimes successfully, but more often not. Despite the eventual and perhaps inevitable near universal loss of control of their programs by poor blacks, battles with the local white establishment had a profound effect on the future of Head Start in the state.

The rural Bolivar and Sunflower Counties in the Mississippi Delta offer the opportunity to explore often overlooked rural Community Action Programs and to examine the complexity and diversity of the white response to Head Start despite the similar political, economic, geographic, and racial characteristics of the two counties. Extremist white segregationists dominated every aspect of social, economic, and political life, rigidly enforcing segregation in the small isolated communities of Bolivar and Sunflower Counties. Historians of the Klan have pointed to a diminishing impact of violent extremism in the late-1960s. Drabble suggests that the FBI's Counterintelligence White Hate Program had successfully infiltrated the organization, and despite its lack of success in securing prosecutions, the HUAC's Klan investigations did have some effect in diminishing Klan activity.²¹ However, as Newton has noted, Southwest Mississippi beginning in 1964 became a hotbed of extremist violence, which persisted throughout the remainder of the decade spreading into the Delta and much of the rest of the state. Delta counties had been dominated by White Citizens Councils in the decade following *Brown*; unlike the counties of Southwest Mississippi, the repressive racial structure of the plantation economy rendered the Klan's violent enforcement unnecessary.²² However, with the decline of Citizens' Council influence and the increasing activism of African Americans in the Delta, violent white supremacist organizations began to make headway in these counties. By 1966, FBI reports on Klan activity indicate the presence of the Klan in Bolivar, Coahoma, Leflore, Washington, and Yazoo Counties.²³ Internal conflicts and inter-Klan rivalries created a volatile situation. Between the Mississippi White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Alabama-based United Klans of America (who had made Adams County a base from which to invade Mississippi), and the Americans for the Preservation of the White Race, white extremists' influence remained widespread and entrenched amongst local

²¹ John Drabble, "The FBI, COINTELPRO-WHITE HATE, and the Decline of the KKK Organizations in Mississippi, 1964–1971," *Journal of Mississippi History* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 353–402.

²² Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 111–12.

²³ "Member List: White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi," folder 1, box 142, Johnson Family Papers, Archives and Special Collections, University of Southern Mississippi. In Sunflower County, the White Citizens' Councils were so reminiscent of the Klan, a Klavern would have been obsolete.

officials, businessmen, and even churches in many areas of Mississippi in the late 1960s.²⁴ Individual acts of terror against civil rights activists, such as the bombing of the car of local NAACP leader George Metcalfe in 1965 and a second attempt on his life the following year, expanded to include violent attacks on Head Start staff and centers across the state. Beginning in 1965 with shootings and arson attacks against CDGM centers, violent opposition to Head Start expanded to include the harassment, intimidation, and economic oppression of Head Start personnel both black and white, CDGM and non-CDGM affiliated. CDGM's state-wide biracial successor Mississippi Action for Progress faced a wave of violence against its white employees in 1967.²⁵ Although attacks waned by the end of the decade, Head Start centers remained targets of violent white opposition; in 1970 a county attorney in Liberty threw a brick through the window of Amite County's Head Start office.²⁶

Bolivar County

Bolivar County's poor white community remained committed to segregation and largely unaffected by the passage of the civil rights legislation by 1965. Despite the extent and depth of poverty in the county, poor whites uniformly refused to send their children to CDGM's Head Start centers. High unemployment due to agricultural mechanization and lack of industry, poor housing, health, and sanitation resulting from widespread tenant farming and sharecropping resulted in 43.1 percent of the county's population living in poverty. There were numerically far more poor African Americans in the county; approximately 10 percent of the white population lived in poverty while over 90 percent of the African American population of the county were poor.²⁷ The poor African

²⁴ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi: A History* (Jefferson, McFarland & Co., 2010), 163; M. Bryant, "Fact Sheet: Problems and Victories of Lincoln County MAP Head Start Program," November 29, 1967, folder "Executive Session," box 1, Hodding Carter III Papers, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

²⁵ Roland Evans and R. Novak, "Mississippi Klan Shifts Gears; Aims Wrath at Head Start Project," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, March 7, 1967.

²⁶ "Local Attorney Pleads Guilty to Malicious Mischief," *Southern Herald*, May 7, 1970.

²⁷ Evaluation Report of Bolivar County CAP, April 19, 1969, folder "Mississippi Bolivar County Community Action Program Inc., Cleveland Mississippi," box 3, RG 381, National Archives and Records Administration South East (hereafter cited as NARA SE); "OEO Information Center Community Profile: Bolivar County," box 49, office files of Fred Panzer, LBJL.

American community, numerically larger than the poor white community and more accustomed to community activism through civil rights and church activities, saw more quickly than poor whites the potential of Head Start to help the entire poor community and not just children.²⁸ However, the middle class whites involved in creating the Bolivar County Community Action Program (BCCAP) were both more pragmatic about the likely inevitability of civil rights legislation and the need for federal funds and perhaps most importantly, would be less immediately affected by the required integration. White board members included businessmen, local officials, and civic leaders whose children would not have to attend the potentially integrated Head Start classes. Recognizing that access to and thus control over federal funds would necessitate accepting certain compromises, Bolivar County's political leadership appointed six white and six African American men to serve on the board of directors. As acquiescence to OEO's requirement that the board reflect the racial composition of the community was the only way to secure funding—and thus begin to erode support and funding for CDGM in Bolivar County—the Bolivar County Community Action Committee (BCCAP) voluntarily accepted an integrated board. As one of the first integrated CAP Boards in the South created by the local political leadership, BCCAP was lauded in the local (liberal) press.²⁹ However this veneer of interracial cooperation masked an implacable resistance to ceding control to or even sharing power with African Americans. Bolivar County's white political leadership selected six middle class, conservative African Americans as board members, men with economic ties to the white community, a vested interest in yielding to the demands of the white board members and very little knowledge of or interest in the needs of poor blacks. Acquiescing to this limited and controllable integration, white men like board chairman Sam Long and program director Earl Davis ensured their control of the BCCAP would go unchallenged. BCCAP was by no means alone in excluding poor participation. OEO Region III, including Deep South states committed to preserving white control, had the lowest percentage of poor representation on CAP Boards in the country, Mississippi, the lowest in the region.³⁰ However, Bolivar County's

²⁸ Reverend Sammie Rash, interview by Mike Garvey, March 30, 1977, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/8450>.

²⁹ C. Ellis, "Bolivar County CAP Unites Races for Common Purpose," *Delta Democrat Times*, October 5, 1966.

³⁰ Sargent Shriver to Leon Gilgoff, December 4, 1965, folder "FG 269-1, CAP October-December 1965," box 9, Bernard L. Boutin Papers, LBJL. OEO Region III was comprised of Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, and South Carolina.

political establishment was more successful than most. They manufactured a program that destroyed the opportunity for genuine poor community participation which was lauded for its progressive, interracial success at the state and national level.³¹

Denied the chance for a voice within the establishment program, the county's former CDGM workers continued to operate their Head Start centers voluntarily hoping that CDGM's grant would be renewed. However, in January 1966 it became clear the former CDGM centers in the county would not be refunded. CDGM's \$5.3 million grant did not include Bolivar County. OEO instead supported the creation of a county-wide Head Start program operated under BCCAP, which rejected CDGM's application to operate as its delegate agency in the county.³² Bolivar County did not have a diverse or particularly strong network of civil rights activists. Pockets of activism were isolated and restricted to areas with extremely high African American populations such as Shaw and the all-black town of Mound Bayou. However, the proposed operation of Head Start by BCCAP crystallized the mobilization of the African American community.³³ Led by local NAACP leader Amzie Moore and former CDGM staff, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Delta Ministry worked together to build and support the Head Start program voluntarily while lobbying OEO for funding. Despite the persistence of white claims that CDGM was the lynchpin in a Black Nationalist conspiracy and a front for the MFDP, CDGM (and Head Start more generally) had been more a source of division than unity for local activists. While MFDP was affiliated with state CDGM leadership, at the local level the relationship between the two groups could be strained. Many SNCC activists opposed involvement with Head Start, fearing the conditions that would be attached to federal funding. The NAACP had a particularly stormy relationship with CDGM. State NAACP leaders resented NAACP staff's exclusion from the program; in over eighty centers across the state only one NAACP staff member was employed by CDGM. When the NAACP state President Aaron Henry and Field Representative Charles Evers gave their support to CDGM's state-wide replacement Mississippi Action for Progress,

³¹ John C. Stennis to Sargent Shriver, January 26, 1967, folder 51, box 7, Series 25, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, MSU.

³² William Bozman to Theodore Berry, March 24, 1966, folder "FG 269-1 Community Action Program January 1966," box 8, Bernard L. Boutin Papers, LBJL.

³³ Andrews, "Social Movements and Policy Implementation," 87.

the relationship of the two organizations deteriorated even further.³⁴ Though the NAACP State Conference voted to support CDGM's application to OEO for further funding in the midst of the controversy, Henry's acceptance of a position on MAP's board infuriated CDGM Director John Mudd. Mudd evoked the language of betrayal, drawing comparisons with post-Reconstruction era plantations, complete with a white leader and "head nigger," anger echoed in local fliers which called on African Americans to demonstrate in opposition to the "third era of slavery."³⁵

Mississippi's white leaders, uninterested or unaware of the divisions Head Start had created among activists found the notion of alleging communist-inspired Delta Ministry-CDGM-MFDP coalition appealing. Drawing on the language of earlier Massive Resisters, influential Mississippi Democrat lawyer and friend of the president, Douglas Wynn attempted to circumvent OEO by appealing directly to the president's Special Counsel Harry McPherson. Combining the threat of Black Power with thinly veiled warnings about the potential political consequences of a failure to support BCCAP, Wynn claimed the 'DM-CDGM-MFDP coalition' had been trying in every possible way to defeat the attempts of the moderate right thinking people in Mississippi.³⁶ McPherson who had relied on Wynn's knowledge of Mississippi politics to shape a state-wide replacement for CDGM that was acceptable to the white establishment, now found Wynn urging him to intervene with OEO in favor of BCCAP. OEO, caught between political pressure and their belief that the survival of the former CDGM group in Bolivar County was of paramount importance, made the unusual decision to fund two parallel Head Start Programs. BCCAP was authorized to create a Head Start program for 1,500 children, while the former CDGM group became Associated Communities of Bolivar County (ACBC), serving 1,300 children as a delegate agency of BCCAP. Together these two Head Start programs employed over 700 people and received \$1.75 million

³⁴ Lillian Louie to Gloster B. Current, October 6, 1966, in R. H. Boehm, J. H. Bracey Jr., and A. Meier, eds., *Papers of the NAACP, Part 28: Special subject files, 1966-1970, Series A, Africa - Poor People's Campaign* (Bethesda: 1996), microfilm reel 10 fr.0705; "Jackson Negroes Charge Betrayal," *New York Times*, October 9, 1966.

³⁵ M. Hoffman and J. Mudd, "The New Plantation," *Nation*, October 24, 1966, p. 411-15; flyer, October 3, 1966, box 2, Loose Materials, Hodding Carter III Papers, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

³⁶ Douglas Wynn to Harry McPherson, April 2, 1966, folder "Poverty (1966) [2 of 2]," box 14, office files of Harry McPherson, LBJL.

federal funds annually.³⁷

Despite having secured funding for its own Head Start program, BCCAP's Board and executive director Earl Davis remained concerned that ACBC would fuel civil rights activities and teach children Black Power. In reality ACBC neither funded civil rights activities nor taught Black Power, but it did have a profound impact on the entire African American community. The white threat to Head Start united the limited and isolated activists operating in the county in defense of the program.³⁸ ACBC gave poor blacks independence from oppression and deprivation, as employment in Head Start ensured African Americans could exercise their newly-acquired right to vote without fear of losing their jobs. It liberated the black community, getting some of the poor off welfare lists and providing them with a little dignity. The program's impact was not limited to the poor community. ACBC united the whole black community of Bolivar County. This unity engendered in support of the program enabled the election of Kermit Stanton as the first black county supervisor in Mississippi since Reconstruction.³⁹ BCCAP Executive Director Earl Davis, having been unsuccessful in his attempts to ensure that BCCAP was the sole recipient of Head Start funds in the county, turned to the press to air his grievances. Davis was the main source for a 1967 *Wall Street Journal* article, which characterized the War on Poverty as a gold mine and even contained reference to a Cadillac-driving recipient of federal largesse. Davis gave several instances of alleged corruption in the delegate agency targeted to undermine ACBC, but his main complaint was OEO's profligate spending as a result of the county's parallel Head Start programs.⁴⁰ The adverse publicity proved ineffectual; after the CDGM debacle it would take more than unsubstantiated accusations of corruption to provoke a response from OEO. It did not prevent BCCAP from its continued attempts to exercise control of the program or ACBC's efforts to promote meaningful engagement with the poor

³⁷ Evaluation Report of Bolivar County CAP, April 16, 1969, folder "Mississippi Bolivar County CAP Inc.," box 3, RG 381, NARA SE. Between 1964 and 1969, Bolivar County had received approximately \$15 million in OEO funds, the majority of which went to BCCAP and its delegate agency, the rest to the Delta Medical Center in Mound Bayou. In addition to two Head Start programs, BCCAP ran Neighborhood Youth Center, Emergency Food and Medical Services, and coordinated the county's Food Stamp Program.

³⁸ Activism in Bolivar County was limited to isolated towns with high black populations such as Shaw and Mound Bayou.

³⁹ Reverend Sammie Rash, interview by Mike Garvey, March 30, 1977, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/8450>.

⁴⁰ Neil Maxwell, "The Poverty Program as a Goldmine," *Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 1967.

community. Head Start staff were prevented by OEO policy from engaging in voter registration activities only during working hours. BCCAP, in what an OEO inspector euphemistically termed an “over-application” of OEO policy, cynically prevented ACBC from engaging in any voter registration activities whatsoever. In frequent contact with poor African Americans who were unlikely to have been reached during the earlier voter registration activities of either the middle-class oriented NAACP or the more radical SNCC, ACBC staff were perfectly placed to promote registration. BCCAP’s Board, exercising power beyond its remit, curtailed the potentially significant mobilizing activities of over three hundred ACBC workers.

Failing to undermine or gain control of ACBC, BCCAP’s Board turned to its powerful supporters for assistance. The attempts of successive Mississippi governors and politicians to undermine ACBC proved more successful. Both Governor Paul B. Johnson Jr. and his successor John Bell Williams vetoed ACBC’s funding, forcing staff to work voluntarily in order to keep a limited service running, until Sargent Shriver exercised his override of the governors’ vetoes. An early opponent of CDGM when he was a Congressman, Governor John Bell Williams in particular targeted his opposition at delegate agency Head Start Programs.⁴¹ In January 1970 his mass veto of four such programs based on his objection of their racial composition provoked angry demonstrations by the African American poor community who staged protests in front of the Governor’s Mansion.⁴² However, it was his demand for certain conditions to be attached to all Head Start programs that was most damaging. At his insistence, state senator Arnie Watson sponsored a bill that required all Head Start teachers to have at least two years of college education and devolved power to the State Economic Opportunity Office.⁴³ ACBC Director Billy McCain Sr. was committed to providing opportunity for the wider community. He made it his mission to employ and train Head Start parents; in 1969 three quarters of the staff were Head Start parents and less than half of the staff had a high school

⁴¹ Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Dutton, 1993), 211. Williams also used his vetoes to apply pressure on HEW Secretary Robert Finch to acquiesce to more lenient school desegregation guidelines.

⁴² John Bell Williams to Cary Hall, February 12, 1970, folder “PATA/FA: HEW Head Start Programs 1969–1970,” box G-3, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU. In his veto, Williams cited the 840 black and 35 white children in the Hinds County Head Start program under Community Services Association.

⁴³ E. Williams, “Senate Gets Bill Aimed at Head Start Project Teachers,” *Delta Democrat Times*, February 27, 1970.

diploma.⁴⁴ The bill drastically undermined the community involvement that ACBC had worked so hard to achieve as well as undercutting the main source of support for grassroots programs from OEO in Atlanta. Democratic politicians were not alone in their attacks on CDGM and its affiliated groups. The nascent Mississippi Republican Party took the opportunity to gain political capital by helping local whites eradicate CDGM remnants. The Mississippi GOP developed a relationship with the Republican OEO under Donald Rumsfeld and the Office of Child Development (OCD) at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. OCD passed audit reports and other information onto Mississippi Republican Party officials, who used the information to discredit or undermine the delegate agencies. While their involvement was more significant in Sunflower County, Mississippi Republican Party Executive Director W. T. Wilkins also used his connections with DHEW Regional Director Cary Hall to obtain internal DHEW reports alleging corruption in ACBC.⁴⁵

In spite of the attacks of the wider white establishment and at least partially due to the attempts of BCCAP to subvert the program, the African American community united in support of ACBC. The program became a base around which black political activism was built, a source of unity and strength for the community which in turn strengthened and secured the funding of the delegate agency. ACBC still faced many of the difficulties of antipoverty programs; inadequate facilities, a hostile white community, governors' vetoes, funding delays and insecurities, and a local government adept at finding loopholes by which public assistance to poor African Americans could be denied. Led by Billy McCain Sr., a motivated and tireless if overbearing director, ACBC staff remained motivated, creative, and enthusiastic. In contrast to establishment CAPs at this time, BCCAP was also committed to providing a quality program, albeit on its own racial terms. So while race remained a potent source of tension, the two programs were partially united by this common goal. The existence of parallel Head Start programs also served to ease tensions, BCCAP leaders were less vicious in their attempts to undermine their delegate agency than many other establishment Community Action Agencies since it ran its own substantial Head Start. Competition between the two programs produced a "creative tension" that

⁴⁴ Billy Joe McCain Sr., interview by Worth Long, September 19, 1999, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/5160>.

