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Death on a Summer Night: Faulkner at Byhalia

by Jack D. Elliott, Jr. and Sidney W. Bondurant

Byhalia

Shortly after midnight on the morning of July 6, 1962, William Faulkner died at the age of sixty-four. With the coming of daylight the press began to converge on his home town of Oxford. One of the first stories concerning Faulkner's death appeared later that same day in the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, an evening newspaper. The article noted that Faulkner "died of a heart attack in the Oxford, Miss., hospital at 2:30 a.m. today" and that his wife, Estelle, was "with him when he died."¹ The following morning the *Commercial Appeal* also of Memphis and *The New York Times* ran stories with similar information.² It soon became clear, however, that while Faulkner had in fact died, virtually everything else reported in the newspapers was untrue: he did not die in Oxford, he did not die at 2:30, and his wife was not with him. Furthermore, as has now become evident, many of the specifics related about his death weren't accurate either.

A year later the *Saturday Evening Post* published an essay entitled "The

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¹ Clark Porteous, "William Faulkner, Literary Giant, Dies in Oxford," *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, July 6, 1962, p. 1.

² Thomas Michael, "Faulkner Rites Will Be Today At Family Home," *Commercial Appeal*, July 7, 1962, p. 1; United Press International, "William Faulkner Is Dead In Mississippi Home Town," *The New York Times*, July 7, 1962, p. 1.

JACK D. ELLIOTT, JR. is a retired historical archaeologist and currently an adjunct professor at Mississippi State University-Meridian, where he teaches courses in archaeology, geography, and religion.

SIDNEY W. BONDURANT is a retired physician and former member of the Mississippi House of Representatives, as well as a former policy adviser and legislative liaison for Governor Phil Bryant.

Death of William Faulkner” by Hughes Rudd, the acerbic news writer and later newscaster with CBS. As part of the press corps Rudd had traveled to Oxford in 1962 to cover the death and funeral. In his 1963 essay Rudd described the circumstances surrounding the press coverage and revealed that the press had known that significant parts of the story were not true:

someone discovered [that] the body had been brought to Oxford early on the morning of Friday, July 6, in a hearse belonging to the Douglass Funeral Home.³ Before the funeral director could order him not to talk, the driver said, yes, he had gone to Byhalia⁴ early Friday morning for the body. Where in Byhalia? At an alcoholic clinic there, the driver said. Byhalia is on the road to Memphis, north[west] of Holly Springs, and in Oxford everybody knows about the clinic. And it seemed everyone knew that Faulkner had died there, some said in a convulsion, some said in a fall downstairs As for proof, there was none. The superintendent of the clinic wouldn’t talk

In a room at the Ole Miss motel the reporters gathered and talked about it, and—already impressed, perhaps, by the implacability of that formidable family—agreed to forget Byhalia. You couldn’t prove it, and besides, what difference did it make? We were there because a great man was dead, not because a man had died in an alcoholic clinic.⁵

³ The hearse, or ambulance, may have originated, not from Douglass Funeral Home in Oxford, but from Brantley Funeral Home in Olive Branch, Mississippi. See discussion below, note 99. Douglass Funeral Home was owned at the time by Richard W. “Dick” Elliott, Sr. who changed the name to Elliott Funeral Home in 1964. In 1962 it was located in the two-story hipped-roof brick structure located at 1217 Jackson Avenue, due north of and across the street from the present City Hall (the former Federal Building). The building was constructed in 1936 and opened in December of that year as a funeral home by O.H. Douglass. “O.H. Douglass Has Modern Funeral Home,” *Oxford Eagle*, December 3, 1936, p. 1. John Faulkner, the writer’s brother, wrote about standing in front of the funeral home looking out onto the Courthouse Square waiting for the arrival of William’s body while recalling incidents associated with his life. John Faulkner, *My Brother Bill: An Affectionate Reminiscence* (New York: Trident Press, 1963), 4-5.

⁴ Byhalia is located on the western edge of Marshall County about fifteen miles from the county seat Holly Springs with the two municipalities being connected by U.S. Highway 78. According to the federal census, its population in 1960 was 674. Founded as a crossroads town with its post office established in 1846, Byhalia was named after nearby Byhalia Creek--the name coming from the Chickasaw words for “white oaks standing.” Keith A. Baca, *Native American Place Names in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 17-18. In 1885 it became a railroad town when the Memphis, Selma & Brunswick (soon to become the Kansas City, Memphis & Birmingham) Railroad was opened there. *Holly Springs Reporter*, May 21, 1885, quoted in D. Barton Williams, *The History of Byhalia* (n.d., c. 1989), 71-72.

⁵ Hughes Rudd, “The Death of William Faulkner,” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 13-July 20, 1963, p. 34.

Thus Byhalia, the small town where Faulkner had actually died, never made the news coverage in 1962. Only later would the name of the clinic emerge: the Leonard Wright Sanatorium (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Aerial photograph of the Leonard Wright Sanatorium with view to south-southwest. The main building is in the center and nurses residence is in the upper right-hand corner. Photo from *The Mississippi Doctor*, 1956.

Although it was a reputable institution owned and operated by a reputable physician, its name was spoken in hushed tones, if at all, because of the stigma associated with alcoholism.⁶

Despite the family's initial opposition to discussing Byhalia, when the fuller story of Faulkner's alcoholism and Wright's Sanatorium appeared in the form of a biography, it was with the family's approval. Soon after the writer's death, his family authorized Joseph Blotner, both a professor of English

⁶ Charles East later recalled: "of more immediate concern for Dorothy [Oldham, the sister of Estelle Faulkner] in the months following her brother-in-law's death was the possibility that one of the townspeople willing to talk about Faulkner would bring up the subject of Byhalia . . . the subject was one that the family did not want talked about in 1963 and 1964. Faulkner had not yet passed into history." "Oxford-in-Yoknapatawpha," *VQR*, Summer 1998. Online at: <http://www.vqronline.org/essay/oxford-yoknapatawpha>. Accessed October 12, 2015. John Faulkner referred to William as having died in a hospital without specifying the location. John Faulkner, *My Brother Bill*, 1-3. A few years later Faulkner's other brother, Murry, was more candid when he wrote "it has since been published that he had been drinking and had died after being admitted to a small hospital near Olive Branch, Mississippi." (Olive Branch is located between Byhalia and Memphis.) Murry C. Falkner, *The Falkners of Mississippi: A Memoir* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 201.

Karen Castleberry, who with her husband Jim owns much of the site today, informed Elliott that the sanatorium was seldom mentioned in Byhalia in years past. Furthermore, in perusing back issues of the *South Reporter* newspaper of Holly Springs where one would expect to find information about its opening and operation, almost no mention of it was found.

and personal friend of the writer, to begin researching what proved to be a monumental work in biography. On November 17, 1966, while conducting his research, Blotner drove from Oxford to Byhalia to visit the sanatorium and interview Dr. Wright.⁷ Upon reaching the town he turned south off U.S. Highway 78⁸ onto State Highway 309 and after passing through the small business district continued for a mile. Upon topping a hill he could see a cluster of buildings on the edge of a rise set amid acres of lawns and trees. He turned into the drive and passed along the north side of the buildings, gradually ascending the low ridge before turning back to the left and parking near the back door of the main house which served as the main entrance. Once inside he waited in the dining room and had coffee with three patients. He observed that the staff consisted of two registered nurses and two black men, one in his teens and the other in his twenties, who served as orderlies. When Dr. Wright arrived Blotner found him to be “about 5’ 8”, [with a] ruddy complexion, short brown hair—almost a crew cut—a bit of grey in it, blue eyes, [and] a snub nose.” He was “pleasant and obviously competent, [a] no-nonsense sort of man, very quiet, [and] soft-spoken.” Wright filled Blotner in to the best of his recollection on the events surrounding the admission and death of Faulkner.⁹

When Blotner’s work *Faulkner: A Biography* was completed and published in 1974¹⁰ it told for the first time the story of the writer’s struggle with alcoholism and his visits to sanatoria in Memphis, Byhalia, and elsewhere. So what was initially covered up was eventually revealed to the public with the family’s approval. Blotner’s account effectively served as the basic narrative for the sanatorium on which subsequent biographical accounts were based. However, given the vastness of Blotner’s subject, his discussion of the Wright Sanatorium was understandably not as thorough as it could have been and even introduced at least one widely repeated error.

This essay will focus more closely on the history of the sanatorium along with Faulkner’s connection to it than previously attempted. This will in part be

⁷ See Blotner’s notes from his November 17, 1966, visit to the sanatorium and interview with Dr. Wright in the Blotner papers, Louis Daniel Brodsky Collection of William Faulkner Materials, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University. Blotner described the route from Oxford to Byhalia as passing through Olive Branch which is inaccurate. Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), 1836.

⁸ In 1962 U.S. Highway 78 was on the north side of Byhalia. Today this highway has been redesignated as State Highway 178, while the new U.S. Highway 78 (now Interstate 22) is on the south side of Byhalia almost adjacent to the sanatorium site.

⁹ Blotner, interview with Wright.

¹⁰ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*.

accomplished through the use of sanatorium records that have recently come to light. A perennial problem with researching medical records derives from doctor-patient confidentiality which serves to protect the patient's records and usually results in their destruction following a patient's death or the closure of a clinic or hospital, so most are destroyed long before they become of historical interest. This was the fate of the records of the Gartly-Ramsay Hospital in Memphis where Faulkner was admitted on several occasions.¹¹ This was also presumably the fate of many of the more confidential records from Wright's. However, not all were destroyed.

Jim and Karen Castleberry purchased the sanatorium property in 1989, almost two decades after its closure. Soon after, they discovered in the basement of the annex to the main building a number of records stored in boxes and inadvertently left behind by Dr. Wright when he left Byhalia in 1972 (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Wright Sanatorium, the main building viewed to the north-northwest with the annex in the foreground and the two-story original house in the background with the enclosed front porch on the right. The sanatorium records were discovered under the annex in 1989 or 1990. Photograph by Karen Castleberry, 1990.

¹¹ Lisa Hickman, *William Faulkner and Joan Williams: The Romance of Two Writers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 139.

These materials included admission cards, patients' registers, drug books, at least one order book, and various documents including checks and receipts (see Appendix A). Recognizing the potential value to Faulkner scholarship, Mrs. Castleberry went through the records, selecting for preservation those that included the Faulkner name and disposing of many others. Based on what survives it is apparent that individual patient charts with more sensitive information were not among the records discovered; they had probably been destroyed years before by Dr. Wright. Although the surviving material is not the best documentation conceivable, it provides at least minimal documentation for probably every admission by Faulkner and wife Estelle, some of which were previously unknown, along with new evidence of the writer's treatments on the night of his death. Furthermore, commentary will be provided on Faulkner's medications and symptoms, as well as probable causes of his death.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) states that health information for a person is protected for fifty years following his death.¹² William Faulkner, of course, died over fifty years ago. Furthermore, the story of his alcoholism and that of his wife Estelle has already become public knowledge following the publication of Joseph Blotner's biography which, as noted, was fully authorized and supported by his family. Subsequent biographical works have expanded upon this subject, while interviews with people such as Estelle's granddaughter, Victoria Fielden Johnson, have openly discussed the couple's alcoholism.¹³

The owner and founder of the sanatorium, Dr. Leonard Davidson Wright, Sr. (1909-2003), was born in Elbridge, Obion County, Tennessee, the son of Dr. John Leonard Wright (1869-1950), a general practitioner and country doctor. The younger Wright studied medicine at the University of Tennessee College of Medicine in Memphis and received an M.D. degree in 1932.¹⁴ In

¹² "Health Information of Deceased Individuals," online at: <http://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/guidance/health-information-of-deceased-individuals/index.html> Accessed January 7, 2016.

¹³ "White Beaches" (interview with Victoria Fielden Johnson), in Louis Daniel Brodsky, *William Faulkner, Life Glimpses* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 168-171, 175.

¹⁴ Information sheet on Dr. Leonard Wright from the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure. On January 2, 1934, he married Ida Caruthers Banks (1912-1998). They had three children: Leonard Davidson, Jr., Harvey Banks, and Ida.

1940-1941 he was employed by the Wallace Sanitarium in Memphis¹⁵ which was described as a hospital for “the treatment of drug addictions, alcoholism, mental and nervous diseases located in the Eastern suburbs of the city” on “sixteen acres of beautiful grounds.”¹⁶

Following military service in the war, Wright started looking to form his own sanatorium for the treatment of alcoholism and in 1947 purchased a nineteen-acre parcel on the south side of Byhalia. The property had belonged to Thomas Dye “Tom” Burrow, a Byhalia merchant who had purchased it in 1898 and a few years later constructed a large two-story home that would serve as the main building of the sanatorium.¹⁷

One might wonder why Wright chose such a rural setting as Byhalia rather than Memphis with its much larger population. However, he would not be relying merely on local patronage; taking advantage of the new paved highway system his patients would come from throughout the region, primarily from Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee, but also occasionally from further afield, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana and Texas.¹⁸ The choice of a rural location was based in part on the practice of placing sanatoria in pastoral settings far from urban congestion as was the Wallace Sanitarium. The Burrow homestead was located in a rural area on the slope of a hillside with a view of the surrounding land providing an attractive and relaxed location.

Following Wright’s purchase of the property, modifications were made to provide what was needed to accommodate and treat patients. The main house became the central facility with nine rooms (seven upstairs, two down) for patients and a doctor’s office, nurses station, dining facilities, and sitting areas for patients. The gallery across the front was enclosed to provide more interior space. A cluster of buildings behind the main building were added: some for patients, a recreation room, a nurses residence with seven bedrooms,

¹⁵ Wright was listed in the 1940 census as residing at 430 Greer Street in Memphis and was employed as a psychiatrist at an unnamed private sanatorium. In 1941 the *Memphis City Directory* listed him as “medical director” at the Wallace Sanitarium. Presumably the unnamed private sanatorium and Wallace’s were the same institution.

¹⁶ Undated brochure for the Wallace Sanitarium, online at: <http://historic-memphis.com/memphis-historic/hospitals/photos/wallace-sanitarium-1920.jpg>. Accessed October 13, 2015. The 1920 date in the url is too early.

¹⁷ In 1942 Burrow (1873-1948) sold the property to his step-son, Ernest Lea, Jr., who in turn sold it to Wright on September 11, 1947. Marshall County Deed Book 62, p. 464; Deed Book 82, p. 581; Deed Book 85, p. 211, Marshall County Chancery Clerk’s Office, Holly Springs, MS.

¹⁸ These states are listed repeatedly in the Patients’ Registers, Castleberry Collection.

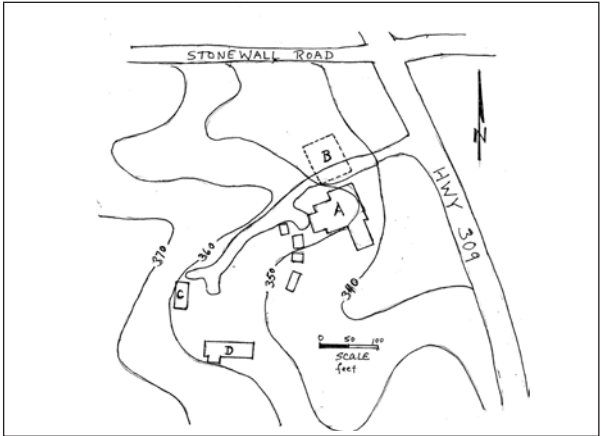


Figure 3. Site plan of the Wright Sanatorium. The topography on the eastern part of the site has been leveled including the ridge on which the main building was located. Key: A – main building; B – present-day AutoZone; C – Dr. Wright’s residence; D – nurses residence. Reconstructed on the basis of photographs, aerial photographs, field observations, and the USGS topographical map “Byhalia, Miss.,” 1971. Drafted by Jack D. Elliott, Jr.

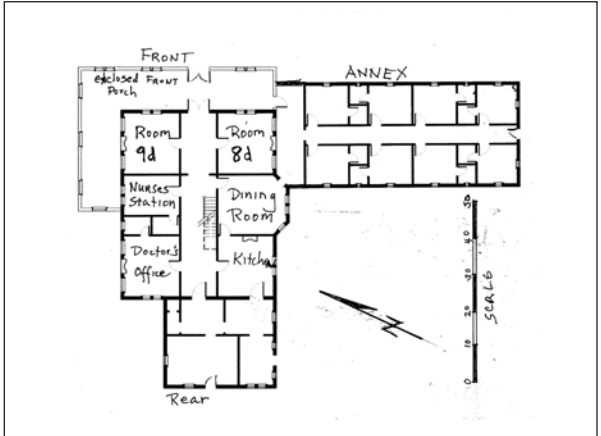


Figure 4. Floor plan of the main building of the Wright Sanatorium. Faulkner died in Room 8d. Reconstructed on the basis of photographs by Karen Castleberry and archival sources, notably Joseph Blotner’s notes on his visit and interview with Dr. Wright. Drafted by John Bondurant, AIA, and Jack D. Elliott, Jr.

and a home for Dr. Wright and his family.¹⁹ (Figure 3 and Figure 4)

The sanatorium was probably opened in 1949.²⁰ A few years later in 1956 an advertisement stated that it specialized “in the treatment of *Alcoholic* and *Drug Addiction* and *Mild Nervous Disorders*” and was located on “20 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds sufficiently removed to provide restful surroundings and capacity limited to insure individual treatment.” Furthermore, “the building is *Air Conditioned*.” An aerial photograph depicted the grounds with its buildings.²¹ Somewhat later an annex was constructed on the south side of the main building adding eight more rooms for patients onto the first nine and an advertisement noted that “a separate wing is provided for quiet and convalescent patients.” There were also two cottages with a total of three rooms.²² This provided a total of twenty rooms. However, throughout the 1960s the institution was reported to have twenty-two beds for patients,²³ the extra two were probably accounted for

¹⁹ Descriptions of sanatorium infrastructure are based on aerial photographs, photographs shot by Karen Castleberry of the grounds and buildings in 1989-1990, personal observation of surviving buildings, the sanatorium order book from 1962 in the Castleberry collection, and a deed of trust filed by Dr. Wright which includes an extensive inventory of sanatorium property. The latter source is in Marshall County Mortgages and Deeds of Trust Book 49, pp. 182-194, Marshall County Chancery Clerk's Office, Holly Springs, MS. Two small cottages and a single family residence, apparently used by the Wright family, remained on the site until 2015 when the cottages were demolished. The cottages were moved a short distance from their original sites when the ground surface was altered in 1990. The residence still remains on site (2018).

²⁰ Information sheet on Dr. Wright from the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure lists him under the address “Byhalia” for April 1948 indicating that he had moved there by that time, although he apparently didn't open the sanatorium immediately. In June 1949, Dr. and Mrs. Wright were reported as vacationing in Mexico. Elizabeth Mills, “Byhalia News,” *South Reporter*, newspaper, Holly Springs, MS, June 16, 1949. Unless Dr. Wright had a substitute--and there's no evidence that he did--it is unlikely that he could have left the sanatorium for such a lengthy vacation, suggesting that it was not open at the time. However, it was certainly open by February 10, 1950, the beginning date of a surviving drug book in the Castleberry collection. By that date two patients were being administered controlled substances which were recorded in the drug book. Because only a small percentage of patients usually received these drugs, the implication is that there were several more patients present and that the sanatorium had been open for some time. If there had in fact been an earlier drug book it would have covered several months; the three surviving drug books cover respectively 7.5 months, 4.5 months, and 2.5 months. Considering that an earlier drug book would have covered at least two months, then it would have begun no later than December. The combined evidence suggests that the sanatorium opened during the period July-December 1949.

²¹ *Texas State Journal of Medicine* (August 1956), p. 6.

²² The two cottages survived until 2015 when they were demolished. One had two rooms for patients with #1 and #2 on the doors, while the other had #3 on its door. They were presumably for patients advanced in convalescing.

²³ *Mississippi Official and Statistical Register* (1960-1964), 213; (1964-1968), 225; (1968-1972), 356.

by two rooms with two beds. For example, Room 8d, a large room, had two beds (see below), and it is quite likely that Room 9d--across the hall from 8d and of similar size--also had two. The total number of patients per year for the period 1955-1962 ranged between 454 and 557.²⁴ The overwhelming majority of the patients admitted were suffering from alcoholism, a distant second from drug addiction, while there were occasional cases of anxiety, psychosis, and tension.

Faulkner at Byhalia

Faulkner struggled with alcohol throughout his adult life and was repeatedly hospitalized in sanatoria. Blotner sketched out his history of treatment, reporting that the first hospitalization was at the Wright Sanatorium in either late 1935 or early 1936. However, this is in error, because as noted the institution did not exist prior to ca. 1949.²⁵ If he was in fact hospitalized in 1935-36, the place is not known while the incident was apparently an isolated event for there is little evidence of his having been hospitalized for alcoholism in or near Mississippi until 1949,²⁶ although he

²⁴ Admissions per year are as follow: 1955--543; 1956--539; 1957--502; 1958--454; 1959--484; 1960--458; 1961--485; 1962--c. 557. This information is from the patients' registers and from the census for Wright's Sanatorium in the Castleberry Collection.

²⁵ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 928. The information is attributed to Blotner's interview with Estelle Faulkner on April 29, 1968, Blotner papers, Louis Daniel Brodsky Collection of William Faulkner Materials, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University. The notes from the interview constitute less than two lines of typescript and make no claim that Faulkner was taken to Wright's in 1935-36. Instead they merely state: "WF first hospitalized for drinking c. 1935-36 when worried about Hollywood. Byhalia in early 1940's." Additionally, the second clause--whatever its intended meaning--is confused, indicating a time frame years before the opening of the Wright Sanatorium. The purported 1935-1936 first visit to Wright's has been mentioned by several subsequent biographers.

Additionally, Judith Sensibar pushed the origin of the sanatorium back decades earlier. First, she quoted Faulkner's daughter Jill Summers as stating that her grandfather, Murry C. Falkner, was regularly taken to the Byhalia sanatorium, this despite the fact that he died in 1932, well before Wright's was opened. In an endnote Sensibar writes that "Blotner says that when Maud [Falkner] had to take her husband [Murry] to Byhalia to be dried out, she brought the children along too, as an object lesson." Her sons can only be categorized as "children" during the first two decades of the twentieth century pushing the sanatorium's origin to possibly before the birth of Dr. Wright in 1909. Judith L. Sensibar, *Faulkner and Love: The Women Who Shaped His Life* (New Haven CN: Yale University Press, 2009), 30, 507n19. However Summers was clearly wrong in her statement, while Blotner was referring to trips, not to Wright's, but to the Keeley Institute near Memphis, one in a chain of hospitals scattered across the nation offering the Keeley Cure for alcoholism. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 99.

²⁶ In 1949 Faulkner was hospitalized at the Gartly-Ramsay Hospital in Memphis. Hickman, *William Faulkner and Joan Williams*, 32-34.

was hospitalized elsewhere.²⁷

The Faulkner family's association with the sanatorium began in 1952, although William wasn't the first patient in the family. The year turned out to be a troubled one beginning with back pains that typically triggered the use of alcohol as Faulkner's "personal remedy." In March he suffered a fall from horseback in Oxford. Two months later while in Paris the pain was such that he went to a clinic on May 27 where he was examined by a physician and a radiologist. X-rays revealed compression fractures in two vertebrae, apparently from old injuries. The prescription was for a surgical fusion of the fractures, and this Faulkner refused, agreeing only to a few days of bed rest. On June 17 he arrived back in Mississippi.²⁸ While he was suffering with his back problem and his drinking remedy his wife Estelle, who also suffered from alcoholism, was admitted to the Wright Sanatorium on August 3, 1952.²⁹ The circumstances behind her admission and the choice of Wright's are unknown, although it seems likely that she was referred there by her family physician.

On the morning of the following day Faulkner wrote to his young protégé, the aspiring writer Joan Williams of Memphis informing her that he had just finished talking with the doctor (presumably Wright) via the telephone and was informed that Estelle was sober and "screaming" to come home. He indicated that he would have to drive up that afternoon to Byhalia, calm her down, and possibly bring her home along with a nurse to look after her.³⁰ Apparently he did retrieve her that day because she was in

²⁷ For example, Albert I. Bezzerides recalled taking Faulkner to sanatoria in California on several occasions during the 1940s. "Bill and Buzz: Fellow Scenarists" (interview with Bezzerides), in Brodsky, *William Faulkner: Life Glimpses*, 64-65.

²⁸ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1411, 1421-1424, 1426.

²⁹ Admission card, #1962, Mrs. William Faulkner, August 3-4, 1952, Castleberry collection. Previous sources have indicated that she was hospitalized at an unspecified location or in Memphis. It is now clear that she was at Byhalia. In the original edition of his biography Blotner (*Faulkner: A Biography*, 1430) states merely that she was hospitalized as "she recuperated from a physical collapse"; however, in the revised version (Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* [New York: Random House, 1984], 559) he writes that "Estelle had been hospitalized in Memphis for an alcoholic episode." See also Joel Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 285; Hickman, *William Faulkner and Joan Williams*, 120.

³⁰ Letter, William Faulkner to Joan Williams, August 4, 1952, copy courtesy of Lisa Hickman.

fact discharged,³¹ the final diagnosis being “alcoholic avitaminosis” and her condition on discharge “poor.”

Alcoholic avitaminosis is a vitamin deficiency found in chronic alcohol abusers that may progress to Wernicke’s Encephalopathy, a deficiency of the vitamin thiamine and a byproduct of alcoholism that can result in severe mental problems, coma, and even death if untreated.³² Her quick departure in poor condition suggests that she left A.M.A. (Against Medical Advice), because it is not usual to discharge someone in poor condition unless for transfer to another hospital.

Following Estelle’s brief hospitalization, Faulkner’s back pain continued. He tried to control it with alcohol and Seconal, a barbiturate that depresses the central nervous system. On September 18, he suffered a convulsive seizure and was taken to Gartly-Ramsay in Memphis where his treatment included withdrawing him from alcohol along with back treatment such as hot packs and massage along with Pantopon for the pain. He was released on the twenty-sixth with the advice that he be confined to a bed with a firm mattress for at least a week.³³

However, he did not improve and resumed drinking and taking Seconal. When his editor at Random House, Saxe Commins, arrived in Oxford on October 7, he found Faulkner in a ghastly condition “completely deteriorated in mind and body. He mumbles incoherently and is totally incapable of controlling his bodily functions. He pleads piteously for beer all the time and mumbles deliriously. Every twenty minutes or so through the night I had to carry him virtually to the bathroom. His body is bloated and bruised from

³¹ Admission card, #1962, Mrs. William Faulkner, August 3-4, 1952. The reverse of the card provides billing charges including \$50, presumably for overall expenses, plus miscellaneous items with the total charge being \$69.10. To the side of this fee is the notation “Refund 65.90/ Aug 15-52.” Also in the Castleberry collection there is a cancelled check on the Citizens Bank of Byhalia paying \$65.90 to William Faulkner from the Leonard Wright Sanatorium signed by Leonard D. Wright, dated August 15, 1952, and marked “For Refund].” The reason for the refund is unclear. Estelle had been there overnight and thereby availed herself of many of the services due, so for the majority of the bill to be effectively cancelled seems inexplicable. However, there is a probable solution. If one adds the charge of \$69.10 to the refund of \$65.90, the total is \$135.00. That this is such a round figure is probably not by happenstance, suggesting that Faulkner paid \$135.00 to Wright’s in advance upon Estelle’s admission. Thanks to Jay Watson for this suggestion. Following his wife’s premature discharge, Faulkner was then refunded the balance of \$65.90. One will see below that when Faulkner was admitted to Wright’s in January 1960, his brother John left a \$170 check as an advance payment.

³² Allan D. Thomson, “Mechanisms of Vitamin Deficiency in Chronic Alcohol Misusers and the Development of the Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome,” *Alcohol & Alcoholism*, vol. 35, supplement 1, (2000), 2-7.

³³ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1433-1434.

his many falls and bears even worse marks.”³⁴

On October 8, he was taken back to Gartly-Ramsay to resume his treatments. He spent the next two weeks there and was fitted for a back brace, but was informed that without the surgery that Faulkner refused, the pain would continue. He arrived back at home on the twenty-first.³⁵ In the middle of November he left home for Princeton and soon began another bout with drinking and was taken to Westhill Sanitarium in the Bronx where he went through another period of treatments before being released a few days later.³⁶

Several months passed. In late summer 1953 he returned again to alcohol and Seconal, and about September 8, his nephew Jimmy Faulkner drove him to Memphis to Gartly-Ramsay where he was treated for alcohol and pain. However, within two days he grew restless and checked himself out A.M.A. and returned home.³⁷ He did not stay there long. On September 26 he was admitted to the Wright Sanatorium for the first time with a diagnosis of alcoholism. He remained for two weeks, the longest extent known for his staying at Wright’s, and was discharged on October 4 with his condition “improved.”³⁸

One might wonder why after an initial stay at Gartly-Ramsay he chose to check himself into a different sanatorium for the second hospitalization. We can only speculate that while the Memphis hospital afforded a wider variety of services, including treatments for both alcoholism and back problems, it also required more driving. Wright’s, on the other hand, while having a narrower focus on alcoholism was nearer and more accessible. This suggests that in choosing the Byhalia hospital the focus was on alcoholism and not on back problems, and in fact the admission card makes no mention of back problems.

On August 21, 1954, Faulkner’s daughter Jill was married at their home, Rowan Oak, in Oxford. The aftermath of the festivities triggered another round of drinking for both William and Estelle. His step-granddaughter Victoria Fielden Johnson, who was only sixteen at the time, recalled having to deal with the ensuing unpleasantness:

He went on a binge of binges. I was there by myself. Finally, after two days or so of my trying to keep at least the beds clean of vomit

³⁴ Letter, Saxe Commins to Dorothy Commins, October 8, 1952. Louis Daniel Brodsky and Robert W. Hamblin (eds.), *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection*, volume II: *The Letters*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984), 89.

