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COVER IMAGE — Tougaloo Nine, 1961. Courtesy of the Jerry W.
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Correction to Soucek (2022)

In the article "Obedience to the Law is Not Liberty: The Poor People's Campaign and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Marks, Mississippi" by Jonathan Soucek (*Journal of Mississippi History*, 2022, Volume 84, No. 3 and No. 4, pp. 158-187.), there was an error on page 164. The author incorrectly labeled a publication from the Freedom Information Service (FIS) as being from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

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“Mississippi Ain’t What It Used to Be”: The Tougaloo Nine and the Read-in at the Jackson Municipal Library

by Mark Nevin

On March 27, 1961, nine students from Tougaloo College, a historically Black college located a few miles north of Jackson, Mississippi, walked into the main library. At the time, the Jackson Municipal Library—like most public libraries in Mississippi and the rest of the South—barred Black patrons. The “Tougaloo Nine,” however, refused to accept the library’s color barrier. As the students sat down at tables and began to read, the library staff quickly called the police. The police arrived a few minutes later and ordered the students to leave. When the students failed to move, they were arrested and taken to jail. Two days later, the Tougaloo Nine were convicted of disturbing the peace. While their trial happened inside a Jackson courthouse, outside the city police, wielding clubs and dogs, attacked a group of African Americans who had peacefully gathered to support the students. In the days and weeks following the Tougaloo Nine’s “read-in” further protests erupted in Jackson and across the state. The Black Freedom Movement had come to Mississippi.

There are numerous studies of the Black Freedom Movement in Mississippi, including several which focus on the struggle for equal rights in Jackson.¹ But none of the works offers a thorough analysis

¹ On the Mississippi freedom struggle see, John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Kenneth T. Andrews, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: The Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and Its Legacy* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Michael Vinson Williams, *Medgar Evers: Mississippi Martyr* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2011); James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest Politics and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2013); Ted Ownby, ed., *The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); and Jo Ann Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower: Black Colleges and the Black Freedom Struggle in Mississippi* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2008). For studies that focus on the Jackson movement, see John R. Salter, Jr., *Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism* (Hicksville, NY: Exposition

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of the origins, dynamics, consequences, and meaning of the Jackson read-in, the first direct action protest in Mississippi's capital and one of the first in the state in the 1960s. A close examination of the Jackson read-in can illuminate three important, though underappreciated, features of the Black Freedom Movement in Mississippi and across the South. First, it shines a light on Tougaloo College as a focal point of civil rights activism in Mississippi. Although there is a large body of literature that examines Black student activism of the 1960s, few studies have concentrated on the Black college campus as an organizing site of civil rights protest. "Students are credited with dominating the movement after 1960," writes Joy Ann Williamson in her study of Mississippi's Black colleges and the Black freedom struggle, "but the existing literature ignores the immediate environment in which student activists functioned: the college campus."² Tougaloo, and other Black colleges, were critical to the fight for racial justice. Founded by White abolitionists after the Civil War to educate newly freed Blacks, Tougaloo College had always served as a safe space in which Black youth could develop ideas, strategies, and institutions to challenge White supremacy. In addition to their academic lessons, Tougaloo students—and students from other Black colleges—learned a "second curriculum . . . a pedagogy of hope grounded in idealism, race consciousness, and cultural nationalism" that sustained and inspired a vision of Black liberation.³ For decades, however, Mississippi's "closed society" made it far too risky for Tougaloo students to directly confront the state's racial order. That began to change in the 1950s when Tougaloo students, faculty, and staff started to challenge the racial status quo beyond the campus. With the Jackson read-in, campus activism reached a whole new level. In the 1960s, Tougaloo students, faculty, and staff trans-

Press, 1979); M. J. O'Brien, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Jackson Woolworth's Sit-In and The Movement It Inspired* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013); and Carter Dalton Lyon, *Sanctuaries of Segregation: The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2017).

² Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ebony Tower*, 3. There are some book-length studies that focus on civil rights activism at Black colleges and universities, but the subject remains understudied. See, for example, Jelani Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Ibram Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Radical Reconceptualization of Higher Education* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); F. Erick Brooks, *Tigers in the Tempest: Savannah State University and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Macon, GA: Macon University Press, 2014); and Williamson, *Radicalizing the Ivory Tower*.

³ Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm*, 5.

formed the campus into a “movement center” and used the institution to organize and support protests against segregation in Jackson and around the state.

An analysis of the Jackson read-in also demonstrates the importance of NAACP youth chapters in the struggle for racial justice. The NAACP is best known for leading the legal assault against Jim Crow schools and other segregated institutions. But the association also organized state conferences and local chapters that engaged in various kinds of civil rights work. As early as the 1930s, the NAACP recruited college students and other young people into its ranks. From the beginning, NAACP youth pushed more conservative, adult leaders to support direct action against segregation. “In many ways,” writes Thomas L. Bynum in his history of NAACP youth, “the youth chapters propelled the NAACP to diversify its civil rights strategy beyond court action to a wide range of direct-action tactics in its fight for racial equality.”⁴ In the 1960s, NAACP college chapters and youth councils were a driving force of the sit-in movement throughout the South. In Mississippi, hundreds of Black youths found their way into the state’s civil rights movement through NAACP youth chapters. Founded in 1960, Tougaloo’s NAACP college chapter planned the Jackson read-in, with nine students from the chapter participating in it. The success of the read-in helped to convince the NAACP’s national office to pursue a more aggressive civil rights program in Mississippi in the 1960s, with NAACP youth chapters playing a crucial role in it.

By challenging library segregation in Mississippi, the Tougaloo Nine called attention to the stark racial inequities of library service in the South. Their read-in helps us to see libraries as part of the struggle against segregated public accommodations. At one time, the fight to gain access to public accommodations was seen as the *sine qua non* of the modern civil rights movement. In recent years, however, historians have downplayed the importance of the drive to desegregate public accommodations and privileged the fight against job and housing discrimination, which are seen as more fundamental and enduring.⁵

⁴ Thomas L. Bynum, *NAACP Youth and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1936-1965* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2013), xiii-xiv.

⁵ My understanding of the trajectory of civil rights historiography is informed by Charles W. Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *The Journal of Southern History* 66 (November 2000): 815-848; Peniel E. Joseph, “Waiting till the Midnight Hour: Reconceptualizing the Heroic Period of the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965,” *Souls* 2, no. 2 (2000): 6-17; Charles M. Payne, “The Whole United States

Yet there is no question that African Americans deeply resented their exclusion from public spaces and were willing to risk their lives to gain access to them. Historians have documented, among other things, the stories of African Americans who struggled to desegregate schools, amusement parks, swimming pools, hospitals, airports, buses, and trains. However, historians have largely overlooked the fight to desegregate libraries.⁶ During the Black Freedom Movement, hundreds of civil rights activists engaged in dozens of protests against Jim Crow libraries across the South.⁷ In some ways, the struggle to desegregate libraries mirrored the struggle to desegregate other public accommodations. Southern Whites doggedly resisted, sometimes with violence, extending greater library access to Blacks and only grudgingly did so

is Southern!": Brown v. Board and the Mystification of Race," *The Journal of American History* 91 (June 2004): 83-91; Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233-1263; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of American History*.

⁵ (March 2007): 265-288; Steven F. Lawson, "Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968," in Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer, eds., *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 9-37; and Victoria W. Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 2-12.

⁶ On the desegregation of specific public accommodations, see, for example, Jeff Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Vanessa Burrows and Barbara Berney, "Creating Equal Health Opportunity: How the Medical Civil Rights Movement and the Johnson Administration Desegregated U.S. Hospitals," *Journal of American History* 105 (March 2019): 885-911; Anke Ortlepp, *Jim Crow Terminals: The Desegregation of American Airports* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2017); Catherine A. Barnes, *Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transit* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983); and Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Rollercoasters*. Although historians have largely ignored libraries as a site of civil rights activity, scholars working in the fields of library studies, education, and information science have produced numerous studies that examine library desegregation in the South. See, for example, Wayne A. Wiegand and Shirley A. Wiegand, *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2018); Cheryl Knott, *Not Free, Not for All: Public Libraries in the Age of Jim Crow* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015); Patterson Toby Graham, *A Right to Read: Segregation and Civil Rights in Alabama's Public Libraries, 1900-1965* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Dallas Hanbury, *The Development of Southern Public Libraries and the African American Quest for Library Access, 1898-1963* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020); David M. Battles, *The History of Public Library Access for African Americans in the South, or, Leaving Behind the Plow* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, (2009); and Michael Fultz, "Black Libraries in the South in the Era of De Jure Segregation," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 41 (Summer 2006): 337-359.

⁷ In their selected list of library protestors and protests, Wiegand and Wiegand name almost 200 protestors who took part in more than a dozen library protests across the South. Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 211-218.

because of civil rights protests, court rulings, and federal laws. However, White Southerners were generally more willing to allow Black and White children to use the same library than to sit together in the same classroom or swim in the same pool. Some civil rights activists, including the Tougaloo Nine, understood this and strategically chose libraries as the location from which to make their initial stand against segregation. As a result, libraries, including the Jackson Municipal Library, were sometimes the places where racial mixing first took place in the Southern cities, and the walls of segregation first began to crumble.

The first public libraries in the South were established in the 1890s. From the beginning, southern libraries were segregated, with libraries for Whites vastly outnumbering those for Blacks. Segregated libraries, which were seen as a way to encourage literacy and education among both races while reinforcing notions of White supremacy, were part of a broader effort among southern progressives to promote both social uplift and social control. "Library boards considered it worthwhile to provide library service for blacks," writes Patterson Toby Graham in his study of library segregation in Alabama, "so long as that service was inexpensive and did not suggest in anyway social equality among the races."⁸ Most southern communities, however, did not extend public library service to African Americans. Few had the money to build libraries for Whites, let alone libraries for Blacks. To fund library construction, many southern communities partnered with the Carnegie Foundation. This partnership helped establish a color line in southern libraries. Between 1890 and 1919, Carnegie library grants helped to pay for more than 1,600 new public libraries across the nation, including a number in southern cities.⁹ Although the Carnegie Foundation required local communities to contribute to library construction costs and maintenance, it did not require them to open their libraries to all races. As a result, southern Whites took Carnegie's money and built libraries that only they could use. A 1926 American Library Association study found that only 55 of 720 libraries in fourteen southern states served African Americans.¹⁰

That there was any public library service at all for African Americans in the South was a testament to the efforts of Black leaders who raised money for libraries for African Americans and pressed Whites

⁸ Graham, *Right to Read*, 8.

⁹ Knott, *Not Free, Not for All*, 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

for access to segregated libraries. In several instances, African Americans managed to secure Carnegie funding for Black libraries after being denied access to Whites-only ones. The first Carnegie-funded library for Blacks – Western Colored Branch Library in Louisville, Kentucky – opened in 1908, a few months after a Whites-only main library had opened. Public libraries for Black people, however, were typically small branch libraries with fewer books and other resources than the main libraries reserved for White people. In the 1930s, New Deal programs and the Rosenwald Fund, a philanthropic organization started by Sears and Roebuck executive Julius Rosenwald, helped to expand library service, especially in rural areas, to southern Blacks. Nevertheless, most African Americans continued to be denied access to libraries. In the late 1930s, almost two million southern Blacks lived in areas with public libraries that denied them service.¹¹

Mississippi's libraries were the most restrictive in the South. To begin with, the state had few public libraries. In 1900, there were only three public libraries in the entire state.¹² Over the next three decades, local communities built several libraries, but the state government did not start funding public libraries until after World War II, so the number remained small. A 1950 study of library service in Mississippi, *People Without Books*, paints a dismal picture of the state's public libraries. "There are 63 libraries in the state [for a population over two million]," it reported. "All but a few of these are small collections of books, poorly housed, and weakly supported."¹³ The lack of libraries meant that "only 36 percent of the people of Mississippi have any form of local library service."¹⁴ As bad as library service was for Whites in Mississippi, it was much worse for the state's Black residents. African Americans were barred from most of the few public libraries in the state. In 1950, there were only eight communities in Mississippi that maintained any public library service for Blacks. These libraries served only about one-eighth of the state's one million Blacks. "What

¹¹ Ibid., 60, 156, 134; Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 35-39. African Americans also established private libraries and bookmobiles. Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 20-21.

¹² Margarete Peebles and J. B. Howell, eds., *A History of Mississippi Libraries* (Montgomery, AL: Paragon Press, 1975), 47.

¹³ *People Without Books: An Analysis of Library Service in Mississippi*, Bureau of Public Information, Univ. of Miss., 1950, 12, Folder 4, Box 2, Papers of Lura Gibbons Currier (The University of Southern Mississippi, McCain Library and Archives, Hattiesburg, Mississippi), hereinafter cited as Currier Papers.

¹⁴ *People Without Books*, 12, Currier Papers.

little public library service there is in Mississippi is limited largely to serving the White population,” observed *People Without Books*. “There is at present no library to which the other seven-eighths of the colored people may go or write for information or reading material.”¹⁵

Mississippi’s Blacks had to fight to secure any measure of library service within the strict confines of segregation. The first library for African Americans in the state opened in Meridian in 1912. The Carnegie Foundation provided the city with \$30,000 for a Whites-only main library and \$8,000 for a branch library for its “colored citizens.” It was the only time Carnegie money helped to build a library for Black people in Mississippi.¹⁶ Two years later, Carnegie funds helped pay for a new Whites-only library in Clarksdale. At some point, Clarksdale’s Black residents, who outnumbered White residents three to one, gained access to a small room in the basement of the library. In 1930, a bond issue was passed for a new main library in Clarksdale. That same year a new branch library for Blacks was also opened in the city, probably because of the city’s large African American community demanding better library services.¹⁷ In 1924, the (White) Woman’s Club in Starkville in Oktibbeha County started a segregated library there. It was not until 1949 that Blacks in Oktibbeha County finally gained access to library service when a branch was established at a Blacks-only high school.¹⁸ In 1934, a WPA grant helped establish a Whites-only library in Noxubee County. At some point a branch library for Blacks in the town of Macon in Noxubee County was opened, but it closed in 1943.¹⁹ Between 1958 and 1961, branch libraries for Blacks were established in Sardis, Batesville, and Oxford, but there remained few libraries for Black people in the state, and the existing ones lacked space, books, and trained personnel.²⁰

In 1961, Jackson was one of the few communities in Mississippi to offer public library service for African Americans, but the service was segregated and inferior. Jackson’s first public library, a Carnegie library, opened in 1914 and was segregated from the start. The city’s Black residents, who made up forty percent of the population, had to

¹⁵ Ibid., 13, Currier Papers.

¹⁶ Peebles and Howell, eds., *A History of Mississippi Libraries*, 67-68.

¹⁷ Ibid., 74-75.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90-91.

¹⁹ Ibid., 114-115.

²⁰ Ibid., 108.

wait thirty-seven years for public library service.²¹ In the meantime, Jackson's African American population launched private library initiatives. In 1929, the Mary Church Terrell Literary Club, a Black literary society, started collecting books and making them available at a local YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association). Black residents also started their own small private library. In 1938, they petitioned the city commission to take over the library, which held 784 books, but the petition failed.²² In 1950, the Jackson chapter of the Junior League, a (White) women's organization committed to civic improvement, established the George Washington Carver Library, a library for African Americans. In 1951, the city took control of the library, marking the beginning of publicly supported library service for Blacks in Jackson. The following year another branch library for Blacks was established in the College Park Auditorium, but the library occupied only two rooms in the building.²³

In 1954, Jackson built a new main library, the Jackson Municipal Library, to replace the aging Carnegie building. It was a big deal for the city. More than three hundred people from all over the South attended the dedication ceremony for the new \$480,000 library, which was touted as "a masterpiece of utility and beauty."²⁴ The day before the ceremony the city proudly announced the event with a quarter-page advertisement in the *Jackson Clarion Ledger*. The advertisement proclaimed, "Welcome to your new municipal library. . . . You, the citizens, made it possible. It is a distinct credit to our rapidly progressing city. Use it."²⁵ But not every city resident was welcome to attend the dedication ceremony or to use the library. Both were segregated and off limits to African Americans. Two years later, in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Jackson officials built a new building, at a cost of \$130,000, to house the George Washington Carver Library. The main library, however, remained closed to African Americans.²⁶

It is not surprising that the first African Americans who tried to

²¹ Ibid., 69-71.

²² Margaret Gunn Holt, "History of the Jackson Library, Jackson, Mississippi" (Master's thesis, Texas Women's University, 1965), 6-7.

²³ Ibid., 21; Pennie Williams Dickie, "A History of Public Library Service for Negroes in Jackson, Mississippi, 1950-1957" (Master's thesis, Clark Atlanta University, 1960), 12-14; Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 21-22.

²⁴ "Jackson Dedicates Beautiful Library," *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, December 8, 1954, 1.

²⁵ Ibid., December 7, 1954, Special Library Section.

²⁶ Holt, "History of the Jackson Library," 28-29.

use the Jackson Municipal Library were students from Tougaloo College. The campus had always been a conspicuous presence on the Mississippi racial landscape. Founded in the aftermath of the Civil War by the American Missionary Association (AMA) on a 500-acre cotton plantation just north of Jackson, Tougaloo reflected the abolitionist orientation of its founders, who viewed education as a vehicle to promote Black social advancement. The college made it a priority to promote dialogue and interaction between races. From its inception, the college's faculty, administration, and its board of trustees were racially mixed, and it had an open attendance policy. It hired racially progressive White teachers, regularly invited speakers to campus who promoted integrationist ideas, and sought to develop contacts between its Black student body and White students and faculty at other nearby colleges. As early as the 1930s, students from Tougaloo and Millsaps College, an all-White school in Jackson affiliated with the United Methodist Church, visited one another's campuses.²⁷

Despite its commitment to integration on campus, Tougaloo managed for decades to steer clear of trouble with Mississippi's White power structure. Unique among historically Black colleges in Mississippi, Tougaloo enjoyed a large degree of financial and political independence. Most of Tougaloo's funding came from northern organizations, including the AMA, the United Negro College Fund, the United Church of Christ, and the Disciples of Christ. It received no state support. In addition, most of the school's board of trustees, administrators, and faculty were not from Mississippi. As a result, state officials could not easily retaliate economically against the college or its employees. While no one affiliated with Tougaloo was immune from police harassment and other forms of intimidation, there was, according to Joy Ann Williamson, a tacit agreement between Tougaloo and the surrounding White community that shielded the campus, "Tougaloo, like other HBCUs, maintained an uneasy agreement with the surrounding White community: Tougaloo constituents did not aggressively agitate against the racial status quo in exchange for being left alone by hostile Whites."²⁸

²⁷ Clarice T. Campbell and Oscar Allan Rogers, Jr., *Mississippi: The View from Tougaloo* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), 3-20, 170-171.

²⁸ Joy Ann Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling': Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 44 (Winter 2004): 557. On Tougaloo's founding and early years, see also Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm*, 49-69.

In the 1940s and 1950s, however, the growth of the Black Freedom Movement sparked increased activism among Tougaloo students, faculty, and staff. In 1946, Tougaloo chaplain William Bender challenged the color line in Mississippi when he tried to vote in the first statewide election since the Supreme Court outlawed the all-White primary in *Smith v. Allwright*. As Bender approached the polling place, he was confronted by a deputy sheriff, who, with his pistol drawn, defied him to enter. After he returned to Tougaloo, hostile Whites burned a cross on the Tougaloo campus.²⁹ A year later Ernst Borinski, a German Jew who escaped Nazi persecution, took a teaching position at the college. The sociology professor later recalled that from the first day of class he exhorted his students to question the racial order in Mississippi. "I am not from here. I am not from America," he told them. "But when I see the kinds of laws you have here I assure you it [segregation] cannot last very long. We will challenge all the laws. I don't want you to accept any of them."³⁰ His students, who had not been taught to question segregation, did not know what he meant. So he showed them. He took his students to a segregated drug store and ordered ice cream for the whole group. After initially refusing to serve the Black students, the drug store, fearing a scene, reluctantly brought them ice cream. To subvert the racial order, Borinski often played up his German nationality and his accent and feigned ignorance of segregation. "I played this game very carefully," he revealed, "by often pretending I just don't know, just don't know."³¹

Borinski's main contribution to civil rights activism on campus was his sponsorship of integrated Social Science Forums. He developed the forums to foster dialogue between Blacks and Whites and raise awareness about the injustices of segregation. "I was not a rabble rouser, period," Borinski recalled. "But I had always built bridges between people and made them aware that certain things that are there should not really be."³² About twice a month Borinski invited a speaker to Tougaloo to give a talk on an important social, political, or economic topic. In addition to Tougaloo students, faculty, and staff, Borinski invited White moderates from the Jackson area to attend the forums.