⁴⁵ Harold B. Hertsgaard to Edward Stepnick, re Audit of Programs, January 5, 1971, folder "PAT... DHEW – Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

benefitted both programs.⁴⁶ The unity engendered by ACBC and the existence of the second Head Start program, ensured that absorption into BCCAP in 1973 did not mean destruction for ACBC.⁴⁷ Combined, they survived funding cuts under the Nixon Administration, the demolition of OEO by President Gerald Ford, and President Reagan's war on welfare. Billy McCain Sr., who had been BCCAP's Head Start Director since 1966 eventually served as executive director of the entire CAP for over thirty years. On his death in 2012, he was commended by the Mississippi State Senate as a Community Action pioneer dedicated to the War on Poverty, who enriched the lives of over 200,000 children and families in Bolivar County.⁴⁸

While the program developed strong links with the local community and over the course of the 1970s developed regular participation of the poor through the Policy Advisory Committees, few poor whites participated in the program. In 1979, 14 percent of the poor population of Bolivar County were white but only 6 percent of the white county population were involved in any of BCCAP's programs. Despite its success, the program remained racially divided and service oriented. Over half of the county's population remained in poverty by 1980 and BCCAP's most successful programs were those providing nutrition, Head Start, and an Elderly Feeding program.⁴⁹ Earlier white opposition was largely displaced by an evolving pragmatic response to the realities of the situation. The determination of the white community to control the entire Head Start program eventually paid off, but only after it had the effect of uniting the African American community in ACBC's defense, a result that had significant consequences for black political progress in Bolivar County. When BCCAP had established its control, the agency's racial pragmatism combined with a commitment to address the needs of the poor eventually enabled the successful operation of the biracial program.

⁴⁶ Evaluation Report of Bolivar County CAP, April 16, 1969, folder "Mississippi: Bolivar County CAP Inc.," box 3, RG 381, NARA SE.

⁴⁷ Billy Joe McCain Sr., interview by Worth Long, September 19, 1999, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections, <http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/coh/id/5160>.

⁴⁸ Mississippi Legislature, Senate Concurrent Resolution 658 (As adopted by Senate and House), 2012 Regular Session, <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/documents/2012/html/SC/SC0658SG.htm>. The legislature also renamed the Mound Bayou-Shelby Head Start Center the Billy J. McCain Head Start Center.

⁴⁹ Community Impact Evaluation of the Bolivar County CAP, November 9–15, 1979, folder "Bolivar County Community Action Program, Cleveland, Mississippi, 1979," box 3, RG 381, NARA SE. Despite remaining racially divided and service oriented, BCCAP was more successful than most Mississippi CAPs, which did not survive that long. Those that did were crippled by administrative defects and racial antagonism.

Sunflower County

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) staff, arriving in Sunflower County in 1962, considered it to be the “worst county in the worst state” in terms of racial discrimination.⁵⁰ As the decade progressed, whites tightened their stranglehold on the county as they faced opposition from SNCC, NAACP, and the MFDP. Though by no means the only planter to wield ruthless control over the lives of local African Americans, nor the only politician to exploit white opposition to public school desegregation, United States Senator James O. Eastland and his home county became an emblem of planter domination and segregationist politics. While his correspondence reveals little of his direct involvement in his home county, Eastland’s commitment to white supremacy, his political power, and his belief in white domination of the majority black population permeated Sunflower County.⁵¹ Likewise, evidence of his opposition to antipoverty programs is easy to divine but rarely quantifiable. Characterized by his pragmatic approach to race relations in his county, Eastland made sure his opinion was understood and then let others enforce it. His absolute opposition to CDGM was understood, though he did not make a crusade of it like fellow Senator John C. Stennis. Instead Eastland let it be known CDGM would be refunded in his county “over his dead body” and set spies to report on the activities of CDGM and its successor MAP, while local whites created antipoverty programs in “his” counties.⁵²

Such was the extent of white control and black fear of reprisals that when an African American grassroots Head Start program began operating in the county in 1965, they had to hold their classes in neighboring Washington County. The group eventually opened centers in people’s homes for over five hundred children in Indianola and expanded to Ruleville in October 1965. They received support from CDGM, for example with staff training and some resources but, in accordance with Eastland’s dictate, were not refunded through CDGM in 1966. Organized by local women activists led by Cora Fleming, Alice Giles, Thelma May, Annie Mae King, and Fannie Lou Hamer, the group operated voluntarily for two years, facing ultimately insurmountable opposition from Sunflower County’s white establishment.⁵³ The fame of Hamer, the presence of Eastland, and the

⁵⁰ Moye, *Let the People Decide*, 20.

⁵¹ Eastland operated “in back rooms over cigars and Scotch whiskey.” Ibid.

⁵² Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 523, 819.

⁵³ Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, 205. The group also received financial support from national organizations such as the National Students Association.

complexity of Movement struggles in Sunflower County have attracted many historians. The turbulent history of SNCC, NAACP and MFDP in the county, including the divisions in the local community caused by the grassroots Head Start program, Associated Communities of Sunflower County (ACSC), has been detailed in biographies of Hamer and Eastland, as well as movement histories and studies of Sunflower County.⁵⁴ However, the role of the establishment CAP, Sunflower County Progress (SCP), has been largely overlooked. The group's opposition to ACSC illustrates unexplored changes and continuities in Massive Resistance in Sunflower County, while SCP's relationships with Democratic and Republican politicians further illuminates the national and local political significance of white opposition to the War on Poverty.

The white establishment in Sunflower County had a long history of exploiting federal funding intended to aid the poor population. Eastland helped create federal farm welfare policy that provided crop subsidies that benefitted him and other powerful landowners, while their farm laborers had to accept near-starvation wages in order to survive.⁵⁵ SCP was designed to serve as an extension of this control, to subvert federal funding away from grassroots African American groups so the 30 percent of the county population that was white could reassert control over the African American majority. Unlike the local establishments in Bolivar and the counties of Southwest Mississippi, Sunflower County's local officials did not even attempt to adhere to OEO's Community Action Program (CAP) Board racial requirements. Their application to OEO named an all-white board—only vehement opposition from local civil rights activists prevented the nomination of Police Chief Bryce Alexander, a man with a long history of perpetrating racial terror against African Americans, as executive director. Though OEO's grant required SCP to include African Americans in its Board, SCP continued to exclude African Americans from the organization.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Biographies of Hamer include Mills, *This Little Light of Mine* and Chana K. Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). On the Movement in Mississippi, see, John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*. On both Eastland and Hamer, see, Chris Myers Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggle of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) and on Sunflower County, see, Moye, *Let the People Decide*. Cora Fleming's account is recounted in Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 523–29.

⁵⁵ Moye, *Let the People Decide*, 168.

⁵⁶ Congressmen Augustus F. Hawkins and Joseph Y. Resnick to President Johnson, March 14, 1966, WHCF GEN FG 11-15, 9/25/64 Box 127, Folder: FG 11-15 11/19/65-3/19/66 GEN, LBJL.

Having secured their control of the federal funds entering Sunflower County, the board of SCP turned its efforts toward eradicating ACSC. Board members petitioned OEO to defund ACSC, staff wrote to their local politicians and to OEO accusing ACSC of corruption. Raising the familiar specter of Black Power, the white SCP staff alleged links between the Head Start program and militant activism.⁵⁷ OEO's attempts to encourage cooperation between the two groups failed. SCP's board refused to meet with ACSC staff; Cora Fleming recalled how ACSC staff members were turned away from meetings arranged for discussion of both program's futures. After weeks of refusals to meet with ACSC, the group received an invitation from the SCP board chairman and assistant director to a public meeting at the Indianola City Hall. When ACSC representatives including Fleming arrived, they were met with police in crash helmets carrying billy clubs and blackjacks, who ordered them to leave.⁵⁸ When African Americans were included, the powerful board members such as Sunflower County Chancery Clerk Jack Harper dominated the meetings to the exclusion of outsiders, meaning those from outside of Indianola.⁵⁹ Local white officials, experienced in uniting the minority white community against Sunflower County's African American population focused their attacks on Fannie Lou Hamer. Hamer was by no means the driving force behind Head Start in Sunflower County; indeed, she had serious reservations about becoming involved in a federally funded program. However, her notoriety amongst whites after her appearance at the Democratic National Convention in 1964 made her an ideal target, serving to link the pre-school program for poor children with militant activism in the minds of the local white community. When OEO forced SCP to hold elections to create a more representative board of directors, Hamer, running against the white establishment's candidate—an African American man from Ruleville—lost. Hamer believed the election had been rigged, though federal investigators concluded the election had been fair. Rigged or not, local whites maliciously used Hamer's defeat in the election in attempts to influence OEO for years to come. When Hamer appeared in Jackson in April 1967 before a United States Senate Committee concerning the War on Poverty, SCP director Colbert Crowe and R. J. Allen, president of SCP Board of Directors, reacted angrily to public criticism of

⁵⁷ Virginia Hughes to Congressman Thomas Abernethy, April 18, 1968, folder "OEO Sunflower County Progress Inc., Head Start Grant," box 182, Thomas G. Abernethy Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

⁵⁸ Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 526. The police continued to intimidate Fleming and the ACSC representatives, following them back to their church and circling the building and later Fleming's home, for hours.

⁵⁹ Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, 207, 199.

SCP, ironically claiming that their organization, not Hamer was representative of Sunflower County's poor.⁶⁰

Appealing to their powerful supporters for help in presenting their case to OEO, the SCP Board accused ACSC of harassing and intimidating SCP employees, teaching children Black Power philosophies and of staging protests in SCP Head Start centers. Attorney Douglas Wynn again petitioned Harry McPherson to clamp down on ACSC, through OEO and any other federal agency. Wynn enclosed a "history" of Head Start in Sunflower County, written by the SCP Board that claimed ACSC was a completely controlled subsidiary arm of the "Black Power MFDP" designed to "manipulate the largely illiterate and ill-informed Negro citizens of Sunflower County to its own power politics ends." Senator Stennis, who had been active in his support of establishment-controlled CAAs since the CDGM controversy, threw his support behind SCP. Stennis mediated with an unresponsive OEO and defended SCP, even when it was SCP errors that created the problems.⁶¹ OEO Director Sargent Shriver proved immune to appeals for support of SCP over ACSC. With the involvement of high profile civil rights activists and the Senate hearings having drawn national attention to Sunflower County's Head Start program, combined with continuing support for ACSC from the Regional OEO Office in Atlanta, Shriver was unwilling to be seen again as undermining the grassroots program in favor of the white establishment. OEO approved a \$360,859 grant on July 1, 1967, forcing SCP to accept ACSC as its delegate agency.⁶²

However, the existence of delegate agencies was rapidly becoming a controversial issue. OEO under a Democratic administration had provided support and protection for delegate agencies, providing protection (albeit of a limited nature) to grassroots African American groups against establishment attacks. In 1969, the administration of Head Start was moved from the Office of Economic Opportunity to the Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). Planned in the final years of Johnson's administration and finalized in the first year of Nixon's Administration, the move was designed to protect the funding of the more popular Head Start

⁶⁰ Walter Gregory, Head Start director, Colbert Crowe, director, and R. J. Allen president, Board of Directors of SCP, telegram to Senator John C. Stennis, April 9, 1967, folder 17: "Correspondence, April 1967," box 4, Series 1, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, MSU.

⁶¹ Memo for files, November 28, 1968, folder 1, box 5, Series 1, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, MSU.

⁶² ACSC Audit Report July 1, 1967–February 29, 1968, folder 1, box 5, Series 1, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, MSU. This initial grant was followed later that year with a \$30,000 supplement.

program, while funding for controversial CAPs was allowed to dwindle. The move, combined with the change in administration, had a significant impact on Head Start programs at the grassroots. The Republican-administered HEW showed little interest in fostering community participation and was unwilling to disrupt the control of powerful potential supporters. Cary Hall, HEW Southeast Regional Director, provoked an angry response when he supported Governor John Bell Williams's racially motivated vetoes against delegate Head Start agencies in 1970.⁶³ Former Mississippi Action for Progress executive director Dr. Aaron Shirley accused Hall and HEW of engaging in the racism characteristic of the governor.⁶⁴ Head Start staff and parents staged protests outside the Governors' Mansion. ACSC Board Chairman Jimmy Herron accused Cary Hall of deliberately attempting to abolish delegate agencies in Mississippi because they gave poor people and black people too much control.⁶⁵ The Head Start program in Sunflower County was caught in the middle of this debate.⁶⁶

The growing Mississippi Republican Party latched onto white opposition to delegate agencies as a way to gain the support of prominent local officials and businessmen. Party executive director W. T. Wilkins established a rewarding relationship with Office of Child Development and HEW officials in Washington and Atlanta.⁶⁷ Cary Hall supplied him with inside information on Mississippi's antipoverty programs, while the party in turn passed on to the OCD allegations and accusations of wrongdoing in delegate agencies. Their collaboration was

⁶³ John Bell Williams to Cary Hall, February 12, 1970, folder "PATA/FA: HEW, Head Start Programs, 1969-1970," box G-3, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU. For example, Williams cites the 840 black and 35 white children in the Hinds County CAP.

⁶⁴ "Two Groups Protest Head Start Veto," *Delta Democrat Times*, February 25, 1970.

⁶⁵ Jimmy Herron to Secretary Elliot Richardson, January 27, 1971, folder "PAT... DHEW - Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

⁶⁶ "The Council Newsletter," vol. I, no. 5 (June 1971), folder 9, box 1, Citizens Council Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi. Head Start was in a precarious position for a number of reasons. Head Start supporters in Congress were increasingly alienated by its social activism, while debate was raging over the effectiveness of Head Start in the wake of the Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University Report. Maris A. Vinovskis, *Birth of Head Start: Preschool Education Policies in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 106, 185.

⁶⁷ Cary Hall to W. T. Wilkins, January 5, 1971, Folder "PAT... DHEW - Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU. Cary Hall sent internal HEW correspondence reporting on Audits of Mississippi CAPs to Wilkins, with the message: "This is for you, now what can you do for me?"

particularly successful in Sunflower County. Bill Gresham, civic leader and powerful businessman from Indianola, member of the Citizens Council and active in the Republican Party, solicited the help of the Mississippi GOP to eliminate ACSC.⁶⁸ Gathering unsubstantiated reports of ACSC wrongdoing, exerting their influence on OCD, and dangling the prospect of the political advantage should they be the ones to defeat Hamer, Wilkins was central in securing ACSC's demise, although some support remained in Washington for the grassroots group. Washington OCD employee Dick Orton's attempts to convince Atlanta OCD staff to protect ACSC prompted a flurry of concerned correspondence between the Mississippi GOP and HEW.⁶⁹ Working together Cary Hall, Watson Munday, Barbara Whitaker, and Bill Wilkins were able to overcome the remaining support for ACSC both in Washington and Sunflower County. Their hard work paid off. The decision on the future of the delegate relationship remained on the local level in the control of SCP—Wilkins and his contacts in HEW ensured ACSC's eradication at the hands of Sunflower County's white establishment.⁷⁰

By January 1971, Wilkins, Clarke Reed, and Gresham were celebrating their achievement of "putting Hamer out of business."⁷¹ However, Hamer had already come to accept that ACSC's absorption into SCP was inevitable. Her acceptance of what amounted to the destruction of ACSC created divisions in the group and provoked an angry reaction from many in the poor African American community. Cora Fleming refused ever to talk to Hamer again. Hamer suspected that a firebomb, thrown into her home but failing to explode, was the work of angry ACSC supporters. Fleming continued to fight for ACSC's survival, searching for other sources of funding for the group and refusing the

⁶⁸ Moye, *Let the People Decide*, 182. Moye also notes Gresham is listed as a donor to the Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedom, through the Sovereignty Commission.