³⁵ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1435.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1442.

³⁷ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1466; Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (revised), 573.

³⁸ Admission card, #2527, William Faulkner, September 26-October 4, 1953.

and excrement and everything else, Pappy somehow, in his drunken stupor, realized I couldn't take it anymore, couldn't handle it. I was too immature. I really couldn't drive; I couldn't go to the bootlegger for them or do anything really. Pappy kept mumbling in his stupor. "Get Malcolm! Get Malcolm to take me to Byhalia." [Malcolm Franklin was Estelle's son by her first marriage and Faulkner's step-son]³⁹

On August 29, Faulkner was admitted to Wright's under the diagnosis of alcoholism and was discharged four days later on September 1 with his condition improved.⁴⁰

By September 10, Faulkner was in New York City at the Algonquin where he would remain at least a month writing and seeing another young woman, Jean Stein.⁴¹ Meanwhile back in Mississippi, Estelle was admitted to Wright's on September 15 with a diagnosis of alcoholism. Her admission card lists her nearest relative as her sister, Dorothy "Dot" Oldham, suggesting that in Faulkner's absence, Dot was her contact person. Presumably she had driven Estelle to Wright's and checked her in. Four days later Estelle was discharged with her condition improved.⁴² The following year Estelle was admitted to Wright's again on July 10 at 5:45 p.m. under the diagnosis "alcoholism, acute." She was discharged five days later⁴³ and soon after joined Alcoholics Anonymous with good result; she quit drinking for years after.⁴⁴ Indeed there are no further records of her being admitted at Wright's.

On March 18, 1956, as the result of drinking and emotional problems, Faulkner began to vomit blood and collapsed unconscious. The following day he was admitted to Wright's with the diagnosis of alcoholism-chronic and gastric hemorrhage with the etiology, or origin, of the latter being

³⁹ "White Beaches," in Brodsky, *William Faulkner, Life Glimpses*, 169-170.

⁴⁰ Admission card, #3043, William Faulkner, August 29-Sept 1, 1954. The bill was \$175.57.

⁴¹ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1974, 1511.

⁴² Admission card, #3071, Mrs. William Faulkner, September 15-19, 1954. To our knowledge outside of this card there is no other known documentation for this stay. The bill for the stay was \$178.37.

⁴³ Patients' Register, #3505, Mrs. William Faulkner, July 10-15, 1955. A deposit slip dated July 16, 1955, from the Citizens Bank of Byhalia notes a credit to Leonard D. Wright on a check for \$293.26 from William Faulkner, presumably for the bill for Estelle's stay.

⁴⁴ Although no known biography refers to this hospitalization, Williamson does allude to Estelle's having joined Alcoholics Anonymous by September 1955. Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History*, 299, 303. On November 5, 1956, Estelle wrote Saxe Commins, Faulkner's editor at Random House, informing him of her successful involvement with the organization. Brodsky and Hamblin, *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection*, volume II: The Letters, 199. During a 1985 interview with L. D. Brodsky, Estelle's granddaughter Victoria Fielden Johnson stated that as of 1962, Estelle "hadn't touched a drop since 1955. Not a drop!" "White Beaches," in Brodsky, *William Faulkner, Life Glimpses*, 175.

unknown. The treatment would have been to stabilize with fluids IV and blood replacement, place a plastic tube through the nose and down the esophagus into the stomach, flush the stomach with cool saline and suck out the blood, then instill antacids like Maalox. If he responded quickly, he could have checked out the next day. Erosive gastritis was almost certainly the diagnosis, but without x-ray studies or looking inside the stomach (surgery would have been required in 1956 to do this) the etiology (cause) of the bleeding could not have been identified with certainty. The lack of equipment and staff needed to diagnose and treat the cause led to Faulkner's late night—12:35 a.m.—transfer from Wright's to Baptist Hospital in Memphis where over the next few days he received the needed tests, x-rays, and treatments and was discharged on or shortly after March 27.⁴⁵ Later the same year he was admitted to Wright's on December 6 at 6:15 p.m. with the diagnosis of "alcoholism acute." He was discharged on December 9 at 3:00 p.m.⁴⁶

After being discharged, three years passed before Faulkner was again admitted to Wright's in January 1960. The event was related in a somewhat surrealistic and comical narrative letter from Faulkner to Estelle. He had an attack of pleurisy on Monday, January 11, 1960, and was given penicillin by the local doctor Felix Linder. Subsequently on his own initiative, he supplemented the penicillin with whiskey. On Wednesday morning, his brother John arrived in an ambulance to take him to Wright's,⁴⁷ where he was admitted on Wednesday, January 13, 1960, at 12:15 p.m. for acute alcoholism

⁴⁵ Patients' Register, #3888, William Faulkner, March 19-20, 1956. He was admitted at 4:45 P.M. and discharged at 12:35 A.M. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1598-1599. Note that Blotner did not realize that Faulkner was initially admitted to Wright's before being transferred to Memphis.

There are several causes of gastric hemorrhage associated with acute and chronic alcoholism. As noted, the most likely diagnosis was erosive gastritis. Alcohol is a direct toxin to the lining of the stomach. It strips away the protective mucus in the stomach and causes irritation to the cells lining the inside of the stomach. This causes a generalized oozing of blood that can be corrected by the avoidance of alcohol along with antacid treatment. Stomach ulcers and subsequent change from an ulcer to a stomach malignancy are common in alcoholics; both can cause bleeding. However Faulkner would not have lived another six years with these diagnoses, so this is unlikely. Esophageal varices are dilated veins in the junction of the esophagus and the stomach caused by cirrhosis of the liver. They can rupture/erode and bleed profusely. Cirrhosis is irreversible; because Faulkner had no other symptoms of this, it is an unlikely diagnosis.

⁴⁶ Patients' Register, #4286, William Faulkner, December 6-9, 1956. There is a deposit slip from the Citizens Bank of Byhalia in which Leonard D. Wright was credited with the deposit of four checks including one from Faulkner for \$168.80, which was presumably to cover the fee for his three-day stay. Neither version of Blotner's biography makes reference to this.

⁴⁷ Joseph Blotner (ed.), *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1977), 440-442; cf. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1754-1756.

and was discharged on Sunday, January 17 at 10:15 a.m.⁴⁸

One Summer Night

The year of Faulkner's death 1962 did not begin well. For several years he and Estelle had been commuting back and forth between Oxford and Charlottesville, Virginia, where their daughter Jill resided with her family. On October 21, 1961, the Faulkners arrived back at their Charlottesville residence. On Saturday, December 16 while foxhunting Faulkner fell from his horse, a fairly common occurrence that did no good for his back. About the same time a cold began to turn into an acute respiratory infection, and he returned to his old bourbon remedy. On the 18th he was admitted to the University of Virginia Hospital, where it was noted that he suffered from back pains and "acute alcoholic intoxication." He was discharged the following day. However, he soon relapsed into drinking and on the 22nd was admitted to the Tucker Neurological and Psychiatric Hospital in Richmond, where an examination revealed that his vital signs were good. After a week-long stay he was discharged on December 29.⁴⁹

Soon after the beginning of the New Year on January 3, Faulkner was riding a horse, this time in the snow. When his horse fell he was thrown to the ground causing him to hit his head; he later had no memory of the incident. Two days later he was coughing and suffering chest pains and resumed drinking. On January 8 he was readmitted to Tucker. Two days later he was running a fever and complaining of chest pains when he was seen by Dr. Paul Camp, a cardiologist who said his blood pressure was normal and his heart was not enlarged. His electrocardiogram showed no signs of any heart damage and no significant abnormality of heart rhythm.⁵⁰ In 1962 the known major damaging effects of alcohol on the heart were high blood pressure and cardiomyopathy leading to cardiomegaly (heart muscle damage leading to enlarged heart).⁵¹ We have to assume that Faulkner's alcoholism had not caused these complications at the time. Today we know that alcoholism is also a risk for developing atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease, i.e. coronary

⁴⁸ Patients' Register, #5771, William Faulkner, January 13-17, 1960. A deposit slip dated January 14, 1960, from the Citizens Bank of Byhalia notes a credit to Leonard D. Wright on several checks including one from John Faulkner for \$170.00. John had presumably written the check the previous day upon William's admission as an advance payment on the bill.

⁴⁹ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1802, 1806-1809; Williamson, *William Faulkner and Southern History*, 347.

⁵⁰ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1809.

⁵¹ J. W. Hurst and R. B. Logue, *The Heart, Arteries, and Veins* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1970, 2nd edition), 998, 1215, 1240-1241.

artery disease, although that effect is by causing increased blood pressure which is what leads to the disease and apparently Faulkner's blood pressure was normal.⁵²

Faulkner's sixth and last visit to Byhalia was the indirect result of yet another fall from horseback, this time while riding on Old Taylor Road near Rowan Oak on June 10, 1962. After suffering intense back pain for over three weeks he had begun drinking by July 3. By the Fourth, the drinking had increased, and he had coupled it with prescription painkillers.⁵³

His nephew Jimmy Faulkner recalled the decision to return to Wright's Sanatorium:

The next day [July 5], late in the morning, I went to Brother Will's again. He was awake and had about half of a second fifth of gin—not much compared to what was normal for him during a bout. I sat and talked to him about how he felt and about going to Dr. Wright's private hospital, Byhalia He agreed that he was ready to go.

I returned to the house about 4:30 that afternoon. He held onto me as he pulled himself out of bed, and I stayed behind him to steady him while he walked to my station wagon. I put him on the backseat so he could lie down. Aunt Estelle sat in the front, holding a drink for Brother Will, if he should ask for one, but he never did. She poured out the untouched drink before we reached the hospital.

When we pulled up to the back door of Byhalia, one of the male attendants met us.⁵⁴ (Figure 5, page 118)

⁵² Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease (ASCVD) Secondary Prevention Guideline, *GroupHealth*, January 2014. Online at: <http://www.ghc.org/all-sites/guidelines/ascvd-secondary.pdf>. Accessed Sept. 13, 2015.

⁵³ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1974, 1827-1835. Note that Blotner dates the fall to June 17, however in a letter dated June 15, 1962, Phil Stone refers to Faulkner's having recently fallen off a horse with resulting back problems indicating that the fall was earlier than the 17th. Brodsky and Hamblin, *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection*, volume II, 307. Blotner later changed the date of the fall to June 10. Joseph Blotner and Chester A. McLarty, MD, "Faulkner's Last Days," *American Literature*, 198, vol. 57, no 4, 646. However, he did not change it in the revised version of *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1984, 708.

⁵⁴ Jim Faulkner, "Brother Will's Passing," *Southern Living*, March 1992, 108-109. Jimmy Faulkner provided another variation on this story during an interview in Sally Wolff and Floyd C. Watkins, *Talking about William Faulkner: Interviews with Jimmy Faulkner and Others* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 176-177.



Figure 5. Wright Sanatorium, the rear of the main building, where Faulkner entered on the evening of July 5, 1962. Photograph by Karen Castleberry, 1989.

The attendant was Willie Jamison, a twenty-two-year-old black orderly.⁵⁵ He and Jimmy guided Faulkner in and down the central hallway to the downstairs nurses station which was on the left behind a Dutch door and filled with the usual paraphernalia: desk, telephone, medicine cabinets, and cupboards with lab equipment.⁵⁶ While Faulkner sat in a comfortable chair, Estelle and Jimmy checked him in. According to the sanatorium records, he was admitted at 5:50 p.m.⁵⁷ (Figure 6, page 119)

On admission he was apparently somewhat confused. When leaving Rowan Oak for Byhalia he had been asked where he wanted to go and replied that he wanted to go home, despite the fact that he was at home at that moment.⁵⁸ On the trip he talked in a confused manner about sergeants and captains.⁵⁹ He was also in significant pain, both back pain and chest pain, although he had been able to walk over a half mile to a friend's house the

⁵⁵ Sue Watson, "Loyal, Respected Employee Retires," *Pigeon Roost News*, Holly Springs MS, January 7, 2004, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1836.

⁵⁷ The time of admission has previously been reported as 6:00 P.M. Blotner, interview with Wright. 6:00 P.M. was subsequently listed in Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1836. However this is evidently an approximation of the 5:50 time reported in the sanatorium records. See Admission card, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962; Patients' Register, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962.

⁵⁸ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1836.

⁵⁹ Blotner, interview with Jimmy Faulkner, November 27, 1965, Blotner papers, Louis Daniel Brodsky Collection of William Faulkner Materials, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1837.

Name <i>Wm. Faulkner</i>		Date Admitted <i>7-5-62</i>		Rm. or Wd. No.		Hosp. No. <i>6913</i>	
Address <i>Oxford, Miss</i>		Telephone		Service		Date Transferred To	
Age	Sex	Occupation	Nativity	Adm. Diagnosis			
Attending Physician		Referred by Dr.		Married	Single	Religion	
Nearest Relative or Friend		Relationship	Address	Widower	Widow		
Employed by		Address		Phone			
Rate per	Day Week	To be paid by		Address			
Financial Arrangements				Previous Admissions			
Date Discharged <i>July 6-62</i>		Final Diagnosis <i>acute Pulmonary Edema</i>		Condition on Discharge <i>Expired 1:30 P.M.</i>			

Form 317

Figure 6. Admission card for William Faulkner, July 5, 1962. Note that the card erroneously records his time of death as 1:30 p.m. rather than 1:30 a.m.

previous day. Dr. Wright performed an examination—presumably in his office—with Estelle and Jimmy present.⁶⁰ Faulkner told him about his riding accident and the ensuing pain. The examination showed that “heart, blood pressure, and chest were normal,” although Faulkner “complained of pain in his chest as well as his back.” Wright noted that it “could have been heart pain but there was no direct indication.” During this time Faulkner was “quiet, tractable, humble, made jokes.”⁶¹

Faulkner’s chest and back pain were not “textbook typical” of angina pectoris, the pain associated with blockage or narrowing of the coronary arteries although, in retrospect, both the back and chest pain could have been caused by coronary artery disease. He was known to have suffered several fractured vertebrae from being thrown off horses, and those fractures would seem a more likely source for his back pain. On June 24 his Oxford physician Chester McLarty had seen him and felt that his skin color suggested impaired coronary circulation. However, on July 3 after Faulkner had begun drinking, McLarty found that his blood pressure was fine and detected no alarming symptoms.⁶² Another physician, the world renowned cardiophysiology Dr. Arthur Guyton, had seen Faulkner in June and did not notice any skin color

⁶⁰ “Aunt Estelle and I sat in the room while Dr. Wright examined him.” Jim Faulkner, “Brother Will’s Passing,” 109. “The examination, performed with E[stelle] and Jimmy there” Blotner’s notes from his interview with Wright.

⁶¹ Blotner, interview with Wright.

⁶² Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1829. Blotner and McLarty, “Faulkner’s Last Days,” 647-648.

abnormality.⁶³ However, on June 6, his old friend Phil Stone had written: "I have never seen him look so old before. It is not his eyes, but the skin around his eyes; looks like that of an old man, and he looks to me like he has aged about five years since I saw him a few months ago."⁶⁴ Dr. Wright's method for treating acute alcoholism involved administering alcohol in diminishing doses and increasing times between doses to prevent DTs (delirium tremens), which can occur with a sudden loss of alcohol in someone who has been drinking heavily for days. He also used sedation as needed along with vitamins and nutritional support.⁶⁵ Although it was common practice at the time to wean alcoholics off alcohol, academic medicine was beginning to move away from the use of alcohol and toward the use of benzodiazepine tranquilizers for "detox" purposes.⁶⁶ Dr. Wright's method was an acceptable procedure then and was still in widespread use for several more years. Additionally he said that Faulkner's heart and blood pressure exams were normal upon admission.⁶⁷

The examination was completed by 6:10, twenty minutes after admission, as suggested by the fact that Dr. Wright began to record his findings and orders for medication. His first order was for 6:10. (Figure 7). Notations

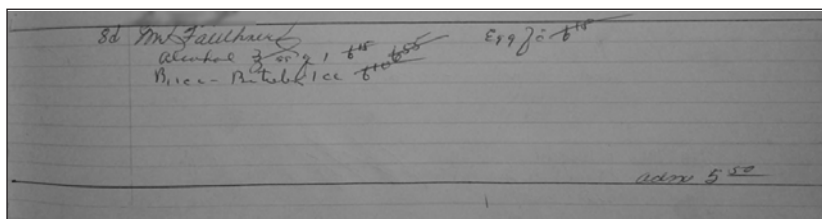


Figure 7. Doctor's order for William Faulkner for daylight hours of July 5, 1962, from the Order Book, page 239.

in the order book recorded all of the doctor's orders for medications and nourishment to be administered. A common practice of the time was for nurses to use blue or black ink for the day shift and red ink for the night shift. Faulkner was admitted at 5:50 p.m., when it was still daylight, so his

⁶³ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1831.

⁶⁴ Brodsky and Hamblin, *Faulkner: A Comprehensive Guide to the Brodsky Collection*, volume II, 306.

⁶⁵ Blotner, interview with Wright.

⁶⁶ J. F. Chambers, A. D'Agostino, W. H. Sheriff, Jr., and J. D. Schultz, "Comprehensive Care of the Acute Alcoholic in a Municipal Hospital," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 86 (1962), 1112-1116.

⁶⁷ Blotner, interview with Wright.

first orders were entered in blue in the day orders for July 5. Because the day was almost over few orders were listed there.⁶⁸ Most were listed in red in the night orders for July 5,⁶⁹ (Figure 8) while a space was allocated for him in

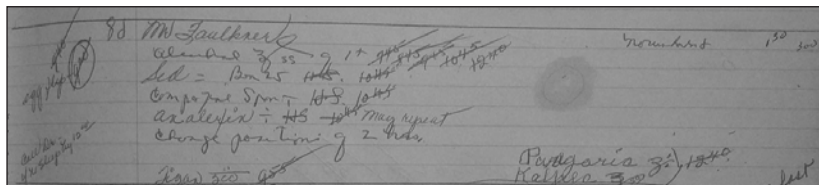


Figure 8. Doctor's order for William Faulkner on the night of July 5, 1962, from the Order Book, page 241.

the day orders for the following day.⁷⁰ After the examination was completed, Faulkner was ushered into Room 8d on the first floor across the hall from the nurses station. It was a large room with two double beds on opposite walls and an old fireplace on the southern wall.⁷¹ Willie Jamison later recalled: "I carried him in and undressed him and put his pajamas on and put him in bed."⁷² A nurse or attendant was to remain with him for some time.⁷³

Nurse Jean Burrow⁷⁴ had been on duty since 3:00 p.m. and was present when Faulkner arrived. She was responsible for his medications until her

⁶⁸ Order Book, page 239.

⁶⁹ Order Book, page 241.

⁷⁰ Order Book, page 243. The day orders for July 6 consisted of alcohol and Betalin. These items were crossed out as moot using red ink.

⁷¹ Ibid. The "d" in 8d evidently stands for "downstairs." Rooms in the main part of the main building were listed as 1u-7u (upstairs) and 8d-9d (downstairs) with the latter close to the nurses station. Rooms in the annex to the main building were numbered 1a-8a. See daily listings of patients by room numbers in the 1962 Order Book. According to Blotner, Faulkner's room was "across from the [nurses] station" which was on the left or north side of the hall, meaning that it was on the right or south side of the hallway. *Faulkner: A Biography*, 1837. Judging from numerous photographs of the building by Karen Castleberry, there were three main rooms on the south side of the hallway. To the west and rear was the kitchen, then the dining room, leaving Room 8d as the front room. The front part of the house was an enclosed porch. Also, see Jimmy Faulkner's recollection of the room in Wolff and Watkins, *Talking about William Faulkner*, 176.

⁷² Sue Watson, "Loyal, Respected Employee Retires." Jamison (1938-2010) worked as an orderly at Wright's from 1956 through 1962 and recalled that Dr. Wright was "like a father" to him.

⁷³ Ibid.; Blotner, interview with Jimmy Faulkner; Admission card #6975 includes in the billing information a \$7.50 fee for an attendant.

⁷⁴ Jean Armour Burrow (1929-2008) was married to Wade Lafayette Burrow, a cousin of Tom Burrow who had earlier owned the sanatorium property.

shift ended at 11:00.⁷⁵ Years later she recalled that he was “totally likeable . . . just a delightful person.” She went on to say: “I think he knew he was dying . . . Dr. Wright insisted he go on to the hospital in Memphis [for his back injury] but Faulkner refused. He said he did not want to be made a spectacle.”⁷⁶

Dr. Wright’s first orders included an injection of one cc of vitamin B-1, pure thiamine, and another injection of one cc of Betalin, a multi-vitamin injection, both scheduled for 6:10 p.m. and both intended to prevent Wernicke’s Encephalopathy.⁷⁷ Dr. Wright then ordered ½ ounce of alcohol every hour with the first doses at 6:15 and 6:45 before sunset. Subsequently—and after sunset—orders for doses of alcohol continued at 7:45 p.m. and then every hour through 10:45 p.m. at which time the patient was put to bed.⁷⁸ At 6:15 he was also given an egg flip, a protein nutritional supplement in beverage form. All of the written times have a slash mark through them indicating that the nurse administered that dose. Thus within twenty-five minutes of his admission, Faulkner had received a dose of alcohol, an egg flip, and vitamin injections, all consistent with Dr. Wright’s method of providing vitamins and nutritional support along with alcohol in diminishing doses. There were also orders for “nourishment” to be provided at 1:30 and 3:00.

The sun set at about 7:15 (CST), and night orders went into effect. At 9:00 and 9:40 Faulkner drank egg flips and followed that at 9:45 with another dose of alcohol. At 9:55 he also received a dose of 200 milligrams of Tigan, a commonly used anti-nausea medicine.⁷⁹ Estelle and Jimmy stayed with him until about 10:00. Faulkner was beginning to relax and appeared ready for sleep, so Jimmy suggested that they go. He later recalled:

⁷⁵ Information on when nurses went on and off duty comes from the drug book from 1962 that was used to record the administering of controlled substances. Faulkner is not listed, because none of his medications fell into this category. Nurse Burrow was followed at 11:00 P.M. by a Nurse Moore about whom little is known. She was on duty when Faulkner died.

⁷⁶ Sue Watson, “Loyal, Respected Employee Retires.”

⁷⁷ R. S. Porter and J. L. Kaplan, *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* (Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., 2011, 19th ed.), 1516-1519.

⁷⁸ Primarily the Order Book, May 7, 1962-July 20, 1962, p. 241, where the night orders for Faulkner were recorded. Jimmy Faulkner later wrote: “The nurse was in Brother Will’s room shortly after midnight. He sat up while she gave him a shot. Then he put his right hand over his heart, groaned, and lay back down.” The suggestion was made here that he died almost immediately following an injection. Jim Faulkner, “Brother Will’s Passing,” 109. At the 1994 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference held at the University of Mississippi there was discussion of the injection with the suggestion that it might have been linked to his death. Michael Kelley, “Faulkner Conferees Study His Life, Death,” newspaper clipping from *Commercial Appeal*, probably early August 1994, pp. C1-C2. However, the discussion was moot, because the injection never occurred; it is not mentioned in the orders for Faulkner.

⁷⁹ The specific order reads “Tigan 200 9:55.” Order Book, p. 241.

Aunt Estelle went to his bed and said something to him that I couldn't hear. Then she left and waited for me in the hall. I walked to his bed then and took his left hand in my left hand. I said, "Brother Will, when you are ready to come home, call me, and I'll come and get you."

When I said that, he recognized my voice and looked up at me. His eyes were bright and sharp, and his voice was clear and not slurred. He said, "Yes, Jim, I will." That's the last thing I ever heard him say.⁸⁰

As the Faulkners were departing for Oxford, the quiet was disrupted by the arrival of a new patient from Greenville, Mississippi. She was admitted at 10:15, diagnosed with acute alcoholism, and placed in Room 9d, across the hall from Faulkner in 8d. This brought the number of patients for the night to ten.⁸¹ At 10:45 Faulkner was prepared for bed. Nurse Burrow gave him his prescribed medications: Benadryl, a sedative; Compazine Spansule, another anti-nausea medication; Analexin for muscle spasms; and another dose of alcohol.⁸² Burrow's shift ended a few minutes later at 11:00. After putting Faulkner to bed she told him "I'll see you in the morning." He replied, "I don't think so."⁸³ These were his last recorded words.

After Faulkner was asleep the nurse was to change his position every two hours by rolling him over in order to insure that skin circulation was maintained and thereby prevent the development of bed sores.⁸⁴ In the left margin of the order book was the notation, "Call Dr if no sleep by 12:00."⁸⁵ Faulkner apparently fell asleep, because there is no note to the effect that

⁸⁰ Jim Faulkner, "Brother Will's Passing," 109.

⁸¹ Order Book, pages 240-241; Patients' Register, #6976.

⁸² Among the other night orders was the notation for "Sed = Ben 25 HS," which is shorthand for "Sedative = Benadryl 25 milligrams at bed time." "HS" stands for the Latin *hora somni*, "hour of sleep," and refers to bed time. There is a slash mark through the HS and the following 10:45 indicating that he received the sedative at his bedtime which was 10:45 p.m. The next order is "Compazine Span 1 HS May Repeat." There is a slash mark through the HS and the 10:45 that follows this order. Compazine Spansule is an anti-nausea medication. The next order is for "Analexin 1 HS 10:45 May Repeat." There is a slash mark through the HS and the time. Analexin was used to treat muscle spasms. An entry for "nourishment" is recorded on the right side of the order sheet, indicating the need to provide food as needed which was followed by 1:30 and 3:00. There are no slash marks through these times. Order Book, p. 241.

⁸³ Sue Watson, "Loyal, Respected Employee Retires."

⁸⁴ The order reads "Change Position q 2 hrs" with "q" standing for the Latin *quaque* meaning "every." Order Book, p. 241.

⁸⁵ For someone being admitted with a need to withdraw from alcohol, agitation and sleeplessness are danger signs and are seen early in DTs. If Faulkner was still awake and especially if restless the doctor would want to increase the dose of the sedative or possibly the alcohol could be repeated a little earlier than scheduled. Untreated or undertreated DTs can be fatal. But alcohol itself can be toxic as well, either quickly or slowly.

Dr. Wright was called at midnight.⁸⁶ By 12:40 a.m. Faulkner was apparently awake and bothered by digestive problems. This was reported, probably by his attendant, and he was administered orally a mixture of paregoric and kalpec as a treatment for diarrhea and intestinal cramping.⁸⁷ He was also given another dose of alcohol and left to sleep.

However after 1:00 something happened. The story presented heretofore in biographies has been based primarily on what Dr. Wright told Joseph Blotner in 1966. According to this Faulkner was awake and sitting on the side of the bed. About 1:30 he groaned and fell over, the victim of a heart attack. The event was probably witnessed by the attendant if not a nurse bringing his 1:30 nourishment. One of these immediately called Dr. Wright who resided a couple hundred feet from the main building. He was at Faulkner's bed within five minutes, found no pulse and could hear no heartbeat. He started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) with closed chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth breathing.⁸⁸ This was state of the art CPR for 1962,⁸⁹ but after an extended effort Faulkner showed no signs of life and was pronounced dead.⁹⁰

Regarding the diagnosis for his cause of death there is a seeming contradiction between two scenarios. The first—and the one made canonical in the biographical material—is that Faulkner died from a myocardial infarction (the medical term for what most call a heart attack), and this is

⁸⁶ Order Book, p. 241.

⁸⁷ This order is written on the right hand side and in a different handwriting than the initial orders, suggesting that it was added ad hoc probably by the nurse who responded to Faulkner's digestive problem, one that would not have required Dr. Wright's intervention. The order was for "Paregoric 1 ounce" and "Kalpec ½ ounce" mixed together with a 12:40 time and a slash mark through it. Order Book, p. 241. This mixture, administered orally, is the narcotic paregoric used for the treatment of diarrhea and intestinal cramping and the mixture of kaolin and pectin which is also used for the treatment of diarrhea.

⁸⁸ Blotner, interview with Wright. Sanatorium records are supportive of 1:30 a.m. as the time of death. Admission card, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962, lists "Expired 130 P.M.," with the "P.M." clearly a careless error; Patients' Register, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962, lists him as having died at "130 AM."

⁸⁹ "History of CPR." Online at: <http://www.cprlab.com/cpr-history.html>. Accessed September 21, 2015; "2010 American Heart Association Guidelines for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and Emergency Cardiovascular Care Science," 2010. Online at: http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/122/18_suppl_3/S640. Accessed September 21, 2015.

⁹⁰ Blotner's notes from his interview with Wright state that "He applied external heart massage for 45 minutes with no results. Then he tried mouth to mouth resuscitation, but without success." John Faulkner also repeated the 45 minutes. *My Brother Bill*, 2. While Dr. Wright certainly did his best, 45 minutes may have been an exaggeration or an error in the notes; it seems to be far more than a physician would need to do while realistically expecting results.

the one presented heretofore in all biographical treatments with all lines of evidence deriving directly or indirectly from oral statements by Wright. Blotner's biography attributes the cause of death to a coronary occlusion while the revised version goes further and states that the information came from Dr. Wright.⁹¹ However, the interview notes do not mention this diagnosis leaving one to wonder how the information was obtained; perhaps he simply failed to record the diagnosis in his notes and later recalled it while writing his biography. John Faulkner attributes his brother's death to a "kind of thrombosis" describing it in some detail while stating that the information was from "the doctors [who] explained it to us," presumably referring in part to Dr. Wright, the only doctor to have firsthand knowledge of the event.⁹² Despite the difference in terminology both descriptions fall under the rubric of myocardial infarction and apparently reflect the same diagnosis. They are also consistent with the description of Faulkner's death from Blotner's interview which states: "[Faulkner] was sitting on the side of his bed. He groaned and fell over."⁹³ This appears to describe either a myocardial infarction or a cardiac arrhythmia.