²⁹ Dittmer, *Local People*, 2-3.

³⁰ Ernst Borinski Interview with John Jones, January 13, 1980, Tougaloo, Mississippi (Mississippi Department of History and Archives, Jackson, Mississippi), 22.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

³² *Ibid.*, 23.

The talks were preceded by dinner and followed by open discussion and refreshments. "Tougaloo's Social Sciences Forums . . .," observes sociologist Maria Lowe, "helped to mobilize not only students, but faculty members as well as additional movement sympathizers and activists. The Forums accomplished these tasks by operating as a prefigurative space where Blacks and Whites could regularly meet, interact as equals, discuss political issues, and strategize about ways they could challenge Mississippi's system of racial segregation."³³

In 1960, a group of Tougaloo students, including some who had attended Borinski's forums, established an NAACP college chapter and took the fight for racial equality beyond the campus. The students drew inspiration from the student sit-in movement, which began on February 1, 1960, when four Black college students from Greensboro, North Carolina, staged a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. All told, thousands of students took part in demonstrations in more than one hundred and four communities in 1960.³⁴ NAACP youth chapters were a driving force of the sit-in movement. Many students joined the sit-in movement through them. From 1959 to 1960, membership in NAACP youth chapters soared from 27,430 to 46,789 as they "launched rigorous campaigns across the South to dismantle the racial barriers that barred them from first-class citizenship."³⁵ In March 1960, Tougaloo students met with Medgar Evers, the NAACP field secretary in Mississippi, to discuss establishing an NAACP chapter on campus. For five years, Evers had struggled to recruit new members, build local NAACP chapters, and organize direct action against segregation in the state amidst growing White resistance and violence. Evers recognized that the sit-in movement was a game changer for Mississippi because it had generated interest in civil rights at Tougaloo and other local colleges. In a letter to Gloster Current, NAACP national director of branches, Evers wrote, "The unrest of young people throughout the

³³ Maria Lowe, "Sowing the Seeds of Discontent: Tougaloo College's Social Science Forums as a Prefigurative Movement Free Space, 1952-1964," *Journal of Black Studies* 39 (July 2009): 868. For more on Borinski's role as a civil rights leader, see Maria Lowe, "An Unseen Hand: The Role of Sociology Professor Ernst Borinski in Mississippi's Struggle for Racial Integration in the 1950s and 1960s," *Leadership* 4 (February 2008): 27-47.

³⁴ Martin Oppenheimer, *The Sit-In Movement of 1960* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 177. On the Greensboro sit-ins, see William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1980).

³⁵ Bynum, *NAACP Youth*, 106, 117.

southland and nation has had its influence on the young people of Tougaloo College and Campbell College [an African Methodist Episcopal junior college] here in the Jackson area.”³⁶ The meeting between Evers and Tougaloo students resulted in the formation of the college’s first youth chapter. John Mangram, Tougaloo chaplain and a member of the board of directors of the Jackson NAACP, advised the students.³⁷

The Tougaloo NAACP chapter went to work right away. In April 1960, it helped organize a boycott of White merchants in Jackson during the busy Easter shopping season. To get the message out to the city’s Black residents to join the protest against retail segregation, more than 350 college students from Tougaloo College, Campbell College, and Jackson State College (a state-supported Black college) distributed thousands of flyers throughout the African American areas of the city and visited African American churches.³⁸ With the motto “Let’s celebrate Easter in old clothes!!” the flyers urged the city’s 61,000 Blacks to join the “sacrifice for human dignity and boycott white-owned businesses in downtown Jackson.”³⁹ The following month, the Tougaloo NAACP chapter held a rally on campus to celebrate the sixth anniversary of the *Brown* decision. Reverend Mangram and NAACP state president C. R. Darden both spoke during the celebration.⁴⁰ In November, Tougaloo students participated in a youth program as part of the fifteenth annual Mississippi State Conference of Branches in Jackson.⁴¹

³⁶Medgar Evers to Gloster Current, March 9, 1960, Box III: C 244, Part III: Branch File, 1956-1965, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Records, 1842-1999 (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.), hereinafter NAACP Records. In late 1961, the state took over Campbell College after its students supported a walk out at a local high school. It closed its doors in 1964 after its last students had graduated. “Campbell College,” *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, August 20, 2021, <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/campbell-college/>.

³⁷Herbert Wright to Medgar Evers, April 18, 1960, Box III: C 244, Box 3, Part III: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records; James Bradford Interview with Worth Long, April 30, 1963, Jackson, Mississippi (Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta Georgia), hereinafter cited as Bradford Interview, 3.

³⁸Medgar Evers to Ruby Hurley, April 13, 1960, Box III: C 244, Part III: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

³⁹Zack J. Van Landingham, “Boycott by Negroes, Jackson, Mississippi,” Supplementary Report, April 10-17, 1960, File # 2-135-0-22-5-1-1, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Online, <https://da.mdah.ms.gov/sovcom/>, hereinafter MSSC. Dittmer calls the boycott “moderately successful.” Dittmer, *Local People*, 86.

⁴⁰Evers’ Monthly Report, May 23, 1960, Folder Box III: C 244, Part III: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁴¹Evers’s Monthly Report, November 18, 1960, Box III: C 244, Part III: Branch File,

In 1961, students from Tougaloo's NACCP chapter took the fateful step of exporting their integrationist ideas to the surrounding community. In March, an exultant Evers wrote to NAACP official Robert Carter to announce that "at long last we are about to commence direct action protests against racial segregation in Mississippi, Jackson in particular. Our moves will be directed against public conveyances, terminals, (including air terminal café), public library, and parks."⁴² The students had good reasons for choosing the main city library for their first direct action protest. First, the library's segregation policy seemed particularly egregious since the tax dollars of Black residents helped to fund the library, but they were barred from using it. Second, Tougaloo students could claim a legitimate need to use the main library since its collection was larger than the collections at Tougaloo or Carver, the branch library for Black patrons. Third, the drive to desegregate southern libraries generally met with less resistance and violence than the movement to desegregate schools and other institutions. "Strategically," observes Michael Fultz, "civil rights activists seem to have calculated that White attitudes about library integration were somewhat less strident than those concerning the integration of other public institutions and that breakthroughs cracking the walls of segregation were more likely to be achieved."⁴³

By 1961, more progress had been made in the desegregation of libraries than the desegregation of schools and other southern institutions. Blacks won access to some southern libraries even before the *Brown* decision. In 1953, an Atlanta University graduate student found that Blacks had access to libraries in forty-eight southern cities. Ten years later, another Atlanta University graduate student found that two hundred and ninety cities had desegregated libraries.⁴⁴ In general, White Southerners perceived racial mixing at libraries to be less threatening than racial mixing at schools. In the words of one White librarian, "We have shopped all our lives with Negroes—in the library you shop for a book; in the schools you have social contact."⁴⁵ There was also a class component that made southern Whites gen-

1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁴² Medgar Evers to Robert Carter, March 15, 1961, Box III: A 230, Part III: Administrative File, 1909-1969, NAACP Records.

⁴³ Fultz, "Black Public Libraries," 348.

⁴⁴ Knott, *Not Free, Not Free for All*, 261

⁴⁵ American Library Association, *Access to Public Libraries* (Chicago, 1963), 30.

erally more willing to desegregate libraries before schools and other institutions. "You have to realize that the class of Negroes who want to use the library is pretty high class," explained a White community leader in one southern city who did not oppose library desegregation. "Just like the Whites who use the library are high class. . . . The rough class of either race doesn't go to the library."⁴⁶ Few southern libraries, however, voluntarily desegregated. Most only did so grudgingly after facing demonstrations, lawsuits, or both.

The nine members of the Tougaloo NAACP chapter who participated in the demonstration at the Jackson Municipal Library were Meredith Anding, Jr., James "Sam" Bradford, Alfred Cook, Geraldine Edwards (Hollis), Janice Jackson (Vails), Joseph Jackson, Jr., Albert Lassiter, Evelyn Pierce (Ameenah Omar), and Ethel Sawyer (Adolphe).⁴⁷ For Geraldine Edwards, a junior who grew up in Natchez, participating in a read-in held special significance. Edwards had been barred from Natchez's main public library, but she had made regular use of the small, branch library for Blacks. She "loved to read. It was my passion because I could escape the reality of segregation and expand my thinking and my mind."⁴⁸ She credited her love of reading with her decision to attend Tougaloo.⁴⁹ Janice Jackson was a junior from Clarksdale, where she had attended a Catholic school and won a scholarship to attend Tougaloo.⁵⁰ For her, the goal of the protest was nothing less than to "establish an equal place for the Negro alongside the white man."⁵¹ She harbored no ill will towards Mississippi Whites and blamed segregation on ignorance. "We grew up in Mississippi, we know these people; we are sorry for them."⁵² Mississippians Alfred Cook, originally from Jackson, and Evelyn Pierce, from Laurel, were active in the Black Freedom Movement prior to attending Tougaloo.⁵³

⁴⁶ Ibid., 28-29.

⁴⁷ "The Tougaloo Nine," Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection, 1960-1991 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi), hereinafter Tougaloo Nine Collection. Joan Collins and Mary Allen were part of the planning group but did not take part in the actual demonstration. Geraldine Edwards Hollis, *Back to Mississippi* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2011), 116.

⁴⁸ Hollis, *Back to Mississippi*, 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁰ A. L. Hopkins, Report to File, April 7, 1961, File # 2-13-0-23-5-1-1, MSSC.

⁵¹ "Jackson Reaches Turning Point," *The Southern Patriot*, May 1961, 4, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Cook's family moved to Flint, Michigan. Zack J. Van Landingham, Supplementary Report, April 22, 1960, File # 2-135-0-22-6-1-1, MSSC.

Cook, the vice president of the chapter, transferred to Tougaloo from Campbell College, where, as student body president, he helped to organize the 1960 Easter boycott.⁵⁴ Evelyn Pierce was a freshman from Laurel, where she had been a member of the local NAACP Youth Council prior to attending Tougaloo.⁵⁵ Meredith Anding, a sophomore from Jackson, and Albert Lassiter, a freshman from Vicksburg, were the other two members of the Tougaloo Nine who were native Mississippians.

The other three members of the Tougaloo Nine – Joseph Jackson, Sam Bradford, and Ethel Sawyer – were from Memphis, Tennessee. Jackson, the president of the Tougaloo NAACP chapter, was a philosophy and religion major. Edwards remembered him as a “serious student.”⁵⁶ In high school an English teacher had told Jackson, “White people may hate the color of our skin, but you get an education, and that is something that they will never ever be able to take away.”⁵⁷ He took the words to heart and considered his matriculation at Tougaloo as a challenge to segregation. Bradford, who attended Tougaloo on a choir scholarship, was a freshman when he joined the college NAACP chapter. After talking about the sit-ins taking place elsewhere in the South, he “felt that if something needed to happen anyplace, it would be the state of Mississippi.”⁵⁸ He volunteered to participate in the library read-in because he believed he had “a personal stake in it—my future.”⁵⁹ Ethel Sawyer, who graduated from Tougaloo the following year, recalled that the Tougaloo Nine staged the read-in simply because it seemed the right thing to do. “I don’t think that we thought of [the read-in] as being historic,” she recalled. “It was just what we felt that we should do.”⁶⁰

On the day of the Jackson read-in, the Tougaloo Nine first visited

⁵⁴ “Jackson Negro Boycott,” *Jackson Daily News*, April 8, 1960, 1; Special Report of Julie Wright, Youth Field Secretary, Activities in Mississippi, April 17, 1961, Box III: E55, Part III: Youth File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁵⁵ Hal C. DeCell to Lt. Gov. Carroll Gartin, January 29, 1958, File # 2-7-0-18-1-1-1, MSSC.

⁵⁶ Edwards, *Back to Mississippi*, 108.

⁵⁷ Gabriel San Roman, “Joseph Jackson Jr. Made Civil Rights History as a Member of Mississippi’s Tougaloo Nine,” *OC Weekly*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.ocweekly.com/joseph-jackson-jr-made-civil-rights-history-as-a-member-of-mississippis-tougaloo-nine-6442062/?sfw=pass1633513658>.

⁵⁸ Bradford Interview, 1, 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ Alice Lewis, “Ethel Sawyer Adolphe Recalls Library Sit-In,” May 1984, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection.

the Carver Library to establish a reason to use the main library. Evers and Mangram, who both helped to plan the protest, accompanied the students to Carver and then to the main library. At Carver, some of the students requested materials they knew the underfunded library would not have. Bradford "went to my biology teacher to get some ideas of what I might request that they would surely not have down there [in the Carver Library]." ⁶¹ After visiting the Carver Library, the Tougaloo Nine proceeded to the main library, parking across the street in what was at the time a Sears and Roebuck parking lot. "When we got out of the cars," remembered Bradford, "the media was there. They popped out of the bushes or wherever they had been hiding, and the cameras started to roll." ⁶² The Tougaloo Nine had contacted the media to publicize the protest and to give themselves some protection against possible police brutality and angry White mobs.

The Tougaloo Nine then entered the main library. Some students sat at tables and read while others looked through the card catalog or browsed encyclopedias. Hollis recalled how big and modern the library was compared with the Black-only libraries she had always been required to use. "As I went along with the group, I glanced around to take in the interior of the building," she recalled. "It far exceeded those I had visited on other occasions." ⁶³ Frances French, the head librarian, approached some of the students, who were looking through the card catalog, and suggested they go to the Carver Library or the College Park Library, the city's other branch library for Black patrons. French later said she directed the Black students to the other libraries because "that was the custom." ⁶⁴ French was not surprised to see the Black students. Earlier in the day, two reporters had asked her whether she knew that Tougaloo students were planning to visit the library. She had called the police to inform them. Now she called the police to report that the students had arrived. A few minutes later several police officers, including Police Chief W. D. Rayfield and Chief of Detectives M. B. Pierce, arrived. Pierce told the Tougaloo Nine that they had to leave and could use the colored library. Having been trained in non-violent

⁶¹ Robert Walker, "Tougaloo Nine: Demonstration Comes to Mississippi" (Paper, Tougaloo College, 1979), 6, Tougaloo Nine Collection.

⁶² Bradford Interview, 8.

⁶³ Hollis, *Back to Mississippi*, 120.

⁶⁴ *Clark v. Thompson* (S.D. Miss. 1962), Transcript of Evidence, Testimony of Frances French, Box V: 1174, Part V: Legal Department, 1842-1997, NAACP Records, 70.



Members of the Tougaloo Nine being arrested on March 27, 1961, inside the Jackson Municipal Library, which served only White patrons. Image courtesy of the WLBT Newsfilm Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

resistance, the students remained calm and did not argue with the officer. But they also refused to obey his order. “They asked me to leave,” recalled Hollis, “This was when I knew I had no *fear*. . . . My emotions were replaced with a determination to do this. I would read in this library or suffer the consequences for my innate choice to do so.”⁶⁵ After a few minutes, the police arrested the students and placed them in the back of unmarked police cars.⁶⁶

The Tougaloo Nine were charged with disturbing the peace, photographed and fingerprinted, and put into cells. Evers arranged for the students to have legal counsel and bail money, but it took more than thirty hours to get them released because the sheriff did not make himself available to approve the necessary bonds.⁶⁷ For Hollis, the time in jail seemed longer: “Some report said it was only 30 hours . . . It felt more like 72 hours!” To pass the time and deal with the anxiety, Hollis

⁶⁵ Hollis, *Back to Mississippi*, 119 (italics in the original).

⁶⁶ “Nine Jailed in ‘Study-In,’” *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, March 28, 1961, p. 1; “Negro ‘Read-In’ Attempt Here,” *Jackson Daily News*, March 27, 1961, 1; “Nine Seized at Sit-In at Jackson, Miss.,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1961, 36. There is an unidentified video of the police arresting the Tougaloo Nine. I want to thank Wayne and Shirley Wiegand for providing me with a copy. Author’s possession.

⁶⁷ Medgar Evers to Roy Wilkins, March 29, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.



Tougaloo Nine being escorted by police on the steps of the Jackson Municipal Library. Image courtesy of the WLBT Newsfilm Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

danced. "Dancing was something I could do with or without music. . . . So to pass the time for the large period of time I was jailed, I danced" she remembered. "We had to be lighthearted and strong because we knew this would be our fate."⁶⁸ During his confinement, chapter vice president Cook clowned around making jokes and climbing the bars of his jail cell. Bradford, however, was more subdued. "It was serious, real serious with me . . . ,," he remembered. "I wasn't sure just what the [white guards'] next move" [would be]. But they treated us okay. . . . There was no violence, I can say that. [They] talked kind of rough to us but didn't beat us up."⁶⁹ The next day, Evers finally managed to secure the students' release on a \$1,000 bail each. He was very pleased with how the students handled themselves, telling NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins, "These young people exhibited the greatest amount of courage in the face of mounting tension and were reported in our local newspapers as being 'orderly, intelligent, and cooperative.'"⁷⁰

The Tougaloo Nine's unprecedented challenge to segregation in Jackson generated considerable support from the city's Black commu-

⁶⁸ Hollis, *Back to Mississippi*, 125, 124.

⁶⁹ Bradford Interview, 13-14.

⁷⁰ Medgar Evers to Roy Wilkins, March 29, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records. Evelyn Pierce told the police she was from Buffalo, NY. Virgil Downing, Report to File, June 29, 1961, File # 2-55-4-35-1-1-1, MSSC.

nity and a violent backlash from its White community. On the night of the read-in, several hundred students from Jackson State College gathered in front of their campus library for a prayer meeting for the Tougaloo Nine. The students prayed, sang hymns, and chanted "We Want Freedom." After about forty minutes the gathering ended abruptly when the college's (African American) president Dr. Jacob Reddix, accompanied by about twenty city police officers, interrupted the protest and threatened to expel the students if it continued. "I don't know what happened," said Reddix, "This is more trouble than we have had here in 20 years."⁷¹ The following day, two hundred students from Jackson State boycotted classes and gathered for another mass meeting on campus. About fifty of the Jackson students then began to march to the city jail where the Tougaloo students were being held. The police stopped them about ten blocks from Jackson State and, when they refused to disperse, used clubs and threatening police dogs to disband them.⁷² That night, Evers organized a mass protest meeting at the Baptist Hill Church in Jackson. It "drew a capacity crowd of some eight hundred people, as well as a large contingent of Jackson City policemen."⁷³

On March 29, the Tougaloo Nine went on trial at the Jackson Municipal Court. The police resorted to violence to disrupt a peaceful show of support for the students. That day more than one hundred Blacks gathered across the street from the courthouse to await the arrival of the Tougaloo Nine. The violence began when the students arrived at the courthouse and the crowd burst into applause. Evers, who was among the crowd, described the unprovoked attack in a monthly report, "Instantly, there was a call from some police officers saying 'get 'em out of here,' and it was then that the hoards {sic} of policemen and two vicious police dogs converged on the Negro Citizens only; and began whipping us with night sticks as well as extending the leashes on the dogs [so they could attack.]"⁷⁴ Evers was hit several times in the back by uniformed officers wielding billy clubs and once in the head

⁷¹ "Jackson State College Students Protest," *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, March 28, 1961, 1.