⁶⁹ Handwritten note by WTW, February 9, 1971, folder "PAT... DHEW – Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

⁷⁰ William T. Wilkins to Clarke Reed, February 10, 1971, and attached letter from Barbara Whitaker to Jimmy Herron, folder "PAT... HEW – Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

⁷¹ W. T. Wilkins to Clarke Reed, January 18, 1971, and Bill Gresham to W. T. Wilkins, n.d., folder "PAT... DHEW – Head Start Programs," box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

position of Assistant Head Start Director created for her within SCP.⁷² While some ACSC employees realized that the only way Head Start would survive in Sunflower County was through SCP, Fleming refused to “sign away the rights and toil of my people” by leading them into the “devil’s arms.”⁷³ The incorporation of ACSC (or as they termed it, “this boondoggle”) into SCP was undoubtedly a victory for the Mississippi Republican Party. Mississippi’s Republican officials hoped their role would bring substantial credit to the Nixon administration, HEW and the Mississippi GOP.⁷⁴ While their role in supporting white supremacy was a factor in the slow but steady building of a base of support at the grassroots, it was perhaps the high point in their relationship with the Republican Administration. While their relationship with Donald Rumsfeld was occasionally mutually beneficial—and with Cary Hall at HEW and later Director of OEO Howard Phillips definitely so—Nixon’s support for Senator Eastland over Republican candidate Gil Carmichael in the 1972 election undermined the connection. While Mississippi Republicans remained opposed to grassroots African American run programs and supportive of white establishment CAPs, their contacts with DHEW and OEO never again aided with the destruction of a grassroots program.

While Sunflower County Progress Organization eventually absorbed ACSC, it was not the complete victory the white community could have commanded a few years earlier. The volunteers of Freedom Summer had gone, leaving behind local activists to face the backlash from the white establishment. Racial murder, though less common in the 1970s still occurred; when a young black woman was murdered in 1971, the response of Sunflower County’s white establishment was silence and indifference.⁷⁵ Freedom Summer received wide publicity, but the quieter local struggles of Head Start evinced small but significant changes in the nature of white opposition. ACSC’s incorporation into SCP served to sustain white control, though some ACSC centers run by ACSC staff survived under

⁷² Mills, *This Little Light of Mine*, 213–14. Though the culprit was never discovered, Hamer told FBI agents she was convinced the people responsible were associated with the ACSC program.

⁷³ Jack E. Harper to Congressman Thomas Abernethy, February 2, 1971, folder “OEO Sunflower County Progress Inc., Head Start Grant,” box 182, Thomas G. Abernethy Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi; Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 528.

⁷⁴ Clarke Reed to Cary Hall, January 18, 1971, folder “PAT... DHEW – Head Start Programs,” box G-4, Series VII, Mississippi Republican Party Records, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

⁷⁵ “The Council Newsletter,” vol. I, no. 5 (June 1971), folder 9, box 1, Citizens Council Collection, Archives and Special Collections, University of Mississippi.

SCP. It was another fifteen years, in the midst of a crisis over the appointment of the county school superintendent before a biracial committee provided an arena for Sunflower County's black and white residents to negotiate as equals and then with middle class, not poor African Americans.⁷⁶

In the two case studies this paper has explored, white opposition to African American Head Start was varied and often contradictory, reflecting Mississippi's complex and slowly changing racial landscape. The commitment of local white establishments to maintain their control over local communities combined with sporadic and often less-than-strategic accommodations. Unlike the response to school desegregation, white resistance and accommodations to antipoverty programs did not follow an orderly, linear pattern that the epithet "strategic" implies. The measure and indeed existence of what Erle Johnston Jr. termed "pragmatic segregation" depended in large part on the widely varying local conditions—the impact of white opposition in creating unity or discord in the poor African American community, the strength of white supremacist influence on the white population, and the level of national attention not just from OEO and HEW, but from politicians and the media. Sunflower and Bolivar were by no means the only counties in which battles between CDGM-remnants and establishment CAPs raged. In the east of the state, five former CDGM counties opposed involvement in state-wide CDGM replacement Mississippi Action for Progress, and instead formed the Friends of the Children of Mississippi (FCM). By March 1967, FCM was operating 130 centers for nearly 2,000 children with 435 employees, on a voluntary basis.⁷⁷ The group battled with MAP to retain control of its program and petitioned OEO for independent funding, eventually achieving an uneasy delegate relationship with MAP in May 1968.⁷⁸ The unwillingness of MAP to compromise on the level of control it wanted over the operation of FCM and the militant and often violent opposition of former CDGM staff to MAP created a volatile mix. Sovereignty Commission director Erle Johnston Jr. exploited the situation to the full, seizing upon instances of violence against MAP employees in the FCM counties, eager to blame the

⁷⁶ Moyer, *Let the People Decide*, 196. Jack Harper and Bill Gresham were both involved in resolving the crisis, using their influence for moderation. Gresham was one of sixteen businessmen who raised \$90,000 to buy out the superintendent's contract.

⁷⁷ FCM Fact Sheet, April 25, 1967, box 1, Loose Materials, Hodding Carter III Papers, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

⁷⁸ Memorandum of Agreement between MAP and FCM, May 2, 1968, box 1, Loose Materials, Hodding Carter III Papers, Special Collections Department, Mitchell Memorial Library, MSU.

violence on former CDGM employees.⁷⁹ In Southwest Mississippi, the white population alternately bolstered and intimidated by the pervasive influence of the Klan ensured the former CDGM program met with violence, hostility, and intimidation. The efforts of the governor, State Sovereignty Commission, and most significantly the establishment of CAP Southwest Mississippi Opportunities combined with OEO's incompetence and inaction in the face of the rampant racism crippled the former CDGM program.⁸⁰

The legacy of CDGM is not limited to the positive impact on Mississippi's pre-school education system or a tradition of grassroots activism.⁸¹ CDGM ignited another phase of Massive Resistance. Although white opposition to CDGM was not entirely successful it served as an important learning curve for Mississippi's white establishment. The initial blast of opposition trickled down into local communities so that the mechanisms of white opposition could function where they did best, away from national attention and on the streets of poor Delta communities. Taking the lessons, though not always successfully, of what did and did not work in opposing CDGM, Mississippi white establishment forged a new opposition to African American advancement through antipoverty programs. Clothed in the rhetoric of earlier massive resistance, it opposed federal intervention and outside influence but drew on newer language incorporating Goldwater conservatism and post-race riots fears of Black Power, utilizing the mechanisms of massive resistance such as the Sovereignty Commission and local white Citizens Councils in new ways. Councilmen now sat on CAA Boards and controlled federal funds. The Commission, instead of propagating threats of violent retribution or facilitating white terror, spied on Head Start programs, interviewing the staff and gathering audit reports to send to Senator Stennis and to OEO. While the local Democratic Party had been the vehicle for earlier massive resistance, such efforts were frustrated by OEO in Atlanta and Washington. Though neither the White House nor Sargent Shriver had any wish to repeat the national humiliation of the CDGM debacle, this did not amount to capitulation to the demands of establishment CAPs, even when put forward by powerful Democratic politicians. The Mississippi Republican Party, however, had greater success establishing itself (albeit briefly) as white Mississippi's key to gaining the support of Republican Washington officials in

⁷⁹ Memo to File by Erle Johnston Jr., March 16, 1967, folder 62, box 4, Series 39, John C. Stennis Papers, Congressional and Political Research Center, MSU.

⁸⁰ OEO Evaluation Report, May 9–11, 1971, folder "Mississippi SMO Inc.," box 19, RG 381, NARA SE

⁸¹ Jordan, "Fighting for the CDGM," 280–307; Greenberg, *The Devil Has Slippery Shoes*, 786.

destroying the delegate agencies.

List of Abbreviations

ACBC	Associated Communities of Bolivar County
ACSC	Associated Communities of Sunflower County
BCCAP	Bolivar County Community Action Agency
CAP	Community Action Program
CDGM	Child Development Group of Mississippi
HEW	Department of Health, Education and Welfare
FCM	Friends of the Children of Mississippi
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee
MAP	Mississippi Action for Progress
MFDP	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
OCD	Office of Child Development
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
SCP	Sunflower County Progress
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

The Legacy of the Builder: Joseph T. Jones and the Development of Gulfport, Mississippi

Reagan Grimsley

“The South needs a few more Joneses; great men of big wealth who dare to use it, perhaps selfishly, but incidentally to the lasting betterment of the world.”¹

On June 24, 1902, nearly 3,000 people waited patiently in the humid night air of Mississippi’s Gulf Coast to listen to a speech by a former Union soldier turned Gilded Age investor. The speaker, Joseph T. Jones, was a relative newcomer to Mississippi who quickly became known for his passion as a “builder.”² Jones unveiled his plans to enhance Gulfport through a series of economic and civic projects, including the construction of a union railroad station, a bank, a state-of-the-art resort style hotel, a new headquarters for the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, an electric generating plant, and a beach promenade.³ While these are merely a sampling of his projects that created a thriving New South city at Gulfport, these improvements also represent Jones’s attitude of civic paternalism. The propensity for building reached far beyond his desire to create an economic empire in the New South, as civic improvements to benefit both residents and visitors were also an important part of his long-term plan for the city of Gulfport. After his death, the Jones family worked to shape public spaces to memorialize one of Gulfport’s founders and its most important early patron.

This article will serve two distinct but related purposes: the first is to examine Jones’s role in the growth and development of Gulfport between 1896 and his death in 1916, with an emphasis on how these actions reoriented spatial geography and

¹ “Harlequin on Gulfport,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, August 8, 1903.

² “Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade in Mississippi,” *American Lumberman*, No. 1590, November 11, 1905, p. 29.

³ “Big Things In Store for Gulfport,” *Biloxi Herald*, June 26, 1902.

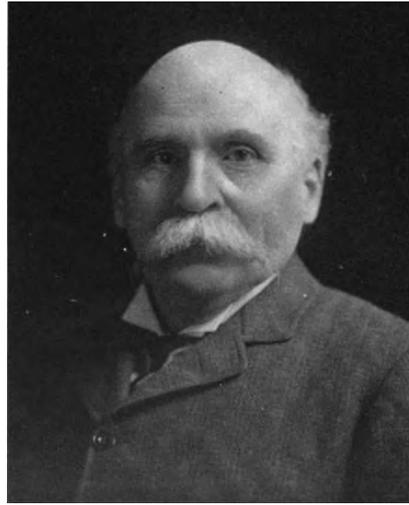
REAGAN GRIMSLEY, a south Mississippi native, is head of Special Collections and Archives at the M. Louis Salmon Library at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

how his sense of civic paternalism impacted the fabric of the city. The second goal of the article will be to examine the Jones legacy as it relates to Mississippi, or in historical terms his memorialization. While on the surface Jones appears to be a typical Gilded Age Industrialist, his unique story of success reveals a complex figure determined to both complete a profitable railway and port and to shape space and place in the nascent coastal city. Rather than walk away from an economically unfavorable enterprise, Jones's stubborn persistence resulted in Gulfport's becoming a regional market town and an international port that during his lifetime dominated the international lumber shipping trade and came to be labeled the "Gateway to Panama." The success of his endeavors reoriented spatial geography on local, state, and regional levels as his improvements spurred economic development. Jones also used his wealth to provide civic amenities to the city. Donations of public lands, the building of a grand promenade, and the establishment of a golf club, yacht club, and a resort hotel with a grand public garden highlighted Jones's interest in civic paternalism. In the aftermath of his death, various parties sought to shape the public memory of "the Grand Old Man of Gulfport" in both literature and via commemoration in the city. While a sketch of Jones's early years are provided here for historical context, this article purposely focuses on his enterprises on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the latter years of his life and the ways in which he is memorialized.

"Captain Jones"

By the time Joseph Jones became a key player in the growth and development of Gulfport he was entering the twilight of a long and successful business career. Born in 1842 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, less than a year before his father, Albanus Jones, perished in a yellow fever epidemic while working as a contractor in Pensacola, Florida. His mother, Jane, remained in Philadelphia, and Joseph spent his youth in that city. Like many of the men of his generation, the Civil War greatly influenced him both mentally and physically. In 1861 at the age of nineteen, Jones enlisted as a private in Company H of the 91st Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. The regiment experienced the horrors of war first hand, taking part in bloody encounters at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the Wilderness. The young Jones eventually rose to the rank of first lieutenant and acting captain before being medically discharged for serious wounds to both feet suffered at the Battle of

Cold Harbor on June 2, 1864.⁴ Similar to many men of his generation, Jones often chose not to speak about the experiences of war unless prodded, and even then his comments were brief. He chose not to dwell on the conflict but instead put it behind him, in a pattern Gerald Linderman terms “hibernation.” The war certainly influenced his political agenda, for like many former Union officers Jones was a staunch supporter of the Republican Party until his death.⁵



Joseph T. Jones, circa 1908. Image from *A History of the City of Buffalo*.

After a lengthy recuperation at his mother’s home in Philadelphia, Jones decided to try his luck in the burgeoning Verango County, Pennsylvania, oilfields. Like many other entrepreneurs of the era, Jones decided to pursue a career drilling in the oil fields due to their close geographic proximity and for the chance to make a solid return on his investment. Less than a decade after its discovery at nearby Titusville, oil was in demand as a source for the production of kerosene heating oil, and small operators could get started with a modest investment. Still walking on crutches, Jones’s early attempts at drilling resulted in failure, earning him the nickname “Dry Hole” Jones and saddling him with a \$6,000 debt. Not to be deterred, Jones finally struck oil on his thirteenth try in the spring of 1867, with his first working well netting some \$90,000 by the winter of the same year. Thus began his career as an oil producer, which would eventually make him one of the largest crude oil producers in the United States and a very wealthy man. On April 20, 1876, along with three other investors, he established the Bradford Oil Company, in which he later purchased a controlling interest in 1879. The same year, Jones married Melodia (Lou) Blackmarr on October 15, 1876. The

⁴ Samuel Penniman Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-65*, Volume 3 (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1869-1871), 186-233; Michael A. Leeson, *History of the Counties of McKean, Elk and Forest, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, IL: J. H. Beers and Co. Publisher’s, 1890), 369-370.

⁵ Gerald, Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 266-275; Lewis Gould, “Party Conflict: Republicans versus Democrats 1877-1901,” in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* edited by Charles W. Calhoun (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 219-220. Gould argues that the Republican Party was strongest in the Northeast in the years after the Civil War.

couple had two children, Joseph Albert and Grace.⁶

By 1883, Jones owned 584 oil wells. In addition to his holdings in Bradford, Jones acquired a large oil operation in Sistersville, West Virginia, in 1891. In the same year, at the request of his wife, the Jones family purchased a substantial home in Buffalo, New York. Soon his business interests extended to western New York, including: real estate near Buffalo, New York, the Pettibone Paper Mill, the Cataract Milling Company, and a controlling interest in the Niagara Gorge Railroad. He also invested in mining entities in the American west and Peru. By 1895 Jones controlled businesses in at least three states, and his net worth was in excess of \$2,000,000. Instead of entering a comfortable retirement as he approached his fifty-fifth birthday, the captain was instead contemplating a new business interest far removed from his current holdings: the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad located in south Mississippi. Little did he know that this business investment in Mississippi would result in perhaps the greatest challenge of his life.⁷

Reorienting Geography: The Gulf and Ship Island and the Port at Gulfport

The Mississippi Gulf coast in the mid-1890s consisted of several small towns, including Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Mississippi City, Biloxi, and Scranton (Pascagoula). The Louisville and Nashville Railroad already existed as an east-west route linking the seaports of Mobile and New Orleans, but the chartered and unfinished Gulf and Ship Island Railroad sought to provide a north-south linkage of the Gulf Coast with the new regional market town of Hattiesburg and the state capital at Jackson. A connection between the coastal waterways and the interior would provide an international shipping point for a number of products: cotton, corn, and most importantly, the forest products industry. In fact, the antebellum vision for the railroad elucidated the importance of constructing the rail line to funnel Mississippi products via a proposed Mississippi port with its outlet at Ship Island, with the goal of competing with the ports of Mobile and New Orleans. The Gulf and Ship Island was first chartered by the state of Mississippi in 1850 and again in 1856, to secure a sufficient number of investors. In the years leading up to the Civil War, Mississippi simply did not have the resources to complete the line, and

⁶ Leeson, 370; Melodia Rowe, *Captain Jones: Biography of a Builder* (Hamilton, Ohio: The Hill-Brown Printing Company, 1942), 39-40, 60-63, 142, 155-156.

⁷ Western New York Heritage Press, "The Joseph T. Jones Family," http://wnyheritagepress.org/photos_week_2011/joseph_t_jones.htm (accessed September 9, 2011); Neill McElwee, "Joseph T. Jones: Early Oil Region Producer," <http://www.oil150.com/essays/2007/02/j-t-jones-early-oil-region-producer> (accessed February 27, 2013).

the charter lapsed.⁸ The company was resurrected in 1882 under a new state charter with former Confederate general Wirt Adams as president. Later the company stockholders elected a new president, William Harris Hardy. Like Adams, Hardy was a former Confederate army officer turned entrepreneur. He was a key player in the early years of the Gulf and Ship Island and brought direct experience in the funding, building, and construction of a regional rail line to the table. His prior involvement with the completion of the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad in 1883 with 196 miles of track from New Orleans to Meridian, Mississippi, had proven he had both the vision and the management skills to bring such a project to fruition. His long-term vision included not only new rail lines to extract the valuable timber resources of the region, but also a new city to serve as the southern terminus of the railroad. In 1887, acting on behalf of the Gulf and Ship Island and the advice of civil engineer S. Whinery, Hardy purchased 5,000 acres of mostly vacant land on the Gulf Coast east of Long Beach and west of Biloxi. His hope was to develop a new port city on this parcel of land, which he named Gulfport. The location had the advantage of a natural but shallow channel that allowed vessels to pass between Ship and Cat Island. While this approach was not of sufficient depth for larger ships, with additional dredging it offered the most direct natural route to the coastline. Hardy thus set the stage for the construction of the rail line and offered the hope of a new port city on the Mississippi Gulf.⁹

Contrary to his positive experience with the New Orleans and Northeastern, Hardy, during his tenure as the head of the Gulf and Ship Island encountered a number of difficulties, including the abuse of convict labor during the construction of the road line, the sudden death of two of the railroad's key supporters, and a serious economic depression. Two construction companies, the Union Investment Company and later the Tobey Construction Company, failed to make significant progress on the road between 1887 and the summer of 1892. In August of 1892 the railroad went into receivership, and construction ground to a halt for a period of

⁸ *Address of the Commissioners of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad: Delivered at an Adjourned Meeting Held at the City of Jackson, Monday, June 7th, 1858.* (Jackson: Mississippian Steam Power Press Print, 1858), 10-16; "A Memorial To Congress: For the Request of Lands to Aid the Construction of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, December 4, 1871, University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, McCain Library, Hattiesburg, MS.