A myocardial infarction happens when a coronary artery is occluded, most often by a blood clot that forms in the artery at the site of an irritated cholesterol plaque in the artery, and cuts off circulation to the heart muscle served by that artery. This causes the death of part of the heart muscle. It can lead to (1) heart failure from a lack of adequate functioning heart muscle, or (2) an abnormal electrical conduction causing an irregular heart beat called an arrhythmia, or (3) sudden death of the patient. Heart failure can be mild and not immediately life threatening or can be severe and cause shock. Cardiac arrhythmias can be transient and cause no symptoms or can cause the heart to become non-functional and cause death within seconds. Fatal arrhythmias disrupt the heart beat so that the heart cannot pump blood at all. Some degree of heart failure has been documented in over two-thirds of patients hospitalized with myocardial infarction.⁹⁴ In summary several sources indicate that Faulkner's death event was consistent with the sudden onset of some type of overwhelming cardiac dysfunction such as myocardial

⁹¹ Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (revised), 714, notes: "Dr. Wright called it a coronary occlusion"; cf. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (original edition), 1838, which does not state that the information came from Wright but an endnote cites the interview with the doctor.

⁹² John Faulkner, *My Brother Bill*, 1-2.

⁹³ Blotner, interview with Wright.

⁹⁴ R. S. Porter and J. L. Kaplan, *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, 19th edition, (Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., 2011), 2099-2100.

infarction. However, these sources were by no means from independent witnesses; all apparently trace back to Dr. Wright's personal account as related to the family and friends of Faulkner.

In contrast to this scenario, administrative documents from the sanatorium present a different story listing the discharge diagnosis as "acute pulmonary edema probable cardiac origin."⁹⁵ Pulmonary edema is characterized by the lungs filling with fluid which is the result of the heart's inability to pump the blood coming from the lungs; consequently the lungs become engorged with blood that is "backed up" there. Fluid is then forced out of the blood vessels and into the air sacs. This pink, frothy fluid fills the air sacs thereby preventing the intake of oxygen. The patient literally drowns in his own fluids. The clinical appearance of such a situation shows an individual coughing-up fluid, gasping for breath, and having cyanotic (blue-tinged) skin deriving from hypoxia (deficiency of oxygen). The description of a patient with pulmonary edema contrasts with both the description of Faulkner groaning and collapsing and the other evidence suggestive of myocardial infarction alone.

Despite their differences, both scenarios apparently derive from Dr. Wright. The first scenario (myocardial infarction) derives from secondary accounts based on oral testimony, while the second scenario (pulmonary edema) comes from sanatorium records. While both scenarios and their respective lines of evidence seem credible when examined in isolation from one another, when juxtaposed they present a seeming contradiction. Of the two, the sanatorium records are the more credible because they were recorded early on and for the most dispassionate of reasons: to provide an objective record in a private setting free from public scrutiny. Why then the difference? Although we may never know the exact truth, one can speculate with considerable confidence that when discussing Faulkner's death Dr. Wright modified his account to soften its impact on bereaved family members. However he probably told the truth, in part, each time he spoke about what caused Faulkner's death. Although it seems in all likelihood that Faulkner died of pulmonary edema, the edema was probably due to heart muscle damage from a myocardial infarction as suggested by the diagnosis that the pulmonary edema was of "probable cardiac origin." In about thirty per cent of cases, pulmonary edema is caused by heart failure that results from

⁹⁵ Admission card, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962; Patients' Register, #6975, William Faulkner, July 5-6, 1962. Both sources list the cause of death as "acute pulmonary edema probable cardiac origin."

having had a myocardial infarction.⁹⁶ Furthermore, it should be pointed out that despite the fact that Faulkner had previously shown no indication of heart problems, up to eighty per cent of patients with significant coronary artery disease do not complain of any symptoms associated with their heart. Also, up to sixty-eight per cent of myocardial infarctions are “silent” with the heart attack patient not complaining prior to the attack of any symptom attributed to his heart.⁹⁷

Extrapolating from all the evidence suggests that Faulkner had a myocardial infarction, lost function of a significant amount of heart muscle, had the rapid onset of heart failure, developed pulmonary edema with a pink froth coming out his mouth and nose, became hypoxic, gasping for breath and turning blue, followed by cardiac arrest, and collapse at 1:30 A.M. This would have occurred over just a few minutes. As this process played out the nurse and/or attendant would have seen it and called the doctor. Upon arrival he would have recognized the symptoms of pulmonary edema and surmised why it had happened. He would have begun CPR when Faulkner’s heart ceased beating. In the end he recorded that Faulkner had died of pulmonary edema, but presented the family with an abbreviated, less disturbing picture.

Dr. Wright made every effort that a doctor was capable of making in 1962 before giving in to the inevitable.⁹⁸ It appears that all the proper diagnostic procedures were performed as were appropriate at the time. The care he received for his acute alcoholism was very much standard for the time, and the attempt at resuscitation was actually advanced beyond what most sanatoria would have been capable of offering.

After all efforts to revive Faulkner were abandoned, telephone calls were made to Oxford and to a funeral home, probably in Olive Branch, which

⁹⁶ Daniel D. Buff and Mahnaz Behboodikhah, “Acute Pulmonary Edema and Myocardial Infarction,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 109 (1988), 247.

⁹⁷ Bianca D’Antono, Gilles Dupuis, André Arsénault, and Denis Burelle, “Silent Ischemia: Silent after All?,” *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* 24 (4) (2008), 285-291.

⁹⁸ There is no evidence that Faulkner participated in any type of follow-up care such as Alcoholics Anonymous which had become standard by that time. However this probably was not the fault of Dr. Wright. As we have seen Estelle did join the association after her 1955 stay at Wright’s Sanatorium, presumably at Wright’s instigation, and with good results, so it’s likely that Faulkner would have received similar encouragement. One suspects though that given his personality he would not have been inclined to participate in the requisite meetings with other alcoholics.

dispatched an ambulance⁹⁹ to pick him up and take him home. Dr. Wright completed the medical certification portion of the death certificate which was required before the body could be removed.¹⁰⁰ When the ambulance left the sanatorium and disappeared into the night, Faulkner's association with Byhalia came to an end.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ It was initially assumed based on the Hughes Rudd article in the *Saturday Evening Post* (above) that Faulkner's body was returned home via an ambulance from Douglass Funeral Home of Oxford. However, Karen Castleberry informed one of the authors (Elliott on November 20, 2015) that the late Bruce Payne, Sr. of Olive Branch, occasionally spoke of having been the ambulance driver who had given the press the information that Faulkner's death had occurred in Byhalia rather than Oxford. During communications with Gene Phillips of Olive Branch, Mississippi, a former owner and current associate of the Brantley Funeral Home of Olive Branch, it was learned that Payne was a co-owner of Brantley Funeral Home from 1960 through 1970, which covers the time of Faulkner's death, so his story is plausible. Mr. Phillips went through records pertaining to the funeral home's ambulance service. While he could find no record of a Brantley ambulance having been used to transport Faulkner's body, he did point out that the records were very unorganized and scattered, so lack of evidence is far from conclusive. Furthermore, in an interview Jimmy Faulkner indicated that the ambulance originated from somewhere other than Oxford: "I called the ambulance here in Oxford and asked them to go to the hospital in Byhalia to get Brother Will's body. I called the hospital, and they said, 'We've already sent him home.'" Wolff and Watkins, *Talking about William Faulkner*, 177. Because Olive Branch is only about ten miles from Byhalia, it was probably the closest location to offer an ambulance service, making it likely that Brantley Funeral Home did indeed transport Faulkner's body to Oxford.

¹⁰⁰ Neither of the authors of this article has seen the death certificate which is available only to immediate family members. However in a telephone interview Elliott talked to a person at the State Board of Health who wishes to remain anonymous. This person had just seen the certificate and stated that it was signed by a doctor in Byhalia whose name she did not remember. The medical certification, which is in the lower right hand side of the certificate, must be signed by either the attending physician or the county coroner to establish time and cause of death before the body can be released. The certificate was presumably given to the ambulance driver who carried it along with the body to the Douglass Funeral Home in Oxford, where the balance of the document was filled out with information pertaining to the deceased's address, occupation, place of burial, etc. Blotner's interview with funeral director Richard W. Elliott on March 23, 1965, Blotner papers, Louis Daniel Brodsky Collection of William Faulkner Materials, Special Collections and Archives, Southeast Missouri State University. The notes from this interview include a transcript of part of the death certificate which has John Faulkner listed as the informant and Dr. Leonard D. Wright, Sr. listed under medical certification.

¹⁰¹ A bill was sent to the Faulkner family for \$57.95: \$50.00 for the base charge, \$7.50 for an attendant, and \$.45 for laundry. Admission card #6975.

Aftermath

Following Faulkner's death, the Wright Sanatorium continued to operate; it was operating in November 1966 when Joseph Blotner arrived to interview Dr. Wright. However, its days were numbered; it was apparently closed on January 17, 1972.¹⁰² Wright sold the sanatorium property in 1972 and 1973 with the majority going to Clark Cochran¹⁰³ who turned it into a school, the Byhalia Christian Academy, which operated for several years.

Why Wright closed the sanatorium is not known. However, we can speculate with some degree of confidence. Within the last few decades hospitals have grown in size, usually with support from governmental entities and endowments, while private institutions have declined to the point of vanishing. After Dr. Wright closed his sanatorium he moved to Holly Springs where he became associated with the Holly Springs Hospital. The burden of running a private institution and simultaneously overseeing the patients without support from another doctor was tremendous. Consequently, the opportunity for affiliation with an established hospital must have been irresistible. He would continue to practice in Holly Springs until his retirement in the early 1990s, at which time he and his wife moved to Memphis. He died there on October 6, 2003, ten days short of his ninety-fourth birthday.

Some years after the sanatorium closed, a major change came to the site. For several decades U.S. Highway 78 had been a two-lane road that passed through Byhalia just north of the central business district. During the late 1980s a new U.S. 78 was constructed with divided-lanes and limited access that passed Byhalia about a mile south of the business district and almost adjacent to the former sanatorium property. An exit was provided nearby for accessing Highway 309 making the immediate area prime real estate for commercial development.

In 1989 Jim and Karen Castleberry purchased the sanatorium property from Clark Cochran¹⁰⁴ and soon after began to prepare the front part of the site for commercial use. The main building was demolished in April 1990¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Information sheet on Dr. Leonard Wright from the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure has a date of January 17, 1972, alongside "Leonard Wright Sanitarium [sic] closed/804 Randolph St. Holly Springs" with the latter part being the street address in Holly Springs to which Wright moved. Also see the passage: "Dr. and Mrs. Leonard Wright moved to Holly Springs recently." From Mrs. G. H. Simpson, "Byhalia News," *South Reporter*, April 20, 1972, section 2, page 2.

¹⁰³ Marshall County Deed Book 139, pages 145, 384-385.

¹⁰⁴ Marshall County Deed Book 228, pages 143-144.

¹⁰⁵ "Sanatorium Coming Down," captioned photograph of the building during demolition in: *Pigeon Roost News*, April 11, 1990, p. 1; *South Reporter*, April 12, 1990, p. 1.

with the exception of the annex which was moved to the back part of the property and turned into a residence.¹⁰⁶ Other buildings were moved¹⁰⁷ or demolished, and the part of the property on which the main building and several smaller building had been located was levelled to produce a broad parking area. In 1991 the Castleberrys opened a convenience store/gasoline station and operated it for several years. This building survives today.

Today a traveler between Memphis and Tupelo who happens to exit at Byhalia will find himself in a small commercial development with a gas station on either side of Highway 309. The one on the west side is at the southern end of a large parking area with an AutoZone store at the northern end. To the west of the parking lot is a green hillside, the last untouched remnant of the sanatorium grounds, where one building remains, the former residence of the Wright family. The site of the main sanatorium building is on the south side of the AutoZone where the surface of the parking lot is about 6-10 feet lower than the ground surface of 1962. There is no marker to inform the visitor that William Faulkner died there.

¹⁰⁶ More recently it was moved a second time to its current location at 5236 Smith Grove Road in Marshall County.

¹⁰⁷ The nurses residence was sold and moved to a location southeast of Byhalia at or near 553 Tunstall Road where it was converted into a church. More specifically it is located about one hundred yards south of Tunstall Road on the east side of Mockingbird Road. Today the building is unused and in poor condition. The cottages mentioned in note 22 above were moved back several yards from their original sites in 1990 and were demolished in 2015.

Appendix A. Documents in the Castleberry Collection

The following is a descriptive list of documents that were salvaged c. 1990 by Jim and Karen Castleberry from the basement of the Wright Sanatorium's annex where they were stored in boxes. The earliest date represented in the collection is February 10, 1950, and the latest date is December 28, 1962. The date range was probably affected by Mrs. Castleberry's saving primarily documents with the name Faulkner. Furthermore the only doctor referenced in all of the documents was Dr. Wright suggesting that he seldom had the assistance of another physician.

Order Book

May 7, 1962–July 20, 1962

This is a large, hardbound ledger, 300 pages, with a handwritten label that reads simply "Order Book." The book uses four pages for each day covered and follows a pattern in which facing pages beginning with page 2 cover "Day Orders" (recorded in blue ink) with the next two pages covering "Night Orders" (in red ink) after which the pattern repeats with succeeding days.

Each two pages (two for Day Orders then two for Night Orders) are arranged according to room numbers with every current patient listed under the room occupied. There are seventeen rooms listed in the following order: beginning at the top of an even numbered page in the following sequence: 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A, 7A, 8A, 1u. The facing, odd-numbered page continues the sequence: 2u, 3u, 4u, 5u, 6u, 7u, 8d, and 9d. The room numbers ending with A's apparently refer to the eight rooms in the annex, while the other nine apparently refer to rooms in the main body of the house with u's referring to the seven upstairs rooms while 8d and 9d refer to the two downstairs near the nurses station.

Patients' Registers

On legal-size, light cardboard, ochre-colored forms designed to allow entries for patients and their addresses as they were admitted with space for diagnoses and times when they were discharged. The date range is continuous from January 1, 1955, through December 28, 1962.

Drug Books

There are three items referred to herewith as drug books based on the fact that the one from 1962 is labeled "Drug Book." All are in brown spiral-bound notebooks of a type used by students. They consist in part of sequential entries for the dispensing of controlled substances to patients. Daytime events were recorded in blue and nighttime events in red. They also include an inventory of drugs on hand and their dispensing.

The 1950 drug books were saved because they make reference to a "Mr. Faulkner," who was hospitalized twice during that year. However, this person could not have been William Faulkner because his stays in the sanatorium conflict with the writer's known whereabouts. For example a period of hospitalization in November 1950 overlapped Faulkner's trip to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize. The 1962 drug book may have been saved because it covered the time of Faulkner's last admission. However, it makes no reference to Faulkner.

Drug Book February 10, 1950-August 31, 1950

A brown spiral-bound notebook: "Penworthy Composition Book"

Drug Book September 1, 1950-January 16, 1951

A brown spiral-bound notebook: "Penworthy Composition Book"

Drug Book May 5, 1962-July 18, 1962

Cover label reads "Drug Book From May 5, 1962 to July 18, 1962"

A brown spiral-bound notebook: "University Note Book/ Wide Ruled with Margins"

Admission Cards

These record basic information pertaining to patient identification, admission, discharge, diagnosis, and billing. There was one card per patient/visit with each being numbered. Only five are known to survive, and these are for William Faulkner and Mrs. William Faulkner. As published these cards were organized with spaces to record information for respective patients. On the front of each are spaces for a variety of information. Most of the spaces

were apparently never used. Only the most basic information was recorded including the patient's name, address, dates of admission and discharge, final diagnosis and condition on discharge. The rear of the cards were designed for billing purposes where services and charges could be itemized.

Censuses

These consist of graphs of tabulated statistical data for numbers of patients treated on a daily, monthly, and annual basis for the years 1955-1958.

Sundries

Miscellaneous bank deposit receipts and cancelled checks.

Appendix B. Summary of Periods of Hospitalization for William and Estelle Faulkner at the Wright Sanatorium

This list probably includes every hospitalization for the Faulkners in Byhalia. The Patients' Registers are complete from the first of January 1955 through the end of December 1962, so we can infer with certainty that they record every relevant admission for this period. Prior to 1955 there are only four surviving admission cards which were selectively preserved from a much larger number of cards that apparently covered at least 1952-1954 if not a longer period. It is likely but not certain that these surviving cards represent all of the admissions for the Faulkners prior to the period covered by the registers.

#1962 Mrs. William Faulkner August 3-4, 1952 [times of admission and discharge not listed]

Final diagnosis: alcoholic avitaminosis; Condition on discharge: poor
Source: Admission card

#2527 William Faulkner September 26, 1953—October 4, 1953
[times of admission and discharge not listed]

Final diagnosis: alcoholism; Condition on discharge: improved
Source: Admission card

#3043 William Faulkner August 29, 1954, 5:15 P.M.--September 1, 1954 [discharge time not listed]

Final diagnosis: alcoholism; Condition on discharge: improved
Source: Admission card

#3071 Mrs. William Faulkner September 15, 1954, 4:15 P.M.—September 19, 1954 [discharge time not listed]

Final diagnosis: alcoholism; Condition on discharge: improved
Source: Admission card

#3505 Mrs. William Faulkner July 10, 1955, 5:45 P.M.—July 15, 1955 5:00 P.M.

Diagnosis: alcoholism, acute
Source: Patients' Register

#3888 William Faulkner March 19, 1956, 4:45 P.M.—March 20, 1956 12:35 A.M. (transferred to Baptist Hospital in Memphis)

Diagnosis: (1) alcoholism--chronic (2) gastric hemorrhage (3) etiology--uncertain

Source: Patients' Register

#4286 William Faulkner December 6, 1956, 6:15 P.M.—December 9, 1956 3:00 P.M.

Diagnosis: alcoholism, acute

Source: Patients' Register

#5771 William Faulkner January 13, 1960, 12:15 P.M.—January 17, 1960 10:15 A.M.

Final diagnosis: alcoholism, acute

Source: Patients' Register

#6975: William Faulkner July 5, 1962, 5:50 P.M.—July 6, 1962 1:30 A.M. expired

Final diagnosis: acute pulmonary edema, probable cardiac origin;

Condition on discharge: Expired 1:30 A.M.

Source: Admission card; Patients' Register

The University of Mississippi, the Board of Trustees, Students, and Slavery: 1848-1860

by Elias J. Baker

The ongoing public and scholarly discussions about many Americans' widespread ambivalence toward the nation's relationship to slavery and persistent racial discrimination have connected pundits and observers from an array of fields and institutions. As the authors of Brown University's report on slavery and justice suggest, however, there is an increasing recognition that universities and colleges must provide the leadership for efforts to increase understanding of the connections between state institutions of higher learning and slavery.¹ To participate in this vital process the University of Mississippi needs a foundation of research about the school's own participation in slavery and racial injustice. The visible legacies of the school's Confederate past are plenty, including monuments, statues, building names, and even a cemetery. The university's relationship to slavery, however, is much more subtle, scattered, and fragmented across the documentary record. Hidden within official records and private letters, buried in newspapers and meeting minutes, slavery on the University of Mississippi campus crystallizes into an unfamiliar narrative, one that highlights forgotten contributions and experiences of those held in bondage. A useful starting point for the university's effort to engage with its slave past is the recovery and reconstruction of the record of enslaved people's presence on campus, however incomplete such a portrait may be, and an account of their intersections with university officials and the student body.

Several themes emerge in the university's archives that help structure a study of the University of Mississippi's relationship to slavery. First,

¹ Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, *Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* (October 2006), https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/documents/SlaveryAndJustice.pdf.

ELIAS J. BAKER is a Ph.D. candidate at the Center for Civil War Research at the University of Mississippi.

though it may seem obvious, enslaved labor provided both physical construction on campus and continual economic return for the members of the faculty and the board of trustees. Notably, official policy dictated students would finance slave labor for most of the antebellum period through mandatory fees. Next, insofar as the records capture the experiences of enslaved people, the campus presented slaves a space for relationships with students and faculty, routine and predictable work patterns, negotiation and self-direction of labor, and some material benefits. The students' own relationship to slavery offers a third theme. The tension between students' racial prerogatives and their subordination to faculty and administrators produced ambiguous rules regulating their authority over the university's slaves. As the sectional crisis intensified students affirmed their racial mastery by inflicting violence and enforcing the subjugation of the university's enslaved people. Finally, centering slavery on campus encourages a re-evaluation of Chancellor Frederick Barnard's infamous trial before the board of trustees in March 1860, on charges of abolitionism and violation of racial laws. While most historians of the university insist the fracas was a personal feud between Barnard and disgruntled faculty and community members, the university's reliance on slavery and the context of rising racial violence on campus demands that one take seriously the ways Barnard's actions threatened students' own racial prerogatives and the security of the university's command of enslaved people.

Compared to many universities and colleges founded across the United States before the Civil War, the University of Mississippi benefited from slavery for but a brief period. Over those fifteen or so years, however, slavery was vital to the university's organizers, Oxford's community leaders, faculty members, and students. Slave labor not only placed the literal cornerstones of the institution's physical campus, but slavery also embodied the racial and economic order central to southern academia. An examination of prominent Oxford community slaveholders' roles in the establishment of the university, the extensive employment of enslaved labor during the school's early years and beyond, and the administration's financial policies toward slave labor highlights the essential place of slavery during the University of Mississippi's early years.

Lafayette County, like much of Mississippi, experienced rapid settlement during the first half of the nineteenth century. After President Andrew Jackson ended federal protection of Indian lands in the old Southwest, white settlement exploded as speculators and settlers, having

depleted farms and plantations in the Atlantic states, flooded the area in search of fertile land.² The founding families of Lafayette County were migrants from slaveholding areas, and though some made the journey with their slaves in tow, most settlers purchased their slaves from markets along the Mississippi River. Slavery was less important to the economy of Lafayette County because the thick forests of North Mississippi precluded the establishment of large cotton plantations characteristic of the Yazoo and Natchez regions.³ Still, the appetite for enslaved labor in Lafayette County was strong. While some white settlers resisted the importation of slaves and even succeeded in pressuring the state legislature to ban the trade, the hunger for slave labor across Mississippi eventually forced political leaders in Jackson to ignore their own constitutional ban on the interstate slave trade.⁴

Slavery steadily grew in importance and scale as Lafayette County prospered in the flush 1840s, and the demographic statistics reflect the white settlers' growing commitment to slave labor. The 1840 census reported that the county held 3,689 whites and 2,842 slaves, and within a decade the white population grew to 8,346, while the number of enslaved people increased to 5,719. By the eve of the Civil War, however, the county contained 8,989 whites and 7,129 slaves, indicating both an end to the county's rapid growth, as well as a sizable population of slaves.⁵ Though it is difficult to be precise about slave ownership, most historians agree slavery was concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of wealthy landowners and professionals. As John Cooper Hathorn calculated with mild astonishment, by 1860, roughly seven percent of Lafayette County's white population owned forty-four percent of the county's entire population.⁶

These slaveholders had a "tremendous vested interest in capital tied up in slaves" and held political as well as economic power in the burgeoning community.⁷ As they plotted Oxford's grid of streets and town square,

² John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old Southwest: Mississippi, 1770-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 5-6.

³ John Cooper Hathorn, "A Period Study of Lafayette County from 1836 to 1860, with emphasis on population groups" (M.A. Thesis, University of Mississippi, 1939).

⁴ Lacy Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵ Statistics from Hathorn, Chapter 4. According to the 1840 census, there were only thirteen free blacks in Lafayette County; by 1850, there were only four.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷ *Ibid.*

these men anticipated their infant municipality would become a center of commercial and educational importance befitting their prestige and wealth and hoped the University of Mississippi in particular would cement the “foundation of Oxford’s identity as a cultural outpost in Mississippi.”⁸ After state legislators chose the town for the university’s location, they recruited an inaugural board of trustees, a “small assembly of remarkable men” including some of the state’s most influential slaveholders.⁹ Of the first trustees three lived in Lafayette County, and they exerted tremendous influence on the university throughout the antebellum period. Jacob Thompson, an early settler to the county and later a congressman and President James Buchanan’s Secretary of the Interior, owned 2,400 acres in 1850, valued at \$10,000. Ten years later, his capital had increased to \$50,000 with only 100 additional acres. A. H. Pegues owned 1,520 acres on Woodson’s Ridge in 1850 and increased his holdings to 5,000 acres within a decade. Their colleague James Howry became the university’s first proctor responsible for financing and managing the university’s slaves. Over the years these men worked closely with one of the largest landowners in Lafayette County, “Colonel” James Brown, an original settler who owned 2,400 acres in 1850.¹⁰ The trustees promptly elected Brown to the board in 1846.¹¹

The task before the board was exciting and daunting. According to the University of Mississippi’s charter, the board’s powers included limited discretion over the university’s allotted funds, a somewhat vague charge to “devise and adopt such a system of learning as in their judgment they may deem most advisable,” and the responsibility to appoint an architect to draft plans for the construction of the initial set of campus buildings.¹² All understood that the new university was to offer a safeguard against the intrusion of northern abolitionism, develop a vibrant southern intellectual tradition and pedagogy, and, hopefully, halt the migration

⁸ Don Doyle, *Faulkner’s County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4.

⁹ David Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 28-32. John Alexander Ventress was a major planter in Wilkinson County, for example, and trustee Alexander Clayton would go on to help L. Q. C. Lamar draft Mississippi’s Ordinance of Secession in 1861.

¹⁰ Hathorn, 50; Frances R. Huff, “The Relationship of Oxford and the University of Mississippi, 1848-1947” (M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1947), 8.

¹¹ Sansing, 33.

¹² To access the university charter, I used the *Historical Catalogue of the University of Mississippi* (Nashville: Marshall and Burns Co., 1910), 6-7.

of intelligent young men out of Mississippi to the decadent, corrupting Yankee universities.¹³ The university was part of southern leaders' larger project to establish institutions across the region to educate elite white male students "under influence congenial to our own principles and institutions."¹⁴ With this mandate, the trustees set out to construct a southern academy, as Jacob Thompson put it, to "prove the pride and bulwark of our fellow citizens" and inculcate and establish "those eternal truths which were taught by him 'who spake as never man spake.'"¹⁵ As Thompson and others understood, these references to eternal truths and regional institutions functioned as appeals in defense of slavery and the accompanying racial caste system.

Before construction began the board carefully considered where slaves were to fit on campus. Tasked with the school's construction, the board settled on an initial plan of four buildings and decided that "special arrangements were needed for slave quarters."¹⁶ The board resolved in July of 1846 that the architect, an English immigrant named William Nichols, make an effort in his plans to carve out a basement in each building to provide a "servant's room" to lodge the expected complement of slaves. The basement would also contain storerooms, a dining room, a kitchen, and "at least two good rooms to accommodate a Professor's family."¹⁷ The board's inclination to house slaves and professors in such close proximity is perhaps surprising, but the decision reflects the realities of slavery. With space at a premium slaves could not be isolated from their place of work.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Jacob Thompson, exercising his authority and leadership, amended this initial design in April 1847 and instructed Nichols to devote the basement for student housing.¹⁹ This decision left the issue of slave housing somewhat uncertain. In practice, some of the university's slaves lived in the two duplexes Nichols designed for faculty

¹³ For more on southern educators' concern over cultural and intellectual dependence on the North before the Civil War, see Michael T. Bernath, *Confederate Minds: The Struggle for Intellectual Independence in the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁴ *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, August 3, 1855.

¹⁵ James Lloyd, *The University of Mississippi: The Formative Years, 1848-1906* (University, Miss: The University of Mississippi, 1979), 7.

¹⁶ Richard Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 59.

¹⁷ For a record of the board meeting minutes, I have used Florence E. Campbell, "Journal of the minutes of the Board of Trustees of the University of Mississippi, 1845-1860" (M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1939). See Campbell, 28.

¹⁸ Wade, 55-59.

¹⁹ Campbell, 40.

housing and in the kitchen, which had chambers for servants. Some also lodged with Oxford residents such as F. H. Reuff and John Davis, who were paid by the university to board slaves.²⁰

To furnish the labor required for construction, the board reached out to Lafayette County's slaveholders, including faculty and trustees such as Brown and Thompson, establishing a pattern that persisted throughout the antebellum period. In exchange for compensation local slaveholders proved eager to employ their slaves on campus projects. To ensure proper remuneration the board carefully noted any expenditure "as per vouchers filed." Typically, the expense reports recorded the type of contract work performed, but not by whom. Although the board commissioned Daniel Grayson of Panola County to build the Lyceum, and throughout 1847 he collected thousands of dollars for "Carpenter's work," the record does not indicate whether he employed slave labor.²¹ In early 1851, Thompson, Brown, and Pegues, the local trustees who oversaw the university's construction, began more detailed expense reports that indicate the university's use of slave labor. But again, they saw little need to explain that, for example, local resident H. Worley earned \$2,200 for "Carpenters work" and "brick work" performed by enslaved labor. So while the university's employment of slave labor often went undeclared, men like James Brown, whom the board's treasurer paid \$333.38 on July 15, 1852, "for services rendered in Superintending the building now being built at the University," used slave labor in their construction projects. Brown, for his part, collected thousands of dollars from the university throughout the antebellum period for maintenance and construction projects. He did not hesitate, as Chancellor Frederick Barnard observed, to "put a large force on."²²

The use of enslaved labor is more explicit when local slaveholders hired out their slaves to the university, which the board dutifully recorded. It appears that many prominent slaveholders in Oxford and Lafayette County collected revenues by leasing out their slaves. Robert Sheegog, an Oxford store proprietor who built William Faulkner's future home, Rowan Oak, hired out his slaves for \$200 in January of 1857 and

²⁰ Ibid., 364. Reuff received \$24 on 4/17/1858; John Davis received \$192.50, but he also provided the university with wood in addition to servant board. Ibid., 322.