⁷² "Police Halt March by Negro Students in Mississippi," *New York Times*, March 29, 1961, 25; Dittmer, *Local People*, 88.

⁷³ Evers' Monthly Report, April 21, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

by a gun-wielding plain clothes officer. A minister was bitten on the arm by a dog and an eighty-one-year-old man was hit so hard his wrist was broken. Inside the courthouse, the Tougaloo Nine were convicted of breach of the peace, fined \$100, and given thirty-day suspended jail sentences. Their lawyers informed the court of their intent to appeal the convictions.⁷⁵

Many of Tougaloo's roughly five hundred students showed their support for their fellow classmates following the demonstration. When the Jackson police brought the Tougaloo Nine back to campus following their court appearance, Tougaloo students surrounded the police cars and cheered their fellow students. They "converged on us right there in front of Jamerson Hall," recalled Bradford. "I remember the expression of fear on the faces of the cops. Kids were coming out of Woodworth [Chapel]. I saw one of the cops actually reach for his gun."⁷⁶ For Bradford, the enthusiastic reception the Tougaloo Nine received from fellow students was the most memorable part of his experience. Sawyer also had fond memories of the return to campus. He recalled, "A lot of students were waiting for us when they brought us back to campus in police cars. It was a joyful time."⁷⁷

The Tougaloo Nine's actions stirred young Blacks from across Mississippi. Black youth, many of whom were members of NAACP college chapters and youth councils, mobilized to confront segregated facilities. NAACP officials, who had been reluctant to support direct action in Mississippi out of fear it might promote extreme White violence, perhaps even incite a race war, encouraged the demonstrations.⁷⁸ The association initiated a statewide antidiscrimination program, Operation Mississippi, which among other things, called for "attempts to be made by students and other groups to test facilities available to Negroes in waiting rooms, bus and train depots, etc."⁷⁹ In Jackson, four college students from the newly formed Jackson NAACP Intercollegiate Council held a ride-in, the first in the state, against the city's segregated

⁷⁵ "Police and Dogs Rout 100 Negroes: Clash Occurs at Courthouse in Mississippi Where 9 Students Are Convicted," *New York Times*, March 30, 1961, 19; Dittmer, *Local People*, 88-89.

⁷⁶ Walker, "Tougaloo Nine: Demonstration Comes to Mississippi," 16.

⁷⁷ Lewis, "Ethel Sawyer Adolphe Recalls Library Sit-In."

⁷⁸ Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 178-179.

⁷⁹ "Program: Operation Mississippi," April 7, 1961, Box III: A 230, Part 3: Administrative File, 1909-1969, NAACP Records.

buses.⁸⁰ In addition, students from the Jackson NAACP Intercollegiate Council, the Jackson NAACP Youth Council, and the Campbell College NAACP Chapter staged demonstrations against racial discrimination in the city's public parks, swimming pools, and the city zoo.⁸¹ In October, NAACP youth picketed the Negro Mississippi State Fair in Jackson.⁸² NAACP youth carried out similar protests elsewhere around the state. In Greenville, youth council members picketed Woolworth's and other chain stores for three weeks to demand more jobs for Blacks and demonstrated against the city's segregated library.⁸³ In Clarksdale, four youth council members tried to buy train tickets at a ticket counter in the station's Whites-only waiting room. In Vicksburg, two members of the Vicksburg Youth Council picketed a segregated movie theatre in the city. In Gulfport, Blacks held a "wade-in" on a city beach.⁸⁴ "These and other direct action protests," writes historian John Dittmer, "were unprecedented in Mississippi."⁸⁵

Around the state, White authorities mobilized to defend the color line and prevent any further challenges to it. Founded in 1956, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission had been created in the wake of the *Brown* decision to protect segregation in the state.⁸⁶ Among other things, it investigated, surveilled, and harassed civil rights activ-

⁸⁰ Evers' Monthly Report, April 21, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records; Monthly Report of Julie White, Youth Field Secretary Activities in Mississippi, April 26, 1961, Box III: E55, Part 3: Youth File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁸¹ Evers' Monthly Report, June 21, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records; Monthly Report of Julie White, Youth Field Secretary Activities in Mississippi, July 5, 1961, Box III: E55, Part 3: Youth File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁸² Gloster Current to Henry Lee Moon, October 18, 1961, Box III: A 230, Part 3: Administrative File, 1909-1969, NAACP Records.

⁸³ Evers' Monthly Report, July 28, 1961, Box III: C 245, Part 3: Branch File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records.

⁸⁴ Monthly Report of Julie White, Youth Field Secretary Activities in Mississippi, September 6, 1961, Box III: E55, Part 3: Youth File, 1956-1965, NAACP Records; Dittmer, *Local People*, 89.

⁸⁵ Dittmer, *Local People*, 89. On July 20, 1962, four black youths did manage to use Jackson's main library for about an hour and then left. The police arrived afterwards and stationed an officer in the library to "maintain peace, harmony, and quiet" and "keep undesirables out." "Four Jackson Youth Explore Advantages of Municipal Library," *Mississippi Free Press*, July 28, 1962, 1, 3.

⁸⁶ On the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, see Yasuhiro Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission: Civil Rights and States' Rights* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001); Jenny Irons, *Reconstituting Whiteness: The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010); and Michael J. Butler, "The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission and Beach Integration, 1959-1963: A Cotton-Patch Gestapo?", *The Journal of Southern History* 68 (February 2002): 107-148.

ists. Shortly after the Jackson read-in, Albert Jones, the commission's director, instructed his investigators to conduct background checks on the Tougaloo Nine. The objective was to dig up dirt that could be used to discredit the students. But the commission's investigators came up empty. One investigator even traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to research the backgrounds of Jackson, Sawyer, and Bradford. After consulting with the Memphis Police Department and interviewing other sources, the investigator found nothing untoward. They were reported to be good students, with good reputations. The investigator could find "no [criminal] record of any kind involving these three students."⁸⁷

In Jackson, White political and civic leaders moved to defend the city's racial order. Mayor Allen Thompson took to the airways to insist there was no racial conflict in Jackson. He told local television stations that the city had always enjoyed "racial harmony."⁸⁸ Even though most of the Tougaloo Nine were from Mississippi and all of them were from the South, he blamed "outsiders" for trying to destroy "our mutual good will."⁸⁹ At the same time, some of city's "most prominent men" called a meeting of newspaper, television, and radio reporters and for ninety minutes tried to persuade them to "blackout the news" of the read-in and the subsequent police violence.⁹⁰ Local White leaders also tried to get the Tougaloo Nine to drop their legal appeal. A special board of the First Christian Church of Jackson, one of the city's leading White churches, met with Tougaloo president A. D. Beittel and told him that they would pay the students' fines if they pled guilty and abandoned their appeal.⁹¹ Beittel, however, refused to even present the offer to the Tougaloo Nine. Beittel, a northern, White liberal, who was committed to racial equality, was very supportive of civil rights activity among the

⁸⁷ Hugh Boren to File, April 11, 1961, File # 3-23A-2-106-2-1-1, MSSC. There are numerous MSSC files pertaining to the Tougaloo Nine.

⁸⁸ "Jackson Reaches Turning Point," Tougaloo Nine Collection.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ "We Don't Want Censorship on the News in Jackson," *Northside Reporter*, April 16, 1961, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection.

⁹¹ The board took this action because it wanted to avoid further adverse publicity. The First Christian Church was a Disciples of Christ church, which was officially a trustee of Tougaloo College. First Christian Church pastor Roy Hulan visited Tougaloo regularly and even served as a guest preacher. However, most of the church's members opposed Hulan's outreach and the church's relationship to Tougaloo, and did not want any more fallout from the read-in. Beittel quotes the board as asking him, "Do the students know how much harm they have done to First Christian Church?" A. D. Beittel, Handwritten Notes of a Meeting with a Special Board of the First Christian Church of Jackson, April 17, 1961, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection; Lyon, *Sanctuaries of Segregation*, 27-28.

college's faculty and students. In a letter to one of the board members, Beittel suggested that nothing short of desegregating the library would stop the appeal. "If Jackson were willing to do what Memphis did under similar circumstances," wrote the Tougaloo president, "that is, to open the library to all citizens of Jackson without discrimination, it is probable that the students would reconsider the matter and be willing to have the suit closed."⁹²

In 1961, the color line held in Jackson. Civil rights protests were not enough to persuade the city's White officials to desegregate the main library or any of its other public facilities. So, on January 12, 1962, the NAACP filed a lawsuit in federal court to force Jackson officials to grant Blacks access to the main library, parks, and other recreational facilities.⁹³ The plaintiffs were three Black city residents, including eighty-one-year old W. R. Wren, who had suffered a broken arm during the police attack against Black supporters of the Tougaloo Nine. The defendants were Mayor Allen C. Thompson and other city officials. None of the Tougaloo Nine was a plaintiff in the suit, but the NAACP made their arrests the centerpiece of their case. During the trial, two members of the Tougaloo Nine, Ethel Sawyer and Janice Jackson, gave evidence, as did several other people, about the incident. The NAACP sought to prove that Jackson police had been enforcing unconstitutional state segregation laws when they arrested the Tougaloo Nine. The lawsuit asserted that state segregation laws violated the Fourteenth Amendment and thus the constitutional rights of the Tougaloo Nine and "thousands of Negroes in Jackson and all other parts of Mississippi . . . who are racially segregated in the use and enjoyment of public recreational facilities" in the city.⁹⁴

However, Judge Sidney Mize, the federal judge who presided over the case, rejected the NAACP's argument and ruled in favor of the defendants. During the trial, Jackson officials and their lawyers contend-

⁹² Campbell and Rogers, *The View From Tougaloo*, 196-199; Williamson, "This Has Been Quite a Year," 562-564; A.D. Beittel to Bayard T. Van Hecke, April 19, 1961, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection. I could find no information about the outcome of the Tougaloo Nine's appeal. As late as 1965, the matter was still not resolved. A.D. Beittel, Oral History, Jackson, Mississippi, June 2, 1965 (Millsaps College Archives, Jackson, Mississippi), 4.

⁹³ "Ban Jim Crow Laws, NAACP Asks Federal Court," NAACP Press Release, January 19, 1962, Box III: A109, Part 3: Administrative File, 1909-1969, NAACP Records.

⁹⁴ *Clark v. Thompson*, Complaint, 6-7, Box V: 1174-1175, Part V: Legal Department, 1842-1997, NAACP Records.

ed that segregation in the city was voluntary and that the arrest of the Tougaloo Nine was not an attempt to enforce state segregations laws. In his testimony, Mayor Thompson claimed city authorities had never needed to enforce segregation because White and Black residents chose to live separately. He credited voluntary segregation for making Jackson a special place. Segregation "is a matter that has worked out for the best interests, happiness, [and] peaceful living together [of the races]. It is a matter we have never had to worry about . . . We have never had to insist on it. It is something that has made this city the outstanding city, frankly, in the whole world."⁹⁵ In his testimony, W. D. Rayfield, the chief of police, even denied knowing there were state segregation laws and depicted the Tougaloo Nine as outside agitators who were rightly arrested for disturbing the peace. "They come into a quiet city where we had not had any violence whatsoever," asserted Rayfield. "We were getting along very nicely. They come with an intent to cause something and to test out something. And my contention was that the best solution in a case of that kind was to remove the source" of the disturbance.⁹⁶ In his opinion, Mize blithely accepted the defendants' statements at face value and failed to acknowledge the all-encompassing nature of racial segregation in Mississippi. He concluded that the "defendants are not enforcing separation of the races in public recreational facilities in the City of Jackson. The defendants do encourage voluntary separation of the races . . . [But] voluntary separation does not violate the Constitution of the United States which does not prohibit a municipality from permitting, authorizing, or encouraging voluntary segregation."⁹⁷

Clark v. Thompson reveals much about the slippery, adaptable nature of segregation. Following the *Brown* decision, Mississippi enacted a series of laws designed to strengthen and protect segregation, including the law the NAACP challenged in *Clark v. Thompson*. The statute required Mississippi officials to prohibit "the causing of a mixing

⁹⁵ *Clark v. Thompson*, Transcript of Evidence, Plaintiff's Exhibit #2, Deposition of Mayor Allen C. Thompson, 163, Box V: 1174-1175, Part V; Legal Department, 1842-1997, NAACP Records.

⁹⁶ *Clark v. Thompson*, Transcript of Evidence, Testimony of W.D. Rayfield, 203, Box V: 1174-1175, Part V; Legal Department, 1842-1997, NAACP Records.

⁹⁷ *Clark v. Thompson*, Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Declaratory Judgement, 333, 335, Box V: 1174-1175, Part V; Legal Department, 1842-1997, NAACP Records. Mize did admit legal segregation was unconstitutional and that "each of the three plaintiffs has the right to unsegregated use of public recreational facilities in the City of Jackson." *Ibid.*, 339.

or integration of the White and Negro races in public schools, public parks, public waiting rooms, public places of amusement, recreation or assembly” in the state.⁹⁸ Segregation laws, however, proved to be vulnerable to legal attack and were not designed to deal with civil rights protestors. So, Mississippi legislators went back to the drawing board and enacted additional laws to get around court rulings and stop the sit-ins.⁹⁹ The law used against the Tougaloo Nine was a wide-ranging “breach of peace” statute. The 1960 law stated that anyone who “disturbs the public peace, or the peace of others, by violent, loud, or insulting, or profane, or indecent, or offensive, or boisterous conduct or language, or by intimidation, or seeking to intimidate any other person or persons, or by conduct which may lead to a breach of peace . . . shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.”¹⁰⁰ The law, which carried a fine of up to \$500 and six months in jail, gave Mississippi authorities a pretext to arrest civil rights protestors, including the Tougaloo Nine, without having to invoke statutes that were blatantly segregationist and constitutionally suspect. It allowed Mayor Thompson and other White authorities in Mississippi to uphold White supremacy while maintaining the fiction of equal justice.

In 1963, however, mass protests forced Thompson to drop the color barrier to the library and some other facilities. The protests were the culmination of the civil rights struggle in Jackson, which started with the Tougaloo Nine and continued in fits and starts until it grew into a mass movement.¹⁰¹ The final stage of the Jackson struggle began in December 1962, when the North Jackson NAACP Youth Council, under the guidance of Tougaloo professor John Salter, called for a boycott against downtown stores and started picketing them to protest discrimination against Black workers and consumers. The boycott began slowly but gained momentum over a period of several months as more students, older Black residents, and the NAACP national office joined the effort. The turning point came on May 28 when a White mob attacked Salters and a group of students during a sit-in at a Woolworth’s lunch counter. The violence brought pressure on Mayor Thompson to nego-

⁹⁸ Quoted in Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 153.

⁹⁹ Dittmer, *Local People*, 59; William M. Kunstler, “Law and the Sit-Ins,” *Nation*, November 4, 1961, 351-354

¹⁰⁰ House Bill No. 560, May, 5, 1960, Box 1, Tougaloo Nine Collection.

¹⁰¹ On the 1963 Jackson Movement see, Salter, Jr., *Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle*; O’Brien, *We Shall Not Be Moved*; Dittmer, *Local People*, 157-167.

tiate with protest leaders after months of stonewalling. After making an agreement, however, Thompson refused to honor it.¹⁰² His duplicity sparked mass demonstrations and mass arrests. The growing unrest climaxed with the brutal murder of Medgar Evers.¹⁰³ The slaying of the prominent civil rights leader prompted the personal intervention of President Kennedy, and a quick resolution was reached.¹⁰⁴ In exchange for an end to demonstrations, Thompson basically agreed to his earlier concessions. He pledged to hire Black policemen and school crossing guards, upgrade the employment of Black sanitation workers, and continue discussions with Black leaders. Thompson also “quietly” desegregated the city’s main library and its recreational facilities. He pledged not to block Black access to the library and other facilities “so long as they do not try and take them over or create incidents.”¹⁰⁵ Although Thompson certainly did not meet all the demands of the Black protestors, his concessions were an important milestone—they marked the first time Jackson’s White officials had been forced to alter the city’s color line.

In 1963, the burgeoning civil rights movement in Jackson and other parts of Mississippi sparked protests against segregated libraries elsewhere in the state. In Clarksdale, Blacks filed suit to desegregate the city’s library and picketed in front of the building.¹⁰⁶ In Ruleville, George Raymond, a twenty-year-old voter registration worker, tried to use the town’s Whites-only library after seeing posters urging people to visit the library during National Library Week. After entering the library, a White man told Raymond it was not integrated and ordered him out. On his way home, Raymond’s car was pulled over, and he was arrested by Ruleville mayor Charles Dorrough. It was Dorrough who had put up the posters.¹⁰⁷ In September, a group of Black citizens

¹⁰² “Ministers Claim Mayor ‘Broke Faith’ on Concessions,” *Mississippi Free Press*, June 1, 1963, 1, 3.

¹⁰³ On the murder of Medgar Evers, see Williams, *Medgar Evers*, 267-304.

¹⁰⁴ “Meeting Halts Marches; Voting Campaign Begins,” *Mississippi Free Press*, June 22, 1963, 1.

¹⁰⁵ “Jackson Mayor Refuses School Negotiations,” *Southern School News*, July 1, 1963, 3. Thompson refused to desegregate restaurants or schools or form a biracial committee, but Jackson’s bus and train stations and its airport were also desegregated. “In South: Negro’s Grow More Insistent of Rights But They Meet Stiff Opposition from Whites,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1963, 141.

¹⁰⁶ “Clarksdale Suit Opposes City Bias,” *Mississippi Free Press*, April 20, 1963, 4; “Clarksdale Protests Bring 36 Arrests Within Past Week,” *Mississippi Free Press*, June 29, 1963, 2.

¹⁰⁷ “Arrest Vote Worker for Visit to Library During Library Week,” *Mississippi Free*

from Laurel gave a list of civil rights demands to their mayor. This list included a demand to allow Blacks to use the library “as any other citizen.”¹⁰⁸

In 1964, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (CRA), which among other things, outlawed segregation in libraries and other public facilities, triggered protests against Mississippi libraries that failed to comply with the law.¹⁰⁹ On August 13, more than a month after President Johnson signed the landmark bill, a group of Black students from a Freedom School in Hattiesburg entered the Whites-only library accompanied by their teacher Sandra Adickes, a White woman from New York City, and asked for library cards.¹¹⁰ The librarian called the police, who under orders from the mayor, removed the students and closed the library supposedly for an inventory.¹¹¹ When the library reopened a few days later, six more Freedom School students and four of their teachers, including William D. Jones, a Black teacher from New York, tried again to use the library. Jones and the other teachers were arrested, and the library closed once again.¹¹² The library reopened the following month with a new policy requiring all patrons to obtain a new library card approved by the library board. African Americans could apply for the new cards, but, as a local newspaper openly acknowledged, “It would be less than realistic to suppose the application of Negroes would result in cards which would get into the main library which has never been used by other than whites.”¹¹³ In September

Press, May 4, 1963, 1, 3.

¹⁰⁸ “Bi-Racial Committee Wanted; Laurel Mayor is Attentive,” *Mississippi Free Press*, September 7, 1963, 1.

¹⁰⁹ *The Civil Rights Act of 1964*, Pub L 88-352, July 2, 1964.

¹¹⁰ In the summer of 1964, Mississippi civil rights groups launched Freedom Summer, an ambitious project aimed at registering blacks to vote and advancing the cause of civil rights in the state. Setting up Freedom Schools for black children was part of the program. The project was met with considerable violence. On Freedom Summer, see Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988); Carson, *In Struggle*, 111-129; and Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season of 1964 that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2010).

¹¹¹ “Library Closed After Integration Attempt,” *Hattiesburg American*, August 14, 1964, 1; “An Oral History with Sandra Adickes,” October 21, 1999 (University of South Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, Hattiesburg, Mississippi), 20-23.

¹¹² “An Oral History with Umoja Kwanguvo [formerly William Jones],” June 8, 1999 (University of South Mississippi Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, Hattiesburg, Mississippi), 29-30.