⁹ Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 1887-1907, University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, McCain Library, Hattiesburg, MS, 87-94; Toney A, Hardy, *No Compromise With Principle: An Autobiography and Biography of William Harris Hardy and the Mississippi He Loved* (New York: American Book-Stratford Press, 1946), 229-243.

almost three years.¹⁰ The Gulf and Ship Island was not the only road that floundered during this time period, which historian John F. Stover has termed a railroad depression, for by 1894 twenty-five percent of all railroads nationwide found themselves in receivership. Stover's research also uncovered another trend: southern railways were increasingly bought and controlled by northern businessmen. The Gulf and Ship Island would follow this pattern.¹¹

Joseph T. Jones first became aware of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad in the summer of 1895, when the Olean (New York) based Spencer S. Bullis contacted W. W. Bell, president of the First National Bank of Bradford, attempting to raise investment capital to bring the line out of receivership. Unlike Jones, Bullis's business experience was primarily in eastern timber mills and regional railroads, making him a natural person to sell the venture to potential capitalists. In addition to Jones and Bell, Bullis presented his proposal to form a construction company to take over operations of the railroad and bring it out of receivership to C. P. Collins and C. V. Merrick. His sales pitch worked, and in November of 1895 the five men incorporated the Bradford Construction Company in West Virginia.¹² In August of 1896 the Gulf and Ship Island reorganized with the Bradford Construction Company, and more specifically, Captain Jones, as the major stockholder. On September 7, 1896, Jones became president of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, a position he would hold until his death in 1916.¹³ According to his niece and biographer, Melodia Rowe, "The people of Biloxi and the Gulf Coast heard nothing directly of Captain Jones for several years to come. He was referred to vaguely as "Northern Capital."¹⁴ This would soon change as Jones became more enamored with the Gulfport project and actively participated in affairs at Gulfport.

Early on, S. S. Bullis was the onsite manager and the face of the project in Gulfport. Jones made his first visit to Gulfport in 1896, and by 1897, he was deeply

¹⁰ Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 132; "The Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Controversy Settled," *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), August 17, 1892. For a broader discussion of the formation of the Gulf and Ship Island, see Gilbert Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume 2 (Dexter, MI: Thomson-Shore, Inc., 2002), 86-89; For an account of the deaths of Jones S. Hamilton, Jr. and Wirt Adams, see "Rich Section Opened," *Sandusky Daily Star*, September 5, 1900; Bradley G. Bond, *Political Culture in the Nineteenth-Century South: Mississippi 1830-1900* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 203-204.

¹¹ John F. Stover, *The Railroads of the South: A Study in Finance and Control* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1955), 254, 281.

¹² Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 179-182; L. E. Chapin, ed. *Olean, New York "City of Natural Advantages" Its History and Institutions* (Olean, NY: Persons, Sibley and Spaulding, Art Printing House, 1889), n.p.

¹³ Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 156-158; McElwee, "Joseph T. Jones."

¹⁴ Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 185.

involved in the construction of not only the railroad, but also a proposed deep water harbor to connect the line to international markets. On July 28, 1898, the Mississippi Legislature voted to incorporate the city of Gulfport. By 1900, the railroad reached Jackson, covering a distance of 161 miles and fulfilling its purpose of linking the new city of Gulfport to the state capital.¹⁵ In 1906 Jones constructed a new state-of-the-art combination hotel and railroad station in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to enhance services along the main Gulfport to Jackson route.¹⁶ The rail line immediately impacted the region. Sawmills soon dotted the landscape along the Gulf and Ship Island. A 1905 *American Lumberman* report listed sixty-two sawmills along the main line from Gulfport to Jackson, with cutting capacity ranging from 20,000 to 250,000 board feet per day. Former agricultural laborers, many seeking to escape the sharecropping system, left farms to take wage labor jobs in the new mills.

Jones continued to develop the line by acquiring and expanding two existing spur lines. First, the Columbia, Lumberton and Gulf, acquired in 1900 extended the line westward to Lumberton and Columbia.¹⁷ Jones oversaw the completion from Columbia to the main line of the Gulf and Ship Island at Mendenhall by 1906. In total, this spur line contained just under 105 miles of track. A second spur line, the Laurel and Northwestern, which connected Laurel with Taylorsville and Mize, was purchased in 1899 and extended westward to the Gulf and Ship Island main line at Saratoga. This completed spur was forty-two miles in length and brought the total mileage of the entire Gulf and Ship Island system to 307.56 miles. Each of the spurs allowed for connections with major sawmills, in particular the Camp and Hinton Mill in Lumberton and the Eastman, Gardiner and Company Mill at Laurel, which had daily cutting capacities of 250,000 and 200,000 board feet respectively.¹⁸ Lumber traveled from these mills to Gulfport, where it was loaded on vessels for delivery to foreign ports. For example, the Camp and Hinton mill had contracts in both Europe and Panama during the first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁹

The completion of the rail route meant access to millions of acres of pine timber; the rails brought timber to the coast, where the harbor provided the key to opening the region to foreign markets. Although a pier existed and some shipping operations began as early as 1897, it took several more years to dredge a deep-water channel seven miles across the Mississippi Sound from Ship Island to the Gulfport

¹⁵ "Rich Section Opened," *Sandusky Daily Star*, September 5, 1900.

¹⁶ New Orleans *Times Picayune*, November 22, 1906.

¹⁷ Gilbert Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume I (Hattiesburg, MS: Longleaf Press, 1998), 196.

¹⁸ "Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade in Mississippi," *American Lumberman*, No. 1590, November 11, 1905, 29-30.

¹⁹ Hoffman, *Steam Whistles in the Piney Woods*, Volume I, 202, 206.

harbor. Jones paid for a majority of the harbor and channel developments out of his own pocket, determined to see Gulfport become a successful and thriving center of transportation.²⁰ Although estimates vary, Jones spent at least \$1,500,000 dredging the channel and developing the port facilities. The federal government at first opposed the project, stipulating in an 1881 report that “no improvement at the locality was desired or needed.”²¹ By 1899, with Jones assuming a leadership role in dredging the harbor, the federal government finally authorized a \$150,000 payment to Jones as general contractor upon completion of the dredging of the ship channel and the harbor. On January 24, 1902, the “Port of Gulfport” officially opened with the roaring approval of over 500 spectators. Since Jones had paid for the development of the harbor with his personal funds and owned the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad, some local businessmen feared limited access would constrain local economic growth. Jones, however, understood the importance of broad access to the port facilities and petitioned to have the port come under federal control. In June 1906, the federal government agreed to take over maintenance of the harbor and channel to Ship Island in a bill signed by President Theodore Roosevelt with a gold pen provided by the Gulfport Business League.²²

The new port immediately became a beehive of activity. In 1904 some 269 steamships, barks, ships, and schooners cleared the port with a total tonnage of 286,551. A 1906 federal report documented that “These vessels carried 245,000,000 feet of lumber and timber, 93,000 barrels of rosin, and 255,000 gallons of turpentine, the total value of these exports being nearly \$4,000,000.”²³ While some of these exports came via coastal transport from lumber mills along the Pascagoula and Pearl Rivers, the majority arrived at the docks via the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. In its most prolific year, 1911, the harbor served as a conduit for 327,520,000 board feet of timber, as well as sizable quantities of cotton and naval stores.²⁴ The port serviced the growing piney woods region by providing a direct outlet to the Gulf of Mexico and offering a shorter and more efficient alternative to the older established regional port cities of Mobile and New Orleans.

²⁰ John Switzer, “History of the Port of Gulfport,” *Manifest: Official Quarterly Publication of the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport* Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1992, 1-7.

²¹ “Anchorage Basin and Channel at Gulfport, Mississippi and Ship Island Pass,” *United States House of Representatives Document No. 184*, December 6, 1906; Gulf and Ship Island Minute Book, 217.

²² “Will Sign With Gold Pen,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, June 13, 1906; “Uncle Sam Now in Control,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, July 11, 1907.

²³ “Anchorage Basin and Channel at Gulfport, Mississippi and Ship Island Pass,” *United States House of Representatives Document No. 184*, December 6, 1906

²⁴ *Gulfport Daily Herald*, September 26, 1912.

In the fashion of Gilded Age businessman, Joseph Jones constructed a transportation empire based in Gulfport that stretched its tendrils into the Mississippi piney woods. Jones's actions reveal his level of personal interest in the growth and development of the city: by March of 1901, he had bought out all of his partners in the railroad and shipping operations and become the sole owner of the Gulf and Ship Island and its Gulfport operations. Since he had earlier purged the company of the few remaining native southerners, he was left in total control of the line. Unlike William Harris Hardy, Jones had the money and the capital to sustain a railroad corporation and build a port to open the pine belt of Mississippi to international markets. He also joined a growing number of northern businessmen who either directly or indirectly controlled railroad operations in the south.²⁵ A contemporary of the two put the economic impact of Jones's actions more bluntly: "Wm. H. Hardy, now our honored Circuit Judge, did all in his power, others did the same, but without Jones nothing was ever finished."²⁶

Shaping the City: Civic and Business Ventures

By 1901, Jones traveled to Gulfport regularly and spent at least part of the year there. Although Mrs. Jones remained rooted in Buffalo, she occasionally accompanied Jones on his trips south, but the captain preferred the coastal climate during the winter months. His interest in the success of the Gulf Coast seemed to his peers to be an intense infatuation. While industrial profit was certainly at the center of Jones's plans, he also pursued substantial civic improvements. On June 24, 1902, Jones dramatically laid out plans for an improved port city in front of an estimated crowd of 3,000 people, which included Mississippi Governor A. H. Longino and other federal, state, and local politicians. His plans included a lavish hotel and a sturdy, modern railroad office building on the point of land just north of the Gulfport Harbor. Also included was a union station for the city, a new bank building, an electric generating plant, and a promenade for public enjoyment. This meeting also involved a call for removal of the county seat from Mississippi City to Gulfport, a move which the citizens of the county supported and that officially occurred one year later in 1903.²⁷ This meeting, organized and promoted primarily by Jones, showed his inclination to shape place and space in the growing town and

²⁵ Stover, *Railroads of the South*, 275-284.

²⁶ John H. Lang, *History of Harrison County, Mississippi* (Gulfport, MS: The Dixie Press, 1936), 179. This portion of his reminiscences of life was written on October 1, 1907, and later included in his monograph.

²⁷ "Big Things In Store for Gulfport," *Biloxi Herald*, June 26, 1902.



Great Southern Hotel, Gulfport, Mississippi. Circa 1913.

highlighted his vision of melding business ventures with improvements benefiting the general public.

Jones's plans quickly unfolded, and by the end of July, work was under way on the new railroad office building. Despite a brief wage strike by brick masons, the project proceeded rapidly, and by October 1902 the third floor of the structure was under construction.²⁸ The three-story, \$100,000 Gulf and Ship Island Office Building opened in March of 1903. The Renaissance Revival edifice contained Jones's personal office and served as the center of operations for the railroad. The adjacent Great Southern Hotel with its sweeping, unobstructed views of the Gulf, opened in July of the same year.²⁹ Designed by noted New Orleans architect Thomas Sully, the combined complex was the crown jewel of Jones's facilities in Gulfport.³⁰ Between the two structures, elegant landscaping created a park-like atmosphere for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. Constructed with southern pine and cypress, the Great Southern Hotel offered visitors 250 rooms with modern amenities such as full electric service and hot and cold baths. In 1905, a journalist for the *American Lumberman* described the new hotel:

“The siding is rough sawed and bevel stock treated to a coat of creosote, subsequently painted a dark green. The outside trim is made entirely of cypress and painted white. The interior trim is largely of cypress. The dining room, whose ceiling is supported by heavy built up columns, is finished to resemble Flemish oak and the resemblance is close.”³¹

²⁸ Biloxi Daily Herald, August 1, 1902; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, October 3, 1902; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, October 16, 1902.

²⁹ “Great Southern Hotel,” *Biloxi Herald*, July 25, 1903.

³⁰ S. Frederick Starr, *Southern Comfort: The Garden District of New Orleans* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 230. Sully also designed the Hotel Hattiesburg for Jones.

³¹ “Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade of Mississippi,” *American Lumberman*, 29; Biloxi *Daily Herald*, May 15, 1903.

A boardwalk extended from the hotel to the nearby beach. A mile-long pier connected the Great Southern to the newly formed Gulfport Yacht Club, and guests could either walk the pier or take a tram out to the club. Jones was a key player in developing the yacht club, of which he was elected commodore. From the pier, launches offered trips to the nearby coastal islands for beach excursions and “surf bathing.”³² The hotel was designed to attract first-class clientele and hopefully winter season customers from colder northern climates. By 1913 Jackson newspaperman Fred Sullens rated the hotel as one of the finest resorts in the south.³³ To Jones the hotel was not only a business venture, but also a family home. The Jones family often occupied a five-room private suite while in residence on the coast.

In early 1902, Jones signed on as one of the original stockholders of the First National Bank of Gulfport, capitalized at \$100,000. True to his word in his June 1902 address, Jones erected a block of commercial buildings north of the Gulf and Ship Island terminals. At the corner of 13th Street and 26th Avenue, the Beaux Arts style bank anchored the block and served as one of the main financial centers of the fledgling town.³⁴ In addition to this building, he collaborated with E. A. Durham to construct four new stores on 26th Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets.³⁵ The new brick buildings stood in stark contrast to the poorly constructed wood-frame buildings that characterized Gulfport’s early existence. Jones’s intention was clear: to have a first-class city one must have first-class facilities.³⁶

Part of Jones’s plan involved relocation of the Harrison County seat of government from Mississippi City to Gulfport. Jones in particular pointed to the need for a suitable county courthouse. To this end, he offered title to thirteen lots worth some \$8,000 on which to erect a new center of government.³⁷ This move, however, was not without controversy. On November 11, 1903, the heirs of John Martin filed a lawsuit which challenged not only the validity of the ownership of the land donated for the courthouse, but also much of the land that comprised downtown Gulfport. The suit intimated that John Martin had in fact purchased a parcel of land, which included that deeded for the courthouse, at a public land sale on October 28, 1839. The suit further alleged that Martin died in 1848 without selling the land, and that based on those grounds the property still belonged to the Martin heirs.

³² Flora K. Scheib, *History of the Southern Yacht Club* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1986), 475-477.

³³ Biloxi *Daily Herald*, January 22, 1903; “A Fine Hotel and a Good Manager,” *Gulfport Daily Herald*, October 30, 1913.

³⁴ Biloxi *Daily Herald*, February 5, 1902.

³⁵ Ibid., January 31, 1903.

³⁶ *Gulfport Record*, July 9, 1904.

³⁷ “Big Things In Store for Gulfport,” Biloxi *Daily Herald*, June 2, 1902.

The court case dragged on for roughly six years, eventually reaching the United States Supreme Court. The court ruled in favor of Jones and the Harrison County Board of Supervisors.³⁸

At least in the eyes of the Harrison County Board of Supervisors, the outcome of the case was never in doubt, as they moved to accept the deed from Jones and authorized construction of a new courthouse on the land he donated. Jones transferred the land to the county on June 4, 1902. Harrison County residents summarily voted to move the county seat to Gulfport from Mississippi City, and the county lost no time in erecting a suitable seat of county government. Designed by Andrew J. Bryan, a highly acclaimed New Orleans architect who designed a number of southern courthouses, and constructed by the M. T. Lewman and Company, the new courthouse building was state of the art in design. A number of Bryan's masterpieces, like the courthouse in Gulfport, incorporated neoclassical design features. The Louisville, Kentucky, based Lewman firm was likewise a regional firm which oversaw construction on the Bryan project. The new courthouse opened on November 9, 1903. Citizens of the late 19th and early 20th century viewed the courthouse as an expression of public pride, and indeed the construction of a new courthouse was in itself an architectural statement about their belief in progress, modernity, and their faith in future growth of the city. Although he did not control the building or the design of the courthouse, by donating the land Jones had nudged the board of supervisors to relocate the county seat and assured that Gulfport would be the new administrative center of Harrison County.³⁹

To encourage interurban travel, Jones developed an electric interurban rail line connecting Biloxi, Gulfport, and Pass Christian under the auspices of the Gulfport and Mississippi Gulf Coast Traction Company. Organized with capital of \$1 million dollars in the spring of 1905, it included a new \$150,000 electric generating plant for the city of Gulfport.⁴⁰ In July 1905, Jones purchased the Biloxi Electric Railway and Traction Company for \$200,000, a deal which consolidated his hold on both the trolley systems and electric power generating plants in Harrison County's

³⁸ *W. O. Rogers, Jr., Ellen G. M. Rogers, John B. Martin, et al. v. Joseph T. Jones, the County of Harrison, et. al.* 214 U.S. 196. United States Supreme Court decision rendered May 24, 1909.