²¹ Campbell, 71.

²² Ibid., 175, 181. Barnard to Hilgard, December 4, 1859. Eugene Hilgard collection, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (hereafter cited Hilgard papers).

again for \$600 the next year.²³ John Waddel, the first chair of “ancient and modern languages” from 1848 to 1856 and a future chancellor, filed vouchers for \$138.93 in 1856 and \$250 in 1857, both for “Servant Hire.”²⁴ Jacob Thompson collected \$200 in September of 1857 and leased his slaves out for another \$400 the next May.²⁵ Some slaveholders hired out their slaves for smaller fees, probably short-term. Local Oxonians J. E. Market and H. A. Barr collected \$33 and \$69.47 respectively for servant hire in 1856.²⁶ The University of Mississippi steadily demanded slave labor, and the board’s careful accounting reveals that small and large slaveholders profited from the university’s employment of slaves.

With a physical campus built, the university was prepared in the fall of 1848 to receive its first class of students. Before students arrived for the inaugural session the board of trustees addressed the issue of student fees and tuitions and decided to finance the school’s slave leases at least in part with students’ money. On October 16, 1848, less than a month before the first classes were set to begin, the board resolved that each student should pay several fees, including three dollars for “repairs and improvements,” ten dollars for “any damage to his room or other buildings that he may commit,” and also “the sum of four Dollars for servant hire.”²⁷ At a meeting the next day the board established the faculty position of proctor to receive these student fees and “disperse the same as required by the resolutions of the Board to hire servants for the University & to the students.”²⁸ In newspaper notices to prospective students and their families across the region, the university made clear that students would pay up front for service from the county’s enslaved people.

It fell to the proctor James M. Howry to account to his fellow trustees how much he spent to hire slaves for the university and students. For the first session, which began on November 6, 1848, and ended July 12, 1849, Howry reported that he had “hired a servant . . . for whose services and board he has paid one hundred and forty dollars. He also hired another servant for the year at one hundred and thirty five dollars

²³ Campbell, 325, 362.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 328, 364.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 325, 361.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 328.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 78. These fees increased steadily over time. While student fees and tuition amounted to only \$1,546.02 in 1852, by the tenth session in 1858 the proctor had \$7,268.33 in fees and tuition at his disposal.

besides board, and he has paid ten dollars for board.”²⁹ Howry performed his clerical tasks well, and the board duly entered into its minutes his scrupulous accounting of the university’s expenditures on slave labor. The summer following the university’s second session Howry reported paying a local man named A. G. Ellis \$83.25 “for servant hire,” plus an additional \$6.50 for slave clothing. That, he calculated, brought the full amount “for two servants as per contract for year 1850” to \$220.³⁰ The appearance of contractual language indicates some slaveholders hired out their slaves in long-term arrangements, underscoring the university’s continual demand for enslaved labor.³¹

The board of trustees early anticipated that slavery would be critical to the construction and operation of the university and developed a policy to partially finance slave labor through student fees. As these fees for “servant hire” flowed into the proctor’s coffers, many slaveholders within the community, including faculty and administrators, readily profited by hiring out their enslaved laborers whose earned wages “made significant contributions to the incomes” of their owners.³² Admittedly the university’s administrators did not always acknowledge the slave labor used by contractors under the school’s employ. But the board’s expenditure reports and the vouchers filed by Oxford and Lafayette County’s slaveholders underscore the economic importance of the university’s continual use of slave labor.

Documenting the university’s extensive use of slavery is a much easier task than uncovering enslaved experiences on campus. Simply put, and like other communities across the South, the university’s white population often did not consider the slaves on campus worthy of attention or study. A portrait of slavery at the university is possible, however, through the few observations of administrators and organizations such as the Phi Sigma Society that employed slave labor throughout the antebellum period. University officials, faculty, and students outlined their expectations for hired enslaved people, described slaves’ assigned tasks and duties, and at times carefully observed their actions as they pertained to the functioning of the university. Several key characteristics appear.

First, the university’s records indicate that slaves engaged in a variety of tasks in close contact with the campus’s free population, producing

²⁹ Campbell, 104.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 182.

³² Moore, 257.

long-term personal bonds. Next, some of their tasks, while mundane and rote, were not particularly strenuous, suggesting physical benefits from university employment. Further, the records emphasize the importance of slave pay, and the evidence suggests that slaves pressed their student masters for compensation. Significantly, it also appears that some slaves either hired out their own time to the university as wage laborers or negotiated the terms of their labor with administrators. Finally, slaves under long-term lease found opportunities to collect personal property often unavailable under the watchful eye of the plantation owner. In many ways, the university offered slaves a limited degree of autonomy and self-determination in a system designed to degrade and dehumanize them.

The benefits of employment on campus would have been apparent to the slaves of Lafayette County, though without direct testimony of their experiences any interpreted benefits can only be suggestive. Still, scholars of non-plantation slavery persuasively argue for tangible benefits slaves encountered through the hiring-out system employed by the university, and the known experiences of slaves on campus tend to reinforce these conclusions.³³ Removal from the direct oversight of the master or overseer offered slaves a respite from scrutiny and arbitrary violence, however brief. Non-agricultural labor might offer the chance to exercise and develop skills marketable in a specialized labor market, or an opportunity for slaves to sell their own surplus labor for compensation. Finally, the physical act of moving from the plantation or farm to a space like the university exposed these hired slaves to others within the broader Lafayette County community, offering a chance to communicate, exchange goods or gossip, and keep track of familial or fraternal networks often torn asunder by slave sales. The records indicate the university's slaves enjoyed at least some of these benefits.

Historians have a general portrait of Lafayette County's enslaved peoples through the slave narratives captured by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Lucindy Shaw, Polly Turner, Joanna Thompson Isom, and others all attested to the dehumanization, fear, physical exhaustion, and violence of slavery in north Mississippi. But historians have also observed in the journals and letters of late-antebellum Oxonians a "tendence . . . among many owners to give their slaves more freedom," including participation in the labor market and small monetary

³³ In particular, see Wade, especially Chapter 2.

allowances.³⁴ As Polly Turner indicated, her life as a slave on a plantation at Woodson's Ridge near Abbeville involved a limited degree of economic and physical freedom. During the 1850s her owner, William Turner, who filed construction vouchers with the university throughout 1857 and 1858, allowed her to raise chickens for sale at a local tavern, to pick cotton after hours by moonlight, and to sell chestnuts and hazelnuts in Memphis. Turner even let Polly and the other slaves keep the money they earned. Polly Turner's experiences help provide useful context for the slaves employed by the university.³⁵

While slaves on plantations within Lafayette County seized opportunities for extra mobility and money, Oxford's evangelical churches offered another institution that "tended to improve the treatment of plantation slaves generally."³⁶ For example, the deacons of College Hill Presbyterian Church, which included influential Oxonians like Alexander Shaw, James Quarles, and W. D. Pettis, admitted their slaves as full members of the congregation throughout the 1850s. In March of 1854 church officials met, they said, to "heartily approve [sic] and promise" support for the "oral & ministerial instruction of our slaves at College Church." Slaveholders' particular brand of evangelical Christianity insisted on the morality of slavery and demanded that slaves offer obedience and servitude to their master in accordance with divine instruction. To this end, the College Hill congregants even resolved to "make the effort by subscription [and] raise the means to build near College Church an African Church, where our slaves can be comfortably accommodated and instructed every Sabbath."³⁷ This African church evidently never materialized, but it is important that within certain spaces Lafayette County slaveholders extended paternalistic treatment and limited economic privileges to their slaves, a pattern that extended onto the University of Mississippi campus. Indeed, as Jacob Thompson affirmed, those who abused their slaves "would be despised by every

³⁴ Doyle, 141.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Moore, 85.

³⁷ College Hill Presbyterian Church minutes, March 18, 1854, Skipwith Historical and Genealogical Society, Oxford, MS.

man in Oxford.”³⁸

On campus, the university’s free population forged personal relationships with some slaves, reflecting the close proximity and frequent interactions that characterized slavery in many situations. A slave named George is perhaps the first enslaved individual mentioned by name in the university’s records, and his presence extended across the campus for several years. On July 12, 1849, the board of trustees resolved to pay George, the “college servant,” five dollars “as a present for the faithful manner in which he has performed his duties during the past session.”³⁹ A few months later the Phi Sigma Society, one of two literary societies that all students were required to join, also passed a resolution “that the Society give George (the college servant) \$1 [illegible] for attending to the hall.”⁴⁰ Whether the university leased George under a long-term contract or owned him outright is uncertain. It is not clear that the university owned any slaves at all. But George was a fixture on campus until at least July 1853, when the board of trustees charged the account of Professor Millington “for services of servant George as Janitor” while Millington was ill.⁴¹ For their part the Phi Sigma Society retained a slave named Simon in its employ for eight years. Not only did the society delegate Simon the ceremonial task of ringing the bell for each society meeting, but as the society prepared to close for the Civil War the students moved and carried a motion to “pay Simon,” one last time.⁴² These personal relationships opened opportunities for slaves like George and Simon to receive pecuniary benefits and preferential treatment by the university’s white population.

Most of the slave labor on campus was manual, deployed for construction projects. But students and faculty also expected slaves like George and Simon to perform routine tasks that probably contrasted favorably with the relentless agricultural labor of a plantation. The official

³⁸ Jacob Thompson also insisted that “No man strikes my negro that I do not hear his story. I will listen to my negro’s grievances. Before God and man I believe this to be my duty. No man has a right to touch him or her without my consent.” From the “Record of the Testimony and Proceedings, in the Matter of the Investigation, by the Trustees of the University of Mississippi, On the 1st and 2nd of March 1860, of the charges made by H. R. Branham, against the Chancellor of the University” (Jackson, MS: 1860), 28.

³⁹ Campbell, 110.

⁴⁰ Phi Sigma Society minutes ledger, September 29, 1849, Hermean/Phi Sigma societies collection, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi (hereafter cited as Phi Sigma).

⁴¹ Campbell, 193.

⁴² Phi Sigma, March 5, 1859; April 27, 1861.

records of the board of trustees and the Phi Sigma Society illuminate these tasks in some detail. In 1849, after rewarding George with the one dollar gift, the society members further stipulated that George “be required to sweep the floor and clean the spittoons every week” and “sweep down the cobwebs, bring water, and make fires whenever necessary.”⁴³ A year later the board of trustees passed a resolution that the university’s slaves be “required to devote all the time not necessarily engaged in cleaning up the dormitories, and furnishing the same with necessary water, and making fires, to cleaning off the College grounds as the said Proctor & Faculty may direct.”⁴⁴ The tasks were not always explicitly defined, as the ambiguous language of the board’s resolution suggests. But often white observers recorded even minor jobs in their meeting minutes, notably with careful attention to the slaves’ pay. When the Phi Sigma Society presented George’s account in 1849 “for lighting up the room, & other services,” the club resolved that the treasurer be “ordered to collect the money and pay it as soon as possible.”⁴⁵ Again, at a meeting in November 1851, the Society’s treasurer “was instructed to pay the negro for cleaning up the Hall.”⁴⁶ The next fall, a student named Harris proposed “that the Treasurer be instructed to pay Simon for his services in removing the chairs from the Hermean Hall to the Phi Sigma,” a resolution that carried.⁴⁷ At times the young men of Phi Sigma appeared utterly unwilling to do any physical labor at all. In December 1859, one “Mr. Gage” presented a resolution that “a fire be made in the fire place and was appointed as a committee to see Simon about it.”⁴⁸ The menial but predictable tasks the university’s slaves performed on campus likely offered physical benefits for people like George and “old Simon.”

As these entries indicate, the society felt an impetus to promptly pay for slave labor, certainly reflecting the power of the large slaveholders who hired out their slaves. But the records also suggest the slaves played a part in pressing for compensation. A member of Phi Sigma in 1850 “reported the Society in debt to Isaac, for services” and requested that the Treasurer “inquire into the matter and pay the debt if just.”⁴⁹ The next

⁴³ Phi Sigma, September 29, 1849.

⁴⁴ Campbell, 129.

⁴⁵ Phi Sigma, May 26, 1849.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1851.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, September 26, 1852.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, December 3, 1859.

⁴⁹ Phi Sigma, May 11, 1850.

month the society reminded the students that “the servant’s time had expired and he demanded his pay.” Again the treasurer “was instructed to pay the amount due.”⁵⁰ The society even consulted Simon about his wages, ordering that a “committee be appointed to confer, with old Simon, with regard to his account.”⁵¹ Perhaps slaves’ wages were seldom deposited into their own pockets, and as Eugene Genovese has shown, payment for work was often “part of a wider system of social control ... designed to stimulate productivity.”⁵² Still, some of the university’s slaves evidently observed the terms of their leased labor and felt little compunction in “demanding” their pay.

While university employment offered slaves - or, more likely, their owners - wages in exchange for their coerced and leased labor, the school appears to have offered the area’s slaves an opportunity to hire out their own labor for pay, representing the closest engagement in a wage labor market that most slaves in the South were able to achieve.⁵³ The university’s constant demand for slave labor seems to have rewarded slaves “for work done during the time recognized as the slaves’ own.”⁵⁴ Indeed, one of the more intriguing entries in the official record, the board of trustees observed in 1856 that three slaves, Moses, John, and Squash, were each entitled to monetary compensation for “Repairs at University.”⁵⁵ Unlike all other entries that recorded slave hire, the treasurer entered these individual slaves’ names with no white owner affixed, suggesting that these men marketed their free and surplus labor to the university and received (at least on paper) monetary remuneration. It is important to note that, because the free black population of Lafayette County was always very small, Moses, John, and Squash likely remained the property of a local slaveholder. Further, it is doubtful their masters resisted their prerogative to take their slaves’ earnings. But these slaves’ presence alongside men like Jacob Thompson and James Brown in the official record attests not only to the importance of the university as a space of increased opportunity for enslaved people, but underscores slaves’ contributions to the university.

Even if the university’s faculty and students did not offer monetary

⁵⁰ Ibid., June 15, 1850.

⁵¹ Ibid., December 3, 1859.

⁵² Moore, 257. Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 313-314.

⁵³ Moore, 268.

⁵⁴ Genovese, 314.

⁵⁵ Campbell, 322 – 328.

compensation for slave work, other evidence suggests slaves were at times able to negotiate the terms of their labor, at least with certain members of the faculty. In a revealing letter to his young friend Eugene Hilgard, the state geologist and engineer of the "Hilgard Cut," Chancellor Frederick Barnard expressed a quandary over John, one of James Brown's slaves on lease to the university and perhaps the same John mentioned in the board's minutes. Barnard informed Brown that he needed slaves to work the grounds of the new observatory, which now houses the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and Brown permitted John to enter the university's employ. The proctor, however, asked Barnard if John might work for him instead. Barnard consented only "if [John] was willing." Apparently John agreed to the change in labor and spent his time chopping wood and making fires. The proctor later complained, however, that John refused to work on Sunday, a matter Barnard considered "indispensable with University servants." "I had no right, that I knew of, to coerce him," Barnard explained to Hilgard, "even if he would obey me more readily than [the proctor]." Barnard advised that the proctor discharge John rather than force him to work, but by this time Barnard had no use for John, since over the course of this argument James Brown had arrived from Jackson to personally supervise observatory ground-clearing, deploying a "large force" of additional - presumably his own - slave laborers. "[John] seems to be too much of his own master to be of any use here," Barnard concluded. "The best I can do," he told Hilgard, is to "advise John to get work for himself and account to you."⁵⁶

Barnard's letter reveals precious insight into the complex arrangement among slaveholders, faculty, and slaves on campus grounds. On leasing John to the university Brown gave Barnard freedom to utilize John's labor however he saw fit. Barnard evidently had a congenial relationship with John since he refused to coerce the slave despite his confidence in John's compliance. The proctor's frustration with John's refusal to work on Sunday supports the evidence that plantation labor patterns, in which "Sunday was the slaves' day by custom as well as law," transferred to the university campus.⁵⁷ Finally, Barnard recognized John's self-mastery and ability to hire out his own labor, reflecting not only Barnard's ambivalence toward his own prerogatives but the ways the university offered John opportunities for

⁵⁶ Barnard to Hilgard, December 4, 1859, Hilgard papers.

⁵⁷ Genovese, 314.

self-direction, financial gain, and mobility.

The university also provided enslaved individuals opportunities to collect property outside the supervision characteristic of the plantation. In another brief letter to Hilgard, Barnard informed his friend of the recent death of Nathan, one of Barnard's domestic slaves. "My wife broke down as soon as Nathan died," Barnard lamented to his friend, though he quickly assured him that she was "better now." What was alarming to Barnard was not necessarily Nathan's death but what transpired the night of his funeral. That night, Barnard explained, "my cellar was feloniously entered, and [Nathan's] little hoard dug for, and I suppose removed, as it cannot be found." Until the theft, Barnard said, he did not know "where he had placed it." Barnard did not indicate to Hilgard whether Nathan's store was a collection of stolen or purchased items, money, or something else. Still, Barnard knew about and evidently pondered the location of Nathan's "little hoard." Perhaps another slave, one of Nathan's friends or enemies, dug the cache out shortly after Nathan's death. Regardless, this small drama reveals much about the abilities of university slaves like Nathan to collect possessions and, if only in life, keep them secure.⁵⁸

Reconstructing enslaved people's experiences on the campus of the University of Mississippi is difficult because the university's white administrators and students were generally unobservant and unreflective about the campus's slave population. There are few records that discuss slavery at all, and even fewer that might potentially capture the perspectives of enslaved people. Still, the evidence, such as it is, suggests that the slaves employed by the university enjoyed some tangible benefits from their positions. Close proximity to students and faculty brought some slaves like George and Simon into long-term personal relationships with white masters. Others seem to have enjoyed an additional degree of independence, exercised some leverage with respect to their labor, and accumulated possessions or money in ways difficult for isolated agricultural slaves. Despite the continual degradations of slavery, enslaved people likely viewed the university as a negotiated space where they could extract more from their labor than under the direct employment of their owner.

With slavery and enslaved people a constant and ubiquitous presence on campus, the university's student body engaged in extensive interactions, both intellectual and physical, with the peculiar institution.

⁵⁸ Barnard to Hilgard, January 18, 1860, Hilgard papers.

The antebellum administrators' persistent anxiety over student behavior, and students' own comments and observations toward slavery and slaves, creates a rich portrait of students' changing relationship to the university's enslaved population. Throughout the antebellum period the administration struggled to find a policy that could regulate and control students' interactions with slaves. Making the officials' task more difficult was the tension between the students' dual identity as master and pupil. By birthright these southern students understood themselves masters of black people because their views were legitimized by their own experiences, by traditions, and by the state's laws. As students, however, these young men were subordinate to university staff, subject to disciplinary action and oversight. While the faculty and administration ostensibly claimed full authority over the university's slaves, their vacillation on privileges regarding slave hire, and their ambiguous attitude about students' ability to direct and discipline enslaved people, created a climate that fostered violence and oppression on campus. As the sectional crisis intensified, students acted on their racial prerogatives and enforced their mastery over the campus's slave population. In the end, the faculty proved hesitant to assert their own authority and to deny the students their perceived role as masters of the university's slaves.

While the students' opinions and attitudes toward slavery were not officially or systematically recorded, there is evidence that most students welcomed debate and discussion of the institution, especially as the sectional crisis deepened in 1859 and 1860. On March 21, 1857, the Phi Sigma Society heard propositions for their weekly debate topic and selected the following: "Will African slavery be perpetuated in the United States?" The society president decided the advantage lay with those arguing in the negative.⁵⁹ As university historian David Sansing observed in his reading of the *Mississippi University Magazine*, first published in 1857 and written by members of the two literary societies, student contributors both praised Professor Albert Bledsoe's railings against abolitionism and "blasted the board of trustees for rejecting popular textbooks critical of slavery."⁶⁰ "If the institution of slavery is wrong, we ought to be willing for the wrong to be exposed," one student wrote, and besides, textbooks with antislavery chapters were toothless if "slavery is tolerable on the principle of morality and religion, which we believe."⁶¹ The Phi Sigma

⁵⁹ Phi Sigma, March 21, 1857.

⁶⁰ Sansing, 64.

⁶¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 64.

Society even introduced a motion as late as February 1861 to reconsider a proposal “to burn an abolition book.” The society carried the motion, “Whereupon the book was restored to the library.”⁶² Two days later, however, Francis Fentress, who would drop out of the university at the outbreak of war to fight for the Confederacy, “moved that two abolition books in [the] library be burnt.” The motion carried.⁶³

The presence of slaves on campus, and the university’s reliance on enslaved labor, demanded a set of rules and guidelines regarding their employment. The essential issue for administrators was authority. The board recognized the need to explicitly define who had the power to direct and discipline the university’s slaves, but the administrators equivocated on the students’ own authority as they experimented with policies designed to safeguard both efficient use of slave labor and the security of the slaveholders’ human investments on lease to the school. The resulting confusion helped engender conflicts over authority between the faculty and students.

It was imperative for the large slaveholders, who leased their slaves to the university, to establish some ground rules for slave labor, particularly on a campus of young men known for rambunctious and rowdy behavior. The members of the faculty presented their attempt to clarify questions of authority in March 1850, resolving that “the College servants all be employed under the direction of the President.”⁶⁴ But it was not until trustee James Brown proposed to the board a set of rules on July 9, 1850, that the administration codified regulations regarding students and slave labor. In accordance with Brown’s proposal the board agreed that “the servants employed about the College, be under the control & direction of the Proctor and Faculty.” The board outlined the slaves’ responsibilities (making fires, fetching water, maintaining the campus grounds) and stipulated that the university’s slaves, like the students, were “not allowed to leave the College grounds without permission of the Faculty.”⁶⁵ With this resolution the board established the parameters of authority, defined the slaves’ tasks, and restricted their physical mobility. Until 1852, it was university policy that the authority to direct and discipline slaves was shared among the administration, the proctor, and the faculty, and explicitly denied to students. With his many vouchers for campus

⁶² Phi Sigma, February 29, 1861.

⁶³ Ibid., March 2, 1861.

⁶⁴ Minutes of the faculty of the University of Mississippi, March 20, 1850.

⁶⁵ Campbell, 129.

construction projects, Brown probably proposed these rules to protect his slave property and limit abuse or misuse by students. It is unclear, though, whether Brown was responding to an existing problem or pattern of abuse on the part of the students. Still, his resolution affirmed that while the slave was under contract with the university the sole authority over his or her labor lay with the faculty and administration. Despite the compulsory servant hire fee, students were prohibited from exercising their authority over the university's slaves.⁶⁶

Whether this restriction on students' authority prompted opposition remains unclear. Nonetheless, on July 14, 1852, the board rescinded the mandatory four-dollar servant hire fee. Instead, the Board established that students could "hire or not their own servants as they may deem most advisable."⁶⁷ Presumably, authority to direct and discipline personal slaves transferred to the students, while slaves used for construction and maintenance remained under administrative control. Despite the policy shift the official *Rules and Regulations* handbook reminded students that "the Faculty shall at all times, have the power to dismiss any servant for misconduct."⁶⁸ This change in policy also proved temporary.

On July 18, 1856, four years after adopting the optional policy, and under the recommendation of the new university president Frederick Barnard, the board reversed itself again. The trustees resolved that "the privilege now extended to the Students of hiring Servants be abolished, and that each Student and Tutor occupying the Dormitories, be required, when paying the other College Fees, to pay or deposit with the Treasurer the Sum of Five Dollars each to cover Servant hire." Not only did the board increase the fee for slave hire, it reaffirmed the proctor's responsibility "in hiring and superintending Servants for the use of the college, providing wood, keeping up the necessary repairs of the buildings, cisterns, wells, and improving and beautifying the College grounds, and in auditing

⁶⁶ Brown, of course, did not intend to cede all authority from himself, for as both slaveholder and member of the board he retained the right to direct his slaves' labor. Several years after the resolution Barnard wrote Hilgard and lamented that construction and maintenance of the campus was delayed because Brown had appropriated his laborers for other projects. Barnard explained that the construction of a particular cistern, already behind schedule, would not be completed for the foreseeable future because Brown had "borrowed the cement" and the laborers. "Nothing is going ahead," Barnard complained, and for projects around campus "progress is stopped." See Barnard to Hilgard, October 8, 1856, Hilgard papers.

⁶⁷ Campbell, 177.

⁶⁸ "Rules and Regulations of the University of Mississippi" (Holly Springs: "Miss. Times" Cheap Book and Job Office, Print., 1854), Chapter 8, Section 2.

the accounts of the Students, for their relative assessments for repairs and Servants hire.”⁶⁹ The next year, according to the new university regulations, undergraduates were additionally forbidden from keeping slaves (or horses) on campus or in the vicinity of the university.⁷⁰ Again, the reasons for the equivocations are unclear, but Barnard’s termination of a policy that acknowledged students’ authority over slaves on campus was likely part of his wider efforts to improve student discipline.

Overall the students’ relationship to slavery and university’s slaves was characterized by this tension between the students’ perceived rights of mastery and their subjection, as pupils, to disciplinary action and even expulsion for exercising that right. The students never fully relinquished their entitlement to control slaves. Within the learned halls of Phi Sigma, where students were “free from the tutelage of their professors,” students regularly directed the labor of slaves like George, Isaac, and Simon.⁷¹ Administrators apparently accepted this compromise and reserved their right to full authority. But this unstable balance tipped as sectional conflict appeared increasingly likely. One student, Mr. Gage of Phi Sigma, who in 1859 had instructed “old Simon” to ring the bell for each meeting, appeared before the faculty in May the next year on charges of “having severely beaten one of the college negroes, and as having acknowledged the act.” The faculty instructed Barnard to “converse” with Gage and recommend disciplinary action only if Gage failed to show a “proper spirit in relation to the occurrence.”⁷² There is no record if Gage exhibited such a spirit, and Barnard likely admonished the student with no official punishment.

Indeed, according to the observations of the faculty in their meeting minutes, as civil war approached the incidents of student violence against slaves dramatically increased. Of course, student violence against slaves was nothing new. The university had expelled one student early in the first session for “getting drunk, stabbing a negro man, and absconding from College without leave,” and cited another several years later for causing an enslaved woman to break a basket of glassware.⁷³ But the record is surprisingly silent on student violence until 1860. Then, in

⁶⁹ Campbell, 295-296.

⁷⁰ Sansing, 54.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷² Minutes of the faculty, May 7, 1860. This Mr. Gage almost certainly refers to Jeremiah Gage, a member of the University Greys killed at Gettysburg.

⁷³ Minutes of the faculty, November 28, 1848; December 5, 1853.

quick succession, the faculty heard numerous cases of student violence in flagrant violation of the official regulations regarding the faculty and administration's reserved authority to discipline the university's slaves.

On October 16, 1860, the anniversary of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the proctor warned the faculty "of whipping, beating, and other maltreatment of the College negroes, by a self-constituted 'Vigilance Committee of Students.'" Apparently, some students had found "an ounce or two of powder" in a slave's room and "proposed to apprehend a general 'negro insurrection.'" Professor Moore resolved, with unanimous commendation by the faculty, that "all attempts to discipline the college negroes without authority from the Proctor" would result in disciplinary action against the students. Barnard then communicated this resolution to the students. Fear of insurrection had gripped Oxford a decade before, but in the context of heightened sectional antagonism, and with the memory of John Brown fresh in their minds, the students seized the initiative to control the local slave population.⁷⁴

Less than a month later the faculty called a special meeting after the proctor reported that one of the university's slaves had been "brutally and severally burned on the cheek by a Student, and without provocation." The faculty present agreed the incident was "worthy of notice" and reconvened the next morning to investigate. Under questioning one "Mr. Wright" confessed to burning the slave with his cigar. The faculty seemed undecided as to a course of action. A vote for indefinite suspension first lost to a tie (Barnard, with memories of his own ordeal before the board fresh on his mind, refused to cast a deciding vote), and then it passed by majority the next day.⁷⁵

Barely two weeks passed before the faculty summoned a junior named "Mr. Rice" on suspicion of beating a college slave. "After some hesitation" Rice admitted he "whipped the negro but denied that he had treated him brutally," citing a "personal insult" from the slave as provocation. After some deliberation, the faculty decided to require Rice to sign a pledge that he would never again "take the law in his own hands in such a case," and instead report all "misdemeanors" by the university's slaves to the

⁷⁴ Minutes of the faculty, October 16, 1860. On fear of insurrection, see Doyle, 140. Three days before, on October 13, 1860, the Phi Sigma Society debated whether "the influences which tend to dissolve the Union [were] greater than those which tend to perpetuate it." The president decided in favor of the affirmative.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, November 5, 6, 7, 1860. Mr. Wright, after "expressing sorrow for his act," was readmitted on November 26, 1860.

administration and faculty. In distinguishing his chastisement from brutality, Rice skillfully negotiated his violation of university rules by affirming the paternalistic intent of his actions. Nor was Rice the only student to justify violence against slaves. After “Mr. Melton” pled guilty to beating one of the university’s slaves in January 1861, he “succeeded in justifying the act” to the faculty’s satisfaction and was “no further punished than by the imposition of 25 demerit marks.” Like Rice, Melton pledged to “never again attempt to chastise one of the College Negroes.”⁷⁶ Despite earlier resolutions that “no person connected with the University shall in any manner interfere with the negroes or give them any orders,” the faculty and board appeared unwilling to restrict the students’ violent interference with and abuse of the university’s slaves.⁷⁷

The students of the University of Mississippi during the antebellum years were in an awkward position. The laws and traditions of the South afforded them certain privileges over slaves, but the rules and regulations of the university officially restricted those privileges for students. The administration’s equivocation regarding the students’ right to hire their own slaves bred confusion, though in practice students never fully relinquished their right to direct slave labor. As the sectional crisis grew, and students became increasingly convinced of insurrectionary plots or threats to the institution of slavery, violence against the university’s enslaved population increased. Despite rules designed to protect the property on lease from the county’s large slaveholders, including the university’s trustees, the faculty and administration yielded more and more to the students’ exercise of their physical mastery over enslaved people.