¹¹³ “City Library Open to Card Holders,” *Hattiesburg American*, September 9, 1964, 1, 5.

1964, Indianola closed its main library rather than let Blacks use it. City officials later opened a "library" for African Americans in an old grocery store to discourage them from trying to use the main library. The Black community boycotted it. In February 1965, a White librarian in Vicksburg's main library turned away Black students who tried to check out books.¹¹⁴

As these examples illustrate, most Mississippi libraries did not immediately desegregate after the passage of the CRA. But the new law ultimately compelled them to do so. It prohibited public libraries and other entities that received federal dollars from discriminating against African Americans and authorized federal agencies to withhold money from those entities that failed to desegregate.¹¹⁵ By 1964, the federal government was an important source of funding for libraries. It began funding library services for rural libraries in Mississippi and across the nation in 1957 through the Library Services Act. The act helped to extend library service to 40 million people living in rural communities.¹¹⁶ In 1964, President Johnson signed the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA), which increased the amount of money the federal government allocated for libraries and expanded the funding to include urban libraries and the construction of new libraries.¹¹⁷ Mississippi, which was one of the poorest states in the nation, desperately needed federal dollars to maintain and expand its meager library services. In 1965, for instance, Mississippi received \$419,383 under the LSCA for the construction of seven new libraries.¹¹⁸ However, if the state's libraries continued to bar Black patrons, they risked the loss of future federal funding.

In the end, Mississippi's libraries complied with the CRA and opened their doors to African Americans. In March 1965, Lura Currier, the director of the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC), the state agency responsible for administering LSCA funds, mailed the boards of trustees for the state's public libraries a "statement of compliance," which they had to sign and return to verify their compliance with the

¹¹⁴ Wiegand and Wiegand, *Desegregation of Public Libraries*, 165-166.

¹¹⁵ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifically prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs.

¹¹⁶ John C. Frantz, "The Library Services and Construction Act," *ALA Bulletin* 60 (February 1966), 149.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ "Fiscal 1965 Projects," Folder 8, Box 9, Currier Papers.

CRA's non-discrimination requirements. In a cover letter, Currier advised library boards to accept the CRA as "the law of the land, and try to work out good library service for your public in that framework."¹¹⁹ During the next year, most of Mississippi's libraries signed the statement. In a March 1966 letter to a federal official, Currier detailed the widespread compliance with the CRA among Mississippi libraries. Of the fifty-five public libraries in the state subject to the law, Currier reported that forty-two had signed compliance forms and only thirteen had "failed to comply" and thus were ineligible for federal funding. She speculated that some of the thirteen libraries that had not signed were probably serving African Americans but did not want to publicize the fact.¹²⁰ The Hattiesburg Library was one of the library's that dropped its color barrier.¹²¹

On March 28, 1961, it might have appeared as if the segregationist wall was as strong as ever in Jackson, Mississippi. That day, thousands took to the streets of the capital to cheer the more than 5,000 people who took part in the Civil War Centennial parade, the largest in the state's history. The huge crowd delighted in the booming cannons, the marching bands, the world's largest Confederate flag, and celebrated the South's defense of White supremacy one hundred years earlier.¹²² But the day before, not far from the parade route, nine Black students from Tougaloo College challenged the parade's racist message when they walked into the Whites-only Jackson Municipal Library with their heads held high and expected the same library service as White patrons. The Tougaloo Nine's dignified demonstration forever changed the racial order in Jackson and across the state. As Samuel Bailey, a local NAACP leader in Jackson, observed a couple of weeks after the historic event, "Mississippi ain't what it used to be."¹²³

¹¹⁹ Lura Currier to Rev. L. C. Blanton, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Ellisville Public Library, March 5, 1965, Folder 13, Box 1, Currier Papers.

¹²⁰ Lura Currier to David Seeley, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Equal Educational Opportunities Program, Office of Education, March 22, 1966, Folder 12, Box 11, Currier Papers. Currier admitted there was a "wide variation in the nature and degree" of the compliance in the forty-two libraries that had signed. Ibid. On Currier's complicated relationship with library segregation, see Karen Cook, "Struggles Within: Lura G. Currier, the Mississippi Library Commission, and Library Services to African Americans," *Information and Culture* 48:1 (2013), 134-156.

¹²¹ Mary Love, Associate Director, Mississippi Library Commission, to Honorable Robert Edward Anderson, July 21, 1966, Folder 12, Box 11, Currier Papers.

¹²² "Giant Parade Draws Crowd to Centennial," *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, March 29, 1961, 1, 12.

¹²³ NAACP Youth Dispatch, May 10, 1961, Box III: E 54, Part III: Youth File, 1956-

After shaking up the racial order in Jackson and across Mississippi in 1961, members of the Tougaloo Nine continued to advance the cause of Black civil rights throughout their lives. A few months after the protest, James Jackson left Tougaloo and returned to Memphis. He later relocated to Orange County, California, where he completed his college education, earning a degree in sociology. As a member of Orange County's small African American community, he was often the only Black person wherever he went. "To me, I was still breaking down barriers the same way I broke down racial barriers in Mississippi," Jackson was quoted as saying. "I never abandoned civil rights."¹²⁴ Sam Bradford also left Tougaloo shortly after the read-in. He moved to Chicago but eventually returned to Mississippi and finished his degree. Like Jackson, Bradford did not participate in another civil rights protest, but he did continue to agitate for racial change. Whether working as an auditor for the Mississippi Medicaid Commission or as a claims adjuster for an insurance company, Bradford was always "a fly in the glass of buttermilk" who spoke out against racial discrimination.¹²⁵ Ethel Sawyer graduated from Tougaloo in 1962. She went on to earn a master's degree and taught at various colleges during a long career in higher education. She did not participate in another demonstration, but she quietly remained a civil rights activist. As she waited to give her plea in the Jackson courthouse following the arrest of the Tougaloo Nine, Sawyer had thought to herself, "If my presence in this white library disturbs your peace, then I am guilty."¹²⁶ This became her mantra throughout her life. "If my presence in this place, in this room, in this job, in this position, on this earth disturbs your peace, [then I am guilty]."¹²⁷ Geraldine Hollis also graduated from Tougaloo in 1962. She later moved to Oakland, California, where she earned two advanced degrees and retired as an administrator in physical education in the Oakland school system. She approached her career in education as an extension of her activism in 1961. "My life work has been to give, reach, and teach. . . . My experience as a member of the Tougaloo Nine was a

1965, NAACP Records.

¹²⁴ San Roman, "Joseph Jackson Jr. Made Civil Rights History as a Member of Mississippi's Tougaloo Nine."

¹²⁵ Bradford Interview, 9, 16-17.

¹²⁶ Ethel Adolphe, Panel Discussion on "Hidden Figures in American Library History: The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South," New Orleans Public Library, June 24, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGFgTpXYspc>.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

foundation builder” for my career.¹²⁸

The unprecedented defiance Hollis and the other members of the Tougaloo Nine displayed at the Jackson Municipal Library helps us to see Black college campuses as a center of civil rights organizing. Tougaloo offered its students, faculty, and staff a safe space where they were free to explore integrationist ideas, develop civil rights strategies and organizations, and mount demonstrations. In addition to the library protest, Tougaloo students, faculty, and staff participated in demonstrations in Jackson against racial discrimination in city stores, churches, and the state fair. They took part in voter registration drives, political campaigns, and other civil rights activities throughout the state.¹²⁹ In 1964, Mississippi’s legislature, angered over Tougaloo’s role as an incubator of civil rights activism, considered a bill to remove the college’s state charter. Tougaloo survived, but the controversy and the college’s continuing role as a “movement center” hurt its finances and contributed to the replacement of President Beittel.¹³⁰

The Jackson read-in also demonstrates the importance of NAACP youth chapters to the sit-in movement of the 1960s. Along with SNCC and CORE, the NAACP, through its youth chapters, mobilized young Blacks and supported direct action against segregated facilities across the South. The NAACP national office was more comfortable challenging segregation through the courts and Congress, but its youth chapters pushed the association to take a more confrontational approach to securing racial justice. The Tougaloo Nine, all members of the college’s NAACP chapter, took direct action against segregation in Jackson. The success of their library read-in, the first direct action protest in the capital city in the 1960s, helped to convince the national office to support further demonstrations by NAACP youth chapters in Jackson and elsewhere around the state. The collective efforts of the association’s youth chapters advanced the cause of civil rights in Mississippi.

Finally, the Tougaloo Nine’s read-in highlights the struggle to

¹²⁸ Hollis, *Back to Mississippi*, 282-283.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Tougaloo student Anne Moody’s excellent memoir, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York, 1968), which chronicles her civil rights work in the state. Tougaloo pastor Ed King was very active in the Jackson movement, the vice-presidential candidate for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1963, and an organizer of Freedom Summer. On his affiliation with Freedom Summer, see Ed King and Trent Waters, *Ed King’s Mississippi: Behind the Scenes of Freedom Summer* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

¹³⁰ Williamson, “This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling,” 564-569; Katagiri, *The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission*, 152-158.

desegregate public accommodations and underscores the importance of libraries. Although the segregation of public accommodations like libraries might seem insignificant compared to job and housing discrimination, the fact is that thousands of African Americans risked their lives to gain access to public accommodations. This number includes hundreds of Blacks who protested library segregation. We need to take their actions seriously and try to understand why access to libraries and other facilities was so important to them. As college students, the Tougaloo Nine appreciated the value of libraries for Black education and social advancement. They also understood that it made sense to strike first against Jackson's segregationist wall from within the relatively safe confines of a library. A library demonstration was less provocative than targeting a segregated school or pool and offered a better chance for success. In the end, their strategy was successful. Their protest helped to spark a broader civil rights movement in Jackson that led to the eventual desegregation of the Jackson Municipal Library and other public accommodations in the city. The Tougaloo Nine's courageous act produced the first crack of what became a large fissure that ultimately destroyed the segregationist wall in Jackson.



Tougaloo Nine, 1961, Courtesy of the Jerry W. Keahey Sr. Collection at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Mississippi and the Missouri Controversy

By M. Philip Lucas

When the U.S. House of Representatives took up the Missouri Territory's application for statehood in February 1819, two surprises jolted southern congressmen out of any complacency they might have had. Representative James Tallmadge Jr. of New York delivered the first surprise when he proposed stifling the growth of slavery as a condition of statehood. Specifically, Tallmadge moved "that the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited . . . and that all children of slaves, born within [Missouri] . . . shall be free, but may be held to service until the age of twenty-five years."¹ Even his ally, John Taylor of New York, who would carry the fight in the House for the next two years, was taken off guard. The second shock was that so many northern representatives supported the amendment. If statehood had passed on these terms, Missouri would have witnessed a process of gradual abolition of the approximately ten thousand slaves already there.² Northern congressmen joined Tallmadge challenging the assumption that slavery should spread above Louisiana. Their southern colleagues roared back that the right of slave ownership was not a topic for debate.

In retrospect, the Missouri controversy was a milestone on the road to the Civil War. The arguments of 1819-1821 were rehashed and broadened in the late 1840s when the nation questioned the status of slavery in newly acquired territories from Mexico. In 1854, the political eruption was more poignant because Senator Stephen A. Douglas's proposal extended popular sovereignty into the Kansas Territory, which was an area supposedly covered by the Missouri Compromise.

¹ Quoted in Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1953), 35.

² Moore, 32, 39-40; Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 15.

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In assessing the impact of the Missouri debates, historians have been of two minds. Their differences lie in the context that they provide for the controversy and its consequences. One approach often embraces former President Thomas Jefferson's anguished letter to Congressman John Holmes of Maine: "This momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the knell of the Union."³ The subsequent debate in Congress, Richard E. Ellis notes, "uncovered the bankruptcy of Jeffersonian policy on the slavery issue."⁴ In its place, according to Don Fehrenbacher, "the votes of southern congressmen . . . indicated that the South had made the most important decision in the whole history of the slavery controversy. . . . The Slaveholding South by 1820 had rejected the possibility of gradual emancipation." Such a "commitment to the permanence of slavery . . . made sectional conflict irrepressible and disunion increasingly probable." Southerners recoiled against "the antislavery solidarity of so many northern Republicans," such that it "inspired a new surge in the development of southern consciousness."⁵ Elizabeth Varon carefully tracks the use of disunion rhetoric from the Constitutional Convention onward. She asserts the Missouri controversy "significantly transformed the discourse." More specifically, in 1819 both sides employed "disunion rhetoric . . . as a kind of political gamesmanship," and had no "process or program . . . to foment a disunion movement." The debate, however, "racialized the discourse of disunion." That is, before Missouri "the focus on national security" led Northerners and Southerners to compromise. But after 1821 that had forever changed.⁶ In the years following the Missouri Compromise, Robert Pierce Forbes perceives "the seething sectionalism beneath the surface," that politicians would be unable to dissipate.⁷ The implication

³ Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes, April 22, 1820, in Paul L. Ford (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), Vol. XII, 158.

⁴ Richard E. Ellis, "The Market Revolution and the Transformation of American Politics, 1801-1837" in Melvin Stokes and Stephen Conway (eds.), *The Market Revolution in America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 165.

⁵ Fehrenbacher, 23, 14.

⁶ Elizabeth Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 44-45, 53.

⁷ Robert Pierce Forbes, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath: Slavery and the Meaning of America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 11. William W. Freehling gives "the Slavepower" a distinct identity and agency in resolving the Missouri controversy to its advantage. At the same time, he foretells later anguish by noting a split between the border slave states and "the tropical South." William W. Freehling, *The Road to Disunion: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854* (New

of these interpretations is that the path to the Civil War has greater clarity and predictability.

A slightly different approach gives greater emphasis to a larger complex of factors surrounding the issue of Missouri statehood. Heated words indeed flew about the House and Senate chambers, but they did so within a context peculiar to the late 1810s. John R. Van Atta, for example, reminds us of the confluence of developments after the War of 1812 which included rapid westward movement, economic expansion and contraction, nationalistic decisions from John Marshall's Supreme Court, and political fragmentation, that all made fertile soil for a vigorous debate about Missouri's fate. For example, the rapid decline of a two-party system in which Jeffersonian Republicans battled against Hamiltonian Federalists created a political vacuum. As would happen more dramatically thirty-five years later, in the absence of a competitive national party system, more radical ideas and rhetoric could seem more palatable.⁸ Glover Moore, in his seminal *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821*, offers a more subdued conclusion about persisting ill will than do later historians. As to the precise question of slavery restriction, Moore concludes that in its opposition "the Solid South [became] more solid."⁹ The rationale for that unity, however, was diverse.¹⁰ To gain more perspective of the dramatic events in Congress, he considers additional contemporary issues and the reactions among various constituencies beyond Washington City (as the nation's capital was often called at the time). The South, with some important exceptions, was fairly united against the tariff, but divided on internal improvements. It is significant that soon after the Compromise "the people were happy to forget it for a season."¹¹

Put another way, something changed in the years after the War of

York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144-157, 161. See also Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery, and the Politics of Jacksonianism" *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 65 (Winter 1966): 55-72.

⁸ John R. Van Atta, *Wolf by the Ears: The Missouri Crisis, 1819-1821* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 3-5. Fehrenbacher also briefly notes the significance of the decayed party system, Fehrenbacher, 14. For the 1850's, see Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), and Joel H. Silbey, "The Surge of Republican Power": Partisan Antipathy, American Social Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War" in *The Partisan Imperative: The Dynamics of American Politics Before the Civil War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁹ Moore, 250.

¹⁰ Moore, 346.

¹¹ Moore, 342. On the tariff, see 320-328; on internal improvements, see 332-336.

1812. The Missouri controversy was emblematic of that change. But change to what course? Was the new path primarily defined by views on slavery? Or was the future more inchoate and blurred? Gordon Wood reminds us that in the decades after independence the United States experienced a gradual, multifaceted transition from republicanism to democracy. Richard Ellis, who suggests the end of a Jeffersonian naivete on slavery, also observes, "What is much more difficult to assess is the role the Missouri Compromise played in the political revolution of the 1820s."¹² Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, albeit far from ordinary, could not ignore the Missouri debates. One scholar, in fact, argues Adams's views on the constitutionality of slavery restriction "flipped" in March 1820. But Adams avoided entanglement in the controversy (as did his equally diplomatic wife). In the years afterward "what is striking is his continued optimism about the union with slavery." For the ambitious presidential contender, "Expansion and the nation was what mattered."¹³ More broadly, in his recent study of the Panic of 1819 Andrew H. Browning emphasizes that the economic collapse and Chief Justice John Marshall's expansive defense of the hated Bank of the United States in *McCulloch v. Maryland* "overshadowed" the Missouri crisis.¹⁴ Even if one does not want to go that far, Browning's study is a reminder of the presence and persistence of other constitutional and economic arguments that shaped the nation during this period. As Van Atta notes, the Missouri debates "ended with a compromise making sense at *that* time." Only by looking from 1861 backwards could one conclude that the Missouri episode "made a violent outcome *inevitable*." But, in truth, "it did not."¹⁵ While Jefferson

¹² Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1992); Ellis, "The Market Revolution," 165.

¹³ David Waldstreicher, "John Quincy Adams, the Missouri Crisis, and the Long Politics of Slavery" in Jeffrey L. Pasley and John Craig Hammond (eds.), *A Fire Bell in the Past: The Missouri Crisis at 200* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2021), Vol. 1, 357, 359. For Louisa Catherine Adams, see Miriam Lieberman, "Diplomat, Republican, Lady: Louisa Catherine Adams and the Missouri Crisis" in Pasley and Hammond (eds.), Vol. 2, 111-117.

¹⁴ Andrew H. Browning, *The Panic of 1819: The First Great Depression* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2019), 339. Browning also shows the limitations of the argument that Congress was concerned about maintaining the balance of free and slave states. Browning, 334-36.

¹⁵ Van Atta, 4. Matthew E. Mason offers an astute corrective in "Review of Forbes, Robert Pierce, *The Missouri Compromise and Its Aftermath*," H-SHEAR, H-Net Reviews, June 2008. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=14582>. For a powerful statement of the Civil War's "pernicious influence on the study of American political development that preceded it," see Joel H. Silbey, "The Civil War Synthesis," in *The*

may have heard funeral bells for the nation, this second approach to the meaning of the Missouri controversy implies there were far fewer clear or predictable lines of development leading to the Civil War.

When it comes to Mississippi's connection to this controversy, historians have said very little. Moore offers some guidance in suggesting the state's "small population and isolated location" and a "conservative population . . . concentrated in the southwestern counties" led to a minimal response, and certainly not a sectional one.¹⁶ This concurs with the opinion of Andrew Marschall, editor of the *Mississippi State Gazette*, who in 1820 "chided members of Congress . . . for forgetting that 'Time is Money' which could be better invested in more important matters."¹⁷ This was similar to the sentiment from an Alabama newspaper that "the question to be settled is of infinitely less importance to the nation than the time consumed in their discussion of it."¹⁸ Both newly minted states were far too occupied with their own development. The reaction of Mississippi's White residents to the Missouri debates will never be determined with any precision. The complexity of their response is seen in the Natchez *Mississippi Republican*. The editor, Richard Langdon, credited opponents of slavery in Missouri with "principles of humanity." They had a "deep interest for the honor and character of the nation and regard for the future safety of the Southern States – What other motives can they have?"¹⁹ While this was perhaps a generous opinion, Langdon was not so favorably inclined towards the enslaved. "If slavery must be kept up at all, no half way measures will answer" in its maintenance.²⁰ Natchez merchant Eden Brashears opined, "The People of that Territory ought to be the best Judges . . . and the less Legislating on this subject the better for the present."²¹ Despite these comments, the apparent disconnect between Mississip-

Partisan Imperative, 3-12 (quotation on 12).

¹⁶ Moore, 248. See also Joel Sturgeon, "Nullification in Mississippi," *Journal of Mississippi History* 82 (Spring/Summer 2020): 56, 59, which is very good on the later tariff controversy but glides by the Missouri debates.

