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COVER IMAGE—A sign in Marks, Mississippi, where the Mule Train portion of the Poor People's March on Washington began. Photo courtesy of James G. Thomas Jr.

Book Reviews

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Freedom to Resist: The Story of John Henry Sylvester and Strike City, Mississippi

By Robert L. Reece

The Mississippi Delta is the name given to the alluvial flood plain of the Mississippi River that extends from Memphis, Tennessee, to Vicksburg, Mississippi. Centuries of flooding provided the area with arguably the most fertile soil in the country, ripe for growing the cotton that through its slave economy made Mississippi one of the wealthiest and more powerful states in the Union in the antebellum era and has shaped social relations in the region since then.[1] In many ways, the history of Mississippi is a history of White Mississippians' struggle to reclaim that past glory against the ongoing resistance of Black Mississippians, who have consistently stood up against White power to demand racial justice.

After the Civil War, many Black Mississippians, faced with limited options for education and employment were forced into sharecropping. Sharecroppers operated much like indentured servants and arguably in many instances, like enslaved people. They lived on the plantations and worked the land for the plantation owners. However, sharecroppers were sold the dream that they would earn a profit, perhaps enough to start new lives for themselves and their families. They entered yearly contracts with plantation owners, in which the owner gave the sharecroppers the tools they needed to work, in addition to food, housing, and clothing, and after the harvest the workers would settle their debts with the owner. But profits, if there were any at all, were meager; many found themselves sinking deeper into debt year after year.[2] Challenges to the system were often met with swift and cruel violence[3]. Nan Elizabeth Woodruff describes one such incident, demonstrating the lengths White Mississippians would

[1] James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 2.

[2] Nan Elizabeth Woodruff, "African-American Struggles for Citizenship in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas in the Age of Jim Crow," *Radical History Review* 55 (1993), 35.

[3] Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth,* 103.

ROBERT L. REECE is a professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin.

resort to in order to maintain their control: "When small landowners and sharecroppers in Leflore County, Mississippi, joined the Colored Farmers' Alliance and Cooperative Union in 1889, the National Guard was sent in and killed at least twenty-five members."[4]

World War I provided new opportunities for Black southerners. The threat of Black workers leaving to join the military, or to fill industrial needs in cities, forced plantation owners to raise workers' wages in order to attract and retain labor. In some places, wages rose to as high as $1.50 per day for a field hand and $4.50 per day for a mechanic, but these wages did not change much over the next few decades, and by the 1960s, Black southerners were still suffering considerably.[5] In 1960, only about 20 percent of Black homes had hot and cold water and almost half had no running water at all. Moreover, 66 percent of Black homes used outdoor toilets or lacked toilet facilities completely. Black median annual income in 1959 was $1,444, significantly less than the White average of $4,209. The Black infant mortality rate in 1963 stood at 53.1 per 1,000, while the White infant mortality rate was 23.1 per 1,000. The following year, in 1964, Black mothers accounted for forty-eight of the total fifty-seven maternal deaths in the state, and 1,631 Black children died during their first year of life compared to 599 White children.[6]

Mississippi needed dramatic change, and in May 1965, about five miles to the southeast of the town of Leland, Mississippi (population then 7,000), tenant farmers struck. Against a backdrop of increasing industrialization and mechanization, the workers on one of the area's most prominent plantations (comprising 1,300 acres owned by the Andrews brothers) took a stand against the oppressive tenant farming system and went on strike. It constituted the first series of strikes in the area since the 1930s[7]. Led by John Henry Sylvester, the strikers went on to found a community called Strike City, where they sought to achieve economic independence by building a self-sustaining city. Although the project failed to reach the prominence that their founders

[4] Woodruff, "African-American Struggles for Citizenship," 35

[5] Ibid., 36.

[6] "Aid to Delta Negro Often Backfires," *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1966, 4.

[7] Douglas A. Blackmon, "Strike City: A few determined African-Americans found they could change a way of life in Mississippi," *Slavery by Another Name* (blog), June 4, 1995, http://www.slaverybyanothername.com/other-writings/strike-city-a-few-determined-african-americans-found-they-could-change-a-way-of-life-in-mississippi/#sthash.AUSE9mry.dpuf.

envisioned, Strike City still contributed to important economic and political victories across the Mississippi Delta providing a beacon of hope and resistance for local people.