Finally, the university’s commitment to slavery and its dependence on slave labor provides new context for the “Branham Affair,” the infamous 1860 trial of Chancellor Frederick Barnard by the board of trustees on charges of tacit abolitionism. The fervor surrounding Barnard’s expulsion of the student offender on the basis of slave testimony assumes a more complex response in the context of heightened racial violence and increased sectional tensions on the eve of the Civil War. Rather than simply a personal feud between irritated parties, the trial reflects instead the central place of slavery at the University of Mississippi, the necessity of consensus, and the fears and anxieties surrounding perceived threats to the South’s racial and legal order.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the faculty, January 14, 1861.

⁷⁷ Campbell, 374-375.

Sexual violence against slaves by students is not well represented in the documentary record. In December of 1853 the faculty investigated a student named Williamson on charges of visiting Oxford “after 9 PM” to commit a “most flagitious outrage upon a servant girl,” which Williamson emphatically denied.⁷⁸ Nearly the entire free population on campus was young men, and unlike the slave population of Lafayette County, northern Mississippi in general was disproportionately male.⁷⁹ But still the record is mostly silent. It is likely that students’ sexual encounters with slaves went unreported or were handled delicately without official intervention. Whatever the reasons for this lacuna in the records, the proximity, familiarity, and continual presence of slaves on the all-male campus ensured the probability of sexual relationships between students and other residents of Lafayette County and Oxford, including slaves.

The details of Samuel Humphreys’s assault on an enslaved woman named Jane in May of 1859 were well known due to Chancellor Barnard’s intervention and because, facing charges of antislavery sentiment, he demanded the publication of the official record of his trial. On May 12, 1859, Humphreys and another student broke into faculty housing where Humphreys raped and beat the twenty-nine-year-old Jane, leaving her injured but able to recognize her assailant. Though Jane testified that Humphreys was the perpetrator, in general the faculty’s handling of the case was marked by the same ambivalence and equivocation that characterized most student violations in the late antebellum period. While the faculty were “morally convinced” of Humphreys’s “shameful designs” upon Jane, and equally convinced of his guilt in “inflicting severe personal injury” that left Jane “for some days incapacitated for labor,” Jane had no legal standing in Mississippi law and thus could not testify against Humphreys.⁸⁰ Barnard encouraged Humphreys’s parents to withdraw him for the semester, and they did so that spring without incident. It was only when Barnard categorically denied Humphreys’s application for readmission the following semester that grumblings emerged from some faculty members and the rumors of Barnard’s abolitionist sympathies spread.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Minutes of the faculty, December 5, 1853.

⁷⁹ Hathorn, 77.

⁸⁰ These proceedings were not recorded until charges against Barnard had been filed. See the Minutes of the faculty, February 2, 1860.

⁸¹ David Sansing details these events in *A Sesquicentennial History*, 97.

Historians of the university often argue that the charges brought by H. R. Branham, an Oxford physician, and his co-conspirators were a bluff, as one of Barnard's biographers put it, a "personal antagonism in which the enemies of Barnard sought to use the prejudices of the moment and locality to destroy Barnard professionally once and for all."⁸² A recent historian of the university agrees that Barnard's bold plans to reorganize the university and increase admission standards, reform curriculum, and strengthen student discipline left some faculty disgruntled. In this reading, the controversy surrounding Humphreys's suspension and Jane's testimony was little more than a convenient *casus belli*, the product of personal feuds designed to "challenge Barnard's soundness on slavery and states' rights" by manipulating his northern pedigree and the latent sectionalism within the faculty.⁸³ Some have even suggested Branham's religious faith motivated his attack, citing his connection to students in the "Mystic Seven," a fraternity that "seemed to be oriented more in its symbolism to the Hebrew tradition."⁸⁴ These historians tend to agree the board's eventual, and unequivocal, absolution of Barnard reflects the flimsy nature of Branham's political attack.

But Branham articulated his own reasons for bringing charges on Barnard that capture his preoccupation with the perceived threat posed by Barnard's apparent unsoundness on the slavery question. In a rambling defensive pamphlet, published "against the advice of [his] nearest and dearest friends," Branham insisted that he had no ulterior motive to bring charges against Barnard, and indeed, at the time of the Humphreys incident he and Barnard were on "the most friendly terms." When word reached him that Barnard had introduced "the statement of a negro, as evidence against a student," Branham felt compelled to correct this "gross injustice." In bringing formal charges Branham sought to raise the issue of Jane's testimony, which, he pointed out, Barnard himself admitted was "not legal testimony," before the faculty and trustees to both exculpate Humphreys and confirm Barnard's long-suspected abolitionist proclivities. For Branham, Barnard's actions

⁸² William Chute, "The Life of F. A. P. Barnard to his Election as President of Columbia College in 1864" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1951), 317. Chute's published version of this dissertation is entitled *Damn Yankee!*

⁸³ Sansing, 97. In this interpretation, Sansing draws heavily from Allen Cabaniss's interpretation. See Allen Cabaniss, *A History of the University of Mississippi* (University, Miss: University of Mississippi, 1949), 46.

⁸⁴ *The Heritage of Lafayette County, Mississippi* (Oxford: Skipwith Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., 1986), 88.

proved that “he is as high in the confidence of the worst of abolitionists as he is of the best Southerner.”⁸⁵

In fact, Barnard was often dismayed over what he considered the backward desolation of the benighted southern people, famously blaming the “misery of the situation in Mississippi” on the “destructive tendencies of the people.”⁸⁶ Recounting his advice to a colleague’s son at the outset of his own academic career, Barnard admitted he could hardly “bid godspeed to a young man bent on the insane and suicidal (suicidal so far as happiness is concerned certainly) pursuit of a professorship in a southern college.”⁸⁷ It is not surprising then that historians attribute the controversy over Humphreys’s rape and assault on Jane as an extension of widespread antipathy toward Barnard’s “Yankee” sentiments and anti-Southern prejudices, but it is not enough to argue that Humphreys’s expulsion “probably wouldn’t have mattered much” but for Barnard’s powerful enemies within Oxford and the faculty.⁸⁸ By factoring Jane’s own account of her assault into his considerations for disciplinary action, Barnard violated Humphreys’s racially-grounded legal rights and, more damningly, the South’s entire social, economic, and political order. At a moment when slavery seemed under threat across the South, Branham’s charges reflected another expression of fear and anxiety over internal dissension on the region’s peculiar institution.

The University of Mississippi’s relationship to slavery represents an important, if uncomfortable, alternative narrative to the school’s celebrated past. While “Ole Miss” attempts to address its role as antagonist during the Civil Rights movement, its complicity in slavery hides in plain sight in buildings built with coerced labor and places named for local slaveholders. Buried within the official records, private correspondences, and informal/off-hand observations by students and faculty, this alternative narrative emerges. The university’s extensive use of slave labor offered financial return for the community’s slaveholders, including those within the faculty and administration. The slaves themselves likely found increased opportunities for mobility, financial reward, self-direction, and autonomy through employment on campus. Students struggled to balance their dual identities as racial masters and obedient pupils, and despite official

⁸⁵ H. R. Branham, “A Review of the Action of the Trustees in the Trial of Chancellor F. A. P. Barnard, and a Defence [*sic*] of the Prosecutor,” (Oxford: 1860), 1-8.

⁸⁶ Barnard to Hilgard, November 6, 1858, Hilgard papers.

⁸⁷ Barnard to Hilgard, November 11, 1856, Hilgard papers.

⁸⁸ *The Heritage of Lafayette County*, 90.

policies barring their right to direct and discipline the university's slaves, the administration proved unwilling to restrict students' violent efforts to assert their own racial prerogatives. Slavery's crucial importance to the university makes the urgency of the "Branham affair" more explicable.

Institutions of higher learning are well positioned to lead national discussions of slavery and race in America. Due to the University of Mississippi's extensive participation in the enslavement of others, and its history of racial discrimination and violence more generally, the school has the opportunity to address this past and join the ranks of other colleges and universities nation-wide. With more research a fuller and more complex depiction of slavery on campus should appear, one that will help uncover more completely the experiences of Lafayette County's enslaved people and the university's deep, twisting, and fascinating relationship to race long before James Meredith set foot on campus. George, Simon, Isaac, and Jane helped build the university too, and the school will benefit from the inclusion of their stories.

William Leon Higgs: Mississippi Radical¹

by Charles Dollar

A special issue of *Life Magazine* on September 14, 1962, was devoted to the “Take Over Generation” that consisted of “One Hundred of the Most Important Young Men and Women in the United States.” Included was twenty-six-year-old William L. Higgs, a Harvard-trained lawyer, who was described as a “A southern maverick, the only white lawyer in Mississippi who actively takes civil rights segregation cases. He was the first attorney who challenged the powerful Citizen’s Council.”² From January 1961 until February 1963, Higgs had wide public exposure as an advocate for equal justice under law for black Mississippians. He relocated to Washington in February 1963 where he created the Washington Human Rights Project to promote civil rights initiatives.

Higgs is infrequently mentioned or barely mentioned in most studies of the civil rights era,³ so some might be inclined to view him as an eccentric gadfly who only dabbled in major civil rights events and activities. This article argues that Higgs did much more, especially after his move to Washington where he created the aforementioned Washington Human Rights Project that played an important role in helping shape the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Moreover, as the Washington legal representative of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, he was a strong advocate for social and political justice for blacks in Mississippi.

¹ There is no known body of William L. Higgs’s papers. Except for several letters from Higgs found in a handful of manuscript collections and archives, most of the source material drawn upon in this article includes newspapers, magazines, organization official reports, oral history interview transcripts, telephone interviews, unpublished dissertations, and excellent book-length studies on some aspect of the history of Mississippi in the 1950s and 1960s.

² *Life Magazine*, Vol. 53, No. 11 (September 14, 1962), 4-10.

³ An exception is John Howard: *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 150-158.

CHARLES M. DOLLAR is a retired historian, archivist, and archival educator at Oklahoma State University, the National Archives and Records Administration, and the University of British Columbia.

William Leon Higgs, the second son of Cyrus and Jessie Higgs, was born on November 26, 1935, in Greenville, Mississippi. Both parents worked for the U.S. Post Office, so they had a relatively stable income during the Depression years. Although Greenville was the most progressive city in Mississippi, this seems to have had little impact on Higgs when he was growing up because he never questioned race relations. Hodding Carter III, a high school classmate, observed many years later that "Billy Higgs" was very smart, but he was shy and had few interpersonal skills. Moreover, he tended to be a loner who had few relationships with fellow students.⁴

A precocious student in high school, Higgs skipped his senior year and enrolled at the University of Mississippi in September 1952, not yet seventeen years old.⁵ Years later, Hodding Carter III recalled that Higgs was so bright he detected an error in a University of Mississippi entrance exam and derived great pleasure in calling it to the attention of school officials.⁶ He had a heavy class load, completing requirements for a B.A. degree in three years and graduating at the top of his class.⁷ Although his undergraduate major was mathematics, Higgs decided to attend Harvard Law School. Despite his stellar undergraduate performance, he did not excel as a law student, earning average grades.⁸ He focused on constitutional law and federal procedures, not realizing how important they would become in his work as a civil rights lawyer.

After graduating from Harvard Law School at the age of twenty-two, Higgs satisfied his military commitment by serving six months on active duty in the U.S. Army Reserves Adjutant General Corp.⁹ He returned to Jackson in 1958 and joined Henley, Jones, and Henley,¹⁰ a prestigious law firm where he soon realized a traditional law practice had little appeal, so he opened his own private law practice. Shortly thereafter, he was an unsuccessful candidate for election to represent Hinds County in the state legislature. Not yet twenty-five years old,

⁴ Author's interview of Hodding Carter III, June 18, 2014, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁵ University of Mississippi Official Transcript of William L. Higgs, in possession of the author.

⁶ Author's interview of Hodding Carter III, June 18, 2014.

⁷ University of Mississippi Official Transcript of William L. Higgs.

⁸ John Howard, *Men Like That: Southern Queer History*, 150.

⁹ "William L. Higgs Investigative File," November 21, 1967, Federal Bureau of Investigation Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Release, FOIAPA Number 391334, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, DC. Copy in possession of the author courtesy of Charles W. Eagles, Oxford, Mississippi.

¹⁰ "William L. Higgs Investigative File," June 19, 1968.

on April 1, 1960, Higgs announced his plan to challenge incumbent congressman John Bell Williams in the Democratic primary. One of his campaign themes was "A strong and aggressive policy of continued segregation . . . but without emotionalism and demagoguery."¹¹ Higgs had few connections with the Democratic Party in Mississippi and virtually no public visibility in Hinds County, so it is unclear why he would challenge an incumbent who had been in office since 1946. Higgs's campaign attracted very little coverage by the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* and the Jackson *Daily News*. Not surprisingly, Williams easily won the primary election, receiving 32,175 votes to Higgs's 3,628.¹²

Unhappy with the 1960 Democratic National Convention's selection of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson as its presidential and vice-presidential candidates, the Mississippi Democratic Party's support for the national ticket was tepid. Seeing an opportunity, Higgs volunteered to serve as chair of the Mississippi Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson, which put him in touch with the Democratic National Committee and brought him statewide exposure. He made several television speeches on behalf of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, including support for the National Democratic Party's strong support for civil rights.¹³ Given his support for segregation in his primary campaign in April and May, his "remarkable conversion" to civil rights¹⁴ only three months later seemed opportunistic. Nonetheless, his loyal support of the Kennedy-Johnson ticket in Mississippi was rewarded with an invitation to attend the Inauguration, including the inaugural ball. He reported in the *Northside Reporter* that while in Washington he had an appointment with the newly-appointed solicitor general of the United States, Archibald Cox, a former Harvard Law School professor, and had attended a party hosted by the legal advisor to the State Department, Abraham Chayes, both of whom Higgs knew through his years at Harvard Law School.¹⁵ He also met Burke Marshall, the newly-appointed assistant attorney general for civil rights, who requested that Higgs keep him informed

¹¹ "Statement of William L. Higgs," April 1, 1960, William Higgs, Congressional Candidate, 1960-1961, Box 2182, Folder 8, Mississippi State AFL-CIO Records, Georgia State University Library, Special Collections and Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

¹² Series 107, Election Returns, Box 3026, Election Returns June 7, 1960 (Primary: U.S. Senator, U.S. Representatives, and Mississippi Supreme Court Judges. State of Mississippi).

¹³ "Bill Higgs, December 19, 1965," 11, Oral History Transcript, Box 5, Folder 10, Howard Zinn Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

¹⁴ Howard, *Men Like That*, 150.

¹⁵ *Northside Reporter*, February 2, 1961.

about events in Mississippi.¹⁶ Doubtless, he discussed with Marshall and other officials the recent law suit he had filed to enjoin the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission from providing public funds to the White Citizens' Council, a private organization.

The Memphis *Commercial Appeal* reported on December 30, 1960, that the Sovereignty Commission had provided \$5,000 a month to the Citizens' Council without any documentation of how the money would be used.¹⁷ Three days later, Higgs¹⁸ filed a federal law suit to enjoin the Sovereignty Commission to cease the monthly payments, arguing the payments were unconstitutional because they violated the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and tax funds were being used to undermine the "law of the land" established by decisions of the Supreme Court against segregation.¹⁹ The Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* defended the Sovereignty Commission, claiming the NAACP was behind the litigation.²⁰ Hazel Brannon Smith wrote in the Lexington *Advertiser* that the individuals who filed this suit did "for all of the people of the state a tremendous service" because the founding fathers who wrote the state constitution never intended "that any private organization would be given taxpayers' funds to achieve its objectives."²¹

After two of the plaintiffs withdrew from the case, Higgs requested a postponement because he needed more time to prepare for the hearing.²² However, after depositions were scheduled for early March Higgs became involved in providing legal assistance to Freedom Riders arrested in Jackson and there was no follow-up. Eventually, the law suit

¹⁶ "Statement of William L. Higgs Jackson, MISS," 51, Hearings Before Subcommittee No. 5 of the Committee of the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Amendments to Abolish Tax and Property Qualifications for Electors in Federal Elections (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962).

¹⁷ *Commercial Appeal*, December 30, 1960, Mississippi Edition.

¹⁸ There were four plaintiffs, including Higgs. Robert L. T. Smith, a retired black employee of the U.S. Post Office and two leaders of organized labor, Lottie Daniels and Jack Shaefer, who withdrew because of pressure from fellow union members. Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, January 24, 1961. "Bill Higgs, December 19, 1965," 3, Oral History Transcript.

¹⁹ Docket 1-7-1961, *Higgs, et al. v. Citizens' Council Forum, et al.*, Case #3068, Civil Case Files, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi, Jackson Division, Records of District Courts of the United States, Record Group 21, National Archives and Records Administration, Atlanta (hereafter cited as NARA, Atlanta).

²⁰ "NAACP Backs U.S. Suit," Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, March 19, 1961.

²¹ Hazel Brannon Smith, "Through Hazel Eyes," Lexington *Advertiser*, January 2, 1961.

²² Jackson *Daily News*, January 27, 1961; Docket 1-26-1961, NARA, Atlanta.

was dismissed without prejudice.²³ Higgs's inaction may also have been influenced by threats he received from the president of the Greenville Bank and Trust Company to call in a loan Higgs had co-signed with his parents unless he dropped the case.²⁴

Doubtless, this litigation gave him a great deal of public exposure, especially after *The New York Times* published a UPI story about the lawsuit.²⁵ The big issue for Higgs was that neither the Sovereignty Commission nor the Citizen's Council wanted this kind of public scrutiny, so he had come into their crosshairs.

Several weeks after his return from attending President Kennedy's inauguration, Higgs gave a lecture on civil rights at Jackson State College. After the lecture a young black man, who identified himself as James Meredith, asked him, "How do we know you're not a traitor? How do we know you're not paid for by the Citizens' Council?"²⁶ Higgs's response apparently convinced Meredith that it was safe to talk with him because Meredith told him he had applied for admission to the University of Mississippi. Higgs suggested Meredith come to his office to discuss his plan. A few days later Meredith did so, and knowing that Burke Marshall, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, would be interested in this development, Higgs called his office and had Meredith speak directly to Marshall to explain his plan. Marshall told Meredith the Civil Rights Division would support his application in any way it could. After the call was over, Higgs advised Meredith to prepare a written statement about his goals and send it to the Justice Department.²⁷ Technically, Bill Higgs had become a legal advisor to James Meredith, but in fact Meredith had already contacted the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund for assistance, thereby setting the stage for a law suit. Higgs attended subsequent court hearings on Meredith's application, usually sitting with blacks.²⁸

Meredith's application to enroll at the University of Mississippi was not the only challenge to segregation with which Higgs became involved.

²³ Dockets 1-9-1963 and 3-31-1966, NARA, Atlanta.

²⁴ "Statement of William L. Higgs to FBI," February 2, 1961.

²⁵ *New York Times*, January 8, 1961, p. 62.

²⁶ Hendrik Hertzberg, "Meredith in Danger of Being Shot, Higgs Tells Meeting of H-R Liberals," *The Harvard Crimson*, October 17, 1962.

²⁷ Charles Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 225-226.

²⁸ SCR ID #1-76-0-23-2-1-1, Series 2515, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Records, 1956-1973, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS. Hereafter cited as MDAH.

Nine members of the Tougaloo College NAACP youth chapter staged a sit-in at the Jackson Public Library on March 27, 1961. They entered the library and when asked why they were there they explained they were doing research for college courses. Police quickly arrived on the scene and instructed the students to leave. Refusing, they were arrested and charged with breach of the peace. At the trial the next day they were convicted, fined \$100, and given suspended sentences. This event “unleashed a burst of activity by black youth in Mississippi,”²⁹ but it was also the first instance when Bill Higgs complained directly to the Department of Justice about the Jackson city police’s violation of the nine students’ civil rights.³⁰ Called a “frequent complainant in civil rights matters,” Higgs became a person of interest to the FBI over the next decade or so.³¹

Six weeks after the library protest eleven Freedom Riders were arrested at the Jackson Trailways Bus Terminal and charged with trespass and breach of the peace when they tried to use a “white only” designated bathroom and later attempted to eat at a white cafeteria. Over the next three months more than 350 Freedom Riders traveled by bus to Jackson and were arrested. The sponsor of the Freedom Riders, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), asked William “Bill” Kunstler to go to Jackson to assist Jack Young, a local black attorney, who was representing the Freedom Riders. Early on, Kunstler met Bill Higgs, and they collaborated in preparing for the trial of the Freedom Riders in August. All but nine of those arrested were located but the nine’s failure to appear in court meant their bonds, totaling \$4,500 would be forfeited. In his legal research, Higgs had discovered an obscure statute enacted in 1866 that allowed civil rights cases to be remanded (transferred) from a state court to a federal court.³² Kunstler and Higgs prepared removal petitions for the nine Freedom Riders and filed them with the southern district of the Federal Court, which automatically transferred the case to its jurisdiction. They used this same removal petition procedure to get arrests of other protestors transferred to district federal courts but

²⁹ John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 87-88.

³⁰ Higgs called Burke Marshall and informed him that the situation in Jackson was tense. Burke Marshall, “Demonstration in Jackson, Mississippi,” Burke Marshall Papers (1961-1964), Asst. Attorney General Files, 1958-1961 (bulk 1961-1964), Series 1:00, Subseries 1:01. National Archives.

³¹ “William L. Higgs Investigative File,” October 8, 1962, February 1, 1963, Federal Bureau of Investigation Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts Release, FOIAPA Number 391334.

³² William M. Kunstler, *Deep in My Heart* (New York: William Morrow, 1966), 50-51.

quickly learned unsympathetic district federal judges could block their efforts by remanding the cases back to state courts. This practice became a major issue in the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Another indication of Higgs's broad interest in civil rights issues surfaced in the fall of 1961 when he learned that Brandeis University was soliciting applications for the 1962 Florina Lasker Fellowships in Civil Liberties and Civil Rights. He was selected as one of five recipients of the fellowships which paid \$2,000 for a fourteen-week resident program at the university.³³ Under the terms of the fellowship Higgs was required to attend seminars, to give a lecture, and to research and write a paper on civil rights. Higgs chose to create a reference handbook on voting rights in Mississippi. Called the "Mississippi Political Handbook," its purpose was to inform the average citizen about the governmental and political structure under which he lived.³⁴ The core of the handbook was Higgs's belief that "The principle of total segregation has a firm commitment by almost all of the present officers in the government and political organization of the state" and colors political affairs more than any other factor.³⁵ The thirty-two-page handbook plus eleven appendices offered basic information to citizens, especially black ones, about poll taxes, how to become a candidate, times and hours of election, precinct, county, congressional, and state conventions of the state Democratic Party, the Mississippi governmental structure, and the role of the federal government. It also explained the role of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and the federal courts in protecting civil rights. Brandeis University printed 3,000 mimeographed copies of the handbook for use as a text in Mississippi Freedom Schools in the summer of 1964.

Higgs's support for the civil rights platform of the 1960 Democratic Party had also brought him to the attention of Medgar Evers, Mississippi Field Secretary for the NAACP, and Reverend Robert L. T. Smith, a retired Post Office Department mail carrier, owner of several small businesses, and pastor of a Baptist church. They asked Higgs to prepare legal documentation for incorporating Hico Publishing with the intent

³³ 1962 Florina Lasker Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Fellowship brochure and undated announcement by Brandeis University of the awards. Copies in possession of the author.

³⁴ William L. Higgs, "Mississippi Political Handbook," (unpublished, 1962), Box 4, Folder 13 in Victoria Gray Papers, McCain Library and Archive, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS. Copy in possession of the author.

³⁵ Ibid.

of creating a black weekly newspaper. It took almost a year to organize a volunteer staff and work out the logistics of publication with Hazel Brannon Smith agreeing to print the newspaper on her paper's press in Lexington, Mississippi.³⁶ The first issue of the *Mississippi Free Press* was published on December 23, 1961, and featured the announcement that Robert L. T. Smith had declared his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for Congress for the Fourth Congressional District.³⁷

Higgs later recounted that Smith's candidacy had come about because opponents of segregation wanted to run a strong candidate in the campaign against the incumbent, John Bell Williams. A small group, including Higgs, tried to persuade Medgar Evers to become a candidate, but he refused. After being rejected by other potential candidates and seemingly at a dead end, they asked fifty-eight-year-old Smith to become a candidate.³⁸ Reluctant to become a candidate because he felt he did not know enough about politics to run for office, he agreed only after Higgs promised to coach him on political campaigns and the duties of political office. Higgs tutored Smith over the next six weeks before leaving for Brandeis University. He observed that Smith was one of the brightest people he had ever met, praising him as an intelligent, stable, and trustworthy man, adding, "Maybe most of Mississippi won't want him in office but he can surely represent me there."³⁹

While at Brandeis University, Higgs arranged a fundraising trip to Washington, DC and New York City which he hoped would give wide exposure to Smith.⁴⁰ Through his connections with prominent Democrats, he managed to get a meeting with Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt at Hyde Park. In her syndicated column, "My Day," she recounted how impressed she was with Smith and Higgs. Both were Mississippians, she said; Smith was a middle-aged "American Negro" who was doing the unthinkable thing of running for a congressional seat while Higgs was a young white lawyer who was trying to help Smith get elected. In their different ways, they were courageous because they had to live

³⁶ SCR ID #1-76-0-26-2-1-1, Series 2515, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Records, 1956-1973, MDAH.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, SCR ID #1-76-0-2-1-1-1.

³⁸ "Bill Higgs, December 19, 1965," 4. Oral history transcript, Wisconsin Historical Society.

³⁹ Arthur Whitman, "The Ordeal of Reverend Smith," undated clipping in Rev. Robert L. T. Smith Vertical File, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

⁴⁰ During this trip Higgs was admitted to practice law before the United States Supreme Court on April 16, 1962. There is no evidence that he was ever disbarred from practicing law before the Supreme Court. Telephone interview with Admissions Clerk of the United States Supreme Court, July 30, 2013.

under threats of violence and economic pressure.⁴¹ After returning to Jackson, Smith sent a gracious letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, thanking her for a cash contribution to his campaign.⁴² Of course, Congressman Williams handily won the primary election, but Higgs believed the effort gave black voters hope for the future.⁴³

Shortly after completing the Brandeis University fellowship in May of 1962, Higgs returned to Jackson and learned that Dr. A. D. Beittel, president of Tougaloo College near Jackson, had invited John Walker, chaplain of Coe College (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), to organize a Coe Summer Project in Mississippi with Tougaloo College serving as host. The goal of the two-week internship was for students to study the culture and environment of Mississippi. Higgs volunteered to show the students areas outside Jackson.

On June 4, a three-car caravan with the twelve students and the college chaplain headed from Cedar Rapids to Jackson.⁴⁴ On the following Saturday, Higgs and three students in a red Volkswagen with Iowa tags drove to Greenville, about 110 miles northwest of Jackson, to meet his parents.⁴⁵ Outside of Yazoo City they stopped at a string of shanties along the highway to talk to a family living there. They asked a black woman in one house about indoor plumbing, voter registration, and voting. Word about their stop spread quickly and by the time they got to Belzoni the chief of police pulled the car over, searched it, and questioned the driver and passengers. He released them with a warning “not to fool with Negroes during the rest of their trip.”⁴⁶

A week later, Higgs and four Coe College students (one black) traveled in a car with an Ohio license plate to Oxford and toured the Ole Miss campus.⁴⁷ From there they drove to Rust College in nearby Holly Springs where they met with Clarice Campbell and several students

⁴¹ Eleanor Roosevelt, “My Day,” March 25, 1962.

⁴² Robert L. T. Smith to Eleanor Roosevelt, March 29, 1962, Robert Smith, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, 1957-1862, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY.

⁴³ “Bill Higgs, December 10, 1965,” 4. Oral history transcript, Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁴⁴ Fritze Roberts, *Even Our Friendship Was Illegal* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 16.

⁴⁵ SCR ID # 1-76-0-35-9-1-1, Series 2515, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Records, MDAH.

⁴⁶ Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, June 10, 1962.

⁴⁷ This paragraph is based upon SCR ID # 1-76-0-35-9-1-1 to SCRI ID # 76-0-35-9-12-1, SCR ID # 76-0-36-1-1 to SCR ID # 76-0036-7-2-2, and SCR ID 76-0-44-1-1-1 to SCR ID 76-0-44-32-1, Series 2515, MDAH.

before spending the night. On Saturday they headed toward Clarksdale to attend a NAACP fundraising event and to meet civil rights activist Aaron Henry. Local police authorities began tracking the car as it left Oxford. When they arrived in Clarksdale police followed them as they went to Aaron Henry's drug store and then to a meeting at a black Baptist church. After leaving the church service, they planned to drive back to Jackson, but instead they were arrested because of suspicions they were in a stolen car, which of course was a subterfuge. The students and Higgs were held overnight in jail and subjected to hostile interrogation about why they were there, what civil rights organizations they belonged to, who had paid for them to come to Mississippi, and interracial dating. No local attorney was available or willing to represent them. Held in jail for twenty hours, the students and Higgs were released after the state of Ohio confirmed the car was not stolen. Upon returning to Jackson, they sent a telegram to President John Kennedy protesting their arrest and interrogation as a violation of their civil rights.⁴⁸ A UPI news story reported that Higgs had said that a deputy sheriff had threatened him with death, telling him "we have extremely dangerous inmates and we can tell them to get you."⁴⁹ The Coe college students' experience in Clarksdale was a preamble to Mississippi's reception of the flood of black and white college students in 1963 and 1964.