¹⁷ (Natchez) *Mississippi State Gazette*, April 1, 1820, quoted in D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1968), 282.

¹⁸ (Huntsville) *Alabama Republican*, March 16, 1821, quoted in J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1978), 166.

¹⁹ (Natchez) *Mississippi Republican*, January 11, 1820, quoted in James, 282.

²⁰ {Natchez} *Mississippi Republican*, August 17, 1819, quoted in Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 209.

²¹ Eden Brashears to John McKee, February 6, 1820, quoted in James, 282.

pi's perspective and the debate among historians over the significance of the Missouri controversy is worth deeper examination.

There is a different avenue, however, for understanding the context and consequences of the Missouri debates. Even if the state's popular opinion and its interests are indistinct, the behavior of Mississippi's congressional delegation in the nation's capital might expand our perspective of this dramatic controversy. Presumably the opinions and priorities of Senators Thomas H. Williams, David Holmes, and Walter Leake and Representative Christopher Rankin in the Sixteenth Congress (1819-1821) and the Seventeenth Congress (1821-1823) reflected those of their constituents. Their actions might reveal a "seething sectionalism", or they might suggest that a deeper appreciation of a broader context is warranted. This analysis of their service is divided into two parts. First, the Mississippi delegation's reaction to the Missouri controversy offers insight into how southern leaders – even from a new state – confronted the change of direction that Representative Tallmadge demanded. Not surprisingly, they favored Missouri's slave state application, but they embraced compromise to achieve it. Second, the activities of Mississippi's senators and lone representative, aside from the Missouri issue, illustrate the concerns of that turbulent time. An investigation of both dimensions of their service is important if we are to appreciate what the Missouri debates meant then and what they may have contributed to a crisis forty years later. As will be seen, Mississippi's congressional delegation was far from irrelevant or uninterested. In Washington City, Mississippians labored diligently in service to their state and nation. Their manifold contributions reflect a developing society, not one that was destined for a national disruption.

No resolution of the Missouri matter was possible in the dying days of the Fifteenth Congress when Tallmadge proposed his slavery restrictions. It was inevitable the issue would be revisited when the Sixteenth Congress convened in December 1819. The outlines of the ensuing controversy and compromise are well known. Missouri applied for statehood assuming that slavery would be legal. At the same time, Massachusetts had given permission for its Maine counties to seek statehood, but only if Congress consented by March 4, 1820. Still, it was "a golden opportunity" for a deal to be made.²² The initial attempt to link the admission of Maine and Missouri as a package failed. Ulti-

²² Moore, 86.

mately compromise was reached when Congress added that no other slave state would be created in the Louisiana Purchase north of 36 30' (Missouri would be the lone exception). The first session of the Sixteenth Congress ended with those components approved. The issue of slavery was rejoined in the second session, however, when Missouri asked Congress to approve a state constitution that ordered the forthcoming Missouri Legislature to pass a law "to prevent" free Blacks from entering into the state. The constitution also made it very difficult for owners to free slaves, thus provocatively emphasizing Missouri's slave state standing. Although this controversy was less serious than those of the previous session, it was incredibly difficult to solve.

When the Sixteenth Congress opened in December 1819, Christopher Rankin took his seat in the House of Representatives replacing George Poindexter, who had become Mississippi's second governor. A lawyer from Natchez, Rankin was placed on the Committee on Private Land Claims, an issue he probably dealt with a lot in his private practice. In the Senate, Thomas Hill Williams of Washington, Mississippi, (the former territorial capital near Natchez) joined the Committee on Naval Affairs and also became the chair of the Committee on Public Lands. Walter Leake of Bay St. Louis accepted appointment to the important Committee on the Judiciary. Beginning in January 1820, Leake also chaired the newly created standing Committee on Indian Affairs, an issue of considerable interest to Mississippi.²³ Although all three would be embroiled in the Missouri arguments, the committee assignments should serve as a reminder that members of Congress conducted a lot of other business.

Probably as a result of his position on the Public Lands Committee, Senator Williams chaired a select committee to investigate whether any "legislative measures may be necessary" for completing the admission of the state of Alabama (formerly the eastern half of the Mississippi Territory). While his report and legislation sailed through easily, his next assignment – chair of a select committee that reported a bill declaring Maine a state, pending approval of its constitution – would have a more complicated legislative history.²⁴ Maine's wishes could not be divorced from Missouri's fate.

Leake and Williams fully supported Missouri's request to be a

²³ *Annals of Congress* (hereinafter *Annals*), 16th Cong., 1st sess., 26, 57.

²⁴ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 11, 20, 35.

slave state. Only Leake, however, spoke on the floor of the Senate to explain his position. He did so probably because of his membership on the Judiciary Committee, which had been tasked with investigating the constitutional issues involving the admission of new states. In his speech on January 19, 1820, Leake, like other southern senators, took a narrow view of Article Four, Section 3, which gave Congress this power. If the territory had appropriately defined boundaries and sufficient population, it was "expedient to admit" it.²⁵ Leake was at a loss to find a provision that permitted Congress to restrict slavery, which the senator categorized as a "municipal and local concern of the States." The authority to restrict slavery was not in the enumerated powers of Congress in Article One, Section 8. It was true that by joining the Union a state gave up "important portions of their sovereignty" as listed in Article One, Section 10, but not "the right to make their own local and municipal regulations."²⁶ If there were any doubts, Leake emphasized, the Tenth Amendment left such powers to the individual states or to the people. Furthermore, slavery's legitimacy was "clearly recognized" in the Constitution by the necessity of returning runaway slaves. Thus, why should Missouri be treated any differently than the thirteen original states?²⁷ Congress had also not created regulations about slavery in the nine territories that became states after 1788. Instead, it had followed the will of the people in those territories.²⁸ This precedent was important because in the Louisiana Purchase treaty with France, the United States had promised to grant the trans-Mississippi region all the same "rights, advantages, and immunities."²⁹ Having explored what he felt were the main constitutional issues, Leake took his seat. He did not defend the institution of slavery; he simply accepted its existence. As will be seen in the speech of Mississippi congressman Christopher Rankin, Leake probably felt he did not have to do so.

Senator Thomas Williams did not offer his views on the controversy. There is, however, some evidence of his position. All three members of the Mississippi congressional delegation were usually in attendance and participated in almost all roll call votes. Here an interesting difference in attitudes emerged between the two senators,

²⁵ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 195.

²⁶ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 196-197.

²⁷ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 197.

²⁸ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 198-200.

²⁹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 197. The entire speech can be found in *Ibid.*, 195-200.

Leake and Williams. Both were willing to combine the Missouri and Maine statehood bills to enhance Missouri's chances for admission.³⁰ Williams, however, was not as motivated to pursue compromise as Leake was. Of the ten roll call votes in the first session dealing with the Missouri issue, two specifically concerned adding the 36 30' line restriction, and on those Williams broke with Leake.³¹ In opposing the 36 30' provision, Williams joined forces with more determined southern senators – William Smith of South Carolina and Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina and with several in the House of Representatives – who refused to accept any conditions on the admission of a slave Missouri. Ultimately, they voted no on the entire compromise package. Williams, for unknown reasons, declined to go that far. He relented and reunited with Leake in accepting the final compromise.³²

On February 15, 1820, Christopher Rankin spoke in the House for more than an hour against the repression of slavery in Missouri. Like Senator Leake, he based his initial argument on specific passages of the Constitution, but then Rankin took a more general view of the Constitution's principles. A basic flaw in the slavery restrictionists' argument, according to Rankin, was the assumption that Congress had the power to do this. Rankin's response was that "the sovereignty of the people" was paramount. "The silence of the Constitution is our law," argued Rankin, and to do otherwise was to leave Congress with a "capricious will" exercising "undefined, unlimited sovereignty."³³ A deplorable example of this capriciousness, according to the Natchez lawyer, was the Northerners' assertion that the provision to end the importation of slaves after 1808 (Article One, Section 9) also applied to the importation of slaves across the Mississippi. But this "discovery of . . . latent and dormant powers" was illogical.³⁴ If the pursuit of humanity was so acute, why was this alleged power not implemented in the admission of Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama? Instead, Rankin urged, "we should adopt the rules dictated by common sense."³⁵

³⁰ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 424.

³¹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 420, 457.

³² *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 428.

³³ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1333.

³⁴ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1336.

³⁵ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1334. Rankin had done his homework. He cited James Madison's *Federalist* #42, the Massachusetts ratifying convention in 1788, and Anti-Federalist Luther Martin to prove Article One, Section 9 of the Constitution only

Another argument by Northern congressmen was that every state must have "a republican form of government" and "no constitution can be republican in which slavery is not prohibited."³⁶ Rankin brushed this aside by noting that Virginia, Georgia, and others of the original thirteen had slavery. Such a redefinition of republicanism was ahistorical and a violation of guaranteed property rights. Congress had the responsibility to admit new states, but that "does not confer on Congress the power to frame a constitution for, and strip the people of their sovereignty."³⁷

A popular argument by those who would forbid slavery in Missouri was the precedent of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 which produced the free states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The Articles of Confederation indeed sanctioned that legislation, but Rankin argued no evidence existed "that such an ordinance would have been authorized by the Constitution."³⁸ Furthermore, Rankin noted that the U.S. Senate had implicitly rejected the principles of the Northwest Ordinance when in 1803 it ratified the Louisiana Purchase treaty, which had guaranteed property and equal rights. That treaty was the "supreme law of the land," and a future Congress could not renege on the its terms and engage in "such subterfuge. . . . The honest heart revolts at such a proposition."³⁹

Forty-three years later Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address would invoke the Declaration of Independence to justify the Emancipation Proclamation. When Northerners in 1820 cited the Declaration as reason for a slave-free Missouri, Rankin denied that the "Declaration gives liberty to every slave in the Union." The Declaration was indeed relevant in that it gave the people the right to make their own governments. That right should not be denied to Missouri. Self-government was a Revolutionary "inheritance."⁴⁰

Rankin could make this argument, and try to gain the high ground, because of a self-imposed handicap by the restrictionists. While some northern congressmen attacked the morality of slavery, they could not bring themselves to the logical conclusion that if slavery

applied to the international slave trade. Both Madison and Martin had been members of the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention.

³⁶ Constitution, Article Four, Section 4; *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1338.

³⁷ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1339.

³⁸ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1341.

³⁹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1340.

⁴⁰ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1342.

was wrong and to be forbidden in Missouri, it also had to be wrong and set on the road to extinction in Mississippi or South Carolina.⁴¹ Like most Americans all the way to the Civil War, Northerners shied away from abolition.

Southerners, however, faced an equally “difficult problem” in confronting the morality of slavery. “They had to acknowledge that slavery was an evil and at the same time demand that it be allowed to spread.”⁴² Rankin admitted that slavery was “an unrepugnant feature in our republican Constitution.”⁴³ His fallacious justification, one widely articulated by southern congressmen, was that the expansion of slavery was a good thing. Conditions improved as slavery spread. “Extension is humanity, is mercy,” Rankin asserted. “No man has passed through the State of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama, who does not know that their condition is much better there than in the old States.”⁴⁴

Secure in his own mind about the legitimacy of obeying the Missourians’ will, Rankin, in his conclusion, almost taunted the anti-slavery opposition for betraying the nation’s destiny. It was the restrictionists who “conduct us to an awful precipice,” namely disunion. Rankin, however, hoped “our Union will be as perpetual as the rocks and mountains of our continent.” Southerners did not threaten separation. “Spare, oh spare your country the evils which the agitation of this question has produced.”⁴⁵ After all, in Rankin’s mind, it was the restrictionists who did not understand the Declaration, who violated one Constitutional principle after another, and who denied the sovereignty of the people. Rankin’s votes show a faithful adherence to the middle course to produce compromise.⁴⁶ The arguments offered by Rankin, Leake, and Williams were not the views of representatives of a small, undeveloped state sitting on the sidelines.

When the Sixteenth Congress reconvened for its second session in November 1820, it immediately encountered Missouri’s defiant

⁴¹ Knowingly or not, Rankin argued, restrictionists were leaning in that dangerous direction, and “yet we are told not to be alarmed,” *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1343-44.

⁴² John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Vol. 1, 62.

⁴³ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1335.

⁴⁴ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1343. See also Matthew Mason, *Slavery and Politics in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006), 177-213, for an excellent discussion of this theme.

⁴⁵ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1344.

⁴⁶ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1586, 1587.

constitution. The question was whether that constitution could require the state legislature to enact a law forbidding free Blacks entrance into the state. Simple approval would seem to mean that Congress was permitting a violation of the United States Constitution that "Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States," since a few states had granted citizenship to African Americans.⁴⁷ The more radical Southerners—Macon and Smith in the Senate, and John Randolph of Virginia in the House—would admit Missouri only on Missouri's terms. More than a few northern congressmen saw an opportunity to use such a flagrant defiance of the Constitution to delay admission, if not bring up the slavery restriction issue again. Those interested in compromise found a solution elusive. Mississippi's three-person congressional delegation fit into that middle group. That delegation now included former governor David Holmes who replaced Walter Leake. Leake had resigned his seat to become a justice on the Mississippi Supreme Court.

Neither Holmes nor Williams contributed to the debate. If J. F. H. Claiborne's recollection is to be believed, Williams "and Governor Holmes . . . were all successful politicians, but intellectually very inferior to many who vainly competed for the honors they obtained."⁴⁸ Both were honest and men of character, but Holmes "was not an orator" and Williams was "a striking illustration of the success of mediocrity in politics."⁴⁹ While this may explain their silence, they did participate in all roll call votes on this difficult issue. In early December 1820, Senator John Eaton of Tennessee offered a solution that would eventually be reshaped and accepted in February. Eaton advocated Missouri's statehood, but "nothing . . . should be construed as to give the assent of Congress to any provision in the constitution of Missouri, if any such there be, which contravenes" the "privileges and immunities" clause.⁵⁰ Senators Holmes and Williams repeatedly voted for the inclusion of Eaton's compromise and refused to support a counteroffer to force Missouri to revise its constitution. The Senate was ultimately stalemated particularly since it received no cooperation from the House of Representatives.

⁴⁷ Constitution, Article Four, Section 2.

⁴⁸ J. F. H. Claiborne, *Mississippi as a Province, Territory and State* (Jackson, MS: Power & Barksdale, 1880), 258. He also included Walter Leake in that list.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 303, 258.

⁵⁰ The full text is in the *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 41. See also Van Atta, 119.

The House, in fact, had an even more difficult time with Missouri's constitution. Part of the problem was leadership. Henry Clay resigned the speakership because of a long delay before he could attend the second session. In his place, the House selected John Taylor of New York, a determined opponent of slavery's expansion. The House had no majority interested in Senator Eaton's vague proposal. Instead, it erupted when a member called Missouri a state and another suggested it was "the late territory of Missouri."⁵¹ The chaos only increased when John Randolph vigorously protested the backhanded way Missouri's electoral votes were to be counted in James Monroe's reelection even though Monroe received all but one electoral college vote.⁵² Throughout the turmoil, Representative Rankin supported compromise measures to finalize Missouri's statehood with slavery. It was only when Henry Clay arrived on January 16, 1821, that momentum built towards a resolution. In the ensuing roll call votes, Rankin always agreed with Clay. The path was nevertheless difficult. While Rankin did not express an opinion on the floor of the House, he did play a key role in settling the dispute.

On February 22, Clay proposed that the House elect a special committee of twenty-three to meet with a Senate committee to find a solution that both houses would support. Clay suggested only those who received a majority of the ballots would serve. In the ensuing election 157 members received votes, but only seventeen attained the required majority. One of them was Rankin of Mississippi.⁵³ His election is testimony to the respect he had attained and suggests that he exerted his influence more quietly and beyond the House chamber. Most of the others elected had spoken at great length during the session. The joint committee's deliberations were not recorded.⁵⁴ Anti-slavery senator Rufus King of New York, although appointed by the Senate, was so disgusted at the prospect of a compromise that he did not bother to show up for the meeting.⁵⁵ Clay's joint committee returned with a proposal to admit Missouri that was even more opaque than Eaton's. Nev-

⁵¹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 853-856.

⁵² For a colorful account of this episode see Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 188-190.

⁵³ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 1219-1220, 1223.

⁵⁴ Many years later Clay gave his account. Moore, 155-156.

⁵⁵ Rufus King to Charles King, February 24, 1821, in Charles R. King (ed.), *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), Vol. 6, 386; Moore, 154-156.

ertheless, it attracted majorities in the House and Senate, including the votes of all three Mississippians. Missouri, with slavery, became the twenty-fourth state.

The history of the Sixteenth Congress was more than the Missouri debates. For example, Senator Eaton wrote a remarkable letter to the somewhat notorious Senator King immediately after the Sixteenth Congress had permanently adjourned. Enclosed was an article from a Nashville newspaper. In it, the editor found King "obnoxious" on the Missouri question, but most of the piece praised the New Yorker's "manly spirit" for his vigorous defense of General Andrew Jackson, who had led a controversial incursion into Spanish Florida. Eaton also took the opportunity to describe the inauguration of President James Monroe. With obvious disgust, he ridiculed "the Coronation" and Monroe's inaudible speech. "Of all the mobocratic collections I have seen, it was a match for any." Eaton claimed it took an hour before he got into the crowded House chamber; then "I remained but a few minutes, and was happier to get out, than I was to get in." There was a postscript in a different hand: "I was wiser* than Eaton, I staid at home. In one thing we agree, that is in wishing you a safe arrival at your domicile, and my best wishes await you there. [signed] Wms. of Mississippi." Eaton literally had the last word; he put the asterisk next to "wiser" and wrote, "*Dubitatur*. E. of Tenne."⁵⁶

This playful letter between bitter antagonists over Missouri seems unexpected, if one assumes that Missouri was the only political issue of the day. Eaton and Williams had both pushed for a slave Missouri and for compromise. While King went so far as to castigate northern congressmen, who favored compromise, as "men who pretend to be intelligent."⁵⁷ Yet Eaton ignored King's inflammatory rhetoric and graciously forwarded to King a newspaper's praise for him, and both Williams and Eaton shared a feeling of disdain for the reelected Monroe. These exchanges suggest that much more of significance transpired within the halls of Congress than the heated and prolonged discussion of Missouri statehood.

What lingering fears and animosity persisted in the ensuing Seventeenth Congress (1821-1823)? A broader examination of the ac-

⁵⁶ *Dubitatur: Doubtful*. John Eaton and Thomas H. Williams to Rufus King, March 5, 1821, in King (ed.), Vol. 6, 388-390. Eaton and Williams lived in the same hotel in Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷ Rufus King to Christopher Gore, April 9, 1820, in King (ed.), Vol. 6, 329.

tivity of Mississippi's congressional delegation reveals much about that period. The famous Missouri debates were part of a larger political fabric, not all of it portending disaster in 1861, as some historians would have it. The actions of Mississippi's two senators and single representative remind us of that complexity, and it would be decades after their deaths before the United States faced a more serious threat to the nation.

The Mississippi delegation—Senators Leake, Williams, and Holmes, and Representative Rankin—labored diligently for their state and its citizens. They handled issues of local, regional, and national significance. The range of issues and the continuity of behavior during the two Congresses lend perspective to the overall significance of the expansion of slavery.

Mississippi's congressional delegation presented petitions from residents and memorials from the Mississippi General Assembly (as the state's legislative body was known at the time). These actions were not the most historically significant of their labors, but they were important to their constituency. Senator Williams, for example, presented petitions from Sarah Chotard, Clarissa Scott, and Horatio Stark, each asking for land or a confirmation of their land claims. Samuel Monett wanted reimbursement for supplies to the army. At the behest of the state legislature, Williams, Holmes, and Rankin pushed for federal "support of the Natchez Hospital, established . . . for the reception and relief of indigent boatmen."⁵⁸ That they failed was not due to a lack of effort.⁵⁹ They also requested the establishment of ports of entry at the mouths of the Pearl River and the Pascagoula River. Senator Holmes in February 1822 and again in January 1823, at the bidding of the legislature, asked for a "donation of lands lying upon the waters of Pearl river . . . to aid in opening and improving the navigation . . . from the seat of government of the State to the Gulf of Mexico."⁶⁰ Altering the meeting times of the U.S. District Court took Senator Williams and Representative Rankin over two years to accomplish. Williams requested a better post road connecting Natchez to St. Stephens, Alabama. Rankin unsuccessfully advocated for a military road from Columbus "through the Choctaw nation of Indians, to Turner Brashaer's

⁵⁸ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 927.