Civil Rights Comes to Mississippi

In 1961 and 1962, organizers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Council of Confederated Organizations (COFO) set their sights on Mississippi as an important area to cultivate local leadership in the pursuit of civil rights. Organizers poured into the state, spending time making connections with local people, hosting mass meetings, leading voter registration drives, and preparing communities for the long fight that was ahead of them as they sought to peel back the power that White Mississippians had largely monopolized. Civil rights workers were often met with violence by local White people, but national organizations countered by sending even more organizers to the state. By 1963, roughly a third of SNCC field organizers in the Deep South were in Mississippi gearing up for their largest initiative yet – the 1964 Summer Project, which would come to be known as Freedom Summer.[8]

Headed into the fall of 1963, SNCC and COFO leadership debated the strategies for the upcoming summer project. They reflected on the violence and threats they had experienced over the past few years, and some in leadership sought to outflank local White people by bringing in White volunteers from the North. They argued that the White people would provide a layer of protection for local organizers by drawing national attention to the project and thus forcing the federal government to expand its protection of Black Mississippians. Others in leadership felt that bringing in even more White people would undermine their ultimate goal of developing local leadership.[9] The White volunteers would inevitably be more educated than the rural Black southerners and would gravitate towards leadership roles that SNCC and COFO had been hoping local people would assume themselves. An intense debate about the role of White people in the Summer Project raged for

[8] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 2007), 297.

[9] Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1850s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 178-195.

months, but it was ultimately settled when Louis Allen from Amite County was murdered in his driveway in January 1964. Louis had been a witness to a murder of a Black man by a White man a few years prior, and his murder was a stark reminder of the dangers that Black Mississippians faced. A talk with Louis's widow changed the tenor of the debates, and SNCC and COFO leadership became determined to protect local Black people as best they could, and they decided the best way to do that was by using White northern volunteers during the summer project.[10]

Leading up to the summer project, SNCC organized the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to counter the state Democrats' consistent refusal to allow Black people to participate in the party. While SNCC sought to empower local people to take charge, they did not anticipate or appreciate the friction that developed between SNCC field organizers and the MFDP following Freedom Summer. In particular, local people did not think the 1964 Civil Rights Act would mean much if they were unwilling to push for its enforcement at the local level. For the MFDP, this meant organizing boycotts of businesses that continued to refuse service to Black people, and in some cases, driving them out of business. Boycotts were not a preferred SNCC strategy, and towards the end of 1964, their organizers started to trickle out of the state, leaving more responsibility in the hands of local people.[11]

Following the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the increase in Black voter registration, and a slight softening of White attitudes on race and segregation, tenant farmers and sharecroppers across the Delta turned their attention to economic justice. The first rumblings of a union began during a Freedom School session in January 1965, when a group of farm workers began to gripe about how they did all of the work but the planters received all of the profit. Over the next few months, these complaints turned into organizing as a group of farm workers from Shaw, Mississippi, presented their idea for a union to the MFDP, the National Council of Churches' Delta Ministry, and the

[10] Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 299-300.
[11] Ibid., 319, 323.

remaining SNCC organizers in the area.[12] In April 1965, the Mississippi Freedom Labor Union (MFLU) was officially born when forty-five Shaw farmworkers, with a newly drafted constitution and a set of specific economic demands, voted unanimously to found the union and to go on strike at the Seligmann plantation. In just two weeks, they registered one thousand people, and over two hundred workers were on strike across the Delta.[13] The union's platform called for a $1.25 minimum wage, an eight-hour work day, free medical coverage, basic income for people unable to work, an end to working under the age of sixteen and over the age of sixty-five, accident insurance, social security benefits covered by their employer, and federal unemployment insurance.[14]

At the time, minimum wage laws did not yet apply to farmworkers so men, who were fortunate enough to be mechanics and tractor operators, were paid $6 per day. Women and children, who chopped cotton and hoed weeds, only received .30 an hour, which amounted to $3 for a ten-hour workday.[15] The wages had changed little since World War I, and the work, especially the chopping and weed hoeing, was seasonal, only available from May until September. This limited time often forced workers, who lived on plantations, to take out loans from planters to survive the offseason driving them deeper into debt.[16] In the non-growing season, the average Black family only earned about $12 per week, well below the federal poverty threshold of $75 per week.[17] Although the federal government purported to offer poverty relief funds for Black Mississippians, to the great dismay of Black organizers, the government entrusted local White people to distribute the funds without discriminating, which they simply would not do. To qualify for the meager anti-poverty assistance, plantation workers were

[12] Michael Sistrom, "The Freedom Labor Union: Economic Justice and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi," in *Reconsidering Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Mathew Hold and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2018), 191-204.