Several weeks after James Meredith's enrollment in Ole Miss under a federal court order, another black student, Dewey Roosevelt Greene, Jr, a native of Greenwood, contacted Higgs about his interest in following in Meredith's footsteps.⁵⁰ Several months earlier he had submitted a transfer application for admission to the University of Mississippi, which University Registrar Robert Ellis rejected because Greene had attended an unaccredited college and his overall level of academic achievement was unacceptable.⁵¹ Despite this rejection, on January 31, 1963, Greene went to the campus in Oxford to register, but the registrar informed Greene that he could not register. On February 1, Greene's attorney, Higgs, filed a federal law suit against the University of Mississippi, claiming the rejection of Greene's application violated the ruling of

⁴⁸ Telegram, William Higgs and others to the president, June 19, 1962, John F. Kennedy White House Subject File (JFK WHCSF-0365-004), JFK Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

⁴⁹ Undated newspaper clipping in SCR ID #76-0-44-331-1. Series 2515, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Records, MDAH.

⁵⁰ Ibid., SCR ID# 2-45-1-1-58-1-1-1.

⁵¹ Eagles, *The Price of Defiance*, 400.

the U. S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that the University could not refuse qualified students from other Mississippi-operated schools. A hearing was scheduled for the following week, but it was at this point that Higgs unexpectedly left Mississippi for Washington, D.C. under a cloud of a failed marriage and disrepute. The litigation concerning Greene's rejected application faded away.

There is little source material on Higgs's personal life. On December 27, 1961, he married Elizabeth Burke, but barely six months later she obtained an uncontested divorce, charging him with desertion and inhuman treatment. Aside from the boiler plate language of the divorce decree, neither Higgs nor his wife offered documented explanations. In his book, *Men Like That*, historian John Howard says that Higgs was a known homosexual while at Harvard, which suggests his sexual preference might have been a reason for the failure of the marriage.

Several hours after he filed the law suit on behalf of Dewey Greene, Higgs was arrested and charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor when he committed "acts of unnatural and perverted sex" with sixteen-year old Walter McKinley Dewalt, who had run away from his Pennsylvania home. Higgs had befriended Dewalt at the YMCA and allowed him to stay at his house. Without Higgs's permission, Dewalt drove his car and had an accident. During the police investigation, Dewalt disclosed he was staying at Higgs's house. Subsequently, Dewalt told police officials that Higgs had sex with him almost nightly.⁵² When confronted by police, Higgs denied the allegations. Nonetheless, he was arrested and released after posting \$500 bail bond. The next day Higgs was scheduled to go to New York City to receive the Florina Lasker Civil Liberties Award, so his trial was delayed until February 15, 1963.

After receiving the award, he delivered a short speech in which he lambasted the Justice Department under Attorney General Robert Kennedy for failing to protect black Mississippians who tried to register to vote from harassment, intimidation, and physical attacks. He called for the formation of a lawyer's committee to protect the interests of organized black groups in the South and for enforcement of Section II of the Fourteenth Amendment that calls for proportional reduction of the representation in Congress of any state that suppressed voter rights. He also announced he had been framed and would not return to Jackson

⁵² SCR ID#1-76-0-54-1-1-1-SCR ID#1-76-0-54-3-1-1, Series 22514, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, MDAH.

for the trial because he would not get a fair one and feared for his life if convicted and sentenced to jail for six months.⁵³ Higgs was tried in absentia and an all-white male jury found him guilty. Six months later he was disbarred by the Mississippi Bar Association.⁵⁴

Most of Higgs's out-of-state supporters believed he had been framed.⁵⁵ James Silver reported in his book, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, that Higgs had a copy of an affidavit by Dewalt in which he recanted his testimony, claiming the Jackson police threatened to send him to reform school for four or five years if he did not cooperate in getting something on Higgs. A copy of the affidavit has not been found.⁵⁶ William Winter, who would later be elected governor of Mississippi, told Professor Silver most people in Mississippi believed Higgs was guilty.⁵⁷

Refusing to remain in Jackson for the trial, Higgs moved to Washington, where he lived from 1963-1968. He probably chose Washington because it was the seat of government and he had personal relations with people in the White House and the Department of Justice.⁵⁸ Undeterred by his disbarment by the Mississippi Bar Association, which sharply restricted his practice of law, he reinvented himself by developing a business model in which he was a legal advisor for civil rights matters and director of a not-for-profit organization that legally could solicit funds to support civil rights initiatives. This business model was manifested in the Washington Human Rights Project (WHRP), which was an educational, non-partisan, non-profit, and non-affiliated summer seminar in civil rights and civil liberties. The project drew upon his initiative while at Brandeis University in the spring of 1962 to recruit college students to come to Mississippi during the summer to

⁵³ "Miss. Lawyer Blasts Robert Kennedy," Feb. 11, 1963, *The Militant*, newspaper clipping in FBI Investigative Case File 44-20790, FOIPA Number 391334.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, October 29, 1963.

⁵⁵ Barbara Carter, "A Lawyer Leaves Mississippi," *The Reporter: The Magazine of Facts and Ideas*, Vol. 28, No. 10 (May 9, 1962), 33-35.

⁵⁶ James Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (New York: Harcourt. Brace, 1966), 97-98.

⁵⁷ William Winter to James Silver, July 15, 1963, Box 7, Folder 6, James Silver Collection, University of Mississippi Library Special Collections and Archives, Oxford, MS.

⁵⁸ He exchanged correspondence with Burke Marshall, Assistant Director for Civil Rights in the Department of Justice, and John Doar, the lead Justice Department attorney for civil rights. Moreover, Higgs was on a first-name basis with Lee Waters, Special Counsel for President Lyndon Johnson, who arranged for Higgs to attend as an observer at a White House conference in June 1963 organized to enlist support of the legal profession for assistance in providing legal services for civil rights activists who had been arrested in the South. Bill Higgs to Lee Waters, July 26, 1963, John F. Kennedy White House Subject File (JFK WHCSF-0365-004), JFK Presidential Library.

see first-hand the injustices inflicted on black Mississippians. WHRP had two primary goals in 1963: recruiting law students to spend the summer in Mississippi assisting “the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, civil rights lawyers and others to expand the limited range of Negro freedom there”⁵⁹ and recruiting between ten to fifteen law school students and college students to spend the summer in Washington, DC working on civil rights initiatives.

One of these civil rights initiatives was a detailed analysis of civil rights legislation introduced in the 88th Congress, including but not limited to the Kennedy Administration’s civil rights bill (H.R. 7152), protection of voting rights, and prohibition against discrimination in public accommodations and equal employment.⁶⁰ Early in July 1963 Congressman Robert Kastenmeier (Democrat, Wisconsin), a member of the House Judiciary Committee, learned of this analysis and requested assistance in drafting an omnibus civil rights bill that was stronger than the Administration’s bill.⁶¹ Higgs, who was informally known as “Bob Kastenmeier’s civil rights advisor,”⁶² had the Washington Human Rights Project team quickly develop an omnibus civil rights bill that Congressman Kastenmeier introduced as H.R. 7702 with the hope it would replace H.R. 7152.⁶³ Higgs prepared a detailed analysis of the two draft bills that was distributed widely.⁶⁴ Over the next several months Higgs and the project team lobbied members of Congress and their staffs to gain support for H.R. 7702.⁶⁵ He testified before the House Judiciary Committee on the need for a strong section on voting rights, including a requirement that federal district courts must decide cases of alleged voter discrimination within thirty days, must prohibit any test or other prerequisites that were intended to abridge voting rights, and

⁵⁹ “Washington Human Rights Project, Cumulative Report, September 20, 1964,” 1, Harvard Law School Library. Copy in possession of the author courtesy of Amy Ruth Tobol, SUNY Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, NY.

⁶⁰ “Washington Human Rights Project: Report, 1963,” 3. Copy in possession of the author.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Charles and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate: A Legislative History of the 1964 Civil Rights Act* (Cabin John, MD: Seven Locks Press, 1985), 62.

⁶³ “Oral interview of Robert Kastenmeier,” 9, Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁴ “An Analysis of the Kastenmeier Omnibus Civil Rights Bill (H.R. 7702),” Box 2, Folder 6 SNNC Super Series, Special Collections and Preservation Division, Harold Washington Library Center, Chicago, IL and “Washington Human Rights Project: Report, 1963,” 6.

⁶⁵ *Harvard Crimson*, October 22, 1963. For several months Higgs worked out of the office of Congressman Kastenmeier. “Oral interview of Robert Kastenmeier,” 13-14.

presume the literacy of any person who had completed the sixth grade.⁶⁶ Higgs solicited comments from Professor Mark Howe of Harvard Law School about inclusion of state elections under provisions of Title I and expanding the authority of the Attorney General in Title III to intervene in a range of civil rights issues.⁶⁷ Higgs responded to one comment, writing “I took the letter straight to my confidant, Bill Copenhaver, the House Judiciary minority counsel, and we found ourselves in agreement with you . . .”⁶⁸

On October 1 Subcommittee No. 5 (all Democrats) of the House Judiciary Committee approved H.R. 7152 as amended by H.R. 7702.⁶⁹ However, this strengthened version of H.R. 7152 evoked strong opposition from Republicans on the full Judiciary Committee who believed they were being set up to be blamed for approving a bill that likely would fail passage or be substantially weakened in a House vote. Working behind the scene, a handful of Republican members of the committee, led by Congressman William McCulloch of Ohio, worked with Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and other Justice Department officials to fashion a compromise bill that the full House Judiciary Committee approved on October 30.⁷⁰ Almost four months later after an extended debate, a bipartisan majority (152 Democrats and 138 Republicans) approved H.R. 7152 with all of its major provisions intact and sent it to the Senate for action.⁷¹ H.R. 7152 included an amendment to Title VII, Equal Employment that Congressman Howard Smith (Democrat, Virginia) had made to add sex to the list of prohibited discriminations (race, religion, and national origin) in employment. Ironically, Congressman Smith’s intention was to add a killer amendment that neither the House nor the Senate would accept.⁷² He was wrong on both counts, and he became “the man responsible for the single biggest

⁶⁶ U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary, H.R. 7152, As Amended by Subcommittee No. 5, 88th Congress, 2nd session (Washington, DC: GPO, 1964), 1821-1825, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015014176989?urlappend=%3Bseq=911>.

⁶⁷ Mark Howe to Bill Higgs, October 24, 1963, Mark Howe Papers, Harvard Law School Historical & Special Collections.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Bill Higgs to Mark Howe, April 29, 1964.

⁶⁹ Charles and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate*, 37-38.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 44-49.

⁷¹ <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/88-1964/h128>.

⁷² Charles and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate*, 115-117. For a more generous view of Smith’s motives see Todd S. Purdum, *An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Two Presidents, Two Parties, and The Battle for the Civil Rights Act of 1964* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014), 195-198.

advance in women's rights since the Nineteenth Amendment granted them suffrage."⁷³

After invoking cloture to end the longest debate in the history of the U.S. Senate, this body approved H.R. 7152 on June 19, 1964, and President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bill on July 2, 1964. Amendments made during deliberations in both the House and the Senate resulted in stronger provisions than many supporters had believed possible a year earlier.⁷⁴ Even after amendments by the Senate, it included eleven titles that prohibited discrimination in public accommodations, mandated desegregation of public education, non-discrimination in federally funded assisted programs, and established an Equal Employment Commission, among others. Title III authorized the Attorney General to intervene when there is clear evidence of a pattern of resistance or practice to deny the full protection of a person's right to public accommodations. Title VI banned discrimination in any program or activity receiving federal funds. Title IX allowed for appeal of petitions for remand of state cases to a three-judge panel after their denial by a federal judge.⁷⁵ Doubtless, this was gratifying to Higgs and William Kunstler, who successfully had filed remand orders to remove civil rights cases from Mississippi state courts to federal courts in 1961. Historian John Howard's assessment that "Bill Higgs drafted key provisions, ultimately passed into law, of the monumental Civil Rights Act of 1964" oversimplifies the role of Higgs.⁷⁶ Higgs and the Washington Human Rights Project staff were bit players who nonetheless had an important role in drafting H. R. 7702 legislation, but they had virtually no role in the negotiations that led to the House decision to substitute H. R. 7702 for H.R. 17152, which eventually became the core of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights held

⁷³ Clay Risen, *The Bill of the Century: The Epic Battle for the Civil Rights Act* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 161.

⁷⁴ Joseph Rauh observes that the greatest skeptics were the Kennedy Administration. "Transcript of a Tape-Recorded Interview with Mr. Joseph L. Rauh, Jr. Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Lawyer," 61. Ralph J. Bunche Oral History Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

⁷⁵ For a review of changes in the Civil Rights of 1964 see Appendix A in Charles and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate*, 239-242.

⁷⁶ John Howard, *Men Like That*, 157. Howard cites four sources for this claim but only a single sentence in the Harvard University student newspaper support his claim: "Last summer he [Higgs]" and several law students drew up an ideal bill . . . the bulk of that bill sailed through the House without a hitch," *Harvard Crimson*, March 4, 1964. For an informative and readable account of the machinations and negotiations that produced the House civil rights bill and the prolonged debates in the Senate, see Charles and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate*.

a "Victory Banquet" to celebrate its success and invited Higgs and the entire Washington Human Rights Project staff to attend the event, a tacit acknowledgement of their contribution to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁷⁷

Shortly after President Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964, Higgs's team conducted a detailed analysis of each of the eleven titles of the statute and compiled an index to the legislative history of the bill, each of which totaled more than one hundred pages. Hundreds of copies of the study and index were disseminated across the country to inform citizens of their rights under the legislation.⁷⁸

Following on the heels of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, WHRP worked on a detailed report and recommendations calling for a strong civil rights platform for the Democratic National Convention Committee on Resolutions and Platform. Higgs presented an oral summary of the report to the committee,⁷⁹ but the committee took no action, perhaps a portent of the action a few weeks later when the Democratic National Convention rejected the challenge of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to seat the Mississippi Democratic delegation. Higgs was the Washington legal representative for the MFDP,⁸⁰ so he took WHRP staff members to Atlantic City for the 1964 Democratic National Convention where they observed the meetings of the MFDP delegation and the convention itself.⁸¹

In 1962 Higgs had proposed enforcing section two of the Fourteenth Amendment that authorized a reduction in congressional representation of a state proportionate to the number of citizens whose right to vote had been abridged.⁸² His proposal had little traction until after the rise of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which decided to challenge the seating of the Mississippi House of Representatives. Several dozen members of Congress supported a MFDP initiative to

⁷⁷ "Washington Human Rights Project Cumulative Report," 17, September 20, 1964, Harvard Law Library, copy in possession of the author.

⁷⁸ "Detailed Analysis of Civil Rights Act of 1964," Washington Human Rights Project, Series 1:13, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Assistant Attorney General Files, 1958-1965 (bulk 1961-1964). Burke Marshall Personal Papers, JFK Presidential Library.

⁷⁹ Proceedings of the Democratic National Committee, 1964. Committee on Resolutions and Platform, Panel III; August 18, August 19, August 20, August 21, Box 292, Series I, Democratic National Committee Papers, LBJ Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

⁸⁰ Interview with Bill Higgs, January 1967," 283, Ann Romaine Papers, 1963-1969, Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Change, Atlanta, GA.

⁸¹ "Washington Human Rights Project Cumulative Report," 14.

⁸² "Miss. Lawyer Blasts Robert Kennedy," Feb. 11, 1963, *The Militant*.

challenge the seating of five representatives who had been elected in 1964. MFDP recruited more than one hundred lawyers to take depositions from Mississippi citizens whose right to vote had been abridged.⁸³ Higgs was involved in reviewing and organizing more than six hundred deposition interviews that documented major abridgements of black citizens' right to vote. When the 89th Congress convened in January 1965 it seated the Mississippi delegation subject to a congressional committee's recommendations of what action to take. In August 1965 the committee presented its report, which rejected the challenge. This decision marked the end of Higgs's involvement in Mississippi politics.

A spinoff from the 1963 WHRP was the National Law Students Association for Human Rights, which sent a handful of law students from Harvard and Yale to work with civil rights lawyers in the South. By 1964 the organization had rebranded itself as the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council (LSCRRC) with a full-time executive director and administrative staff headquartered in American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) offices in New York City.⁸⁴ Supported by the ACLU and funding from several foundations, it recruited only current law school students or recent law school graduates. By 1966 WHRP had become a shell organization. The reasons for its demise are unclear but it is likely that several factors came into play. Legal support for civil rights in the South required a more comprehensive approach than what the one-person WHRP with summer college and law school interns could offer. Based on the personal commitment of one person with many "irons in the fire," WHRP could not scale to a larger organization or broader mission. Combining college students and law school students in a summer intern program would diminish the impact LSCRRC could have on curriculum reform in law schools. Higgs's disbarment probably would have been a severe handicap in negotiating with large law firms and law schools to support LSCRRC initiatives. Moreover, living almost at a poverty level and relying upon modest support from friends and supporters of the causes he advanced, he had a reputation of failing to pay bills on time or even not paying some bills. As Norman Solomon, who worked with Higgs on an anti-Vietnam War campaign in 1967, put it "he was usually

⁸³ John Dittmer, *Local People*, 338-341.

⁸⁴ Amy Ruth Tobel, "Badge of Honor: The Law Students Civil Rights Council" (Ph. D. diss., University of New York at Buffalo, 1999), 65-98.

one step, or less, away from creditors.”⁸⁵ The combination of all these negatives meant there was no place for Higgs in LSCRRRC.

On the other hand, there was a place for Higgs in litigation about public education in Washington, D.C. Julius Hobson, a strong supporter of home rule for the District of Columbia, William Kunstler, and William Higgs filed a federal class action law suit on April 26, 1966, against the District of Columbia Board of Education, charging that the policy of an option to transfer out of one school district to another and the assignment of each student to one of four curriculum levels based on an assessment of each student’s learning as measured by standard intelligent tests violated due process guaranteed by the Fifth and Fourteen Amendments. William Kunstler was the attorney of record who handled the court proceedings, but Bill Higgs drafted most of the brief submitted to the court. On June 19, 1967, Judge J. Skelly Wright found for the plaintiffs in a sweeping decision that invalidated the transfer option, the four-track system, and other related aspects of “de facto segregation.” The Washington *Daily News* reported that Hobson and Higgs practically danced with joy after Judge Wright announced his decision.⁸⁶ Aside from William Kunstler’s acknowledgement of Higgs’s contribution to the litigation, he received very little pay or public recognition for his work.⁸⁷

During 1964 and 1965 Higgs was an unpaid Washington legal advisor for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). By late 1965 SNCC was getting involved in opposing the war in Vietnam⁸⁸ and under Stokely Carmichael’s influence it had begun to shift away from a biracial, nonviolent approach toward militancy and black nationalism, where there was no place for white participants, including Higgs.

In a way this was beneficial for Higgs. After enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, civil rights was no longer a hot button issue but opposition to the war in Vietnam was. He now had a new cause and began organizing protests and demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Higgs represented anti-war groups in obtaining permits from

⁸⁵ Norman Solomon, *Made Love Got War: Close Encounters with America’s Welfare State* (Sausalito, CA: PoliPoint Press, 20007), 31.

⁸⁶ Quoted in William L. Higgs Federal Bureau of Investigation Case File, FOIPA Number 391334 (190-HQ-1250700), 32.

⁸⁷ Norman Solomon, *Made Love Got War*, 31.

⁸⁸ John Lewis, *Walking with The Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 354-360.

the Metropolitan Police Department and the National Park Service to hold demonstrations at the Washington Monument and Lafayette Park and marches to the Capitol to protest the war in Vietnam. He organized the National Committee to Defend Civil Liberties and the Washington Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. The small row house he rented in a poor black neighborhood near the Capitol was the place where strategizing went on continuously. Solomon, who worked with Higgs recounted that “he advised, cajoled, and urged more audacious action.”⁸⁹ Ray Mungo, Editor of the Liberation News Service, a New Left radical ant-war news service, reported that the staff energized Higgs, who “aided us, scraped up money for us, advised us, [and] wrote for us.”⁹⁰

In 1966 Higgs reached out to the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to collaborate on opposition to the war in Vietnam. His interest in SDS and his call for “more audacious action” suggests he was becoming more radical, which coincides with a draft he wrote called “A Case for An American Revolution in 1968.”⁹¹ Only four pages long, very general, and poorly written, it is a window into Higgs’s thinking about how to ensure that the poor and dispossessed living in the United States and around the world receive social justice. The American Revolution, he wrote was rooted in a fierce independence from foreign domination, so how, he asked, can the right of any people or nation to use violence to secure independence from foreign domination be denied. The constitutional system of checks and balances in the United States, he wrote, was intended to diffuse power domestically but it did not work in the 1960s in foreign relations where recent presidents wielded unlimited power over people in the world who do not participate in American decision-making. Here in the United States the poor, blacks, and other minorities also have been excluded from this decision-making. These minorities as well as most Americans have a stake in domestic freedom that allows them control over their lives. Gaining this control, Higgs declared, required the government to acquire the means of economic production to eliminate private property. According to Higgs, because wealth in the United States is controlled by a small number of people with entrenched power, only a revolution could break this stranglehold. He spoke at a seminar on “The

⁸⁹ Norman Solomon, *Made Love, Got War*, 31.

⁹⁰ Ray Mungo, *Famous Long Ago: My Life and Hard Times with Liberation News Service* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 145.

⁹¹ Bill Higgs, “A Case for An American Revolution in 1968,” Box 50, Folder 31, Reies Lopez Tijerina Collection, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM.

New Left” at Montgomery Blair High School in late April 1968 where he apparently had this document in mind when he declared “it would be very, very good for this country to have a revolution.”⁹²

Two months after speaking at the seminar, Higgs met Reies Lopez Tijerina during the Poor Peoples March on Washington. Tijerina, a charismatic former Pentecostal minister had founded the Alianza Federal de Mercedes (AFDM), whose purpose was to reclaim title to Spanish and Mexican land grants the U.S. Government had “illegally” claimed in the aftermath of the war with Mexico. Initially, Tijerina focused on legal research and analysis of Spanish Land Grants to document that the U.S. Government’s claims violated provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago of 1848. By 1966 he had adopted a confrontational strategy that included occupancy of contested land that the U.S. Forest service managed, demonstrations, and citizen arrests of public officials for failure to protect the land rights of the descendants (he called them IndoHispanos) of the original land holders.⁹³ Recognizing the value of having an “Anglo” with a solid civil rights track record in Mississippi and Washington, D.C. associated with AFDM, Tijerina invited Higgs to become the organization’s legal advisor and relocate to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Undoubtedly, Tijerina thought Higgs’s networking contacts in civil rights and opposition to the Vietnam War protests could be used to strengthen relationships between AFDM and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the emerging Chicano Nationalist Movement. Moreover, he viewed Higgs as a valuable resource in shifting the focus of AFDM to public demonstrations, voter registration, and the creation of an IndoHispanos political party in New Mexico. Initially, Higgs was reluctant to relocate, but after touring the state with Tijerina and meeting many AFDM supporters he accepted the offer. Later, he recounted, “I sort of fell in love with New Mexico. Mr. Tijerina drove me all over introducing me to the people, showing me the country. Their thinking about land and the value of life fit in perfectly with my own

⁹² The quote is from the Montgomery Blair High School Student Newspaper, April 30, 1968, and is found in a memo from Special Agent T. E. Bishop to Assistant Director Cartha DeLoach, June 19, 1968, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Number 190-12335 (100 HQ 449818). Copy in possession of the author courtesy of Charles Eagles.

⁹³ IndoHispanos is the term Reies Lopez Tijerina used in his book, *They Called Me “King Tiger”*: *My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights*, edited and translated from Spanish by Jose Angel Gutierrez (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2000), 103.

ideals.”⁹⁴ AFDM also gave him a new cause as civil rights and anti-Vietnam war protests were beginning to run out of steam.

Higgs’s disbarment by the Mississippi Bar Association meant he could not officially practice law or have clients in New Mexico, but it did not preclude his providing legal advice to Tijerina and AFDM. An immediate issue for Tijerina was his trial for an armed raid to make a citizen’s arrest of the Rio Arriba county attorney in the county seat in Tierra Amarilla for having prohibited a protest meeting of AFDM. Tijerina decided to be his own attorney at his trial but the presiding judge refused to allow Higgs to sit beside him during the trial, so his legal advice was limited to what could be done when court was not in session. A jury found Tijerina guilty of false imprisonment and in February 1969 he received a two-year sentence to be served at a federal prison in Missouri.

After Tijerina’s conviction, Higgs became the *de facto* leader of AFDM. He took over management of litigation in which Tijerina sought to require reapportionment of local school boards and teaching of all high school subjects in English and Spanish based on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago. In 1970 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a federal district court finding that the treaty confers no obligations for the administration of public schools or to have the Spanish language and culture preserved in public schools.⁹⁵ This decision implicitly reaffirmed previous rulings that the courts have no jurisdiction in adjudicating violations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago. Given this outcome, Higgs concluded that the Supreme Court was unlikely to rule in the affirmative on any litigation based on the treaty, so this issue faded away.⁹⁶ In the meantime, Higgs had begun cultivating relations with the SDS and Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales, the founder of the Chicano movement, to exchange views about the shared goals of their respective programs. At the same time, he received a \$40,000 grant from the U.S. Catholic Conference Campaign Conference for Human Development to fund an AFDM antipoverty and social justice

⁹⁴ Undated (c. 1971) newspaper clipping, AP release, Albuquerque, NM, Box 33, Folder 15, Reies Lopez Tijerina Papers, Southwest Research Center, University of New Mexico.

⁹⁵ Richard Griswold del Castillo, “The United States Judicial System and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago,” Southwest Hispanic Research Institute, University of New Mexico (1987), 25-26.

⁹⁶ William L. Higgs to Chief Justice Burger, et al, United States U.S. Supreme Court, February 2, 1971, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Number 190-12335 (100 HQ 449818).

initiative.⁹⁷

Higgs's relocation to Albuquerque meant that responsibility for surveillance and tracking of his activities was transferred from Washington to the Albuquerque FBI Field Office, which assumed responsibility for the surveillance of Higgs. By 1972 FBI investigative reports described a growing schism between Higgs and his supporters and AFDM members loyal to Tijerina.⁹⁸ Tijerina's release from prison in July 1971 heightened this tension because he now rejected a confrontational strategy, believing instead in peaceful means in accordance with the law.⁹⁹ Moreover, he was unhappy with Higgs's allocation of jobs created under the grant from the U.S. Catholic Conference to AFDM.¹⁰⁰ There were now two AFDM groups, one that supported Tijerina and one that supported Higgs. In April 1972 the Tijerina-led group asked Higgs to resign from AFDM, but he ignored the request.¹⁰¹ In early July, however, Higgs resigned from AFDM after the U.S. Catholic Conference sided with the Tijerina group.¹⁰²

Higgs returned to Washington, DC in 1972, but times had changed in his four-year absence and many of the people he had worked with had lost interest and moved on to other challenges. He decided to create another non-profit organization, The Committee for An Open Society (CFOS), as a platform for promoting the ideals of free, open, and nonmanipulated societies. Higgs was executive director, and there was no staff. Meanwhile, he needed an income so Representative Augustus Hawkins (Democrat, California) gave him a part-time job on his office staff that evolved into a full-time position on the staff of the House Subcommittee for Education.

In 1973 Higgs began issuing CFOS press releases and letters that

⁹⁷ Reies Lopez Tijerina, *They Called Me Tiger: My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights* (Houston, TX: Arte Politico Press, 200), 161; "William Leon Higgs," August 30, 1973, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Number 190-12335 (100 HQ 449818).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Rudy V. Busto, *King Tiger: The Religious Vision of Reies Lopez Tijerina* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 68; J. Edgar Hoover to United States Secret Service, May 5, 1972, 16, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information and Privacy Number 190-12335 (100 HQ 449818).

¹⁰⁰ Reies Lopez Tijerina, "Summary of the Reasons Why Bill Higgs Was Fired After Three Years of Friendship" (English translation of ESTE ES UN RESUEN DE LAS RAZONES PARQUE BILL HIGGS FUE DEPEEDID DESPUTES DE TRES ANOS E MY AMISTAD), Box 33, Folder 15, Reies Lopez Tijerina Papers, Southwest Research Center, University of New Mexico.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Splinter Alianza Unit Loses Catholic Funds," *Albuquerque Journal*, July 12, 1972.

attacked the Central Intelligence Agency for undermining democracy in Mexico, Venezuela, and Chile. On September 12, 1973, Higgs sent a public letter to Senator William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, requesting him to investigate whether the CIA had been involved in the overthrow of the government of President Salvador Allende of Chile. The letter, which was published in several South American newspapers, made clear that Higgs believed the United States was involved. Over the next two years he issued press releases and copies of letters he had sent to President Gerald Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and members of Congress. Those press releases and letters were published in daily newspapers in Mexico City, among other cities in South America. He alleged U.S. Marines were preparing to occupy oil fields in Venezuela to protect American investments in these fields from expropriation. Moreover, he charged the U.S. was training terrorist groups to invade Mexico and free U.S. citizens in Mexican jails, working to undermine the Mexican economic system, spreading the Swine Flu among Mexican citizens to reduce the population, increasing the salinity of the Colorado River as it flowed into Mexico to reduce agriculture production, and using a purported proposal from the University of Texas to microfilm all Mexican government records so they could be made available to the Central Intelligence Agency, where they would be computerized and manipulated to create a fictitious history of Mexico.¹⁰³

Joseph J. Jova, the American Ambassador to Mexico, was furious about Higgs's news releases because he believed they were false but nonetheless required official rebuttal. He sent cables to the State Department complaining about Higgs and suggesting his anti-American activities probably meant he was being paid by enemies of the United States.¹⁰⁴ Jova asked the FBI Legat (Legal Attaché) on the embassy staff to forward a request to FBI Headquarters to investigate Higgs for failing to register as a foreign agent. The FBI reviewed its previous investigative case files and initiated new queries and concluded there was no statutory basis for further investigation and closed the investigation.¹⁰⁵

Apparently, around 1975 the Committee for An Open Society's

¹⁰³ 1974 Mexico08291 1974, Mexico 07547 1974, Mexico02927 1976, Mexico04739 1976Mexico, and 1974 State05352, Declassified/Release US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 Jun 2006, available at NSArchive2.gwu.edu.