⁵⁹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 27; *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 130, 439.

⁶⁰ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 227; 2nd sess., 75-76.

stand” on the Natchez Trace.⁶¹ On March 1, 1822, Rankin presented a memorial from the legislature asking permission to sell the public lands that had been set aside “for the support of schools.” Holmes did the same in the Senate a day earlier.⁶² These multidimensional efforts aimed to enhance the development of the new state.

One of the first contentious issues in the House of Representatives of the Seventeenth Congress was the apportionment of the House based on the 1820 Census. Impassioned speeches and numerous votes exposed the localistic priorities of the congressmen. There was no concern for what was best for one’s section, or the nation, but what served the interests of each representative’s state. John Randolph and other Virginians were determined that the Old Dominion would not lose one seat. South Carolina argued for a rather precise population to representative ratio (39,900 : 1) so that it could add one more representative to its delegation. Delaware and Rhode Island desperately tried to hold on to their two-seat delegations. Christopher Rankin in eight roll calls voted to keep the ratio high, above 44,000 per representative. While he never spoke on the issue, he probably realized that Mississippi would not get more than one representative, so why not keep the House relatively small, and thus maintain a louder voice for Mississippi. On one ballot, Rankin did try to assist South Carolina, but after that he was very consistent in supporting a small House of Representatives.⁶³ Resolving apportionment was clearly a situation where every state was out for itself.

Senator Williams was a frequent participant in an issue of regional significance – the organization of the recently acquired Florida Territory. He lent his expertise on “the extent and labor,” “the talents and learning required,” and the appropriate salaries of territorial judges.⁶⁴ He moved to protect public lands from squatters. Both Williams and Holmes, however, tried to guarantee that settlers in Spanish Florida would keep their lands.⁶⁵ In the House, Christopher Rankin presented

⁶¹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1000, 1058. Brashaer’s Stand was the Choctaw Indian Agency. It was in current-day Ridgeland on the Natchez Trace near mile post 104.5.

⁶² *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 239, 1165.

⁶³ David Holmes followed the same strategy when the apportionment bill came before the Senate. Williams was absent the day it was debated.

⁶⁴ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 226.

⁶⁵ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 229.

a bill from the Committee on Public Lands to accomplish those tasks.⁶⁶ Williams pushed for the timely creation of ports of entry and appointment of revenue officers, as well as for the application of tariff duties outlined in the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 that ceded Spanish Florida to the United States.⁶⁷ In the debates over the roles of the territorial governor and secretary of the territory, Williams resolved a deadlock by pointing to precedents established by a 1789 law.⁶⁸ Clearly Mississippi's recent territorial status gave weight to Williams' advice in the establishment of the Florida Territory. Curiously, Williams would have added part of western Florida to Alabama, but a majority of the Senate, including his colleague David Holmes, disagreed.⁶⁹ Williams and Holmes, however, did help scuttle a feeble attempt to restrict the movement of slaves into Florida.⁷⁰

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses dealt with issues having more national implications. The contributions of Mississippi's senators to national policy were first expressed in the Senate and House Standing Committees. Senator Walter Leake in his brief tenure was put on the Committee of Accounts, but later became a member of the influential Judiciary Committee. After Leake's resignation, David Holmes chaired the Committee on Indian Affairs. He held that post through the Seventeenth Congress. Thomas Williams was chair of the Senate Committee on Public Lands for one session, but in both Congresses he found a home on the Naval Affairs Committee. Committee records from this period were not preserved, so it is unclear what contributions they made to the deliberations.

Christopher Rankin's committee service led him to have more of a presence in the House. His first committee experience in the Sixteenth Congress was as a member on the mundane Committee on Private Land Claims. Presumably his performance was quite competent because in the next Congress he became chair of the Committee on the Public Lands. Rankin would serve as chair of that committee until his untimely death on March 14, 1826, during the Nineteenth Congress. The Committee on the Public Lands guided the distribution and sale of federal government land largely in the new states beyond the

⁶⁶ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 928.

⁶⁷ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 227-228, 236.

⁶⁸ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 277.

⁶⁹ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 276.

⁷⁰ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 277.

Appalachians. The committee was besieged by requests to give lands away for one supposedly worthy project after another. The Mississippi General Assembly's request for lands along the Pearl River was a typical example. Since the Revolutionary War, the federal government had promised public lands to veterans for their service. Education in the trans-Appalachian states benefited from public land sales. But the lands were also to generate money for the federal government's operation. When the Treaty of Doak's Stand, signed in 1820, led to the removal of the Choctaws from central Mississippi, the House charged the Committee on the Public Lands with creating a process "for the better organization of the land districts in the State of Mississippi, and the disposal of the public lands."⁷¹ Rankin's committee was responsible for finding the right balance.

A seemingly trivial but bitter dispute arose when residents of Peoria, Illinois, requested public lands due to their settlement long before that territory had been organized, allegedly in 1776. The town's initial and valuable purpose was as a trading outpost with Native Americans. Most committee members concluded that acceding to this claim was tantamount to giving public lands away to squatters. Rankin acknowledged that the Confederation Congress in 1781 had granted the residents some lands, but they had never legally registered their claims, and later settlers were demanding the same right. One member of the committee, Daniel Cook, the lone and particularly feisty representative from Illinois, argued the claims had merit and "this was a peculiar case, requiring peculiar legislation."⁷² The response by many congressmen, including Rankin, was that this "peculiar case" set a dangerous precedent. "They would tread on dangerous ground," Rankin warned, "and . . . there were claims of this description in several other of the States and Territories."⁷³ "It was time to stop giving away the public lands."⁷⁴ Not only was the precedent worrisome, but some of the land in question, Rankin observed, might have been already surveyed for military bounties.⁷⁵ Eventually, the bill was passed after being amended in the House and Senate, notwithstanding Rankin's concerns. The act did restrict how much land a claimant re-

⁷¹ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 524.

⁷² *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 477.

⁷³ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 477.

⁷⁴ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 472.

⁷⁵ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 486.

ceived while recognizing that others might have prior and superseding claims.

Rankin represented the voice of financial prudence when U.S. Representative Edward Tattnell of Georgia proposed the immediate enactment of a measure to pay the Cherokee and Creek Indians for all lands within Georgia's borders. Rankin gently suggested the Ways and Means Committee investigate this appropriation. Congress did not comprehend "the extent of these reservations," and Rankin warned "the sum adequate to the extinguishment of the Indian title would be much greater than gentlemen anticipated." Tattnell felt he had been unfairly criticized, if not insulted, but Rankin's cautiousness carried the day.⁷⁶

On two occasions Rankin helped define the borders of Western expansion and facilitate its settlement. According to the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, Spain recognized the Sabine River as the western border of Louisiana. Long before that treaty, controversy surrounded the ownership of what was called the Neutral Ground, or demilitarized zone, in western Louisiana. Rankin's committee wrote a bill to examine the titles of all settlers in that long-disputed area, thus setting the stage for the sale of the remaining public lands.⁷⁷ Rankin's attention also ranged farther north. In January 1823, he proposed creating a select committee (to include many of the Public Lands Committee members) to define the western border of the Arkansas Territory, beyond which would be Indian lands. Their bill would shield public lands in Arkansas from squatters and prevent White settlements in the Indian Territory. His vice-chair on that special committee was future president James Buchanan.⁷⁸

The smooth operation of land offices was also of concern. In a time of economic turmoil, Rankin, as will be seen, was supportive of cutting government expenses. Rankin vigorously argued, however, that the employees of the land offices – registers and receivers of public money – deserved salary increases due to the great surge in western land sales after the conclusion of the War of 1812. This important business demanded accurate records of the money delivered to the banks where the government had accounts. "The effect of lowering the sal-

⁷⁶ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 442, 443.

⁷⁷ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 447-448.

⁷⁸ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 543-544.

aries” for these officials, Rankin argued, would “not . . . diminish the number of applicants for them, but to get incompetent men to fill them. This was false economy.”⁷⁹ More compensation would attract the truly qualified who would conduct the government’s business both efficiently and safely.

Rankin’s conduct of the Committee on the Public Lands provides no evidence of the persistence of sectionalism. Far from it. The Mississippi congressman showed concern for the equitable settlement of the West, good government, and the nation’s prosperity and welfare.

In the absence of published speeches and detailed committee records, it is still possible to get a sense of what Mississippi’s congressional delegation thought of national issues. The roll call votes in the House and Senate, despite their limitations, reveal a number of important patterns. The financial panic in 1819 severely disrupted the national economy for several years.⁸⁰ Congress responded in three ways – retrenchment of government spending, reform, and seeking the foundation for future growth.

One controversial target for curtailing government spending was the reduction of pensions for Revolutionary War veterans. On seven roll calls in the Sixteenth Congress, Rankin supported making these cuts. In the following Congress, he relented to restore some pensions to demonstrably indigent veterans. But on a subsequent question of adding more to the pension rolls, he again was in opposition. Senators Leake, Williams, and Holmes joined with Rankin. When a Kentucky senator proposed rewarding a veteran of the War of 1812 with land for “very . . . hazardous service” against the Indians, Williams and others objected that such a bill did not come “within any principles on which Congress had given pensions or donations and of the inability of the Government to reward all cases of meritorious service, where no disability ensued.”⁸¹

Congress also targeted the army. Williams adamantly favored trimming army appropriations. Leake and Holmes did not. In the House, Rankin was almost as determined as Williams and voted twice to reduce the size of the army. As will be seen, there is indirect evidence that Williams concurred. Rankin even supported a measure that

⁷⁹ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 2nd sess., 364-365. See also *Ibid.*, 356-357.

⁸⁰ An important study of the economic dislocation is Browning, *The Panic of 1819*. For an insightful overview of its impact, see 7-10.

⁸¹ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 641.

would have affected the viability of West Point, and Williams voted against the promotion of Sylvanus Thayer, the superintendent of the United States Military Academy. In the Sixteenth Congress, a bill came up to remove the military and government from the business of trading with the Indians and, instead, place it in the hands of private entrepreneurs. Leake presented evidence of “the pernicious effects of private traders.” Rankin moved to lay the bill on the table to kill it. On this issue Holmes, Leake, and Rankin consistently disagreed with Williams.⁸²

There were several reductions Mississippi’s political leaders refused to make. All supported maintaining appropriations for the navy. Williams, who was the most vigilant in constraining spending, approved their appropriations without dissent, perhaps because of his service on the Naval Affairs Committee. Rankin even voted for a small increase to help the navy combat piracy.⁸³ Senators Holmes and Williams opposed measures to cut congressional compensation. Rankin fervently joined them, voting twelve times to preserve salaries and travel expenses. To be fair, Rankin also wished to preserve or even increase compensation for land office employees, and he also voted to maintain custom officials’ pay and the number of customs houses. His rationale was that government revenue would be enhanced.⁸⁴

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives proposed reform measures meant to mitigate future economic downturns and eliminate corruption. Senators Holmes and Williams agreed on changing some practices of the Bank of the United States, whose leadership was widely condemned for causing and deepening the economic panic. In the first session of the Sixteenth Congress, an issue arose with which the Mississippi delegation was probably well familiar – the purchase of public land on credit. Senators Leake and Williams and Representative Rankin favored switching to cash only.⁸⁵ The sole concession Rankin supported was that there should be some temporary indulgence be-

⁸² For Leake, see *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 547. For Rankin, see *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 1250-51. For the Williams and Holmes disagreement, see *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd sess., 381.

⁸³ On Williams and Holmes, see *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 415. On Rankin, see *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 2239-2240; 2nd sess., 1063, 1287.

⁸⁴ Holmes and Williams were also on record for maintaining the customs presence at Natchez. *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 173.

⁸⁵ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 450-452, 458.

cause this change was rather unexpected.⁸⁶ Leake was willing to divide the land into smaller sections to facilitate cash purchases, and in the future, the Senate might consider reducing the price for lands that went unsold.⁸⁷ But for the present, the policy of selling land had to change. In the Senate, controversy erupted over whether government officials who owed the government money should be paid. Williams again took a very hard stance voting six times to forbid paying “public defaulters.” Leake opposed him in the Sixteenth Congress, and Holmes did the same in the Seventeenth.⁸⁸ In the House, Rankin backed a bill to allow the Treasury to collect money due more easily.

A persistent reform measure in both the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses was bankruptcy protection. Congress has the power to create “uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States,” but what that would entail was greatly disputed.⁸⁹ The Mississippians in Congress could not agree either. Williams was consistently supportive of a federal bankruptcy law that applied only to merchants. Leake and, later, Holmes were opposed to such a measure. Both, however, voted to extend bankruptcy protection to farmers, but they probably knew that was a deal breaker and would sink the measure. Rankin voted six times against a bankruptcy bill in the Sixteenth Congress. In the Seventeenth Congress, he waffled. Rankin opposed adding more than merchants to the bill, changed his mind (only a handful of representatives did that), and then missed the final vote.⁹⁰ It would be decades before Congress enacted a bankruptcy measure covering individuals.

The Congress also looked beyond the immediacy of the Panic of 1819 to lay a foundation for future growth and stability. One such measure was a revised tariff. The Tariff of 1816 had garnered widespread support from all sections and both political parties. A more protectionist proposal offered in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses was not so well received especially by Mississippi’s senators and its representative. Despite the argument that the nation would benefit from more

⁸⁶ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 1699.

⁸⁷ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 27, 486.

⁸⁸ For example, see *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st sess., 576; *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 401, 402, 405-407.

⁸⁹ Article One, Section 8. See also Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York, 2009), 593.

⁹⁰ This series of perplexing votes are in *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 1276, 1278, 1298.

revenue and less dependence on foreign manufactured goods, many argued a revision in tariff rates would benefit some at the expense of the many. Even potential beneficiaries quarreled over the appropriate revisions. Speaker of the House Henry Clay, a fervent advocate for the tariff, admitted there was no perfect bill when the subject was revived in the Eighteenth Congress.⁹¹ No Mississippian spoke up earlier, but in the Eighteenth Congress, Representative Rankin gave an extended denunciation moments after Clay, his erstwhile Missouri Compromise ally, concluded his argument. In a two-day speech that began on March 31, 1824, Rankin preferred “a policy, which does not propose to tax one portion of the community for the benefit of another . . . which protects all classes in their lawful pursuits.”⁹² Rankin admitted a sectional bias: “What does the South demand of Congress? Only that her capital and industry may not be taxed for the benefit of some other section of the Union.”⁹³ For the most part, however, he claimed the tariff hurt the nation as a whole. It did not inspire confidence that the bill had no accompanying report from the Ways and Means Committee that calculated “the probable effects” that all were to experience.⁹⁴ Rankin pledged to “protect . . . every species of industry; but no one exclusively.”⁹⁵ He then sought in the rest of his speech to prove the proposed tariff would be a “corrupting influence . . . on the commerce, the agriculture, the manufactures, the revenue, the morals, and the liberty of the country.”⁹⁶ If Henry Clay of Kentucky and Daniel Webster of Massachusetts could proclaim the tariff was part of the “American System” to guarantee national prosperity, so could Rankin declaim that the measure undermined America’s future, not merely the South’s.⁹⁷ As a mechanism for economic growth, the tariff left much to be desired, according to Mississippians.

A newer device for economic progress and stability was incorporation. Here again the Mississippians were wary. Leake and Williams voted for stricter restrictions on all District of Columbia bank charters. Rankin in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses voted against

⁹¹ Clay: “You want what you will never get. Nothing human is perfect.” *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2000.

⁹² *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2002.

⁹³ *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2002.

⁹⁴ *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2003.

⁹⁵ *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2005.

⁹⁶ *Annals*, 18th Cong., 1st sess., 2007, 2018.

⁹⁷ See Sturgeon, “Nullification in Mississippi”; Browning, 353-356.

chartering those banks outright. He also opposed the incorporation of the Columbian College (eventually a part of George Washington University) in the District of Columbia. Leake spoke against granting "certain privileges to the Ocean Steamship Company of New York."⁹⁸

Mississippi's congressional delegation was also involved in decisions about federally sponsored internal improvements, particularly roads and canals. Unfortunately, if they spoke about it in the Congress, their comments were not recorded. Nevertheless, there are some clear patterns. Senator Leake voted against supporting roads and canals in Ohio and Indiana. Like Leake, Senator Williams twice opposed a bill for a canal in Ohio, but he backed a measure for roads in Ohio and Indiana. In the Seventeenth Congress, Williams and Holmes voted three times for the repair of the Cumberland Road. This part was the easternmost portion of the National Road that crossed the Appalachians between Cumberland, Maryland, and Wheeling, Virginia (now West Virginia). Williams's earlier support for the Ohio and Indiana roads was probably related to the eventual extension of the National Road towards the Mississippi River. In the House, Rankin's position was unequivocal. He voted eleven times for the repairs and one of those votes was to override President Monroe's veto. Although a measure to conduct surveys and estimates for roads and canals never came up for a vote in the Senate, Rankin backed it the two times that it did in the House. In sum, it would appear that Senator Leake joined President Monroe in finding federal government support for internal improvement to be unconstitutional or perhaps financially unwise in the midst of an economic downturn. Williams concurred only when the projects in question pertained to one state. When roads connected states, however, as did the National Road, Williams, Holmes, and Rankin deemed them beneficial for the nation's future growth. A standard theme is the South stood in opposition to the expansion of federal government power. That argument applies to the tariff, but in the 1819 to 1823 period, Mississippians did not see the internal improvement issue through a sectional lens.

This era also saw the constant stirrings of democracy. A recurring topic of debate was a constitutional amendment that would change

⁹⁸ *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 627. See also R. Kent Newmyer, *The Supreme Court under Marshall and Taney* 2nd Ed. (Wheeling, IL: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 70-79; Howe, 557-559.

the Electoral College from a winner-take-all to voting by districts in a state. Whether to include existing congressional districts or even allow people to choose electors formed the shoals on which these proposals crashed. But the prospect of making the presidential election more democratic was irresistible. In the first session of the Sixteenth Congress, Mississippi's Williams resolutely favored reform while his Senate colleague Leake voted three times to maintain the status quo. In the House, Rankin twice supported constitutional change, but the requisite two-thirds support was unattainable. When a similar measure reemerged in the Senate during the Seventeenth Congress, both Holmes and Williams were supportive, but in vain.⁹⁹

It is somewhat ironic that the Missouri Compromise should loom large in the so-called Era of Good Feelings. That appellation came from President James Monroe's unopposed reelection in 1820 and subsequent tour of the Northeast. The apparent unity was emblematic of the emergence of calm after the turmoil of the War of 1812 and assisted by the demise of the Federalist Party. Yet the support for Monroe was limited and unenthusiastic. John Eaton's letter to Rufus King, with Thomas Williams' postscript, on the day of the inauguration was one of many indications of that lack of support. "We have no administration," Rufus King wrote an old Federalist colleague. "Mr. M. tho' not buried, is dead."¹⁰⁰ Monroe sincerely wanted to rise above political parties, but as John Quincy Adams noted, "As the old line of demarkation [sic] between parties has been broken down, personal has taken the place of principled opposition. The personal friends of the President in the House are neither so numerous nor so active, nor so able as his opponents."¹⁰¹ The presidential campaign of 1824 had begun. Some of its earliest manifestations came in Congress because so many cabinet officers – Adams, William H. Crawford, and John C. Calhoun – and former (and future) Speaker of the House Henry Clay, eyed the White House. Their congressional allies sought both to enhance their can-

⁹⁹ See also Andrew Burstein, *America's Jubilee: A Generation Remembers the Revolution After 50 Years of Independence* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2002), 159-180.