³⁹ *Municipal Journal and Public Works*, V. 13, N. 6 (July-December 1902), 26; Charles Sullivan, *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: Portrait of a People* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1985), 113, 115; Wilber Caldwell, *The Courthouse and the Depot: The Architecture of Hope in an Age of Despair* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), ix, 2-5, 152, 259, 576.

⁴⁰ "Gulf Coast Traction Line," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, March 30, 1905; "Huge Power House for the Gulf Coast Electric Railroad," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, June 5, 1905.

coastal towns.⁴¹ Jones's primary goal was the establishment of a trolley line that would stretch from Biloxi to Gulfport, but speculative newspaper accounts suggest that Jones planned an interurban line, which would eventually stretch eastward to Pascagoula and perhaps Mobile. While the eastward connection never materialized, the line eventually did extend westward to Pass Christian, but for once Jones's plans were thwarted; he would not be able to build the trolley line along the beachfront. Instead, the trolley line in Pass Christian ran behind beachfront homes gracing the waterfront. His building and acquisition of electric plants in conjunction with the trolley lines also laid the foundation of the modern day Mississippi Power Company.⁴²

Jones's philanthropy extended beyond the gift of a parcel for a county courthouse. He also provided land for the erection of local churches for both white and African-American congregations. Racial segregation was the rule of law in the early 20th century South, and Gulfport was no exception. While blacks represented an important part of the community, and a crucial part of the local labor force, the city itself was spatially segregated. Jones, a former Union soldier, certainly recognized the freedom of African-Americans, but he also conformed to Southern racial practices and segregation laws. Jones employed a number of African-Americans in his numerous business ventures in Mississippi, but they were engaged mainly in menial labor positions. In 1906, an African Methodist Episcopal church formed in Gulfport, and the congregation likely appealed to Jones for help, for in 1907 he donated the land for the Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church. While Jones's action showed that his benevolence extended to the local African-American community which constituted a growing part of the city's population, he also made certain that his gift of land maintained spatial segregation in the city.⁴³

In February of 1909, Jones suffered either a stroke or a nervous breakdown, which limited his involvement in his business endeavors. The severity of his illness and the extent to which it affected him long-term is difficult to determine, but a report

⁴¹ "Electric Plant Sold to Jones," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, July 7, 1905.

⁴² "Syzygy of Trolley Line," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, May 29, 1906; "Electric Line is Probable," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, March 15, 1906; Frank A. Brooks, Jr., "Along the Line of the Gulfport and Mississippi Coast Traction Company," *Gulfport Daily Herald*, September 26, 1912; Frank A. Brooks, Jr., "Traveling By Trolley in Mississippi," *Southern Traction*, September 1983, 15-24; Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 239.

⁴³ Phillip Thomas Tucker, *Father of the Tuskegee Airmen: John C. Robinson* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 3; Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Containing Principally the Biographies of the Men and Women, Both Ministers and Laymen, Whose Labors during a Hundred Years, Helped Make the A. M. E. Church What It Is* (Philadelphia, PA: Book Concern of the AME Church, 1916), 314-315.

in the Biloxi *Daily Herald* termed it a “nervous breakdown caused by long pressure of business.”⁴⁴ His biographer, Melodia Rowe, termed it “a slight apoplectic stroke” but also referred to it as a “complete nervous breakdown.”⁴⁵ Jones left Gulfport on a special invalid train and spent nearly four months recovering in New York and Virginia before departing for Europe for further treatment. A direr picture of the captain’s health circulated in 1910, which described him as an “invalid” unable to oversee the daily operation of the company. While this last assessment was likely speculation, nevertheless Jones was in poor health for the final seven years of his life.⁴⁶ His son Albert, better known as Bert, initially played a key role in Gulfport. During 1909 and 1910, he oversaw daily operations of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad. In addition to serving as a vice president of the railroad company, Bert was instrumental in the development of the Great Southern Golf Club.⁴⁷ He was clearly the successor to his father’s business interests, but sadly, his leadership of the company was brief. He died from complications of malaria on Christmas day of 1910. After Bert’s death, the elder Jones re-engaged as the prime decision maker for the Gulf and Ship Island, but his physical condition limited his ability to work the long hours necessary to retain a tight grip on the company. His daughter Grace stepped in at least once in 1916 to mediate a dispute at the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad and keep the line operating, hoping to resolve the issue to protect her father’s health.⁴⁸

Memorializing the “Builder”

Jones continued to oversee many of his coastal operations until his death on December 6, 1916, in Buffalo, New York. His interment was in Forrest Park Cemetery in Buffalo, in the Jones Mausoleum on the grounds. At a memorial service in Gulfport, W. G. Evans provided this apt eulogy of Jones:

“Capt. Jones is gone and a veil of sadness has been drawn over the city and the entire community and indeed over the state. All we can do is cherish his memory, for it can be truthfully said that he has been a benefactor to South Mississippi and the entire state.

⁴⁴ Biloxi *Daily Herald*, March 26, 1909.

⁴⁵ Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 248-249.

⁴⁶ “Will a Struggle Follow for G. and S. I.?” Gulfport *Daily Herald*, December 28, 1910.

⁴⁷ “Meeting of the County Club,” Biloxi *Daily Herald*, September 10, 1909.

⁴⁸ “Miss Grace Jones Said to Have Settled Strike,” Gulfport *Daily Herald*, March 24, 1916.

When another man like Capt. Jones will do for Mississippi what he has done, no one can foresee.”⁴⁹

His wife and daughter shared equally in his estate, which the *New York Times* estimated to be worth “\$35,000,000 in 1916.”⁵⁰ In 1919, a court agreement gave his wife Melodia Jones control of the holdings in the northern states, while daughter Grace E. Jones Stewart gained the Mississippi portion of the Jones empire.⁵¹ Grace continued to be involved in the economic and civic life of Gulfport and served as the president of the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad from 1919-1925. In the latter year, she sold the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad to the Illinois Central, a competing national line, which had long coveted the linkage to the port of Gulfport. The Illinois Central system officially took over the route on July 1, 1925.⁵² On Saturday, July 11 of the same year, the city hosted a large group of Illinois Central executives at the Great Southern Hotel. This occasion was one of both reflection on the accomplishments of Joseph T. Jones and of the promise the infusion of new capital would bring to the city. At the banquet, the president of the Illinois Central system praised Joseph T. Jones’s many accomplishments and asked the question “Where is the monument that the people of Gulfport should have built to the memory of Captain Jones?”⁵³

To some Gulfport residents, the question was a prescient one. Even before his death, at least one newspaper account singled out the entire city of Gulfport as a “monument to individual enterprise, the creation of one man- Joseph T. Jones of Buffalo.”⁵⁴ Calls for a permanent memorial to Jones began the day after his death when local residents, led by the superintendent of Beauvoir, Elnathan Tartt, initiated the plea for a suitable monument to memorialize Jones.⁵⁵ Former Gulfport Mayor John Lang contended in his reminiscences that while “Captain Jones monument is the railroad, channel, harbor, hotel, upon which he spent millions” some suitable memorial should be constructed.⁵⁶ Taking up the call to action, Lang’s wife in 1925 worked to establish a Jones Memorial fund through the American Legion, but despite a substantial fundraising campaign in the local papers, no memorial came of the effort. The community would have to wait for another decade before

⁴⁹ “Eulogies for Capt. J. T. Jones,” *Gulfport Daily Herald*, December 11, 1916.

⁵⁰ “Woman May Head Railway,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1916.

⁵¹ “Estate of Late J. T. Jones Divided,” *Gulfport Daily Herald*, March 5, 1919.

⁵² *Gulfport Daily Herald*, July 1, 1925.

⁵³ “Illinois Central Head Honored Banquet Guest,” *Biloxi Daily Herald*, July 13, 1925.

⁵⁴ *Biloxi Daily Herald*, April 2, 1909.

⁵⁵ “Biloxians Believe Monument Should be Erected to Capt. Jones Memory,” *Gulfport Daily Herald*, December 7, 1916.

⁵⁶ Lang, *History of Harrison County, Mississippi*, 221.

an official monument to Jones materialized.⁵⁷

In subsequent years, memorials to Jones, all of which worked to shape his public memory, followed three distinct patterns. The first was through literature that anchored his place in coastal history and placed his life in context of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and her other great men. A second method of memorialization was the creation of living memorials, or memorial spaces dedicated to Jones while also functioning as public spaces. The third method was the most traditional: the construction of a physical monument, which honors the co-founder of Gulfport. Each shaped the public memory of Jones in subtle ways and created associative memories with his legacy and the city of Gulfport.

Literature, and in particular biographical treatment of a subject, can be a powerful tool in shaping public memory. During his lifetime, biographical accounts, likely prepared in close cooperation with Jones, circulated in a variety of publications. These often contained the same basic information on his life distilled into a brief sketch or vignette.⁵⁸ By the late 1930s many of those who knew Jones personally were in the twilight of their lives. One popular method of commemorating notable figures of the time was through historical biography. Some twenty years after his death, the Jones family published a detailed full-length biography of their patriarch. Authored by his niece, Melodia Blackmarr Rowe, *Captain Jones: Biography of a Builder* is a well-written, thorough account of Jones's life; while objective it is not a critical study of his life, nor was it intended to be. It also stands as the only full-length biography of Jones. As a member of the family, Rowe had access to many of Jones's personal papers on which to base the account.⁵⁹ The broader goal of the work, however, was to remember Jones's exploits via a credible account of his life and to place him in historical context for a younger generation. This work certainly succeeded in its effort, as it remains on the library shelves of at least thirty-three major libraries.⁶⁰

Chapters in two monographs, the 1940 work *Men of Spine*

⁵⁷ "Fund Started by Mrs. Lang," *Biloxi Daily Herald*, July 20, 1925.

⁵⁸ For example, see *A History of the City of Buffalo: Its Men and Institutions* (Buffalo, NY: *Buffalo Evening News*, 1908), 184-185.

⁵⁹ Rowe, *Captain Jones*.

⁶⁰ A search of Worldcat.org on November 20, 2013, reveals holdings by thirty-three libraries.

in *Mississippi* by Clayton Rand and the 1951 work *Gulf Coast Country* by Hodding Carter and Anthony Ragusin, also served to celebrate Jones as an integral part of Gulf Coast history. Both of the works paint the picture of a man driven to build a new city and see it succeed. These posthumous recollections not only salute Jones as a “builder,” but offer positive reinforcement of his efforts in Gulfport. Readers are left in awe of Jones by these largely salutary biographical sketches. Neither offer new information on Jones’s life, but both hail him as one of the most important historical figures of the early twentieth century. Still, these literary memorials served to remind a younger generation of Jones’s exploits and solidified his importance as one of the founding fathers of Gulfport.⁶¹ More importantly, these works mark the last wave of literature to focus on Jones’s life and works. After 1942, his literary legacy is sparse at best.

The first physical memorial to Jones took the shape of a living memorial. In 1935 Grace Jones Stewart donated a parcel of land adjacent to the Great Southern Hotel and the port of Gulfport for the express purpose of creating a public park and small craft harbor.⁶² The small craft harbor served as a memorial to her brother, Bert, while the land-based park bore the name of her father: Joseph T. Jones Memorial Park. The original stipulations for the gift of land required that the site be used for public purposes or be returned to the family, thus creating a responsibility on the part of the city to uphold the civic use of the public space. An extensive \$405,000 project, supported by funds from the Sea Wall Commission, the Public Works Administration, and the city of Gulfport and Harrison County, reshaped an area described as “unsightly marsh” into a first-rate public park and small craft harbor. In historical terms, the choice of a living memorial was in step with national trends. During the early part of the century, sculptures and memorials were important commemorations of memorable figures. After World War I, however, parks, public buildings, and other spaces of public interaction became the primary method of shaping the public memory of historical figures. These spaces merged public use and public remembrance and were attractive to funding agencies for this reason.⁶³ Thus, the living memorial of a gulf front park was a fitting memorial for

⁶¹ Hodding Carter and Anthony Ragusin, *Gulf Coast Country*, Chapter XI; Clayton Rand, *Men of Spine In Mississippi* (Gulfport, MS: Dixie Press, 1940), 263-266.

⁶² New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, May 16, 1937.

⁶³ Andrew M. Shanken, “Planning Memory: Public Memorials in the United States During World War II,” *The Art Bulletin*, V. 84, N. 1 (March 2002), 130-133.

the civically-minded Jones.

Jones Park was not the only living memorial in Gulfport. Adjacent to and north of Jones Park between 21st and 20th Avenues was the Gulfport Chautauqua grounds. This site originally housed a Chautauqua building, and the Jones family donated the land to the city in 1929. Like Jones Park, the deed stipulated that the parcel be used for public purposes. In 1964, the city transferred ownership of the site to the Harrison County Board of Supervisors. In 1966, the city of Gulfport erected a new library building on the Chautauqua site, which survived Hurricane Camille in 1969 only to be heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. Despite a dedicated lobbying effort in 2008-2009 on the part of local citizens, which included several Jones relatives, due to the site's proximity to the Gulf the city decided to build the new Gulfport Library at an alternate site further inland. Descendants of the Jones family helped form the group "We the People" and vigorously lobbied for the old library to be refurbished and utilized as a community center or some other public building, in line with the agreement to use the space for public good. In April of 2014, the Harrison County Board of Supervisors put on hold an earlier plan to demolish the building, in hope of saving the building and once again utilizing it for the betterment of the public. This shattered living memorial, while it does not carry the Jones name, is a landscape associated with Jones and his civic spirit of education and lifelong learning. The extended Jones family continues to strive to find an adaptive reuse for this site that would be in line with its public mission.⁶⁴

Ironically, an actual physical monument in the form of a traditional statue was the last to come to fruition. The monument as memorial movement reached its pinnacle in the first two decades of the 20th century. It was common to honor men of Jones's era, particularly those associated with the Civil War, by construction of a marker, statue, or other physical monument. Paul Shackel argues that during this time period commemoration was a method by which to honor great men and the "glory of industry and capitalism."⁶⁵ The dedication of a permanent monument to Jones on January 18, 1942, finally answered the calls to create a suitable memorial in his honor. Located on the former Chautauqua grounds, the combined statue and base serve as a legacy to Jones, who many referred to as the "Grand Old Man" of Gulfport or alternately as in the title of his biography, simply a "builder."⁶⁶ Designed

⁶⁴ Gwen K. Jones, "Demolition of Historic Building on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina." MA thesis, University of Georgia, 2011, 86-97. Jones's thesis contains an excellent overview of the opposing points of view in this still ongoing debate.

⁶⁵ Paul A. Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 193.

⁶⁶ Rowe, *Captain Jones*.

by Charles Keck, the elegant Georgia marble base with its appropriate engravings of a schooner at full sail and a steam-powered railroad engine with smoke billowing from its stack are topped with a statue of Jones, who dressed in his customary three-piece suit is facing southward toward the Gulf of Mexico. During the 20th century, the Jones statue escaped damage from numerous hurricanes. Hurricane Katrina, however, toppled Jones from his base, and the monument survived the storm only to be removed for repair by the Harrison County Board of Supervisors on October 29, 2008.⁶⁷ Although there was some concern over the fate of the statue by Jones's relatives and the group "We the People," the Harrison County Board of Supervisors voted in March 2009 to pay for refurbishment of the statue and base. This traditional memorial of Jones, which was restored in 2010 to a position along the harbor in Jones Park, is the most visible reminder of the man and his accomplishments at Gulfport.

Conclusion: How can the historian evaluate the Jones legacy?

As outlined in this article, three themes are evident in Joseph T. Jones's career in south Mississippi. First, his economic impact on the region created a spatial shift, which resulted in the formation of new towns and centers of population, drastically altering the landscape of the coast and southeastern Mississippi. Second, while the trajectory of Jones's life places him in the company of the Gilded Age elite, in Gulfport he also had a strong interest in civic paternalism, or in other words fatherly guidance in matters civic for the betterment of the citizens and the community at large. Third, his memorialization in literature and via the built environment shaped memory after his death.