¹⁰⁴ Teletype, July 25, 1974, FBI Investigative Case File 100-449818.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., teletype, March 26, 1975.

attacks on American foreign policy no longer were credible, and it disappeared from history as did Higgs. The last known date of his employment was August 13, 1974.¹⁰⁶ Norman Solomon wrote in a memoir that in the winter of 1980 he saw Bill Higgs near the Capitol. He described him as looking and sounding wearier than he could remember. Higgs told Solomon he was planning to relocate to Mexico because he could not make a living in Washington, DC.¹⁰⁷ He moved to Acapulco where he reportedly worked at a hotel.

It is ironic that barely twenty years after his prominence as a courageous civil rights leader in Mississippi and Washington, D.C., there was no place for Higgs in America. He moved to Mexico, perhaps a failure in his own eyes. Yet, this should not blind us to his contributions to civil rights in Mississippi in the 1960s. He had a very visible public life as a white Mississippi lawyer who had the courage to take on civil right cases involving black Mississippians and to support their right to vote. He was co-founder of the Mississippi Free Press and a staunch supporter of Robert L. T. Smith's election bid to unseat Congressman John Bell Williams in the spring of 1962.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the Coe College students he worked with in June of 1962 had a keen appreciation of his idealism and commitment to achieving social and political justice for black Mississippians. The Citizens Council and the Sovereignty Commission viewed him virtually as Public Enemy No. 1 who had to be vigorously opposed because his initiatives, if successful, would undermine white supremacy.

Some progressive white Mississippians such as William Winter questioned Higgs's ability as a lawyer and the tactics he used. Winter wrote to Professor James Silver that he did not know any lawyer who had a high opinion of Higgs as a lawyer because the legal community believed his tactics were calculated to advance his personal and political interests. Winter added that Claude Ramsay, president, Mississippi AFL-CIO, claimed Higgs was more interested in getting a large fee from organized labor than he was in enjoining the Sovereignty Commission

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., teletype, May 13, 1974.

¹⁰⁷ Norman Solomon, *Made Love, Got War*; 217; telephone interview with Norman Solomon, April 19, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ William Leon Higgs, "Report of The Death of An American Citizen Abroad," February 17, 1989, Passport Vital Records Section, Department of State, Washington, DC.

from donating funds to the Citizens Council.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to reconcile the opinions of Winter and Ramsay with the realities of Higgs's world. Bill Kunstler had a high regard for his work as a lawyer in the Freedom Riders case and in *Hobson v. Board of Education*. Moreover, what constitutes advancing one's personal and political interests vis-à-vis idealism largely is in the eye of the beholder. Being arrested and held incommunicado by the Clarksdale police while undergoing intensive questioning and threats of violence did not appear to be the act of a man dominated by self-interest. Nor did his no-frills approach to funding the work of the Washington Human Rights Project and living on the edge of poverty bring him any financial benefits.

Despite his arrest and conviction for contributing to the delinquency of a minor and subsequent disbarment by the Mississippi Bar Association, his relocation to Washington, DC allowed him to continue his support for civil rights where he made his greatest contributions. As executive director of the Washington Human Rights Project, he played an important role in formulating legislative proposals that were incorporated into the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which the *Congressional Quarterly* called "the most sweeping civil rights measure to clear either house of Congress in the 20th century."¹¹⁰ But the tide was changing, and it is doubtful Higgs recognized he had reached the high point in his career at the age of twenty-nine.

His downward spiral began in 1964 when the Law Students Civil Rights Council supplanted the Washington Human Rights Project, cutting him off from organizing law school summer internship programs. Moreover, the decision of SNCC to cease functioning as a bi-racial civil rights group further undermined his position as a civil rights leader with clout. He turned to a new cause, opposition to the war in Vietnam. This was a fateful decision because it pulled him into the orbit of radical groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society and began a process of radicalization that increasingly moved him into radical left social and political movements including opposition to the war in Vietnam, Alianza Federal de Mercedes, and the Committee for Open Society, which further marginalized him.

By 1975 Higgs had disappeared from public view. On July 7, 1988,

¹⁰⁹ William Winter to James Silver, July 15, 1963, Box 7, Folder 6, James W. Silver Collection, University of Mississippi.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in *Citizen Rau: An American Liberal's Life in Law and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 161.

he died at the age of fifty-two in Acapulco, Mexico.¹¹¹ There were no obituaries or acknowledgements of the contributions he made to civil rights in the 1960s. Higgs's rapid rise as an advocate of civil rights and racial equality and equally rapid disappearance from public view reminds one of a meteor that appears as a bright fireball in the sky and quickly burns up, leaving no evidence of its existence. Bill Higgs's remains were buried at Las Cruces Pantheon in Acapulco. On September 16, 1997, Hurricane Pauline struck Acapulco, causing heavy damage at Las Cruces Pantheon, tossing around grave markers and destroying burial records, wiping out the last visible evidence of Higgs's existence.

¹¹¹ William Leon Higgs, "Report of The Death of An American Citizen Abroad," February 17, 1989, Passport Vital Records Section, Department of State, Washington, DC.

2017 Mississippi Historical Society Award Winners



Elbert R. Hilliard (center) was presented the Dunbar Rowland Award by Ann Abadie and Brother Rogers for lifelong contributions to the study and interpretation of Mississippi history.

The Mississippi Historical Society held its annual meeting March 2–4, 2017, in Gulfport to honor its 2017 award winners and to commemorate the state’s 200th birthday. The society’s award for the best Mississippi history book of 2016 went to Jason Morgan Ward, professor of history, Mississippi State University, for *Hanging Bridge: Racial Violence and America’s Civil Rights Century*, which was published by Oxford University Press.

“Although deeply rooted in a remote corner of an isolated county, Ward’s erudite book has broad implications for our understanding of the Freedom Struggle,” said Max Grivno, University of Southern Mississippi history professor and chair of the McLemore Prize committee. “*Hanging Bridge* opens new windows onto the contours and parameters of the Freedom Struggle and suggests that memory and place were, and are, inextricably tied to the Civil Rights movement.”

The 2017 B. L. C. Wailes Award for national distinction in the field of history was presented to Robert S. McElvaine. McElvaine is Elizabeth Chisholm Professor of Arts and Letters at Millsaps College in Jackson, where he has taught since 1973. McElvaine is the author of ten books, including *Down and Out in the Great Depression*, a *New York Times*

bestseller, and *Eve's Seed: Biology, the Sexes, and the Course of History*, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction. McElvaine has also written *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, an exhaustive study on the life of the thirty-second president of the United States, and *Mario Cuomo: A Biography*. McElvaine is a recipient of the Richard Wright Award for Literary Excellence and has twice won the Distinguished Professor Award at Millsaps College. The Wailes Award is named for B. L. C. Wailes, the founder and first president of the Mississippi Historical Society.

Elbert R. Hilliard of Madison received the Dunbar Rowland Award for his lifelong contributions to the preservation, study, and interpretation of Mississippi history. In 1965, Hilliard joined the staff of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History as curator of history at the State Historical Museum, Old Capitol Restoration. In 1973, he was elected the fifth director of MDAH and served in that capacity for thirty-one years. Hilliard's achievements as director include strengthening Mississippi's laws governing historic preservation, leading the effort to establish records management programs for state and local government records, supporting award-winning exhibits at the Old Capitol Museum, spearheading funding efforts for the construction of the state-of-the-art William F. Winter Archives and History Building, and helping establish the Foundation for Mississippi History and the Federation of Mississippi Historical Societies. Hilliard has served as the secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Historical Society since 1973. He also serves as editor-in-chief emeritus of the *Journal of Mississippi History* and is a member of the board of editors of the *Heritage of Mississippi Series*. Hilliard continues to serve MDAH as a volunteer, tallying more than 2,000 hours each year since his retirement on December 31, 2004.

Petal Middle School teacher Cathy Lee received the John K. Bettersworth Award, presented to an outstanding history teacher. Although Lee has taught U.S. history for only three years, her teaching career spans a period of thirty years. In 2016, Lee was selected to attend the C-SPAN Educator's Conference to share her professional experiences with other teachers and to explore ways to bring primary resources into the classroom.

Lisa C. Foster and Susannah J. Ural received the 2016 *Mississippi History Now* Prize for their article "Jefferson Davis Soldier-Beauvoir," which was posted in January 2017. Foster is a University of Southern Mississippi student seeking her master's degree in history, and Ural is



Robert McElvaine, professor, Millsaps College, received the B.L.C. Wailes Award from Ann Abadie.

professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). The online publication is available at <http://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov>.

The Historical Society of Gulfport received the Frank E. Everett, Jr. Award for its outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of local history. Terrence J. Winschel was awarded the Willie D. Halsell Prize for his *The Journal of Mississippi History* article, “A Soldier’s Legacy: William T. Rigby and the Establishment of Vicksburg National Military Park.” Prior to his retirement, Winschel served for thirty-five years as a historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. H. Grady Howell received the William E. “Bill” Atkinson Award for his outstanding lifelong contributions to the study and interpretation of Mississippi Civil War history.

Awards of merit were presented to Larry L. “Butch” Brown, former mayor of Natchez, for his visionary and dedicated implementation of the outstanding yearlong Natchez Tricentennial Celebration; Stratton Bull for his exemplary oversight as chair of the Natchez Tricentennial Celebration in 2016; Douglas B. Chambers, Department of History, USM, for his exemplary research and scholarly direction of the Documenting Runaway Slaves Project; Jennifer Ogden Combs for her exemplary leadership as executive director of the Natchez Tricentennial Celebration in 2016; Marco Giardino, Bay St. Louis, for his invaluable contribution

to the archival work of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History through his translation of the Caselli Family Letters; Max Grivno, Department of History, USM, for his research and scholarly direction of the Documenting Runaway Slaves Project; Jim Miller of Gulfport for his role in the creation of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Museum of Historical Photography; Randy Randazzo of Arlington, Virginia, for his remarkable documentation of Mississippi Gulf Coast history through his collection of more than 5,000 postcards and negatives and his exceptional generosity in donating his collection to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History; Thomas E. Simmons of Gulfport for his extensive and exemplary research in documenting the distinguished life of John Charles Robinson; Joe Tomasovsky of Bay St. Louis for his role in the creation of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Museum of Historical Photography; and Susannah J. Ural, Department of History, USM, for her exemplary research and scholarly direction of the Beauvoir Veteran Project. The Natchez National Historical Park received an award of merit for its exemplary research and production of the daily "Natchez History Minute" during the yearlong Natchez Tricentennial celebration in 2016.

Program of the 2017 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

*by Brother Rogers,
2017 MHS Program Committee Chair*

The Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) held its annual meeting March 2–4, 2017, at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center in Gulfport. The program began on Thursday afternoon, March 2, with a meeting of representatives of the Federation of Mississippi Historical Societies, followed by the welcoming reception at The Chimneys Restaurant. Afterward, the Society’s board of directors gathered at the Great Southern Club in the Hancock Bank Building for its annual dinner meeting. Later, MHS sponsored a hospitality suite at Courtyard Gulfport Beachfront.

The program sessions began on Friday, March 3, with a welcome by William “Brother” Rogers, president, MHS, and George Schloegel, former mayor of Gulfport and chair of the Mississippi Bicentennial South Celebration South.

The morning program began with Sarah Torgeson, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), discussing the state’s founding 1817 constitution and the rare 20-star U.S. flag, the first to include Mississippi. The rare flag is one of only a handful known to exist. It was acquired by MDAH in 2001 after having been discovered in an antique shop in Massachusetts and is now on display in the Museum of Mississippi History.

John F. Marszalek, executive director, Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, moderated a session with three authors of the Heritage of Mississippi Series: James F. Barnett, Jr., *Mississippi’s American Indians*; Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi*; and Timothy B. Smith, *Mississippi and the Civil War: The Home Front*.

Following the morning break, C. Liegh McInnis, co-author of *Brother Hollis: The Sankofa of a Movement Man*, interviewed his book subject, Hollis Watkins, about his experiences as a young person in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement.



Civil Rights Veteran Hollis Watkins was interviewed by C. Leigh McInnis.

Thomas E. Simmons of Gulfport delivered the keynote address at lunch on his book, *The Man Called Brown Condor: The Forgotten History of an African American Fighter Pilot*. The pilot was John Robinson, a Gulfport native who against impossible odds became a pilot, fought for Ethiopia in 1935, and influenced the establishment of a school of aviation at Tuskegee Institute. Susannah Ural, vice president, MHS, introduced Simmons. Otis W. Pickett, assistant professor, Mississippi College, delivered the invocation.

After lunch, Christian Pinnen, associate professor, Mississippi College, moderated presentations by three student members of the national history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta: Faith Chamness, Millsaps College, *If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them: The Mississippi Gaming Industry*; Sarah Moore, Mississippi College, *White America's Enemy: Examining the Treatment of Relationships Between African American Communities vs. German POW's in the 1940s*; and Daniel C. Savell, Mississippi College, *Worship, Christianity, and Slavery in Mississippi, 1750-1850*.

The Friday afternoon tour was a visit to Centennial Plaza, site of the proposed 1917 state centennial celebration that was cancelled due to World War I. The site became a naval training center, Veteran's Administration hospital, and is now being developed commercially.



Jason Ward Morgan accepted the McLemore Prize from Max Griuno.

For the second time, the winner of the McLemore Prize for the best book written on Mississippi history was the featured speaker at the banquet. Jason Morgan Ward, associate professor of history, Mississippi State University, won the McLemore Prize for his book, *Hanging Bridge: Racial Violence and America's Civil Rights Century*. Ann Abadie, assistant director emerita, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, presented the award to Dr. Ward. Marshall G. Bennett, former state treasurer of Mississippi, delivered the invocation.

In addition, Abadie presented the B.L.C. Wailes Award to Dr. Robert McElvaine, professor, Millsaps College. The Wailes Award is presented as merited to a Mississippian who has achieved national distinction in the field of history.

On Saturday, March 4, the annual business meeting took place at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center. Afterward, the first program session featured Katie Blount, director, MDAH, describing the bicentennial plans for the state of Mississippi. Westley F. Busbee, Jr., Belhaven University, reviewed David Sansing's book, *Mississippi Governors: Soldiers, Statesmen, Scholars, Scoundrels*. Jim Miller and Betty Shaw of Gulfport talked about the Mississippi Gulf Coast Museum of Historical Photography and the Historical Society of Gulfport, respectively.



Cathy Lee of Petal Middle School received the Bettersworth Award from Betty Shaw.

William “Brother” Rogers, president, MHS, presided over the awards luncheon. Donald M. Dana, Jr., delivered the invocation. Incoming president Susannah J. Ural, professor, University of Southern Mississippi, adjourned the meeting.

The following members of the program committee deserve thanks for an interesting program: Daphne Chamberlain, John Marszalek, Dennis Mitchell, Deanne Nuwer, Christian Pinnen, James “Pat” Smith, and Charles Sullivan. In addition, secretary-treasurer Elbert Hilliard and the staff at MDAH are to be commended for organizing and implementing the many details that made the annual meeting a success.

MISSISSIPPI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

MARCH 4, 2017

The annual business meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society was held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 4, 2017, at the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, Gulfport, Mississippi. William “Brother” Rogers, president, Mississippi Historical Society, called the meeting to order and presided.

Elbert R. Hilliard, secretary-treasurer, acted as secretary for the meeting. Timothy Davis, administrative technician, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), recorded the minutes.

The following business was transacted:

I. The secretary-treasurer moved that the minutes of the March 4, 2016, annual business meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society be approved as distributed. The motion was seconded by Deanne Nuwer and unanimously approved.

II. The secretary-treasurer presented for the information of the members the following financial report for the year ending December 31, 2016:

BANK BALANCES

As of December 31, 2016

Regions Bank

Heritage of Mississippi Series	39,965.09
Daily Interest Operating Account	

Trustmark National Bank

Halsell Prize Endowment	0.00
Transferred to operating account pending investment	

Certificate of Deposit Due March 9, 2018 (0.45%)	11,894.67
Certificate of Deposit Due April 19, 2018 (0.45%)	5,300.00
Certificate of Deposit Life Membership Account Due March 26, 2018 (0.45%)	45,970.77
Glover Moore Prize Fund Certificate of Deposit Due March 8, 2018 (0.45%)	10,999.56
John K. Bettersworth Award Fund Money market account	4,266.09
Mississippi Historical Society Daily Interest Operating Account	48,231.56
Mississippi History NOW Adine Lampton Wallace Endowment Certificate of Deposit Due March 24, 2018 (0.45%)	15,001.48
Frank E. Everett, Jr., Award Certificate of Deposit Due March 26, 2018 (0.45%)	3,729.47

BanCorpSouth Bank

Mississippi History NOW Money Market Account	767.83
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Origin Bank

Elbert R. Hilliard Oral History Award Transferred to operating account pending investment	0.00
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Heritage of Mississippi Series	20,363.10
Money Market Account	
William E. Atkinson Civil War	11,193.93
History Award Endowment	
Money Market Account	
TOTAL	\$217,683.55
Restricted	\$106,286.55
Unrestricted	\$111,397.00

Operating Account
Summary Report
1/1/2016 through 12/31/2016

INCOME	
Annual Meeting	14,105.00
Bettersworth Award Contributions	578.41
CD Interest Earned	
Glover Moore Prize CD	74.38
Contributions	
Willie D. Halsell Prize	200.00
Donations	
Bettersworth Award CD	50.00
General Fund CD	50.00
Glover Moore Prize Fund CD	50.00
Halsell Prize Endowment CD	50.00
MHS General CD	50.00
Wallace Endowment CD	<u>50.00</u>
Total Donations	300.00
ERH Oral History Award	
Transfer from Origin Bank	
to be invested	4,252.78
Interest Earned	246.60
Membership:	
College	600.00
Contributing	300.00

Corporate	500.00
Federation	125.00
Joint	455.00
Life-New Life Members	1,200.00
Single	4,985.00
Student	5.00
Supporting	200.00
Total Membership	8,370.00
Willie D. Halsell Prize Endowment	
Transferred from Trustmark	
to be invested	8,351.77
Endowment Interest	<u>56.01</u>
TOTAL INCOME	36,534.95
EXPENSES	
Accounting Fees	1,500.00
Adine Lampton Wallace-Transfer to CD	50.00
Annual Meeting Expenses	16,402.64
Bettersworth Award	482.52
Bettersworth Award-Transfer to CD	50.00
Everett Award	300.00
General Fund-Transfer to CD	100.00
Glover Moore Prize	300.00
Glover Moore Prize-Transfer to CD	50.00
Grant Awards –	
Junior Historical Society	1,000.00
Mississippi History Now	<u>2,000.00</u>
Total Grant Awards	3,000.00
Halsell Prize-Transfer to CD	50.00
Hilliard Oral History Award	300.00
Honoraria –	
History is Lunch Lecture Series	150.00
Journal of Mississippi History	4,820.74
McLemore Prize	700.00
Miscellaneous Expenses	
Bus Transportation for	
MDAH Teacher Workshop	425.00
Refreshments for Board Meetings	<u>48.77</u>

Total Miscellaneous Expenses	473.77
Office Expense	461.77
Riley Prize	500.00
Postage	975.00
Website Expense	<u>159.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	29,849.84
TRANSFERS	
From 2015 Operating Account	<u>41,546.45</u>
OVERALL TOTAL	48,231.56

MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NOW
Summary Report
1/1/2016 through 12/31/2016

INCOME	
Donations	10,240.00
Grants –	
Mississippi Historical Society	2,000.00
Interest Earned	<u>101.78</u>
TOTAL INCOME	12,341.92
EXPENSES	
Annual Meeting Expense	106.16
Authors’ Fees	1,250.00
Bank Service Charge	10.00
Lesson Plans	1,500.00
Professional Fees	<u>15,000.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	17,866.16
TRANSFERS	
From 2015 Mississippi History NOW Account	<u>6,292.07</u>
OVERALL TOTAL	767.83

The secretary-treasurer thanked Sherry Norwood for her assistance in preparing the financial statements and in maintaining the Society's membership and financial records. He reported that the Society had 1,336 members at the end of the 2016 calendar year.

III. Page Ogden gave a brief update on the work of the Investment Committee that is comprised of himself, Ann Simmons, Marshall Bennett, and Fred Miller.

IV. The president expressed his appreciation to the members of the Local Arrangements Committee: Jim Miller, chair; Elbert R. Hilliard, Rebecca Kremer Kajdan, Sherry Norwood, Deanne S. Nuwer, Lolly Rash, Betty Hancock Shaw, and Philip W. Shaw for their outstanding work in planning and coordinating arrangements for the annual meeting.

V. The president expressed his appreciation to the members of the Program Committee: William "Brother" Rogers, chair; Daphne R. Chamberlain, John F. Marszalek, Dennis J. Mitchell, Deanne S. Nuwer, Christian Pinnen, James "Pat" Smith, and Charles L. Sullivan for their splendid work in organizing and implementing the annual meeting's interesting and informative program.

VI. The president expressed thanks to the following individuals for their generous financial support in helping fund the 2017 annual meeting: Coast Transit Authority; David Delk, ABC Rental Center, Gulfport; FEB Distributing, Gulfport; Nona Flagg, Durham, North Carolina; Claire and Elbert Hilliard, Madison; Jim Miller, Gulfport; Mitchell Distributing, Gulfport; and Ann Atkinson Simmons, Columbia.

VII. The president recognized and expressed appreciation to the following individuals who were completing their three-year terms of service on the board of directors of the society: Ann Abadie, Craig Gill, Jim Miller, Page Ogden, David Slay, and Robert Walker.

VIII. Dr. John Marszalek, chair, Publications Committee, presented the following report:

The Publications Committee for the *Heritage of Mississippi Series* consists of former Governor William F. Winter, Dr. John F. Marszalek, Elbert Hilliard, Peggy Jeanes, Dr. William Scarborough, Dr. Charles Reagan Wilson, Crissy Wilson, and Katie Blount.

As of this time, through the cooperation of the Mississippi Historical Society and the University Press of Mississippi, the following volumes have been published: Patti Carr Black's volume on art; Dr. Randy Sparks's volume on religion; Dr. Steve Cresswell's volume on 1877-1917; the late Dr. Michael Ballard's volume on the military history of the Civil War; Dr. Timothy Smith's volume on the Civil War home front; and James Barnett's book on Mississippi's Native Americans. Lori Watkins Fulton's manuscript on the literary history of Mississippi should be in print by the end of 2017. In total, we will have seven volumes published in the series.

There are seven other authors under contract who are working on their manuscripts:

Dr. Connie Lester of the University of Central Florida has outlined the entire manuscript and has completed the introduction and first chapter of her volume on the Economic History of Mississippi.

Dr. Bo Morgan of the University of Southern Mississippi has completed a prologue and chapters 1 to 10 of his 1917-1941 volume. He has two more chapters to write, one covering 1936 to Pearl Harbor and the final one on general culture for the entire 1917-1941 period. He will also provide an epilogue. He hopes to have all but the culture chapter completed by the end of summer and the manuscript, less the culture chapter, ready to go to readers in the fall.

Jere Nash, free-lance writer, has completed his research on the Reconstruction volume. He sent four chapters of his manuscript to Elbert Hilliard and to me this January and has sent the same chapters to Dr. William Harris, who is consulting on the volume. He expects to have the manuscript completed by the end of the summer.

Dr. Max Grivno of the University of Southern Mississippi is working on the volume concerning slavery. He has made important progress on his manuscript and will be meeting with Elbert Hilliard and me during this meeting to establish final deadlines.

Mike Bunn now of Historic Blakeley State Park, Alabama, and Clay Williams of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History indicate that, despite their "day jobs," they have made

significant progress on their manuscript dealing with frontier Mississippi, 1800-1840. They lack just a few chapters and are aiming for completion of the manuscript by the end of 2017.

Charles Weeks, retired, and Christian Pinnen of Mississippi College have drafts of eight chapters of the manuscript entitled "A Borrowed Land, Colonial Mississippi." Cambridge University Press has expressed interest in publishing Dr. Pinnen's dissertation which could be essential in his movement towards tenure. Dr. Weeks estimates that the Colonial Mississippi manuscript will be completed by May 2018.

William Jeanes, retired magazine editor, is making progress on his World War II in Mississippi volume. He hopes to have a completed manuscript by August/September 2017, a year from the time he signed his contract. He feels confident that the manuscript will certainly be ready by November/December 2017.

Volumes yet to be assigned an author are three: the pre-Civil War years (1840-1860), the Jim Crow era, and the Civil Rights era. We have received interest in all three volumes, but we have, as yet, not found an author for any one of them.

Thus, we have: seven volumes that have been published; seven under contract with many near completion; and three volumes as yet not assigned to an author. Hopefully this will be the year when we will experience a major breakthrough in publications and also have three new authors under contract.

Finally this annual meeting program included a panel session yesterday morning, on the Heritage of Mississippi Series with myself as moderator and Jim Barnett, Randy Sparks, and Tim Smith as speakers.

We are also planning to have a panel on this series at the Mississippi Literary Festival in August.

IX. Missy Jones, editor, *Mississippi History NOW*, reported on the status of *Mississippi History Now* (MHN). She stated that last year's publication series is finished. All six articles have been published. The final project report has been submitted to the Mississippi Humanities Council (MHC), and the Society is awaiting MHC's grant funding for the prior year. The Mississippi Humanities Council has renewed the grant for an additional six articles for 2017. The president thanked Missy Jones for her dedicated work with MHN.

X. Deanne Nuwer, Junior Historical Society, presented the following report on the Junior Historical Society:

During 2016, the Junior Historical Society co-hosted the National History Day (NHD) competition at the University of Southern Mississippi. The theme was "Taking a Stand in History." Students competed in research paper, performance, display boards, and website development categories on both junior and senior high school levels. At this competition, 112 students from schools across Mississippi — Pass Christian High, Colmer Middle, Long Beach High, Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, Cleveland High, Forrest AHS, Oak Grove Middle, Tupelo Middle, Gautier High, Armstrong Middle, Pascagoula High, Starkville High, as well as Mississippi Home School students — participated. Fifty volunteers, including USM faculty and students, MDAH personnel, and others helped make the 2016 NHD event a success. The co-coordinators of National History Day were Dr. Allison Abra and Mr. Al Wheat. Dr. Rebecca Tuuri is the incoming University of Southern Mississippi co-coordinator, along with Mr. Al Wheat for 2017.

Three workshops around Mississippi in 2016 at Gulfport, Jackson, and Columbus, funded by a Mississippi Humanities Council mini-grant, introduced best practices and information to area teachers regarding NHD as Dr. Tuuri and Mr. Wheat organized the informational events. These were successful programs that introduced the advantages of NHD participation in the classroom, as good research and writing skills are essential. Partnerships were vital to these workshops with Dr. Jennifer Brannock, Ms. Hayden McDaniel, Ms. Jane Shambra, Ms. Stacey Everett, Dr. Robby Luckett, Ms. Elizabeth Green, Ms. Mona Vance, Mr. Chuck Yarborough, and Mr. Neil Guilbeau contributing valuable information and assistance to make these events successful.

In addition, for the past several years, a Mississippi student or teacher has been recognized by NHD to participate in the Normandy Sacrifice for Freedom Program. This is an opportunity for participants to learn more about history in an engaging and hands-on environment that explores critical historical events that shaped the history of the United States.

Dr. Tuuri and Mr. Wheat also presented the NHD program

information at the Mississippi Council for Social Studies annual meeting in Jackson on November 4, 2016. We wish to thank the Mississippi Historical Society and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for their continued support of this exciting and educational event to which the Junior Historical Society remains committed. Mississippi students continue to place well at the NHD national competition held each June at the University of Maryland as well as learning valuable skills that will benefit them as they move into higher education.

XI. On behalf of Dr. Chuck Westmoreland, chair, Meeting Sites Committee, the secretary-treasurer reported that the Society's 2018 annual meeting will be held in Jackson at the new Two Mississippi Museums and that the 2019 annual meeting will be held in Natchez. He further reported that the Society's board of directors had voted at its meeting on Thursday evening, March 2 to accept the Meeting Sites Committee's recommendation that the 2020 meeting be held at Delta State University.

XII. The secretary-treasurer presented the following resolutions:

RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE

WHEREAS, Elizabeth "Libby" Shaifer Hollingsworth of Port Gibson departed this life July 2, 2016; and

WHEREAS, "Libby" Hollingsworth, along with her devoted husband, Al, was a longtime and faithful member of the Mississippi Historical Society, having served on the Society's board of directors and a number of Society committees and attended innumerable annual meetings where she brought joy to everyone with whom she had contact; and

WHEREAS, "Libby" was an active supporter of historic preservation on the local, state, and national levels; and

WHEREAS, "Libby" was an active supporter of the Mississippi Main Street program, a board member and faithful advocate of the Mississippi Heritage Trust, the Advisory Board of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, a founding member of the Port Gibson Heritage

Trust, and champion of the preservation of the historic Shaifer House and the Port Gibson Battlefield; and

WHEREAS, “Libby” was a dedicated supporter of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and one whose love of history was unsurpassed;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Historical Society assembled on March 4, 2017, in Gulfport, Mississippi, mourns the death of Elizabeth “Libby” Shaifer Hollingsworth and expresses its sympathy to her family.

RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE

WHEREAS, Michael B. Ballard departed this life on October 11, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Professor Ballard was a longtime and faithful member of the Mississippi Historical Society, having served on the Society’s board of directors and on innumerable committees during the years of his association with the Society; and

WHEREAS, Professor Ballard served for many years as an archivist in Mississippi State University’s Mitchell Memorial Library, serving successively as associate university archivist, university archivist, and university archivist and coordinator of the Congressional Collection and Political Research Center; and

WHEREAS, Professor Ballard was noted for his scholarly research and writing that resulted in the publication of eleven books, twenty-five articles and more than seventy-five book reviews; and

WHEREAS, Ballard’s books, *A Long Shadow: Jefferson Davis and the Final Days of the Confederacy*; *Pemberton: A Biography*; and *Vicksburg: The Campaign That Opened the Mississippi* were History Book Club selections; and

WHEREAS, Ballard contributed to the Mississippi Historical Society’s *Heritage of Mississippi Series* through his writing of the volume, *The Civil War in Mississippi: Major Campaigns and Battles*; and

WHEREAS, Ballard’s scholarly research on the Civil War

led to numerous speaking appearances before Civil War Round Tables across the nation, historical societies and associations, and civic groups; and

WHEREAS, Ballard ably assisted Dr. John Marszalek in the transfer and relocation of the Ulysses S. Grant Papers to the Mitchell Memorial Library at Mississippi State University (MSU) and in the planning for the Ulysses S. Grant Library at MSU;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Historical Society assembled on March 4, 2017, in Gulfport, Mississippi, mourns the death of Michael B. Ballard and expresses its sympathy to his family.

RESOLUTION OF CONDOLENCE

WHEREAS, Jerome “Jerry” Hafter of Greenville departed this life on September 23, 2016; and

WHEREAS, Jerry, along with his devoted wife, JoCille Dawkins Hafter, was a longtime member and faithful supporter of the Mississippi Historical Society and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History; and

WHEREAS, Jerry Hafter was a distinguished legal scholar, whose thesis on the legislative history of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 won the Sara Norton Prize as the best master’s thesis on a topic in American history or political science and who served while earning his degree at the Yale University Law School as the associate editor of the Yale Law Journal; and

WHEREAS, Jerry was one of a small number of Mississippi attorneys with an extensive international practice, having served as outside general counsel to Delta and Pine Land Company, one of Mississippi’s oldest and largest publicly traded companies; and

WHEREAS, Jerry served effectively for some eleven years as a member of the Foundation for Mississippi History and played an invaluable role in assisting the Foundation in its campaign to raise private monies to support the construction and operation of the Two Mississippi Museums (Museum of Mississippi History and Mississippi Civil Rights Museum) that will be dedicated

on December 9, 2017, to culminate the state of Mississippi's observance of its bicentennial;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Historical Society assembled on March 4, 2017, in Gulfport, Mississippi, mourns the death of Jerome "Jerry" Hafter and expresses its sympathy to his family.

RESOLUTION OF COMMENDATION

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Historical Society is aware that the Local Arrangements Committee, chaired by Jim Miller of Gulfport and the Program Committee, chaired by William "Brother" Rogers of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, invested a considerable amount of time, thought, and effort in planning the annual meeting of the Society; and

WHEREAS, the Local Arrangements Committee succeeded in hosting an enlightening, entertaining, and memorable annual meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Program Committee assembled and organized informative and scholarly sessions for the annual meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mississippi Historical Society, assembled on March 4, 2017, in Gulfport, Mississippi, that the Local Arrangements Committee and Program Committee be formally recognized and commended for their splendid efforts.

RESOLUTION OF COMMENDATION

WHEREAS, Alison Collis Greene, assistant professor of history and specialist in American religious history, Mississippi State University, was honored in November of 2016 with the Southern Historical Association's prestigious Charles S. Sydnor Award for the best book in Southern history published in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Greene's book, *No Depression in Heaven: The Great Depression, the New Deal, and the Transformation of Religion in the Delta*, which was published by Oxford University

Press, documents the suffering and travails of the poor citizens of the Mississippi and Arkansas Delta region during the Great Depression and the inability of churches to provide needed assistance; thereby influencing church leaders to seek help from the federal government; and

WHEREAS, this shift from local to national assistance, according to Professor Greene, generated significant anti-government backlash from religious and political leaders due to its threatening their authority and the traditional racial hierarchy in the Delta regions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mississippi Historical Society assembled on March 4, 2017, in Gulfport, Mississippi, commends Alison Collis Greene for her scholarship and noteworthy contribution to American historiography.

The secretary-treasurer asked if there were any other resolutions. There being no resolutions from the floor, the president's motion to adopt the aforementioned resolutions was seconded by Page Ogden and unanimously approved.

XIII. On behalf of Peggy Jeanes, chair, Nominations Committee, the president reported that the committee recommended the following slate of officers and board members:

Officers for the term 2017-2018

President – Susannah J. Ural, Ph.D., Charles W. Moorman Distinguished Alumni professor of the humanities, and co-director of the Dale Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Southern Mississippi.

Vice President (president-elect) – Page Ogden, Natchez, former president & CEO, Britton & Koontz Bank.

Secretary-Treasurer – Elbert Hilliard, director emeritus, Mississippi Department of Archives & History.

Brother Rogers will serve as immediate past president.

The following six individuals are nominated to serve three-year terms on the Society's Board of Directors (2017-2020).

Toby Bates, Ph.D., assistant professor of history, Mississippi State University, Meridian campus.

Will Bowlin, New Albany, professor of history and political science, Northeast Mississippi Community College.

Chad Daniels, director, Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby, Hattiesburg.

Paul Jermyn, Long Beach, lead test operations engineer at NASA's Stennis Space Center and avid collector of historical images.

Erin Kempker, Columbus, Ph.D., department chair and associate professor of history, Mississippi University for Women.

Deanne Stephens Nuwer, Ph.D., associate professor of history and associate dean, arts and letters, University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast campus, and executive director of the Gulf South Historical Association.

The following nominee is to serve a one-year term to complete the three-year term of a board member who moved out of state and can no longer attend board meetings:

Walt Grayson, WLBT-TV weatherman and producer and narrator of Mississippi Public Broadcasting's "Mississippi Roads."

The committee voted to ask the two individuals serving on the Board of Publications whose terms expire this month to continue to serve: Walter Howell (Clinton) and Jeanne Luckett (Jackson); both have agreed to serve for the 2017-2020 term.

Al Hollingsworth moved that the aforementioned slate of nominees be accepted by acclamation. The motion was seconded by Jim Miller and unanimously approved.

XIV. Katie Blount, director, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, briefly reported on the various activities of the department and highlighted accomplishments from the past year such as the Mississippi Mound Trail, the Mississippi Digital Newspaper Project, the acquisition of the Randazzo Post Card Collection, and the quinquennial Hall of Fame election.

XV. In the matter of other business, Dr. Marszalek reported on the progress of the construction of the Ulysses S. Grant presidential library at Mississippi State University. He stated that the shell of the fourth floor of the Mitchell Memorial library is near completion and that the dedication of the library is planned for October 2017.

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

William "Brother" Rogers, President
Elbert R. Hilliard, Secretary-Treasurer

BOOK REVIEWS

Civil Rights, Culture Wars: The Fight over a Mississippi Textbook

By Charles W. Eagles

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Illustrations, acknowledgments, essay on sources, notes, index. Pp. 298. \$34.95 cloth, \$33.99 eBook. ISBN: 978-1-4696-3115-8.)

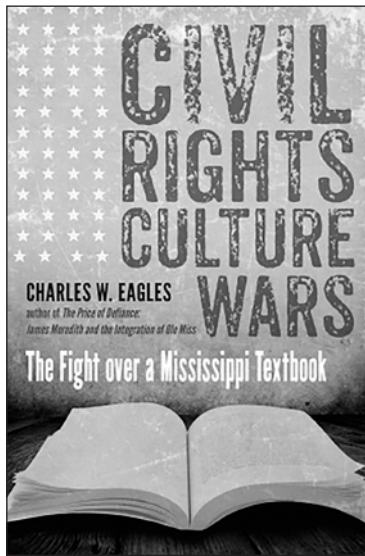
In *Civil Rights, Culture Wars*, historian Charles Eagles focuses on the controversy surrounding a groundbreaking Mississippi history textbook. He presents a well-written, meticulously-researched study proving textbooks' importance in shaping historical memory, ideas regarding race and identity, and Mississippi's efforts to maintain the status quo. For nearly a century, Eagles argues, students learned from texts ignoring (or at best marginalizing) everyone but elite white males. According to state-approved histories, slavery (if discussed at all) was benign and necessary; Confederates fought for honor (not slavery); and patriotic whites resisted the oppressive federal government during Reconstruction. Students internalized this mythology

that shielded them from their state's turbulent record of oppression and discrimination, and therefore struggled to understand why anyone would want to change their way of life. Most white Mississippians believed

race relations were good, blacks were happy, and their state was fair for all. Textbooks taught them these myths and "also played a major role in shaping students' attitudes, values, and interests" (3).

In 1970, sociologist James Loewen and historian Charles Sallis began working on a Mississippi history textbook to "combat [the] ignorance"

in existing texts (2). Mississippi schools were forcibly integrated the previous year and therefore needed "an integrated Mississippi history that included blacks just



as the classroom would” (88). Four years later, *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* was published for required ninth grade Mississippi history courses. This “boldly revisionist textbook” met opposition since it embraced controversial topics like race, class, and gender that had been neglected by other books (2).

Eagles’ first several chapters establish how *Conflict and Change* differed from other texts, chronicling public education and textbooks through the 1950s. This background is interesting but excessive, and Eagles loses track of his argument. He examines approved textbooks preceding *Conflict and Change* to establish a baseline narrative, reviewing almost a century’s-worth of pro-southern textbooks. Eagles sets texts into historical context, but overlooks prevailing historiography. If scholarship was pro-southern and all-white, textbooks would follow suit. If Eagles addressed this, readers would see how textbooks mirrored scholarship for some time, but as trends shifted starting in the 1950s, state histories (mostly written by John Bettersworth) did not. Despite new scholarship, Bettersworth’s *Your Mississippi* (1975) was a typical, pre-revisionist narrative ignoring black history. It is critical to Eagles’s argument since the state approved its outdated, biased history and rejected *Conflict and Change*’s multi-racial, comprehensive version. Given this, one hopes for more extensive analysis of Bettersworth’s text, but Eagles does not deliver, ignoring a 2010 *Journal of Mississippi History* article analyzing Mississippi textbooks and these two in particular.

Beginning with Chapter Four, Eagles moves to a discussion of *Conflict and Change* where his originality and significance shine through. Loewen and Sallis considered Bettersworth’s text “antiquated historically, biased racially, [and] inadequate” and wanted a “remedy to correct the racial imbalance in traditional Mississippi texts” by incorporating recent historiography and events (88, 206). Eagles skillfully assesses *Conflict and Change*’s revisionist approach and explains the process of writing, publication, and adoption challenges. The book met the Mississippi Textbook Purchasing Board’s criteria for being “accurate, valid, and up-to-date,” but was rejected in favor of *Your Mississippi* (151). The reasons for rejecting *Conflict and Change* varied but focused mostly on its candid attention to race. Eagles’s analysis is strongest in detailing both books’ ratings reports and the resulting court case. Board members’ thin justifications for rejection relied on personal bias rather than actual history, proving Eagles’s argument that the dismissal of *Conflict and Change* was a decision rooted in maintaining historical myth. Many defendants argued that the book would hinder students’ ability to “take pride in our state history” and should not emphasize oppression “when so many good things happened in our state” (184, 217). In 1980, a federal judge ordered *Conflict and Change*’s approval, but despite winning in court, Loewen and Sallis ultimately lost because few districts adopted it. Though it did not reach many students, Eagles argues that the textbook promoted change and

pressured others to improve, resulting in a new Betterworth edition with more (but token) black history, as well as new, significantly better texts. This claim by Eagles, however, needs more support to prove causation. *Conflict and Change*, Eagles concludes, was a precursor to the culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s that tested traditional narratives and encouraged students to critically evaluate a flawed past and see how to “change their state for the better” (242).

Despite some faults, Eagles’s book provides students and scholars of education and history an important, highly-readable, and engaging story about memory, censorship, and attempts to open Mississippi’s “closed society.” He shows that resisting change goes beyond violent protests or voter suppression and can be as simple as rejecting a ninth-grade textbook.

Rebecca Miller Davis

University of Missouri-Kansas City

Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement. By Devery S. Anderson. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015. Paperback reprint with new preface, 2017. 552 pages. \$25.00.)

This work is an important and exhaustive study of the 1955 murder in the Mississippi Delta of an African American boy from Chicago. The author cites and acknowledges the many works that have been published on this murder case, which became a lightning rod for the Jim Crow South in the 1950s and 1960s. The name

Emmett Till continues to smolder in the national consciousness. He was murdered for having the temerity to whistle at a white woman. Julian Bond, the well-known civil rights activist leader penned a foreword to the 2015 edition of this work stating, just months before his own death: “You may think, as I did, that you know the totality of this tale, but you will learn much that is new, as I did” (xiv). In essence, that is what this work accomplishes. Anderson spent over ten years of his life researching this history, first hearing about the case as a student at the University of Utah in 1994 while watching the first episode of *Eyes on the Prize* in the Salt Lake City Library. He began serious research on the case in 2004, though his contacts with Till’s mother had begun years before.

Anderson lays out his intent in his first preface. He seeks to “write a truly comprehensive narrative of the case, with all of the details that are, in many respects, stranger than fiction” (xxliii). In reading *Emmett Till*, what truly emerges is the depth of the author’s knowledge of the details, the persons involved, and the twists and turns of their lives following the murder.

Part One is divided into ten chapters. Part Two consists of three chapters followed by an epilogue and an essential appendix that contains frequently asked questions about the case, as well as more detailed notes from Anderson’s research. Within his notes, Anderson analyzes the contradictory sources he met on the research trail. A lengthy bibliography also makes for required reading (485-527).

In Part One, Anderson discusses Till's family history and his close relationship with his mother before moving on to explain the trip to Mississippi that resulted in Till's murder and the subsequent arrests and trial of J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant. Anderson is clear to note that the trial likely occurred in the wrong county. The murderers were arrested and jailed in Leflore County, where the initial kidnapping took place, and then tried in Sumner in Tallahatchie County where Till's body was found. The murder, though, most likely occurred on a plantation near Drew in Sunflower County. This section also recounts the protests and rumors that followed the acquittal of Milam and Bryant, Till's mother's speaking engagements around the country, and the murderers' confession in *Look* magazine. Anderson then spends time on the lives of those involved in this tragedy in the years that followed, with the chapter for this discussion entitled, "Never the Same."

Part Two deals with the "Revival" of the case, in particular, the books and documentary films produced and various queries about reopening the case during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The FBI reopened the case with a detailed study of the events of 1955 and even considered bringing charges against Carolyn Bryant Donham, the woman at the center of the "whistling" story who had kept a low profile following the murder. In February 2007, a multiracial grand jury of nineteen men and women in Leflore County refused to offer indictments in the case, which was, at that point, effectively over. Anderson acknowledges Alvin

Sykes, whose advocacy resulted in Congress's passage of the *Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act*. Anderson's book also highlights the 2014 Tallahatchie County apology to the Till family in front of the Sumner courthouse. This work is the definitive study of the Emmett Till murder. The bibliography and endnotes present a trail that any interested reader can follow. This book will also be useful in the teaching of research methods for university history students.

Kathryn Green
Mississippi Valley State University

Panting for Glory: The Mississippi Rifles in the Mexican War. By Richard Bruce Winders. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016. Acknowledgements, Notes, Bibliography, Index. Pp. x, 192. \$45 cloth. ISBN: 9781623494162.)

The outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846 offered Americans from across the United States an opportunity for military service in regular or volunteer regiments. Richard Bruce Winders' *Panting for Glory* contrasts the military service experiences of the 1st and 2nd Mississippi Infantry regiments during the Mexican War. In examining these two regiments, Winders notes that "the experiences of both regiments, although very different, present a complete picture of volunteers at war" (x). The contrasting realities of military life experienced by these two regiments demonstrates why some regiments were successful in Mexico while others were not.

Throughout *Panting for Glory*, Winders persuasively argues that success and failure for volunteer regiments in Mexico had more to do with opportunity than anything else. The opportunity for active battlefield service presented itself to the 1st Mississippi due to their early arrival in an active theater of operations and the personal connections between Jefferson Davis and Zachary Taylor. The 2nd Mississippi, however, arrived later to an area no longer considered the primary theater of the war. By skillfully examining the multiple personalities comprising the officer corps of the two regiments, Winders further argues that the 1st Mississippi benefitted from a superior leadership that helped place the regiment in a position to achieve its goals. Winders further notes that the men comprising these regiments possessed the same character, motivations, and social background, leaving only opportunity as the differing factor between the two regiments. Because of the relative uniformity of these regiments, the 1st Mississippi benefitted from a combination of better opportunities and better internal leadership. The lack of these same attributes served to deny the same glory to the 2nd Mississippi.

Many of the volunteers who served in the 1st and 2nd Mississippi Rifles enlisted in the hope that military service would translate into battlefield glory, which they could then use as a force of social uplift back home. Others simply signed on for patriotic reasons or because service in Mexico provided a tantalizing promise of excitement and adventure. In *Panting for Glory*, Winders examines the service history of both of these regiments in

detail and draws upon the letters and diaries of numerous members of these regiments. Some, such as Jefferson Davis, are familiar while other names are not as easily recognizable. The inclusion of so many personalities from these two regiments reinforces the argument that personal relationships could shape the service experience of volunteer regiments. As Winders notes, "bickering between the officers within each regiment occurred, but in-fighting had less harmful effects on the 1st Mississippi Rifles than on its sister regiment" (122). Winders's dual coverage of both regiments makes the book unique among unit histories which generally examine one regiment. The juxtaposition of both regiments in the book offers a much more complete view of military service for volunteer regiments in the Mexican War. While many regiments sought the same battlefield distinctions won by the 1st Mississippi, most regiments instead found the garrison duty experienced by the 2nd Mississippi.

Panting for Glory provides scholars and average readers alike with a much more complete view of the realities of service in Mexico than previous unit-based studies. This work builds upon a growing Mexican War historiography, which is increasingly more concerned with the war's participants than with the traditional battlefield narrative. In so doing, Winders not only provides a glimpse into military life within these volunteer regiments, but also delivers a state-level view of the war.

Brady L Holley
Middle Tennessee State University

The Sacred Mirror: Evangelicalism, Honor, and Identity in the Deep South, 1790-1860. By Robert Elder. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Notes, Bibliography, Index. Pp. 288. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 978-1-4696-2756-4.)

Evangelical ministers in the antebellum South occupied a strange space, responsible for upholding their religious tenets while also navigating the broader culture and mores of a society that often did not align with those beliefs. Some historians have argued that these ministers gradually adopted southern honor culture, developing spiritual foundations for secular practices and adapting the rhetoric of honor to their denominational teachings. In *The Sacred Mirror: Evangelicalism, Honor, and Identity in the Deep South, 1790-1860*, Robert Elder complicates this narrative by positing a dichotomy: evangelical ministers were modernizing influences for their faiths at the same time that they operated within premodern customs. Although they succumbed to premodern institutions (their eventual acceptance of slavery is the most obvious and egregious example), Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist preachers also engaged in a professionalization of their occupation. Along this path, they shifted away from discipline and incorporated notions of self-improvement into their sermons.

Elder borrows from historian Beth Barton Schweiger's thesis on modernity in the antebellum period and centers his study on Georgia and South Carolina in the early-

nineteenth century. Focusing on these two states, he explains, helps to narrow the scope of the study while also providing what he argues are representative examples of the change over time that would apply to other southern states. The chapters are thematic and loosely chronological, addressing the interplay between honor and shame in evangelical congregations; how church discipline reflected communal authority; the concept of female honor in churches; honor culture, discipline, and belief for the enslaved; the practice of oratory as an indicator of a ministers' perceived honor; and the connections among honor, fame, and legacy in a minister's later years.

Elder draws upon church records, sermons, correspondence, eulogies, diaries, and biographies to discover how ministers' religious beliefs interacted with southern honor; and simultaneously, how they pushed modernization of church and community through an emphasis on the individual and institutions. Describing this nebulous space is no easy task and the author captures subtleties that are not regularly present in the historiography. Referencing historians such as Anthony Rotundo, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, and Christine Heyerman, Elder places his study within the larger debate over the tensions between Christian principles and southern practices. He offers a nuanced perspective that does not dismiss the contributions of clergymen to progressive views even as they sometimes succumbed to regressive social structures. Ultimately, as Elder notes, these religious lights existed in

two worlds, the “City of Man and the City of God,” and their influences in both could not always be reconciled (205).

This work is recommended for students of religious and southern history and to anyone interested in reconsidering the reality and influence of evangelical ministers in the slave South. At times, the author’s voice adopts a tone similar to that of his sources, which can perhaps cloud the argument. In describing the importance of oratorical skills to the honor of the preacher, for instance, Elder states that a “successful sermon was a complex interplay between the oratorical skills of the preacher and the enlivening influence of the Holy Spirit, who imbued a speaker’s words with power and moved the audience to hear and accept the message of salvation” (160). In examining the problem of “smooth-tongued preachers,” he describes them as being “susceptible to the sin of pride” (161). Although it might have detracted from the artfulness of the prose, couching terms like “Holy Spirit” and “sin” in the context of ministerial rhetoric would have better distanced the author’s voice from his subjects’ beliefs, at times. This minor criticism aside, *The Sacred Mirror* offers additional insight into a subject that is oft-studied, multi-layered, and still not entirely understood. Elder has gotten us one step closer to that understanding.

Charity Wait Rakestraw
Western Governors University

Right to Revolt: The Crusade for Racial Justice in Mississippi’s Central Piney Woods. By Patricia Michelle Boyett. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015. Acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. viii, 244. \$65 hardback. ISBN 978-1-4968-0430-3.)

Patricia Michelle Boyett’s *Right to Revolt* is an arresting account of the struggle for racial freedom in Mississippi’s Central Piney Woods. Principally focused on Forrest and Jones counties, Boyett describes a movement for black liberation over three phases of time: post-World War II, when many black veterans returned home to persistent inequality; the revolution of the 1960s; and the post-civil rights stage in which “blacks and their progressive white allies, launched a second movement” to rectify the wrongs of history and to secure authoritative positions for African American community leaders (243). Boyett’s narrative of the area’s racial history, starting from its roots as a wilderness mired in an inevitable survival struggle and ending in an examination of the region’s racial successes and shortcomings, is captivating, illuminating, and, at times, awe-inspiring.

Early on, Boyett describes an irony of the Central Piney Woods region—that in its youngest days as an inhospitable site for settlement, it was home to flourishing mixed-race societies. Descendants of these societies, such as Vernon Dahmer, are present throughout the work, their activism no doubt inspired by their heritage. Additionally, a consistent theme in this narrative is the depiction of the region as deeply

resistant to authority. Opposition to centralized authority was not unique to the Central Piney Woods because beginning in the nineteenth century, all southern states considered themselves champions of states' rights. Boyett says that, as elsewhere in the South, in Mississippi's Pine Belt, "states' rights" meant maintaining the status quo of white supremacy.

Boyett is thorough in her descriptions of both the white and black struggles in Forrest and Jones counties. For whites, resisting authority meant keeping federal intervention to a minimum as the national political landscape moved toward supporting racial equality. White resistance to change often generated public dismay for the violent actions of radical whites who attracted federal attention that sometimes resulted in the prosecution of offending whites, even if only for show. African Americans confronted Mississippi's political representatives who sought to disfranchise them - including those in Forrest and Jones counties - and waded through the terror inflicted by Klansmen. Boyett makes it clear that few inhabitants were untouched by the events that unfolded in the Central Piney Woods. Whites and blacks each had a crucial role to play. Boyett carefully weaves their stories together, shining a light on the intersections.

One such intersection is the attack by Samuel Bowers' White Knights on Vernon Dahmer's home and his subsequent death in January 1966. Boyett's research into this attack and the trials of the Klan that followed is exhaustive. More than a mere retelling of FBI accounts on DABURN, as the ensuing investigation was called,

Boyett provides a vivid interpretation of the events surrounding the eventual trials and retrials of the attackers. The humanization of the White Knights involved in the monstrous Dahmer attack is skillfully and thoughtfully done; their miscalculation of the new world and political climate in which they lived eventually brought them down.

Justice for Vernon Dahmer and others murdered or terrorized at the hands of the Klan was anything but swift. Some did not see justice while they lived and many never will. In the study's final pages, Boyett acknowledges that progress is undeniable yet there is still much to be accomplished. Primarily, Boyett argues, even after all the legal and social achievements by and for African Americans, their acceptance into American civil life has not brought about a wholesale change in white attitudes on race.

While some pages offer a deluge of names that easily run together, the index and notes are the reader's savior. Boyett's work is an important contribution to the story of the civil rights movement and to Mississippi's history. She breathes new life into the conversation surrounding the racial battles and victories that have marked the landscape of the Mississippi Pine Belt. *Right to Revolt* is timely and provides students and scholars alike with a fresh perspective on the ongoing dilemma of race in Mississippi.

Morgan Ricks
Northeast Mississippi Community
College

Senator James Eastland: Mississippi's Jim Crow Democrat. By Maarten Zwiers. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. Pp. vii, 293. ISBN: 978-0-8071-60010-5.)

The New York Times, on February 20, 1986, announced the death of former U.S. Senator James O. Eastland with the headline, "James O. Eastland is Dead at 81; Leading Senate Foe of Integration." After serving nearly four decades in the U.S. Senate and over two decades as chair of the powerful Senate Judiciary Committee, Eastland's legacy, as seen in the *Times* obituary, rested on his resistance to civil rights reform. Historians have leaned heavily on this image of Eastland and, with little deviation, profiled his efforts to promote the South's segregationist cause to the exclusion of other aspects of his life and career. Maarten Zwiers's contribution on Eastland's life in the U.S. Senate attempts another look, one that sees Eastland not as the ultimate example of southern intractability during the civil rights years. Instead, Zwiers explores Eastland's career as a way to demonstrate the "Janus-faced quality of southern Democrats" and how that quality enabled outspoken segregationists like Eastland to not only maintain powerful positions within their party structure, but to broker nominations, deliver political patronage, and provide presidential counsel.

Zwiers's book is not a biography of Eastland, as the title implies. This book places Eastland within a

complex matrix of political crises, grassroots activism, and party shifts. Through deftly-maneuvered turns through committee minutes, party conventions, and state fractures within Mississippi's Democratic Party, this profile of Eastland's work puts the senator into a much wider context. Attention to Eastland's interactions with Democratic Party leaders like Pat McCarran, Lyndon Johnson, and John Kennedy, raises Eastland's profile on the national political landscape. Set next to his home state's radical turn away from practical segregation and toward the crowd-pleasing speechifying of Governor Ross Barnett, Eastland, while not a moderate by any definition, appears pliable. Zwiers goes as far as to suggest that Eastland's absence within negotiations between Barnett and the Kennedy administration in the days leading up to James Meredith's entrance to the University of Mississippi was a critical misstep on the part of Attorney General Robert Kennedy. Given Eastland's successful intervention in the previous deal struck with Barnett during the Freedom Rides in 1961, the point is well-made.

Zwiers's work undoubtedly contributes a new lens for viewing Eastland. His coverage of Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, James P. Coleman of Mississippi, and Lister Hill of Alabama helps situate Eastland among a wide variety of southern statesmen—all of them located along different points on the pole of segregation's defense. In this widely-framed delivery, however, the reader may struggle to see Eastland at times. Zwiers's research is deep

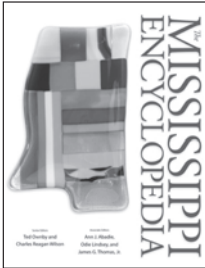
and wide and is not wholly dependent on Eastland as a central character. Navigating through the different moments of Eastland's career, it seems at times that one is watching events develop through Eastland's eyes, rather than evaluating the senator himself. Zwiers does not, as most historians have done, quote Eastland liberally. His voice is muted among a larger conversation about the future of the Democratic Party. Very few personal revelations from Eastland's life appear in the text. A few strokes of Eastland's ideology bookend the monograph, with Zwiers pinning the senator to a defense of white supremacy infused with "laissez-faire capitalism, strict immigration laws, and state sovereignty" (2). In truth, however, much of the book is devoted to an understanding of the intersecting strands of region, nation, race, and power within the Democratic Party.

With these reflections in mind, the reader should expect to encounter a wealth of information about the inner-workings of Washington, the complex alliances built within party structures, and a few notable insights into Mississippi politics. The information is complex, but delivered in a way that gradually builds into a narrative that firms up an understanding of just what was at stake politically during the civil rights years. Zwiers's book reminds us of the value in challenging one-dimensional profiles and grand narratives that cast good and bad characters in the struggle for racial equality. James O. Eastland's work and influence during some of the most critical decades of American history is a profile best

understood within the context of the unique circumstances within which he worked.

Stephanie R. Rolph
Millsaps College

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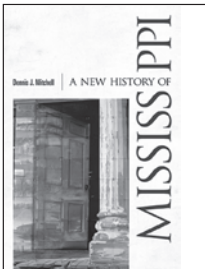
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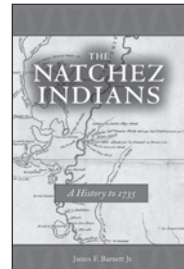


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The Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers “December 1, 1866,” to Chicago’s “1 December 1866”).

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