¹⁰⁰ Rufus King to Christopher Gore, February 3, 1822, in King (ed.), Vol. 6, 456.

¹⁰¹ John Quincy Adams Diary, entry for Jan. 8, 1820, quoted in Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 126. Monroe's philosophical and political dilemmas are outlined in Ralph Ketcham, *Presidents Above Party* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 124-130.

didates' credentials and torpedo the competition. The maneuverings were uncoordinated and murky.

The entrance of General Andrew Jackson into the presidential race by 1823 would dictate the public stand of all Mississippi politicians. Before that point, however, it is difficult to define precisely the inclinations of Senators Williams and Holmes and Representative Rankin. (Leake's resignation preceded the 1820 election.) There are, however, some indications worth noting. As with several of the aforementioned issues, Mississippi's congressional delegation was not united and apparently not fervently behind one candidate or another. For example, the successful attempt to cut the army's size and appropriations was generally interpreted as an attack on Secretary of War Calhoun. Williams and Rankin were the most ardent on that issue, Holmes (and Leake) less so. How the reduced army was to be organized also evoked opposition from Crawford supporters, particularly Senator John Williams of Tennessee. In the spring of 1822, the Senate in executive session considered a number of Monroe's army nominations as recommended by Calhoun. In particular, the nominations of James Gadsden for adjutant general and Nathan Towson for colonel of artillery divided the Senate. The roll call votes rejecting the appointments were close and not sectional.¹⁰² An infuriated President Monroe resubmitted Gadsden's and Towson's appointments only to have them rejected with Senator Williams of Tennessee again leading the charge.¹⁰³ Senator Holmes backed President Monroe. Williams of Mississippi pursued a curious course as he was the only senator to vote for Towson, but not Gadsden. Forty-two of the forty-seven senators who voted in the five roll calls were consistent – they always voted for Towson and Gadsden or against the pair. Williams' particular voting pattern was unique, but he gave no reasons.

In the House, Rankin worked well with Clay to achieve compromise on Missouri, but always stood opposed to the tariff, a fundamental element of the Kentuckian's "American System." David Cook of Illinois, an open supporter of Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, made it his mission to attack Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford whenever possible, often inferring fraudulent behavior. Rankin tried

¹⁰² The roll call votes can be found in the *Senate Executive Journal*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 476, 478, 509-510.

¹⁰³ James Monroe to James Madison, May 12, 1822, *Founders Online*, National Archives. See also Cunningham, 110-111, 127-128.

to rein Cook in. For example, Cook claimed the Treasury had deposited “nearly a million dollars . . . in certain local banks . . . and kept [Congress] so much in the dark.”¹⁰⁴ Cook demanded access to the Treasury’s records, which Rankin characterized was a “complex and voluminous . . . mass of information.” No one would be able to comprehend it easily, but Rankin predicted that Cook would manipulate the data to make “speeches on this floor . . . [to] go forth to the public” suggesting Crawford “had violated his official duty, and disregarded the public interest.” Cook’s only purpose was “do injustice to the Secretary of the Treasury.” There were legitimate questions to be asked, but Rankin “had the utmost confidence” in Crawford. With a more reasonable document request “no doubt all these insinuations would be entirely dissipated.”¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, the chaotic 1824 presidential election would be determined in the House of Representatives, where Rankin would cast Mississippi’s vote for Andrew Jackson. In these early days of the contest, Mississippi’s congressional delegation typified the uncertainty of the nation.

The Missouri Compromise was disturbing. The nation had not witnessed slavery discussed in such heated terms since the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Nevertheless, we should avoid seeing portents of civil war that were not there. Placing the Missouri controversy in the context of its times and using Mississippians as our guides offer a valuable lesson. The first men sent by Mississippians to represent them in Congress were competent and diligent, and their actions portray a more realistic view of that period. The troubled Sixteenth Congress dealt with important business on numerous other topics. In the following Congress, not only did the Mississippi delegation grapple with the immediate needs of their state and nation, but also with the economic and democratic measures that might reshape the nation’s future. Slavery was not among those issues. There was no manifestation of ill feelings among those who participated in the Missouri debates. Williams, Leake, Holmes, and Rankin addressed their constituent and state concerns, but not exclusively. They were not Southerners with an agenda, nor were they even united on the issues before them. Before Andrew Jackson’s candidacy, they were not even sure who should succeed President Monroe.

¹⁰⁴ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 674-675.

¹⁰⁵ *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st sess., 673, 677.

It might be best to see politics in the late 1810s and early 1820s not as party versus party, or North versus South, but as a nation of self-centered factions. Mississippi's congressional delegation over the four-year span of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses (and beyond) characterized that fractured society. In their own individualistic ways, Thomas H. Williams, Walter Leake, David Holmes, and Christopher Rankin were faithful public servants looking out for the best interests of the entire nation.

Mississippi Historical Society Awards Prizes at the 2023 Annual Meeting



Leslie-Burl McLemore received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Due to illness, Leslie II accepted the award from Daphne Chamberlain, MHS president.

The Mississippi Historical Society held its annual meeting March 2-3 in Jackson to honor its 2023 award winners, including the best Mississippi History Book of 2022, the Lifetime Achievement Award, Teacher of the Year, and Awards of Merit.

Leslie-Burl McLemore, a former member of the Jackson City Council and current alderman in Walls, received the Lifetime Achievement Award. He was a leader in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during the civil rights movement and a founding member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 that made history in Atlantic City, New Jersey. As the founding chair of the political science department at Jackson State University, he was a trailblazing academician. More recently, McLemore was involved in the location, funding, and interpretation of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and played a central role in creating the Mississippi Freedom Trail, a group of historical markers about civil rights history.

Evan Howard Ashford, assistant professor of history at State University of New York Oneonta, received the Book of the Year Award for *Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865–1915*. The book examines how African Americans in a rural Mississippi county shaped economic and social issues after the Civil War.

Jere Nash won the *Journal of Mississippi History* Article of the Year Award for “The Mississippi Legislature Changes the Flag,” which documented the remarkable, historic passage of a law in 2020 that led to the adoption of a new state flag for the state.



Jere Nash accepted the Journal of Mississippi History Article of the Year Award from Brother Rogers, MHS secretary-treasurer.

The Outstanding Local Historical Society Award was presented to the Historic Ocean Springs Association for its project installing more than thirty interpretive signs at landmark locations throughout the historic districts of Ocean Springs.



Susan Gulledge and Melanie Allen of The Historic Ocean Springs Association accepted the Outstanding Local Historical Society Award from Daphne Chamberlain, MHS president.

The Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Alexandria Drake of JPS-Tougaloo Early College High School.



Alexandria Drake, JPS-Tougaloo Early College High School, accepted the MHS History Teacher of the Year Award from Daphne Chamberlain, MHS president.

Awards of Merit were presented to the Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce for publishing a history of the agency from the first commissioner in 1906 through the present; city of Jackson and Visit Jackson for organizing the celebration of the bicentennial of the city's founding; city of Madison for installing ten historical markers to mark significant sites in the city's history; Jackson State University for its community-building project to honor the life and legacy of James "Jim" Hill, a Reconstruction politician who was the last 19th century African American to be elected to statewide office in Mississippi; Light-House | Black Girl Projects for its work to add the Unita Blackwell Property to the National Register of Historic Places; Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument for opening as the first national monument in the state of Mississippi; Mississippi Humanities Council for its Museum on Main Street program; Mississippi Museum of Art for its brilliant exhibit called *A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration*; and the Museum of African American History and Culture and the city of Natchez for designating twenty-seven African American historical sites with markers.

Tougaloo College professor Daphne Chamberlain completed her

term as president of the Society and welcomed new president Will Bowlin of Northeast Mississippi Community College. Rebecca Tuuri of the University of Southern Mississippi was elected vice president. New board members are DeeDee Baldwin, Mississippi State University; Sylvia Gist, Migration Heritage Foundation; Jean Greene, Utica Institute Museum; Sharelle Grim, Mississippi Delta Community College; Brian Perry, Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce; and Rory Rafferty, Pass Christian Historical Society.

Program of the 2023 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

By Brother Rogers

The Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) held its annual meeting March 2-3, 2023, at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson. The program began on Thursday morning, March 2, with the board meeting and annual business meeting.

The opening session and luncheon started with a welcome by Katie Blount, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. MHS president Daphne Chamberlain, vice president for strategic initiatives and social justice at Tougaloo College, then interviewed Reena Evers-Everette, executive director of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute, about her father's legacy on the approaching 60th anniversary of his assassination in 1963.

The first afternoon session was titled "Jackson State University and the HBCU History and Culture Access Consortium" and moderated by Garrard Lee from the Margaret Walker Center at Jackson State University (JSU). Panelists from the Walker Center included archivist Angela Stewart and students Chioma Ajuonuma, Jaylen McDaniels, Jeremy McDuffey, and Carolyne Rutto.



Roderick Red accepted the Excellence in History Award for directing the documentary, The Defenders: How Lawyers Protected the Movement.

The second afternoon session was titled “Women in Mississippi History.” It featured three presentations: “Dr. Jane Ellen McAllister: A Columbia University Teachers College Hero,” by Betty Gardner, professor emerita at Coppin State University, and David Rae Morris, photographer and film maker; “Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County” by Dottie Quaye Chapman Reed, columnist at the North Mississippi Herald; and “Commemorating Anne Moody” by Roscoe Barnes III, cultural heritage and tourism manager at Visit Natchez. DeeDee Baldwin, MHS board member and engagement librarian at Mississippi State University, moderated the panel.

The writing awards were presented at the evening banquet, with Will Bowlin, MHS vice president, presiding. The winner of the Book of the Year Award was Evan Howard Ashford, author of *Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865-1915*. Jere Nash won the *Journal of Mississippi History* Best Article Award for “The Mississippi Legislature Changes the Flag.” The Outstanding Dissertation Award went to Mark Aidinoff of the University of Mississippi for “A More Updated Union: A History of New Liberals and Their New Computers in the New New South.” The Outstanding Thesis Award was claimed by Kara Goldman of Delta State University for “Queer in the South’s South: Women Desiring Women.”



Evan Howard Ashford won the Book of the Year Award for Mississippi Zion: The Struggle for Liberation in Attala County, 1865–1915. He is pictured with the selection committee: MHS board members Amanda Clay Powers, Rebecca Tuuri, and TJ Taylor.



Marc Aidinoff accepted the Outstanding Dissertation Award from MHS board member Anne Marshall for his work, “A More Updated Union: A History of New Liberals and Their New Computers in the New New South.”

The first morning session on Friday, March 3, was called “Environmental History in Mississippi.” It featured four presentations: “Through the Wilderness: Andrew Jackson’s Military Road and the Settlement of America’s Southern Frontier,” by Dustin Mitchell Wren, social studies teacher at Itawamba Agricultural High School; “This Land of Sickness and Death: Reexamining the Siege of Corinth Using the Lens of Environmental History” by Christopher T. Slocombe, assistant director of admissions at Creighton University; “Jamie Whitten and the World: The Agrochemical Mississippi Delta and its Global Entanglements by Maarten Zwiers, assistant professor of American studies and history at the University of Groningen; and “Sus Scrofa: Feral Hogs as Prizes and Pests in Mississippi, 1970-2010.” Jeff Rosenberg, MHS board member who works at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, moderated the session.

The second morning session was titled “20th Century Mississippi History.” It featured four presentations: “The Threefoot Building and 20th Century Meridian” by Kasey Mosley, graduate student in history at Mississippi State University; “Time Bomb in a River: Oxford, Natchez, and Two Million Pounds of Liquid Chlorine” by Micah Reuber, associate professor of history at Mississippi Valley State University; “Rail of Wrath: Racial Violence Along the Mobile & Ohio Railroad from 1875 to 1940” by Michael Tobin of Baltimore, Maryland; and “A Complete Revolution: Documenting Prison Reform and Civil Rights Papers

of Judge William C. Keady” by Kate Gregory, director of Mississippi Political Collections at Mississippi State University. Roscoe Barnes III, cultural heritage and tourism manager of Visit Natchez, moderated the panel.

MHS president Daphne Chamberlain presided over the awards luncheon. Incoming president Will Bowlin adjourned the meeting. Afternoon activities continued with tours of the Two Mississippi Museums, the Eudora Welty House & Garden, the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument, the COFO Building, and the Old Capitol.



Incoming MHS president Will Bowlin of Northeast Mississippi Community College received the gavel of leadership from outgoing president Daphne Chamberlain of Tougaloo College.



National Park Service Superintendent Keena Graham and staff accepted an Award of Merit for opening the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument in Jackson.



The city of Jackson and Visit Jackson, represented by Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba, Rickey Thigpen, and others, received an Award of Merit for their work on the bicentennial of Jackson.



Jane Jarvis and Lucy Weber accepted an Award of Merit to the city of Madison for installing multiple historical markers to mark significant sites in the city's history.



Heather A. Denne' and students at Jackson State University accepted an Award of Merit for a project to honor the life and legacy of 19th century Black political leader James "Jim" Hill.



Natalie Collier from The LightHouse | Black Girls Project accepted an Award of Merit for getting the Unita Blackwell property in Mayersville added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Jared Vardaman, Hannah East, and Claude Nash of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce accepted an Award of Merit for publishing a history of the agency from the first commissioner in 1906 through the present.



Stuart Rockoff and staff of the Mississippi Humanities Council accepted an Award of Merit for the organization’s Museum on Main Street program.



Lydia Jasper, curatorial assistant at the Mississippi Museum of Art, accepted an Award of Merit for the exhibit, “A Movement in Every Direction: Legacies of the Great Migration.”



Bobby Dennis, director of the Natchez Museum of African American History and Culture, and Natchez First Lady Marla Gibson accepted an Award of Merit for the museum and the city for designating 27 African American historical sites in Natchez with markers.

MISSISSIPPI HISTORICAL SOCIETY MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

March 3, 2023

The annual business meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society was held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 2, 2023, at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson.

Daphne Chamberlain, president, Mississippi Historical Society (MHS), called the meeting to order and presided. William “Brother” Rogers, secretary-treasurer, acted as secretary for the meeting. Emma McRaney, assistant to the director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), recorded the minutes.

The following business was transacted:

I. The president called the meeting to order at 11 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending.

II. The president requested that the minutes of the March 10, 2022, annual meeting be approved as distributed. A motion to approve the minutes by acclamation was made by Anne Marshall, seconded by Page Ogden, and unanimously approved.

III. Brother Rogers presented the financial report for the Society. He shared that the largest expense is the *Journal of Mississippi History* and that the Society’s finances are in good shape thanks to timely payment of dues.

IV. Page Ogden gave an update on the work of the Finance/Investment Committee and shared that while the Fidelity account has decreased lately, overall the investment strategy of the Society has had positive results. The president expressed his gratitude for the committee’s work.

V. The president expressed her appreciation for the Local Ar-

rangements Committee, annual meeting sponsors, and the Program Committee.

VI. The president recognized and expressed appreciation for the following individuals who were completing their terms of service on the board of directors: La Shon Brooks, Kelly Cantrell, Ryan Schilling, Rebecca Tuuri, Jenn Waller, and Marcus Ward.

VII. Rogers gave an update on the *Journal of Mississippi History* on behalf of Dennis Mitchell. After years of being behind, the journal is back on schedule, although still publishing two joint issues per year. He stated the Fall/Winter 2022 issue was published in December, and the next issue will be printed in the summer.

VIII. Rogers gave a report from the Publications Committee on behalf of John Marszalek. He stated that a new *Heritage of Mississippi Series* book, *Frontier Mississippi, 1798–1840* by James Michael Bunn and Clay Williams, will be ready in 2023. In addition, Jere Nash is completing his book on Reconstruction in Mississippi this year. Finally, Chuck Bolton has signed a contract to produce a book on civil rights in Mississippi by 2026.

IX. Rogers gave an update on *Mississippi History Now*. He stated that a new article about James Meredith was recently posted, and he encouraged all members to browse the website: <https://mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/>. Rogers also stated that the 2024 annual meeting will be held in Oxford, the 2025 meeting will be back in Jackson, and the 2026 meeting will be in Meridian.

X. Kari Baker gave an update on National History Day, which is back to in-person activities following the Covid pandemic. She also reminded the membership that MDAH is the official sponsor for Mis-

Mississippi History Day.

XI. Immediate past president Stephanie Rolph presented the Nomination Committee Report. She presented officers and board members for consideration. On a motion by Stephanie Rolph, seconded by Joyce Dixon-Lawson, the Nominations Committee recommendations were unanimously approved. The nominations are listed below.

Officers for the term 2022–2023

President—William J. Bowlin, Instructor, Government and History, Northeast Mississippi Community College

Vice President—Rebecca Tuuri, Associate Professor of History, University of Southern Mississippi

Secretary-Treasurer—Brother Rogers, Director of Programs and Communication Division, Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Immediate Past President—Daphne Chamberlain, Associate Professor of History and Vice President for Special Initiatives and Social Justice, Tougaloo College

The following five individuals are nominated to serve three-year terms on the Society's Board of Directors (2023–2026):

DeeDee Baldwin, History Librarian, Mississippi State University
Sylvia Gist, President and Executive Director, Migration Heritage Foundation

Jean Greene, Utica Institute Museum, Hinds Community College-Utica Campus

Sharelle Grim, History Instructor, Mississippi Delta Community College

Brian Perry, Chief of Staff, Commissioner Andy Gipson, Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce

Rory Robin Rafferty Jr., President, Pass Christian Historical Society

XII. Katie Blount, director, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, provided an update on the work of the agency. She stated that the initial \$5 million fundraising goal for the William and Elise Winter Education Endowment was met last year and thanked the society members for their contributions. She also gave an update on the department's Natchez initiatives including work at Historic Jefferson College and Grand Village of the Natchez Indians. She shared that the second annual Mississippi Makers Fest will be held at the Two Mississippi Museums on May 13, 2023, and encouraged all to attend.

XIII. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by the president.

Stephanie R. Rolph
President

William "Brother" Rogers
Secretary-Treasurer

BOOK REVIEWS

A Brutal Reckoning: Andrew Jackson, the Creek Indians, and the Epic War for the American South

By Peter Cozzens

(Knopf, 2023. Acknowledgements, maps, notes, index. Pp. 464.

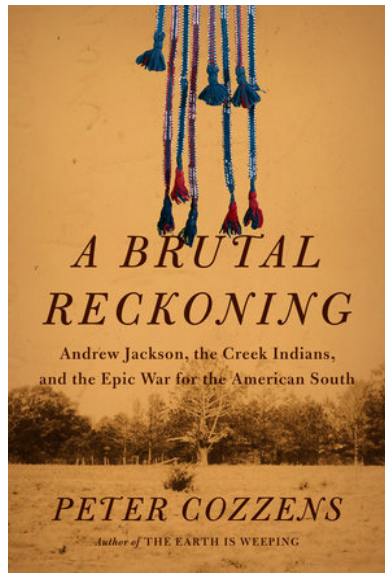
\$35.00 hardback. ISBN: 9780525659457.)

Southern historiography of the nineteenth century is dominated by the Civil War. Although few could argue against that conflict as the seminal point in Southern history, the Creek War of 1813-1814 had dramatic repercussions as well. The war and its results eventually laid the groundwork for Native American removal in the Southeast, spurred mass American immigration into the region (which led directly to the establishment of the states of Mississippi and Alabama), helped bring about entrenchment of cotton agriculture and its reliance on slave labor in the Deep South, and made Andrew Jackson a national hero. Jackson eventually leveraged that notoriety into two terms as president and wield an incredible amount of political influence both before and after his term in office. Thankfully, this much lesser-known struggle has received more attention from

historians in recent years. Peter Cozzens (a retired U.S. Foreign Service Officer and author/editor of seventeen books) has entered the fray in a small but growing body of scholarship on the war with *A Brutal Reckoning*, Andrew Jackson, the Creek Indians, and the Epic War for the American South.