A long-term result of the construction of the Gulf and Ship Island railroad and the port of Gulfport was the spatial transformation of the region. Prior to the railroad construction boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a handful of small towns dotted the landscape of south Mississippi. The most important communities included county seats and small trading towns, mostly located on the banks of the Pearl and Pascagoula Rivers and their tributaries. Until the arrival of the railroad, these rivers offered the best method of transporting trade goods to regional markets. The coming of the railroad immediately influenced the human geography of the region. New "railroad" towns such as Gulfport, Hattiesburg, and Laurel quickly supplanted the older, more established towns of Columbia, Augusta, and Pass

⁶⁷ "Jones' Descendants Upset About Removal of Statue's Base," *Biloxi Sun Herald*, October 29, 2009; Harrison County Board of Supervisors Meeting Minutes, March 9, 2009.

Christian.⁶⁸ Both Wolfgang Schivelbusch and Richard White argue that railroads changed the United States in the latter half of the 19th century by shortening the time it took to travel between two points. Barbara Young Welke summed up the process in her 2001 work *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920*: "Railroads knit America's "island communities" into a nation. They re-created space."⁶⁹ This spatial shift spurred an era of town building unmatched in Mississippi history. For south Mississippi, railroad building was mainly a post-Civil War phenomenon. Jones clearly envisioned a different type of South than the one he fought to subdue during the Civil War. No longer a land of lazy agricultural villages separated by rough wagon roads and muddy rivers, the region instead transformed into one of industrial towns and villages connected by iron and steel. A staunch believer in modernization, Jones staked his personal fortune on developing an industrial economy in the region. It is unclear if Jones ever embraced the term "new south," but his vision certainly created one on the coastal plains and piney woods of Mississippi. While it is well documented that these changes did not immediately revolutionize life in south Mississippi, they did initiate the process of change that would lead to greater industrialization of the region and allow it to forge closer economic ties to the rest of the nation.⁷⁰

While Jones held a paternalistic civic vision for Gulfport evidenced by the breadth of his improvements in the city, he also sought to exert paternal control over the economy, politics, and environment of the city. He steadfastly believed that civic improvements enhanced the regional economy and encouraged urban development. Public piers, electric generating plants, and parks provided amenities to the majority of Gulfport's citizens. Providing quality services via his varied business interests created high levels of customer satisfaction and further stimulated the local

⁶⁸ Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 58-64. Noe documents a similar pattern in Southwest Virginia.

⁶⁹ Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 250; Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), xxix; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1977), 33-35.

⁷⁰ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1951). See V and XI for discussions of industrialization and the nature of the colonial economy in the South. Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). See chapters three and five for a discussion of the development of towns and industry in the New South.



Joseph T. Jones Statue, photograph by author.

economy.⁷¹ While he staunchly promoted open economic competition, perhaps influenced by an 1870s conflict with John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company over use of the corporation's pipelines to deliver oil from the well to the manufacturer, Jones also worked to create a system by which he controlled the Gulf and Ship Island, the Gulf Coast Traction Company, and indirectly, the Port of Gulfport. He imitated the Gilded Age elite in his efforts to control economic power via control of the regional transportation network.⁷² Jones chose to spend his hard-earned fortune to build a first class network of which both he and the community could be proud. Both the railroad and the port became a magnet

for lawsuits, which cost Jones hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees and court settlements. Like any corporate leader, he worked to minimize these losses whenever possible, but the constant barrage of court cases in the public eye likely contributed to the perception that Jones was merely a wealthy Yankee come south for economic gain.⁷³ Jones, instead, viewed these lawsuits as a necessary evil and yet another obstacle to be overcome in his quest to modernize south Mississippi.

While he never served in political office, Jones understood the importance of legislation that would serve to support his agenda, as evidenced in the call to move the county seat to Gulfport and his disdain of the anti-corporate climate in the state. Jones's biographer, Melodia Rowe, offers this account of the relationship:

“Governor Vardaman was particularly antagonistic. His laws were not unfriendly to capital but his appeal to the rabble for political purposes was outrageous. His picture of Captain Jones was of a bloated and unprincipled capitalist, smoking dollar cigars, eating five-dollar beefsteaks, while milking Mississippi dry, buying off

⁷¹ “Influence of a Railroad on the Lumber Trade of Mississippi,” *American Lumberman*, 29.

⁷² Glenn Porter, “Industrialization and the Rise of Big Business” in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), 10-15.

⁷³ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 143-146.

its officers and controlling its policies. The Captain publically and emphatically denied these charges and challenged Vardaman to cite a single instance in which he or his railroad attempted to control the legislature or elect a man to office.”⁷⁴

This account also illustrates the perils of writing life histories, for despite the captain’s claims, he did use politics to his advantage, most notably in his effort to secure federal control of the port of Gulfport. Still, Rowe sought to shape the memory of Jones in a way that would complement and perpetuate a positive historical image.

Jones waged a constant battle for control of the environment. Whether building a railroad across ninety-seven miles of pine hills and river bottoms or dredging the unpredictable Mississippi Sound, he worked to impose his vision onto the landscape. Hurricanes, tropical storms, and tidal surges worked to destroy his work. Still Jones managed to harness technology to build an empire on what had been an empty piece of coastline in the mid-1870s. The importance of his achievement lies in the continued existence, some 110 years later, of the port that he established with his personal resources. While many of his landmark buildings no longer stand, the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Building and the original First National Bank of Gulfport Building remain, even after the devastation of major Hurricanes Camille in 1969 and Katrina in 2005.

While the public’s opinion of Jones during his lifetime is debatable, in particular because of his association with Gilded Age businessman and the accompanying negative connotations, the public image of him after 1916 is strongly positive.⁷⁵ In part due to the efforts of the Jones family to continue his civic donations and to use them as tools of memory, many Gulfport residents are familiar with the Jones name and his contributions to the city. Like other older hotels, the Great Southern declined and was demolished in the 1950s. The landscaped grounds are also long gone, but the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad Building remains as a living testament to the legacy of Joseph T. Jones, the builder. Likewise, the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent rebuilding effort refocused public attention on the revitalization of his statue and of Jones Park. A recent \$35 million dollar project created a splash pad, children’s playground, greenspace, a large pavilion, and an amphitheater. The concept is for Jones Park to become Mississippi’s front porch on the Gulf, a use of which the “Builder” would likely be proud.

An enemy in war, Jones became an “adopted” citizen of Mississippi as he worked

⁷⁴ Rowe, *Captain Jones*, 47-54.

⁷⁵ Charles W. Calhoun, “Introduction” in *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1996), xi.

to build the city of Gulfport. This transformation is no small feat for a man who contradicted the new south in political leanings and sectional differences. Jones expressed his passion for the coast to John Lang:

“Lang, it is my disposition to improve, to build, I never tear down. I want to build up this coast into one large city. See how God has placed it facing the south, so that we get all the cooling winds! Think what it would be if we faced east or west, getting the glare of the sun in our face in the morning or evening. See what splendid water we get from the artesian wells; this is a place for a large city.”⁷⁶

Jones not only succeeded in his work of city building at Gulfport, but he left his imprint more broadly on south Mississippi. Thanks to the repair and replacement of his memorial after Hurricane Katrina, one hundred years after his death, Jones is still standing watch over his city, facing southward as if surveying the park that bears his name.

⁷⁶ Lang, *History of Harrison County, Mississippi*, 221.

BOOK REVIEWS

Grant at Vicksburg: The General and the Siege.

By Michael B. Ballard.

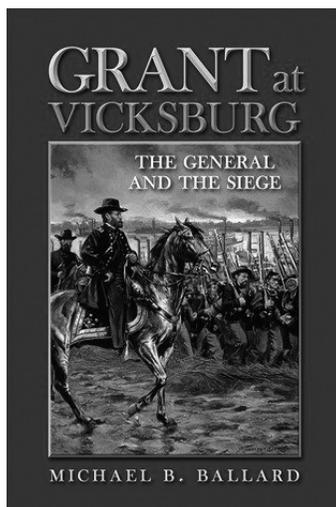
Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013. Illustrations, maps, notes, index. Pp. xiii, 232. \$32.95 cloth, \$32.95 e-book. ISBN: 9780809332403.

Twenty years after the end of the Civil War, with the advantage of hindsight and the knowledge of Confederate defeat, Ulysses S. Grant noted in his memoirs that “the fate of the Confederacy was sealed when Vicksburg fell” (*Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant in Two Volumes*, 1885). The Union army’s six-week siege of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the Confederacy’s last real stronghold on the Mississippi River, ended with the city’s surrender to Grant on July 4, 1863. Civil War historians such as Edward C. Bearss, James Arnold, Terrence Winschel, and Timothy B. Smith have explored the military campaign, while a long list of Grant biographers have produced a glut of studies on the man himself.

In *Grant at Vicksburg*, Michael B. Ballard, professor and archivist at Mississippi

State University, offers an insightful hybrid of both military history and biography. Ballard is no stranger to the Vicksburg story having previously authored books on Grant, the Vicksburg campaign, and a biography of Confederate General John C. Pemberton (Grant’s opponent during the siege). His thesis is that Grant’s Vicksburg experience—particularly the administrative, tactical, and psychological challenges—prepared the forty-one-year-old general to lead the Union to ultimate victory over the Confederacy. The mental and emotional clouds

that hung over Grant’s head following his army’s near-disastrous victory at Shiloh in April 1862, disappeared after Vicksburg, leaving the general with a newfound sense of confidence and determination that served him well for the remainder of the war.



Ballard organizes his book chronologically, analyzing both Grant and military affairs from the failed Union attacks against Vicksburg's fortified defenses in late May to Pemberton's surrender of the city and, finally, the Rebel army's evacuation of Jackson, Mississippi, in mid-July. Throughout the narrative the author focuses on several key events. He argues that Grant's obsession with Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's whereabouts and the constant rumors that Johnston's army was marching to relieve Vicksburg needlessly distracted the Union general. Yet, this experience taught Grant to be more concerned with the execution of his own plans and less preoccupied with those of the enemy. Ballard devotes an entire chapter debunking the legend that Grant became drunk during an inspection trip up the Yazoo River. He is particularly critical of popular writers such as Shelby Foote and Samuel Carter III as well as historian and Grant biographer William McFeely, all of whom embraced the story without question according to the author. Ballard details Grant's combative relationship with subordinate general John A. McClernand, a weeks-long feud that ended with McClernand's removal and Grant gaining more experience dealing with insubordinate officers. And, while biographical material tends to dominate, the author devotes a sizeable portion of the narrative to combat maneuvers and tactical decision making.

Grant at Vicksburg contains a number of notable strengths and several weaknesses. For the most part, Ballard seamlessly weaves biographical information together with the military operations, one supporting the other. He describes the role African-American soldiers played during the campaign and takes head-on the issue of racism within Union ranks as well as Federal soldiers' occasional violence

against blacks. Ballard's overarching thesis is largely successful; his evidence that the campaign shaped Grant's post-Vicksburg prosecution of the Union war effort is convincing. Like many battle narratives, this one lacks a sufficient number of maps; but this reviewer is rarely satisfied in that area. The author also relies too heavily upon the passive voice, a stylistic approach that strains the narrative and sometimes lacks clarity.

Important to note, the author is overwhelmingly positive in his evaluation of Grant, often making excuses for his failures and arguably exaggerating Grant's place in history. Ballard's assertion that Grant was the "greatest Union general of the Civil War, and perhaps the greatest general period" may raise a few eyebrows among military historians and fans of other generals (62). Readers who prefer pure battle narratives devoid of socio-political arguments will probably be disappointed. Conversely, those who favor military biographies mixed with a healthy dose of combat will find Ballard's book an enjoyable read.

TOMMY C. BROWN
Auburn University

A Voice That Could Stir an Army: Fannie Lou Hamer and the Rhetoric of the Black Freedom Movement. By Maegan Parker Brooks (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014. Index, bibliography. Pp. 314. \$60 cloth, \$60 e-book. ISBN 978-1-628646-004-9.)

Fannie Lou Hamer led a remarkable life, from her early years as the youngest of twenty children of sharecroppers to her later years as a fearless voter registration

proponent and to her final years as a venerated leader and cultural critic. Maegan Parker Brooks's rhetorical biography of Fannie Lou Hamer is a meticulous piece of scholarship. In order to benefit maximally from this work, there is a method that citizen, student, and researcher alike should use. They should first listen to the many audio recordings strewn about the internet, and then read the primary documents in *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (2010), which is a collection of thirty speeches compiled by Davis Houck and Maegan Parker Brooks. Parker Brooks offers a convincing analysis, but independent inquiry would be valuable as well.

This rhetorical biography has two functions. First, it regards Hamer's speeches endogenously—Hamer defined herself as rhetorical in evolving ways throughout her activist career. Second, the rhetorical biography maps exogenous or contextual factors that evolve throughout Hamer's career as well. The author makes deft use of "bottom up" and "long view" approaches to document recovery. Concerning the latter, periodization is often too restrictive to be meaningful. Concerning the former, local events take precedence over oft-lauded national events, though Parker Brooks analyzes national events well.

Chapter 1 focuses on Hamer's informal education among family, school, and church. Chapter 2 covers the early recruitment years when the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee was just beginning to develop and benefit from her immense capacities. Chapter 3 focuses on Hamer's evolving rhetorical strategies as she achieved prominence during the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Chapter 4 adds a realistic human depiction to common takes on Hamer's simple, honest sharecropper and warrior personas. Chapter 5 was easily the most

interesting chapter to this reviewer. The chapter recounts Hamer's steady ideological trajectories as the movement imploded all around her. Bowling league, feminist, anti-Vietnam, and Black Power Democrats fragmented, inviting her in all directions. She remained her evolving self in thoughtful dialogue with all factions. Chapter 6 is the cautionary tale of Ms. Hamer's tragic demise, which bears a strong resemblance to the life of Carolina Maria de Jesus, whose diaries were published as *Child of The Dark* several decades ago. The afterword is a thoughtful analysis of the trajectories of Hamer's immense corpus.

Parker Brooks's research is fruitful, allowing for thick description and myriad new avenues of inquiry. There are too many new research questions springing from these pages to give adequate treatment, but one such question is too intriguing to put aside. Are Hamer's accomplishments the surprising result of a poor sharecropper's life that middle-class blacks overtook as they rose precociously to prominence? Or is it simply that the new, formally educated middle class did not recognize that she was a member of the club?

It is an exaggeration to describe Hamer's pedigree as Delta gentry, but consider: 1. The Townsends reputedly raised twenty children, receiving a modest \$50 stipend on each occasion of birth (the equivalent of roughly \$1,500 in 2014 dollars or a total of \$30,000) if twenty children were indeed born. 2. Her father seemed able to accumulate wealth, though others undermined him after the fact. 3. The Townsends raised twenty children. If even just five of them reached adulthood, surely this indicates a modest threshold of wealth. 4. Both Townsend parents seemed able to work long, physically demanding days, perhaps like unheralded former athletes; the mere act of surviving double digit births seems to

corroborate this as well. 5. Mr. Townsend was a minister, which indicates elevated status in virtually every denomination. 6. Hamer herself lived in a nicer house than other sharecroppers due to her position as a measuring broker trusted by planters and sharecroppers alike. 7. Perry “Pap” Hamer, her devoted husband, was skilled enough to operate heavy machinery including tractors, which requires training and in some cases a license. 8. Many friends and enemies described Hamer as stout, and she had diabetes, a horrible disease that can strike amid plenty. It is too early to make a more elaborate argument about Hamer’s socioeconomic status because of the need to know more about the lives of her nineteen siblings.

One other subject deserves mention. Hamer’s voice will draw people in from all sides of the arguments on reproductive rights and will add compassion to what is ordinarily a flinty, unpleasant encounter—rarely a dialogue.

Parker Brooks’s rhetorical biography of Fannie Lou Hammer succeeds in pulling together enough information for scholars to engage and analyze. Read it soon but perhaps not before the research suggested above in order to engage fully the personal and historiographic diversity of this remarkable woman.

DAVID DIXON

Saint Joseph’s College, Rensselaer, Indiana

A New Southern Woman: The Correspondence of Eliza Lucy Irion Neilson, 1871-1883. Edited by Giselle Roberts. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013. *Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, index.* Pp. viii, 306. \$49.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781611171037.)

In *A New Southern Woman*, Giselle Roberts

compiles eighty letters written by Lucy Irion Neilson between her wedding day in 1871 and September 1883 to illuminate how women rebuilt their lives and white femininity in the New South. Through the letters, readers get to observe the everyday life of Neilson, her sisters Cordele and Lizzie, and niece Bess, and to catch glimpses of how the community of Columbus and the region of north Mississippi adapted to a range of postwar issues, from emancipation to the revivalism led by a new minister at the Columbus First Presbyterian Church. Roberts argues that white women, like Neilson, created new identities that built on the freedom and independence of wartime gender roles and allowed for fluid movement between older notions of the domestic ideal and new “outward-looking” and “proactive” endeavors that could include activism at the school house or church, and even political activities, so long as their efforts helped to support white supremacy and patriarchal authority.

For the most part, however, Neilson remained squarely in the traditional role of devoted wife, mother, sister, and exacting mistress—her experience hewed closely to home and hearth, and in matters of race her greatest concern was how to get the upper-hand in dealing with the freed-women working for her. The strength of the collection is in how it chronicles the common desires of the Irion women, who, whether interacting with family, husbands, neighbors, or newly-freed people, tried to adjust to the new demands of white womanhood, while maintaining their place of privilege and furthering their family’s claim to civility.