Cozzens, whose previous books discussed Civil War battles in the western theater, designates this work as the third volume of his trilogy of works on Indian Wars (along with *Tecumseh and the Prophet: The Shawnee Brothers who Defied a Nation* and *The Earth is Weeping: The Epic Story of the Indian Wars*

for the American West.) His stated goal is to provide a gripping and balanced account of the process of dispossessing Indians of their lands and explaining how the actions of one man, Andrew Jackson, charted the course of the nation in winning



“arguably the most consequential Indian war in U.S. history.” In these regards, Cozzens has succeeded admirably.

Cozzens opens with a narrative of Hernando DeSoto’s entrada across the Southeast. He obviously is making a comparison between the Spaniard’s horrific trek and the actions of Andrew Jackson against the Creeks, which these reviewers found to be too much of a stretch. Entirely different circumstances, motivations, tactical situations—not to mention the diversity of allied native forces with which he worked—renders such a connection to provide little more than shock value. Cozzens then transitions to an excellent overview of Creek culture and the impact of increasing influence of the growing United States government and American settlers on native lands, which had altered traditional Creek lifeways. By not only settling on their lands, but actively assimilating Creeks into Euro-American agricultural, economic, and political systems, Americans played a role in irrevocably altering Creek society. The resulting slow-growing but deep schism in Creek society between those who believed they should return to traditional ways and those who insisted they could remain fully Creek (while adapted to new realities) eventually erupted into civil war. In discussion of this complicated and little-understood conflict, Cozzens shines by providing the best account of this affair that these reviewers have ever read. Most books on the Creek War gloss over this internal strife

as prologue to the larger war with American and allied native forces, but Cozzens gives it its just due.

Cozzens then proceeds to cover the war itself, beginnings at Burnt Corn Creek and then describing the horrific affair at Fort Mims. The campaigns of the Mississippi Territorial militia as well as units from the state of Georgia are described in detail, but these take a back seat to the actions of the Tennesseans under the leadership of Andrew Jackson. His determination and perseverance overcame chronic supply shortages and enlistment problems to eventually break the backbone of the Red Stick faction of the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend. During the narrative, Cozzens presents the war’s iconic moments and personalities in vivid fashion. These include riveting tales of the exploits of Sam Dale and the famous Canoe Fight, William Weatherford’s legendary escape from American forces at the Holy Ground, and the deeds of David Crockett and Sam Houston. Cozzens presents an especially thorough and grisly account of the pivotal Battle of Horseshoe Bend, shedding light on the true strategies and the realities of combat for both the Redsticks and their assailants. Because these events make the Creek War such a powerful, epic chapter in Southern history, we were thrilled to see Cozzens deliver some of his most engrossing writing in chronicling these people and events.

Ending the war, Jackson eventually took charge of treaty negotiations and set the stage for future compacts with Southeastern tribes

with the Treaty of Fort Jackson. He forced the forfeiture of more than twenty-two million acres, most of which came from friendly Creek allies, who were astonished at the harsh terms imposed by Jackson. Jackson felt he was securing the nation's southern border and opening areas to white American settlement in an unproductively used expanse of territory, which could play a pivotal role in the growth of the United States. He would forever be known as Sharp Knife for his treatment of the Creeks, as over the next twenty years they endured hardship, poverty, exploitation and eventual removal in a Creek Trail of Tears which they dated to their first altercation with Jackson.

A Brutal Reckoning serves as superb account of a monumental struggle, which led to remarkable change in the Southeast and to consequences, which reverberated across the nation. Cozzens is an excellent writer, whose narrative captures the reader's attention. There are a few minor errors such as one mislabeled image (John Coffee is listed as John Cocke), an incorrect spelling on a map (Hinson and Kennedy's Mill), and a reference to Jett Thomas as Jeff Thomas. He also identifies Fort Jackson as being built in Tuskegee (it is in present-day Wetumpka). But these minor quibbles aside, Cozzens has provided an excellent account of a consequential but understudied war suitable for the general public, which promises to help give this conflict the attention it so richly deserves.

CLAY WILLIAMS AND MIKE BUNN
*Huntsville, Alabama
and Spanish Fort, Alabama*

Resident Strangers: Immigrant Laborers in New South Alabama. By Jennifer E. Brooks. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Acknowledgements, illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. xii, 239. \$45 cloth, \$19.95 ebook. ISBN: 0807176658)

Though the research for this book likely began many years ago, it speaks directly to our current debate surrounding immigration, refugees, and illegal border crossings in the United States. Though Jennifer Brooks, associate professor of history at Auburn University, did not research other Southern states and therefore can offer no firm conclusions about them, she presumes, probably correctly, that immigrant laborers' experience in post-Civil War Alabama was similar to that in the rest of the Jim Crow South. Her conclusion is that, while immigrants suffered mightily under the weight of an oppressive, exploitative system, those that survived it helped to build the modern South, and the lighter-skinned among them, over the course of a generation or two, went on to prosper. Darker-skinned immigrants from places like China and Mexico remained at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

Resident Strangers is a welcome addition to the vast historiography on nineteenth-century

immigration that has privileged the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Pacific Coast. Scholars have assumed, incorrectly, that Southern states' recruitment campaigns after the Civil War were ineffective. While their totals were smaller than the millions who settled outside the South, Chinese, Italians, Austro-Hungarian nationals, and a sprinkling of others came in numbers significant enough to shape communities across the region, if Alabama's experience is any guide. The author's purpose is "to restore immigrant laborers from around the world to their place in the New South project, considering not only the campaigns to recruit them to Alabama but especially how various immigrant groups and individuals experienced their sojourns in Alabama" (5).

Resident Strangers focuses primarily on the years after the Civil War through the early twentieth century, relying on manuscript census records, immigration documents, local newspapers, oral histories (conducted by others), convict lease system artifacts, and trial records. Brooks uses those sources to explore family structures, living and working arrangements, entrepreneurial activity, participation in labor disputes, and union activity (notably the United Mine Workers). Additionally, she provides heart-breaking accounts of immigrants "ensnared by the state's capricious legal system" (10). The horrific convict lease system, which lasted until well into the twentieth century in Alabama, generated tremendous profits for the state and the in-

dustries it supported, particularly the Pratt mines, Sloss Furnaces, and the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company (TCI). The men who ran these enterprises are not household names like the robber barons of the North, but their power and wealth, at least regionally, was equally as vast.

The lies told by the state's immigration recruiters hid the reality of life in Alabama—the poverty, harsh conditions, labor conflict, and the serfdom-like system of debt peonage. Having arrived and finding themselves physically abused by their employers, seldom paid, and the targets of White violence, many immigrants fled, sending word back to the home country not to come to a region where patterns formed under slavery continued under different circumstances. Chinese immigrants, the subject of Chapter 2, were subjected to economic exploitation and targeted racial violence even though their numbers were tiny, they offered desperately needed services, and they posed absolutely no threat. One agent who went to China found that he could not recruit anyone because the Chinese considered the South "a destination they dreaded even worse than Cuba or Peru" (150).

Another theme Brooks explores is the idea of racial fluidity or "racial transiency," meaning "whiteness" was a malleable category. The White power structure treated immigrants as "white" when it suited them but subjected them to extreme Jim Crow-type punishments when immigrants sought to improve their conditions. Immigrant laborers

therefore occupied a precarious position between African Americans—fellow exploited laborers—and White employers. Immigrant peddlers and grocers “faced not only resentful and competitive white merchants but sometimes hostile African Americans as well” (93), caught, in other words, between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

Brooks’ readable and interesting study, well-researched and well-argued, shows that the New South had more in common with the rest of the US than we have commonly understood. Adding significantly to our understanding of New South, labor and immigrant history, this volume should be required reading not only for historians seeking to learn more about the modern South but also for anyone interested in how immigration benefited the country in myriad ways, even while immigrants themselves suffered unspeakable horrors. The perpetrators of violence were not those who came to the United States looking for a better life but instead, then and now, were the White power mongers and capitalists who abused them at every turn.

JANET ALLURED
University of Arkansas

Bloody Flag of Anarchy: Unionism in South Carolina during the Nullification Crisis. By **Brian C. Neumann.** (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022. Acknowledgements, maps, notes, index. Pp. ix, 216. \$45 hard-cover. ISBN: 0807176900.

Brian C. Neumann’s *Bloody Flag of Anarchy* reframes the nullification crisis by emphasizing “the partisan conflict within South Carolina” and by restoring the “state’s Union Party to the center of the story” (4). Neumann reminds his readers that 40 percent of South Carolinians opposed nullification. The “restraint and resolve” of Unionist statesmen and their belief that the Union itself stood as a “fragile experiment in self-government—the last hope of liberty in a world dominated by despotism,” enabled them to counter the disunionist impulses of radical nullifiers (4). This perspective allows Neumann to expand our historiographic outlook on nullification and the coming Civil War, highlighting the ideological power of Unionism, the transnational context of the sectional debates, and the importance of idealized gendered conceptions of Southern manhood during the antebellum period.

Focusing on Unionism and documenting its political importance in South Carolina from 1822 until its eventual demise in 1860-61 offers a welcome addition to the study of nullification and antebellum South Carolina. Neumann’s fresh outlook on Unionist pleas for moderation complements the

radicalism documented by Manisha Sinha's *The Counter-Revolution of Slavery*. While moderates decried the Tariff of 1828, they still held true to the cause of Union, arguing that disunionist action on the tariff issue would not only undermine the slave regime, but instigate all the horrors of St. Domingue and the French Revolution. The "wave of liberal revolutions" in Europe and elsewhere made the crisis in South Carolina one of "global significance" (8). Radicals embraced a global perspective as well, believing subjugation to the tariff would unleash the same transnational horrors invoked by the Unionist party.

Where these global expressions differed, however, were in their gendered appeals. Expanding on the gender analysis of Stephanie McCurry and Amy S. Greenburg, Neumann illustrates that "for Union men, manhood demanded moderation, and honor required reason and restraint" (35). For nullifiers, on the other hand, submission to a tariff favoring Northern industry diminished their manhood. Nullifiers thus mocked Unionist claims of manhood, which often resulted in affairs of honor on dueling grounds. In fact, Neuman effectively illustrates how the centrality of gendered rhetoric during nullification increased violence in "pace and scale" (58). Despite the heightened atmosphere of violence, Union men between the winter of 1832-33 succeeded in keeping the state together. Ultimately, the perseverance of Unionists and the Compromise Tariff of 1833 enabled radicals to not only retain their

sense of masculinity by interpreting the compromise as a vindication of their martial manhood, but it also allowed Unionists—at least for a brief moment—to take solace in the fact that they avoided disunion and retained their "dual sovereignty" to their state and the federal government (94).

Of course, as Neumann is quick to note, most Unionist men framed their moderation in a proslavery defense. The Constitution and the federal Union protected Southern rights and the peculiar institution; nullification and disunion threatened to unravel both. This reframing mirrors the work of Elizabeth R. Varon by underscoring the persistence of Unionism during sectional animosities. Still, the Unionism in South Carolina, and in the South more generally, centered on a proslavery worldview. Radical nullifiers and Unionists both agreed on the need to protect slavery, they merely differed on how to do so. This changed with the onset of the abolitionist mail campaign of 1835-36. Unionists, endeavoring to hold "the middle ground between northern and southern radicalism," eventually came to see Northern radicalism as the greatest threat (117). What followed was the deterioration of Unionism in South Carolina, with the last holdouts being men such as Benjamin Perry and James Petigru. The success of Unionist loyalty during the nullification years thus broke down, leading John C. Calhoun to declare that "Unionism is extinct in our state" (135). Neumann eloquently documents this shift in 1835. Despite

Unionist mobilization early on, the divisive question of slavery led most to denounce the American Union in defense of the peculiar institution.

Superbly researched and accessible to all audiences, Neumann's *Bloody Flag of Anarchy* offers an insightful and complex look into nullification, Southern radicalism, and the nature of Unionism. This book presents both scholars and general readers with a comprehensive yet concise examination of political dynamics, underscoring the strength and ultimate fragility of Unionism in the secessionist hotbed of South Carolina.

K. HOWELL KEISER, JR.
Louisiana State University

***A Day I Ain't Never Seen Before:
Remembering the Civil Rights
Movement in Marks, Mississippi.***

By Joe Bateman and Cheryl Lynn Greenberg. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2023. Pp. xi, 310. ISBN: 0820363035)

In *A Day I Ain't Never Seen Before*, Joe Bateman, a White former Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) worker in Marks, Mississippi, explores the Civil Rights Movement in Marks and its legacy. Bateman uses the stories of Marks to localize the struggle for civil rights as it was fought by ordinary people in towns across the nation, often outside of the glare of the national media. Bateman convincingly argues that it was local Black Mississippians, especially the working class, in places like

Marks, who fought for an expansive vision of Black freedom in Mississippi. As a Black resident of Marks told Bateman years later, "Folks that got the books written up, they say Martin Luther King or some big folks did such and such. . . It was poor people like me in every place done it. Where you got their names?" (176). Bateman's work is a roll call of their names, stories, and efforts.

A Day I Ain't Never Seen Before brings together the story of the movement in Marks as Bateman experienced it with the perspectives of local Blacks and other Black and White activists through insightful quotations and stories that reflect everyday life and struggle in Marks. The story told here adds another important volume to the growing historiography on local and regional Black freedom movements in Mississippi. While the 1990s saw the rise of significant statewide studies of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, the first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen a turn towards the study of local and regional movements in Mississippi. Although Marks has received less scholarly attention than its neighbor, Clarksdale, Marks once served as the starting location for the 1968 Poor People's Campaign precisely because of its known status as a movement town.

Bateman argues that Black activists, along with some White allies, operated in national obscurity and were essential in bringing a new day to Marks. He shows the movement as it was experienced by a wide array of Black locals, activ-

ists, and White civil right workers like himself. The book is divided chronologically into three sections. The first section, "Before the Movement," profiles Marks during the Jim Crow era. This section draws primarily on stories collected during Bateman's 1960s work with COFO. It is supplemented with scholarly sources, emphasizing the early, often underground, civil rights activity in Marks. The second section, "The Movement in Marks and Beyond," spans from the 1950s to the 1970s and chronicles activism in Marks before, during, and after Bateman's own involvement. Notably, this section chronicles the intersection of local and national civil rights activity, while also offering additional insight on topics like the breakdown of the COFO coalition and the later years of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) in Quitman County. The third section, "Ten Years Later," chronicles the aftermath of the movement in Marks and includes reflections by residents on Black progress. This section offers powerful insights on the progress made and hopes unrealized, as well as the economic and class implications of Black advancement as reflected by the testimony of former activists in Marks.

Bateman draws on traditional sources, including recent works on the civil rights struggle in Mississippi, large archival collections such as the Wisconsin Historical Society's Freedom Summer Collection, and contemporaneous newspaper accounts. But it is Bateman's private interview collection that gives

the book its power. In the 1970s, Bateman visited Marks again to record the stories of locals and movement participants. These accounts allow the voices of local Black residents of Marks to be heard in the work, while also offering a lasting meditation on the value of their struggle and its implications for later generations aiming to continue the long march to freedom in Marks and beyond.

A Day I Ain't Never Seen Before will appeal to anyone with an interest in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, local Black freedom movements, or more broadly in the American Civil Rights Movement. General readers will find an education in movement organizing and grassroots politics in this work. For educators at the high school and college/university level, this work provides an informed memoir that conveys everyday realities, the promise and peril of grassroots organizing, and the intersection of local and national organizing in Mississippi. Scholars of the Civil Rights Movement will find Bateman's work an illuminating addition to the growing historiography of local movements in the state. Thanks to Bateman's work, the names of those who brought a new day to Marks will not soon be forgotten.

JUSTIN MARTIN
Louisiana State University

The Last Fire-Eater: Roger A. Pryor and the Search for a Southern Identity. By William A. Link. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023. Acknowledgements, illustrations, notes, index. Pp. 1, 123. ISBN: 0807178935.)

In *The Last Fire-Eater*, William A. Link traces the political career of Virginian Roger Pryor from his rise to prominence as an ardent defender of states' rights through his eventual support of sectional reconciliation. Drawing on Pryor's speeches, contemporary newspaper coverage, and his wife's memoirs, Link explores Pryor's evolution from secessionist to "reconstructed southern white man" (3). Rather than just another biography, however, Link argues that Pryor's evolving views on sectionalism and race make him a "central, perhaps representative figure in southern history" (3). Link clearly demonstrates the change in Pryor's rhetoric after the war and his move to New York City, but it is unclear if the change reflected a true shift in his thinking, or if it was another example of the self-interested pragmatic politics that Pryor so deftly practiced throughout his life. As Link notes, Pryor left no papers to document his private feelings, so we are only left with his public persona as evidence. Regardless, *The Last Fire-Eater* provides students of Southern history with a succinct account of the way in which an ex-Confederate navigated his changed circumstances to maintain his economic, political, and social status.

In the first chapter, Link focuses on Pryor's entry into politics, culminating in his election to the 36th Congress of the United States as a representative of Virginia. He paints a vivid picture of a handsome young man, obsessed with honor—his own and that of the South's—gifted in oratory and the rhetorical flourishes usually associated with better known Fire-Eaters like Alabama's William Lowndes Yancey or Mississippi's Albert G. Brown. He describes Pryor's involvement in several duels and his public employment of "aggressive language" to push for the right to expand slavery to the western territories. Ultimately, though, Link asserts that the bellicose rhetoric and talk of disunion that Pryor and other Fire-Eaters employed was "more bark than bite," (16) a claim not especially well supported throughout the book.

Pryor's role in the Civil War, the conflict he claimed was necessary to defend Southern honor, is covered in the second chapter. Shortly after the conflict began, Pryor used his political clout to secure command of a brigade, but his poor performance on the battlefield, especially during the Peninsular Campaign and at the Battle of Antietam resulted in his assignment to remote posts in southeastern Virginia. Link argues that the brutality that Pryor and others like him experienced firsthand during the war had a profound impact on his postwar politics, asserting that the violence he witnessed moderated his bluster.

Postwar, Pryor's reinvention

of himself into a prominent New York City lawyer and advocate of sectional reconciliation forms the basis of the third and final chapter. Link points to speeches he made at the Long Island Historical Society in 1873 and a gathering of Northern veterans in New Jersey two years later as examples of Pryor's progressive views on everything from race to conceptions of manhood and honor. In the former speech, Pryor struck a paternalistic tone when speaking about African Americans, claiming their faithfulness to their prior masters and stating that they presented the nation with a common problem. In the latter remarks, he told the audience that the South had fought in defense of states' rights, claimed that divine providence ended the "folly of the southern people," and asserted that he, as a Southerner, "had nothing to apologize for and, under the same circumstances, before God, would do it again" (89). Such language struck a similar note to the message that ex-Confederate officers, newly elected to statehouses in the so-called "redeemed" states like Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina, proclaimed to their White Line constituents around this same time.

Through the 1880s until his retirement from public life in 1899, Pryor maintained his life-long allegiance to the Democratic Party, using his connections to New York's Tammany machine to secure a position as a judge on the state's Supreme Court. In conclusion, Pryor does seem to be a representative figure in Southern history as Link contends, removing slavery as the

primary cause of the war, equally honoring veterans from both sides of the struggle, and asking for divine forgiveness for the shared sin of the conflict, just as his unreconstructed contemporaries throughout the South did in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

ANDREW SALAMONE
Burke, Virginia

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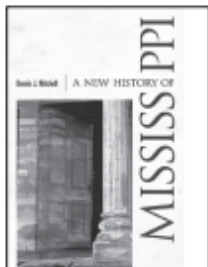
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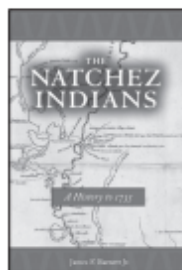


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The Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers “December 1, 1866,” to Chicago’s “1 December 1866”).

For more information contact *Journal of Mississippi History* editor Dennis J. Mitchell at dmitchell@meridian.msstate.edu or 601-479-6293.