Neilson was born in Tennessee, the eighth child and the youngest, to a prosperous, slave-owning family who lost it all by 1848, due to the father’s mismanagement. The Irion children spent much of the rest

of their lives trying to rebuild a sense of family and establish themselves in the upper echelons of white society in their new home of Columbus, Mississippi. The right education for the younger generation was important to new notions of white femininity, but so was looking the part. Neilson reported her dismay to Lizzie when Bess and her new husband, Frank, showed up to visit—for which Neilson had prepared “nice elegant entertainments”—with nothing fit to wear (237). The situation was dire enough that Lucy spoke to Bess and Frank separately about the problem, reprimanding Bess for being stingy with regard to her personal upkeep and Frank for not having done something about it before their arrival. Interludes like these make clear that claims on respectability and refinement were felt to be tenuous, and redress needed to be swift and unambiguous.

One of the many themes to emerge in Neilson’s letters is the careful attention paid to maintaining and strengthening family bonds, despite long absences, conflict regarding property, and hurt feelings. Along with detailing local and family events, much of the content of her letters to Lizzie and Bess, her most frequent correspondents, is spent complimenting them, remarking on the spiritual devotion their letters evidenced, or on a pleasing turn of phrase that Neilson liked, and in all ways, letting them know that they were foremost in her heart and mind. While Neilson was remarkably explicit about her affection and devotion to family, other relationships can be only glimpsed. Readers may be frustrated by the brief reference made to servants and former slaves known to the family, but the letters provide enough detail to demonstrate Neilson’s dedication to establishing her authority over her female domestic servants, for which she seeks advice from her older sister in how to outmaneuver the

freed women and compel their submission to her understanding of when and how they should work.

The volume holds appeal to undergraduate and graduate students interested in social history of the era and women’s history. Scholars and the general audience will appreciate the organization of the letters, the introduction, and the notations that Roberts provides for each section. By not correcting Neilson’s use of language, unorthodox punctuation, or use of abbreviations, the letters better reveal Neilson’s mood and meaning. Such decisions credit the editor and help ensure that the goal of the series, “to enable women to speak for themselves,” is achieved (ix).

Erin Kempker

Mississippi University for Women

Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women: Race and Beauty in the Twentieth-Century South. By Blain Roberts. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Acknowledgments, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. ix, 363. \$39.95 hardcover, \$29.99 e-book. ISBN: 978-1-4696-1420-5.)

In *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, Blain Roberts tackles the complex regional history of female beauty. Building upon the work of historians such as Anne Firor Scott, Deborah Gray White, and Tara McPherson on southern women, and Kathy Peiss, Maxine Leeds Craig, and Tiffany M. Gill on beauty history and politics, Roberts investigates the connections between gender, race, representation, and power in the twentieth century American South. Roberts charts the evolution of southern ideas about beauty from the late-nineteenth century to the 1970s, with

the goal of showing how southern women “mediated the crises of modern southern history” through changes in racialized and class-based expressions of, and thus behaviors surrounding, beauty (5). She does this through an admittedly “segregated approach” in which she separates the changes in white and black beauty cultures over the course of the first half of the twentieth century into different chapters, only bringing them together in her final chapter about the civil rights era (13).

Roberts’s analysis begins around the turn of the twentieth century with the reactions of white southern women to the modernization of beauty culture. The classist, “natural beauty” ideal of the “southern lady” and the financial barriers to beauty-based consumerism among rural women served as initial obstacles to the widespread adoption of cosmetics in the region. Eventually, however, the cosmetics industry learned to manipulate the ideal of the lady for widespread appeal. According to Roberts, the result was a set of cross-class beauty behaviors that eclipsed socioeconomic divisions between white women, therefore bolstering Jim Crow.

During this era, black women in the South also had an evolving relationship with cosmetics. African-American women who used cosmetics and hair products like straighteners constantly courted accusations of trying to “look white,” but Roberts ably shows how black beauty parlors could also serve as community centers and springboards for progressive politics and so-called “racial uplift” in the first half of the twentieth century. Roberts devotes two chapters to public evaluations of racialized, regional beauty through contests and pageants. White beauty pageants grew out of efforts to modernize rural culture, providing a new version of ideal southern femininity, while black pageants empha-

sized the politics of respectability through representations of virtuous femininity.

Roberts’s best chapter is her last one on the politicized uses of ideas about beauty during the civil rights era. With emphases on female racial and sexual purity, white beauty contests served as lovely enactments of the very ugly politics of massive resistance to the civil rights movement. The meaning and process of black beauty pageants changed as well, as younger black women shed the traditional appeal to racial respectability in favor of the more physically natural and politically charged Black Power aesthetic.

This final chapter will be of specific interest to Mississippi readers and scholars. Although Roberts uses examples of beauty practices from Mississippi throughout the book, her strongest comparison comes at the beginning of this chapter, cleverly entitled “Bodies Politic.” Roberts contrasts Lynda Lee Mead, a white University of Mississippi student and Miss America 1959, who argued publicly that Mississippi had “nothing to apologize for,” with the experiences of Anne Moody, a former beauty queen who went straight to a black beauty parlor for cleansing—both physical and psychological—after being attacked at a sit-in in Jackson in 1963 (192-193). The difference was stark: “One woman had beamed beneath a sparkling tiara,” while “the other, dirty and disheveled, retreated to a place where she could be made presentable again” (193). Of similar interest to Mississippi readers is the section on the “multitude of Ole Miss beauty queens” who, by “adding beauty and decorum” while spouting vague pleas for “cordiality” and “getting along,” attempted to beautify the reactionary, violent atmosphere of the state in the 1960s (204-206).

Although Roberts finds some continuity over time, which she indicates through

a short biography of Mary Kay Ash (yes, *that* Mary Kay) in the “Conclusion,” she simultaneously stresses key changes in the politics of southern beauty. Ultimately, Roberts convincingly shows how, over the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, black and white southerners used ideas about female beauty to both uphold traditional hierarchies of gender, race, and class, and to contest these prevailing structures of power.

KEIRA V. WILLIAMS
Texas Tech University

Black Freedom, White Resistance, and Red Menace: Civil Rights and Anticommunism in the Jim Crow South. By Yasuhiro Katagiri. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014. Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, index. Pp.xi, 392. \$47.50 hardcover. ISBN 9780807153130.)

This well-researched monograph emphasizes southern segregationists' connections with northern-based “Red-baiters,” and historian Yasuhiro Katagiri has added another volume on southern anticommunism and massive resistance. Katagiri's major historiographic intervention involves the North-South network of anticommunists who attempted to “nationalize their resistance not only to irresistible tides of social change but also to federal authority” (xvii).

Visiting dozens of archival repositories in mostly southern states, Katagiri details the rise of Methodist anticommunist strategists Myers G. Lowman and Joseph Brown Matthews. For many scholars of anticommunism and massive resistance, these names are nearly synonymous with the Dies Committee, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and

the opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Lowman commanded the fiercely anticommunist Circuit Riders, Inc., from Cincinnati, Ohio, while Matthews turned from the Popular Front and missionary work to public relations for HUAC and the southern states' “little HUACs”—or legislative investigating committees (31, 36-39, 62).

Katagiri's strength is showing how southern segregationists—people at the top of the white supremacist political food chain such as Tom P. Brady, William Rainach, William J. Simmons, James O. Eastland, and Eugene Talmadge—organized, finding common cause with professional anticommunists such as Lowman and Matthews, among others. In the former Confederate states, Katagiri reveals how segregationists shaped their own anti-communist rhetoric by picking the brains of Lowman and Matthews. Charges of communism levied against civil rights organizations including the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) and the Southern Regional Council (SRC) developed alongside school desegregation crises in Little Rock, New Orleans, and Clinton, Tennessee, which rallied white supremacist political elites. Lowman and Matthews provided support and information for the legislative agencies and sovereignty commissions battling racial integration in schools.

It is a chore to examine anticommunism and defense of segregation in a single volume. Questions remain such as whether anticommunism functioned only as a weapon, and here Katagiri's work could have benefitted from a tighter conceptualization. The weapon-based thesis diminishes the complexity of ideology and reduces historical actors to monolithic, calculating, and pragmatic automatons (xvii). Analyses of southern anticommunism

must examine the possibility that it was the core of segregationists' understanding of rapid domestic social and economic changes—most of which affected the South—between 1932 and 1968. Anticommunism was an expression of how militant segregationists—of William Rainach and James O. Eastland's ilk—understood and dealt with the blows levied upon the social and economic structure of southern society. After all, Katagiri quotes Citizens' Council founder Robert B. "Tut" Patterson, who exclaimed "racial integration would 'utterly destroy everything that [he] valued'" similar to the lifestyle changes associated with the transition to a communist system (18). The book is replete with similar statements from well-known and obscure white supremacists, suggesting strongly that they understood racial integration as synonymous with communism.

It is likely that anticommunism was more than a weapon since these kinds of charges have demonstrated remarkable staying power despite the demise of international communism. As the black freedom struggle rekindles with protests against police misconduct, opponents quickly denounce activists as communists. Many conservative Americans and their political representatives have too often labeled Barack Obama as a socialist, if not a communist. A better historical analysis is needed to demonstrate anticommunism's appeal as a rhetorical device, so the historian must retrace its ideological development and dissemination to the rank-and-file. Scholars should analyze anticommunism's appeal in the context of massive resistance and political realignment to fully appreciate the breadth of the charge "communist!"

Another shortcoming in this otherwise exceptionally researched monograph is temporization. In the 1930s, Matthews became an anticommunist by working for

Texan Martin Dies, the architect of the Dies Committee—progenitor of HUAC. Yet, Texas is less important than Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Mississippi in the author's analysis (40-41). Katagiri acknowledges that 1930s-era segregationists charged the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the Highlander Folk School (founded in 1932) with communism (130-31,106). Thus, southern anticommunism melded with white supremacy long before the classical phase of the civil rights era, which is the author's focus. Regardless, Katagiri's latest volume is a welcomed "sequel" to his work on the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (xiii).

KEVIN BOLAND JOHNSON
Grambling State University

Natchez Country: Indians, Colonists, and the Landscapes of Race in French Louisiana. By George Edward Milne. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2015. List of figures, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xi, 293. \$84.95 cloth, \$26.95 paper. ISBN: 9780820347509.)

In recent years, scholars have paid increasing attention to the ways that indigenous people used racial categories historically to define relationships with "others" and to establish internal political identities. Building upon these works—in particular that of historian Nancy Shoemaker—George Edward Milne tackles the question of "why the Indians decided to become 'red' in Natchez Country and why they decided to do so in that particular place with such determination" (2). The answer, Milne asserts, lies in their "unique spatial conditions" (5), which included "authority-bestowing terrain features" (6) and a

zone of interaction that gave them ample opportunity to observe the racial discourse of Europeans. Using archaeological evidence, writings, maps, charts, and census data, Milne reconstructs the landscapes of race in colonial Louisiana.

When French explorers entered Natchez Country in the late seventeenth century, they encountered a world strangely familiar. Like Louis XIV's France, the Natchez were ruled by a powerful Sun King. Built environments—like the palace at Versailles and the temple mounds of the Grand Village—solidified sovereign power. Both societies had nobles and commoners who defined their status through kinship. They both used religious rituals to unify their people. These similarities helped the French and the Natchez to fit one another into their “respective epistemological categories” (16). The French viewed the Natchez as the most “civilized” sauvages they had encountered, while the Natchez saw the newcomers as another group of refugees to incorporate into their chiefdom.

The “accommodations born of perceived resemblances,” however, were not to last (51). Tensions over trade, land use, and diplomatic protocol led to conflict, particularly between satellite Natchez towns and recent French arrivals. Natchez villagers employed “graduated acts of violence” to bring French colonists under control (9). The Natchez leader, Great Sun, tried to mitigate the effects of this violence, to affirm his authority over the outlying villages, and to preserve his partnership with the French through careful negotiation. Over time, however, Great Sun recognized that the French were not taking up the role of subordinate refugees after all.

As more French colonists poured into Louisiana, they made greater demands on Natchez lands. In addition, the French brought with them African slaves and a

mature discourse on race, which they solidified in the *Code Noir* of 1724. The French also began enslaving Natchez people from satellite towns. The treatment of these Indian slaves made it clear to the Natchez that the colonists perceived them as low-status, racial “others.” The final straw came in 1729 when the commandant of Fort Rosalie, Étienne de Chépart, told the Natchez to abandon their sacred mounds and plaza to make room for French construction. According to Milne, “When the newcomers controlled more of Natchez Country in a manner that put authority-generating sites at risk, the People of the Sun began to fashion a ‘red’ identity” (163). By adopting the term “red men,” the Natchez endeavored to distinguish themselves from Europeans and Africans and to unite their people behind a “portable” common racial identity to drive out the French.

On November 27, 1729, the Natchez led a coordinated attack against French colonists near Fort Rosalie. They miscalculated the French response, however, and, in the months that followed, the colonists hunted down the Indians. The French sent Natchez captives to Saint Domingue as slaves. Those who escaped dispersed among other southeastern tribes like the Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees. There, Milne argues, the “red identity, which the Natchez helped to shape, spread and took on a life of its own” (205). Before long, colonists also began referring to Indians as “red men.”

Although thought-provoking, Milne's thesis that the Natchez embraced a red racial category to unify their people after the French threatened their authority-generating landscape rests on thin evidence. The first recorded use of “red men” occurred in 1725—nearly four years before Chépart demanded that the Natchez vacate the Grand Village. It seems more likely that the Natchez adopted the term as a response to

the *Code Noir* of 1724. Moreover, despite Milne's contention that this racial category developed first in Natchez Country, he concedes that "the Natchez cannot be identified with absolute certainty as the source of the ideology of redness in Native America" since other southeastern peoples used the term before the Natchez diaspora (214). Despite these discrepancies, Milne has produced a fine monograph that sheds valuable light on the Natchez Country and French colonialism in Louisiana. His work is a critical contribution to discussions on racial formation in the colonial South.

MIKAËLA M. ADAMS

The University of Mississippi

In Remembrance of Emmett Till: Regional Stories and Media Responses to the Black Freedom Struggle. By Darryl Mace. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014. Preface, introduction, illustrations, acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xi, 212. \$40 cloth. ISBN: 978-0-8131-4536-5.)

A grocery store in Money, Mississippi, a watery grave in the Tallahatchie River, a hot courthouse in nearby Sumner—these are the places that the historian Pierre Nora called *lieux de mémoire*. Such sites triangulated the abbreviated life and the reverberant death of Emmett Till, the Chicago teenager whom at least two white men murdered for ostensibly having whistled at a white woman. Because the killing occurred after the traditional forms of Southern lynching had disappeared, because the victim was only fourteen years old, because the offense (if it occurred at all) was too innocuous to have merited death, and because an all-white jury expeditiously exonerated the murderers, the case attract-

ed extraordinary attention. The breadth of the media interest, therefore, amply justifies Darryl Mace's effort to categorize and distill how newspapers covered the case in the late summer and early fall of 1955. The press de-provincialized what in an earlier era would have been an ordinary racial crime, the sort of homicide that would have been vindicated by white supremacists and ignored by the rest of the nation. The glare of the media that Mace confirms inaugurated what the succeeding six decades have amplified: collective memory has ensured that the case never got cold. For black Americans especially, the force of communal recollections has guaranteed the significance of the death of Emmett Till.

The author argues that it "raised America's conscience" (136) and accelerated the drive for equal rights. The evidence can be located, he claims, in the press; and Mace should be commended for having examined a huge number of newspapers. They range across both South and North, Midwest and West, and were aimed at black readers as well as everyone else. Mace has amply demonstrated how widespread the press treatment was, when the corpse was discovered, when J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant were arrested and tried, when Mamie Till-Mobley came down from Chicago to testify in an atmosphere of rampant bigotry, and when justice was thwarted when the half-brothers were acquitted. The extensive recognition in the press of the lethal implications of white supremacy, thus, became the prelude for the remembrance that this book seeks to record.

But, the author has not licked the problem that bedevils all such studies drawn from primary research in newspapers. Their accounts tend to blur into one another because the number of different ways that reporters can describe the same

event is finite. By dividing what amounts to the same story into regional groupings, Mace has not established sufficient variety of perspective, and, thus, the attentiveness of readers is bound to sag. Nor has the research that he has conducted in newspaper archives (the term “morgues” hints at the danger of such an approach) yielded any real surprises. The wire services, like the Associated Press and the United Press, aimed at the asymptotic ideal of objectivity, so that the passion of particular voices was deliberately suppressed in that journalistic era. In *Remembrance of Emmett Till* also cites magazines like *Jet*, which featured the terrifyingly mutilated face of the youngster, and *Look*, which recorded the confessions (for profit) of murderers who were immune from further prosecution. But, Mace’s indebtedness to newspapers as sources obliges him to miss the impact of the photojournalism of *Life*, which vividly portrayed the mockery of the trial.

Though Mace promises to “expound . . . on previous scholarship” (4), the gaps in his bibliographic apparatus are large enough to be noted. One egregious instance is the omission of Davis W. Houck and Matthew A. Grindy’s *Emmett Till and the Mississippi Press* (2008). Though Christopher Metress provides a blurb for Mace’s book, its bibliography does not list a key work in the formation of collective remembrance about the case, *Emmett Till in Literary Memory and Imagination* (2008), which Metress as well as Harriet Pollack edited. The first monograph to recount the episode and to trace its aftermath in the civil rights movement is *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till*, which this reviewer published in 1989. It is not cited either. Nor is confidence restored by the persistence with which Mace describes the crime as a lynching. He provides no definition. Yet, Milam and Bryant did not belong to a mob

that was seeking to exact public, communal vengeance. Their motives were racial; but their method bore no resemblance to the open, blatant vigilantism that had characterized Southern lynchings, say, half a century earlier. Like ordinary criminals, the pair hoped to conceal the homicide that they perpetrated. They failed to do so, nor has it sunk into oblivion.

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The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region. By Marcie Cohen Ferris. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014. 496 pp., 7x10, 50 halftones, notes, bibl., index. \$35 cloth, \$34.99 e-book. ISBN: 978-1-4696-1768-8.)

Many books have focused on the stories of the South’s bittersweet culinary past to try to make sense of the painful paradoxes that continue to inform its future: how a land so rich in agriculture could produce so much poverty, how wealthy whites feasted while the black field hands and household workers ate scraps, how red-carpet hospitality and racial injustice existed at the same place and time. Civil rights champion John Egerton was the foremost pioneer of this burgeoning genre of food writing. His 1987 book, *Southern Food: At Home, On the Road, In History*, exposed these contradictions while celebrating our most beloved food traditions, leading a passionate and growing cadre of writers, food professionals, and academics to follow in his footsteps.

Marcie Cohen Ferris’s *The Edible South: The Power of Food and the Making of an American Region*, joins Egerton’s classic as required reading of any serious student

of the South and its foodways. Ferris, who wrote *Matzo Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* in 2005, does not temper the heavy history lessons of her latest work with biscuit recipes or barbecue joint recommendations. This exhaustively researched tome is strictly aimed at feeding the hungry mind. Ferris combed slave narratives, pioneer journals, diaries of planters' wives, governesses' letters, cookbooks, and a multitude of other archived material and interviews for insight into the eating patterns of southerners through the centuries. These diverse perspectives show how the ruling classes used food, directly and indirectly, to control the region's poor and maintain white supremacy.

Hunger is a common thread throughout each section—Early South, Plantation South, New South, and Modern South. Jamestown colonists tell of starving settlers who “resorted to cannibalism” (11). An ex-slave recounts stealing a peppermint stick as a child and how the mistress punished her by crushing her head under a rocking chair, leaving her unable to ever chew solid food. Some slaves, we learn, joined the Union troops, not just to fight for freedom, but because they had a better chance of getting a meal from the better-supplied Yankees.

After the war, sharecroppers worked the fields. Cotton ruled, followed by tobacco. Because garden produce did not translate into cash, landowners discouraged their tenants from growing them, forcing them to subsist on corn, molasses, and other substandard carbohydrates. Many suffered from pellagra and typhoid as a result, paralleling the diseases of corn-dependent Indian tribes thousands of years earlier, as well as diabetes and other obesity-related ailments that plague poverty-stricken communities today.

Government programs and a raft of

volunteer efforts brought relief to impoverished families in the twentieth century. But, bleak racial and economic disparities associated with these plights persisted—hard truths underscored by widely publicized social and nutritional studies, including those focused on the Mississippi Delta before the cataclysmic 1927 flood.

Southern food and tourism businesses tried to counter these realities by painting more inviting pictures. Dixie-themed restaurants and cookbooks featured rich menus with a “plantation flavor” (189). Labels depicting cheerful black mammies appeared on packaged pancake mixes and canned yams. Segregated hotels and inns boasted of antebellum themes, “famous fried chicken,” and obsequious African-American wait staff (239). In stark contrast, reproduction photo-postcards of lynchings at barbecues and picnics attended by white spectators were the “most abhorrent artifacts of racist consumption” (189).

Restaurants became incubators for the civil rights movement. A rising black middle class challenged Jim Crow segregation laws by staging sit-ins at lunch counters reserved for white customers, sometimes with violent outcomes. Ferris takes readers into the dining rooms of restaurants that became civil rights landmarks—some for welcoming blacks and whites to the table and others for defiantly refusing.

These initiatives gave way to Vietnam War protests, spawning a nationwide counterculture movement that eventually trickled southward. Youthful activists opened co-ops and natural foods cafes; some began growing their own food. A “New Southern Cuisine” emerged, blending this environmentally conscious ethos with elements of nouvelle cuisine and authentic local flavors.

Here the narrative takes on a more upbeat and personal tone, as Ferris recounts

dining experiences in contemporary high-end restaurants that support local growers and visits to farmers markets to shop for small-batch jams and spirits, largely around the North Carolina Triangle area where she lives. She tells the stories of these culinary innovators, as well as of the cutting-edge research produced by the influential Southern Foodways Alliance founded by John Egerton and others in 1999, which is now an institute of the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture.

It's worth noting, as Ferris does in the conclusion, that the southern food renaissance she describes is "the domain chiefly of white, educated, politically progressive southerners, even as the racial and ethnic diversity of this community expands each year" (334). Without the regional overview provided in earlier chapters, however, it is not immediately clear how the poor and working-class masses benefit. Middle-class folks outside of these urban and academic enclaves, white or black, barely get mentioned.

I would have found the conclusion more satisfying had she included voices from more diverse, economically-challenged communities. There is no mention, for example, of the remarkable post-Hurricane Katrina rebound of New Orleans' legendary restaurant culture, made possible with the help of chefs and foodways supporters across the South. Nor does she acknowledge the infamous racially-charged fall of former Food Network superstar Paula Deen, arguably the most popular and polarizing figure in southern food history.

These quibbles, however, do not detract from the importance of *The Edible South*. Rather, we are reminded that the conversation is far from over.

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Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear. By Aram Goudsouzian. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. Map, notes, acknowledgements, index. Pp. ix, 351. \$30 cloth, \$18 paper. ISBN: 0374192200.)

On June 5, 1966, James Meredith began a "March Against Fear," his planned trek from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, meant to empower southern Blacks by encouraging them to register to vote and allaying their fears of white supremacy. When Meredith was shot on the second day of the march, his intended, solitary journey once again brought Mississippi to the center of civil rights activism and national visibility. In *Down to the Crossroads*, Aram Goudsouzian recounts the March Against Fear by examining its impact on Mississippians and civil rights activists, as well as various civil rights organizations and the movement itself.

Goudsouzian uses the march to examine how the national civil rights organizations—the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the NAACP—as well as local organizations such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) and the Delta Ministry, were struggling to survive and redefine themselves amidst legislative gains and the persistence of white resistance; reticence on the part of the federal government; the crisis in Vietnam; the successes in Lowndes County, Alabama; and the increasing popularity of Black Power. Goudsouzian's in-depth focus allows the reader to witness the involvement of

local people—both long time activists and newcomers to the movement—as well as the impact the march had on communities throughout the state. In so doing, this work is rooted in the current trend in civil rights scholarship that focuses on local studies to provide a bottom up analysis and, therefore, greater understanding of the roles of grassroots activists.

Goudsouzian begins *Down to the Crossroads* by introducing the reader to the demonstration's major players—Meredith, Roy Wilkins (NAACP), Floyd McKissick (CORE), Stokely Carmichael (SNCC), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (SCLC)—the individuals whose leadership, camaraderie, political machinations and ideological and strategic differences provide *Down to the Crossroads'* narrative thread. With no perfunctory thesis statements or textual outlines, Goudsouzian delves right into an epistolary format, with each chapter typically detailing one day of the march as a diary entry. The use of rich source material, including contemporary press coverage, archival material, and extensive interviews with participants, allows him to provide a daily account as though he were an eyewitness to the unfolding of the march. The chronological narrative is interspersed with necessary, contextual information but never takes the reader too far from the text's focus of understanding the development and impact of the Meredith March.

The recollections of local activists and youth provide critical detail to the narrative, which balances the national leaders' perspectives and involvement. He provides much needed depth into the roles of activists like Willie Ricks, whose centrality to mobilizing people around the concept of "Black Power" during the March, is often understated. Further, despite the dominating role of male leaders, Goudsouzian does

a respectable job of including the voices of women and other local activists.

Whether it is Meredith's quirkiness, King's thoughtfulness, Carmichael's charismatic radicalism, or Charles Evers's shrewdness, Goudsouzian aptly portrays their unique personalities as he recounts the negotiations among the male civil rights leaders struggling to redefine and redirect the trajectory of the March Against Fear and the larger movement while grappling with the meaning and praxis of Black Power. Additionally, he explores the activists' consideration of the roles of whites in the movement, their representation in the press, their relationship with the Johnson administration, and the best strategy by which to achieve individual and collective empowerment for black people, while never losing sight of Meredith's attempts to regain control of the march and maintain his individualism and relevance among a sea of civil rights celebrities.

Goudsouzian's well-written account reminds us that James Meredith's March Against Fear was much more than the shooting of Meredith or the call for Black Power in Greenwood, Mississippi. Indeed, *Down to the Crossroads* supports the positioning of the march as a key, transitional civil rights demonstration—the last mass demonstration on which the major organizations would work together—with a level of detail that has not yet occurred. Students of the civil rights movement will appreciate the honest examination of the gains (empowerment, the emergence of Black Power, and voter registration) and setbacks (increased repression after the march and greater divisions among civil rights organizations) as the movement shifted from civil rights to Black Power.

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After Slavery: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in the Reconstruction South. Edited by Bruce Baker and Brian Kelly. Afterword by Eric Foner. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013. Acknowledgments, images, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. vii, 279. \$74.95 cloth. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 978-0-8130-4477-4.)

The After Slavery Project, an international collaborative research group, published *After Slavery* in 2013, to showcase ten individual essays that move beyond uniform interpretations of race, labor, and the meaning of political activity in the Reconstruction-era South. The collection challenges historians to probe the various contradictions that arose between the hope engendered by emancipation and the realities of the period after the Civil War. The essays included in the volume address local contexts, the composition of the black community, and issues of categorization in order to understand how racial and economic inequalities persisted despite Reconstruction. Editors Bruce Baker and Brian Kelly appreciate the work done by scholars such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Nell Irvin Painter, Eric Foner, and Steven Hahn in recovering the history of African-American agency that early histories of Reconstruction lacked. Baker and Kelly recognize, however, the need for new frameworks to drive the next generation of historians. *After Slavery* presents a wide range of experiences of Reconstruction that will galvanize new studies of the period.

Four essays examine small-scale events or transformations in order to show how local contexts shaped the dialogue among labor, capital, and politics. Urban spaces

receive special attention. James Illingworth, Jonathan M. Bryant, and Susan Eva O'Donovan examine individual southern cities to demonstrate the diversity of the urban experience. Illingworth and Bryant focus on New Orleans and Savannah, respectively. Their studies show that the relationship between a city and its periphery could either help or hinder African-American efforts at labor organizing after the Civil War. Furthermore, the frustration created by urban-to-rural interactions frequently erupted in violence. O'Donovan's study of grapevine telegraphs in the port city of Wilmington, North Carolina, likewise illustrates how certain cosmopolitan spaces afforded black southerners power that might not have been available in isolated locales. Rural spaces were also far from homogenous, as demonstrated by Bruce Baker's assessment of Greenville County, South Carolina. Waning access to capital caused by the decline of the livestock droving trade and increased taxation on distillers pushed the white residents of northern Greenville County into Democratic politics favored by the cotton growers of the county's southern region. The book's focus on local specificity yields results that challenge narratives about the uniformity of Reconstruction in the South.

Outlining the diversity of black communities also upsets traditional assumptions concerning the homogeneity of the African-American experience of freedom. Gender and class sometimes created conflicting needs among freedpeople. J. Michael Rhyne's analysis of Kentucky testifies to the unique hardships black women faced in freedom, most notably maintaining stable family units despite violence, labor exploitation, and intransigent Freedmen's Bureau agents. Brian Kelly's study of South Carolina attests to the emerging class dimensions of black

experiences during Reconstruction. The divergence of working class concerns, especially that of land ownership, and those of a growing black middle class doomed the Radical Republican period of South Carolina politics.

The most successful essays in *After Slavery* implore readers to reevaluate definitions that scholars take for granted in their understanding of Reconstruction. Thomas Holt's opening meditation challenges historians to view citizenship as a category that is historically contingent on time and place. Holt's directive to contextualize historical definitions complements the research of Erik Mathisen and Gregory Downs. Mathisen's study on loyalty oaths in Mississippi and Downs's focus on federal military occupation force a reconsideration of state power. Indeed, they both historicize the difficulty of on-the-ground administration of federal authority. Finally, Michael W. Fitzgerald's statistical appraisal of white terrorists in Alabama reframes the discussion on racial violence. His work suggests that multiple impulses, rather than a singular concern, drove some whites to engage in terroristic violence. Their motivations involved a matrix of socio-economic, racial, and partisan factors. Above all, the essays in the collection entreat scholars to embrace a healthy skepticism of assumed knowledge when studying the years after the Civil War.

An afterword by Eric Foner closes out a provocative collection of scholarship. He aptly criticizes the absence of national politics from the studies at hand. The collection's emphasis on the diversity of the Reconstruction period, however, makes *After Slavery* invaluable, Foner argues. The book may be daunting for those unfamiliar with the standard debates in post-Civil War historiography. For readers familiar with Reconstruction history, however, the

volume offers fresh insights and questions that will send one sprinting to the archives.

CHRISTINE RIZZI

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George Ohr: *Sophisticate and Rube*. By Ellen J. Lippert. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013. Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, Pp. x, 163. \$40 cloth. ISBN: 9781617039010.)

George E. Ohr was alternatively considered both a mad potter and America's greatest potter. Since his reputation ranged from folk artist to extreme genius, author Ellen J. Lippert writes in a way that emphasizes both Ohr's sophisticated designs and the more rustic characteristics that appeared in his ceramic wares, contextualizing his work in the late nineteenth century social, economic, and philosophical milieus. *George Ohr: Sophisticate and Rube* analyzes both the life of Ohr, who lived in Biloxi, Mississippi, from the end of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and his oeuvre. Lippert not only provides a biography of Ohr, but she argues for a new way to understand Ohr's artwork that meticulously connects his ceramic vases to his personal experiences, including his exposure to the Chicago World's Fair and his interactions with other potters working in different regions. The author suggests that any straightforward interpretation of Ohr is too simplistic because of his efforts to gain diverse experiences that would inspire his creativity.

This book is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on Ohr's personal life and how his experiences and interests affected his work. Lippert's in-depth study of specific cultural, social, and

economic changes in the South during the late nineteenth century, especially as connected with popular literature, suggests an origin for his unique ceramic designs and sophisticated visual displays. Ohr's ceramic wares look somehow twisted and peculiar in form, but, because of a metallic-luster glaze, they convey an extremely smooth surface texture, contrasting with the underlying material of rough, red earthen clay collected from near his studio. These remarkable characteristics promoted Ohr's reputation as a mad potter who created bizarre ceramic shapes with rustic and metallic glazes that were interpreted as southern folk art.

Lippert's thorough research on the broader cultural spheres that informed Ohr's work helps readers to challenge this stereotypical "folk art" interpretation. Lippert convincingly argues that Ohr's peculiar attitude and appearance, including his notorious mustache, cannot be considered substantial evidence of his idiosyncrasy but that these physical characteristics were strategically implemented as part of Ohr's own plan of self-promotion. Lippert's research shows that Ohr's "rustic" style ceramic wares cannot simply be considered folk art or grotesque. She proves that Ohr's artwork delivers a sophisticated aesthetic based on his cultural context in the late-nineteenth century.

In the second section of the book, the author analyzes Ohr's most important ceramic works, including their forms, colors, and designs. Based on the arguments of the first section, she interprets Ohr's pottery as simultaneously being sophisticated and rustic, as well as embodying the cultural prosperity developing in the South at this time. Because of Ohr's high level of skill,

he gradually gained fame as a genius potter and is considered by some to be an early leader in the development of American Abstract Expressionism, which was more famously expressed by the likes of Jackson Pollock. Separating her arguments from the dominant scholarship on Ohr, Lippert suggests that he was a sophisticated, aware, and seemingly paradoxical artist who symbolized late-nineteenth century cultural developments.

Some biographical books stray from their investigations of an individual's life and works or simply provide historical events in a chronological way. *George Ohr: Sophisticate and Rube*, on the other hand, maintains a careful focus on Ohr's life and art in an attempt to answer the question of why he created such peculiar ceramics wares. Lippert provides a meticulously researched investigation, including a wide spectrum of cultural context that guides the reader to understanding Ohr's artistic choices in terms of a high-art paradigm. Readers are able to perceive Ohr's selections of types of clay, designs, and glazes, not simply as superficial decisions, but as the embodiments of Ohr's own personal message challenging the status quo in the South.

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The Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers “December 1, 1866,” to Chicago’s “1 December 1866”).

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