[13] Mark Newman, *Divine Agitators: The Delta Ministry and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 95.

[14] Donald Janson, "Striking Negroes are Evicted from Plantation in Mississippi," *New York Times*, June 4, 1965, 17; Michael Paul Sistrom, "'Authors of the Liberation': the Mississippi Freedom Democrats and the Redefinition of Politics," PhD diss., (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2002), 262.

[15] Janson, "Striking Negroes are Evicted," 17; Paul Good, "Plantation Owners Losing Strike Cotton Pickers Cannot Win," *The Washington Post*, July 5, 1965, A8.

[16] Janson, "Striking Negroes are Evicted", 17; Richard Corrigan, "Camp-Out in Park Ended, Miss. Negroes to Quit City," *The Washington Post*, April 8, 1966, B1.

[17] Sistrom, "The Freedom Labor Union," 191-204.

required to obtain the signature of every planter they had worked for over the course of the year. This requirement gave planters unilateral control over whether individual workers would receive assistance, and planters exercised this power in arbitrary and racist ways, often refusing to sign on behalf of workers, who they simply did not like or who they perceived as agitators. Local organizers petitioned the federal government for more funds and for Blacks to have more control (if not complete control) over distribution, but the government dragged its feet and ultimately refused. Moreover, civil rights activity was deemed "political" and thus a disqualifying factor for people seeking work with program distribution.[18] This decision meant that in the absence of the federal government handing control of the anti-poverty programs to the impoverished people, distribution of funds was determined by White people and a few Black people who were hand-picked for their unwillingness to rock the boat too much.

Isaac Foster, a resident of Greenville, Mississippi, was fired from his job at the Greenville Mill for participating in a picket at the facility. After his dismissal, he began working at the Andrews Plantation with his mother. Then he visited the MFLU in Shaw and brought the strike idea to the Andrews' workers. Soon after, they voted unanimously to go on strike.[19]

The workers' strike on the Andrews Plantation and the founding of Strike City are often mentioned in passing by historians, but are presented quickly among a list of examples of resistance in the Black South. In most cases, scholars offer a short account of the conditions that led to the strike and move on to other topics.[20] Historians and social scientists alike have neglected to provide a full account of the duration of resistance among Strike City residents, their goals, the successes of the community, or any account of their leaders. Strike City, although it was largely bereft of SNCC support, was emblematic of the type of leadership and agency SNCC and COFO set out to create when they entered Mississippi in 1961 and 1962. In particular, John Henry Sylvester, who played a central role in organizing the strike

[18] Press Conference Transcript, undated, FSKaplowB1F8000, Mss 507, Box 1, Folder 8, Kaplow—Friends of SNCC—General (Alicia Kaplow papers, 1964-1968), Wisconsin Historical Society, Archives Main Stacks.

[19] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 95.

[20] Monica M. White, *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 90.

and advocating on behalf of the community, epitomized the leadership capability of rural Mississippians. Built in the mold of other organizers who have been canonized such as Fannie Lou Hamer,[21] Sylvester was homegrown. He was from, and of, rural Mississippi. His politics were shaped by his experiences there, and rather than leave the state for the North like so many others, he determined to make his stand in the place he considered home and to create change for future generations of Black Mississippians. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the local character of the civil rights movement in Mississippi by focusing on the rise to prominence of Strike City, the strikers' endurance, the long-term goals for their community, how they sought to achieve those goals, and Sylvester's leadership trajectory therein.

The Founding of Strike City

John Henry Sylvester was one of the lucky few to earn the coveted $6 per day and free housing that came with being a tractor driver and mechanic on a plantation.[22] The free housing was particularly special because it was becoming increasingly rare. As more and more farming processes became mechanized, planters realized that they could increase their profits by eliminating the money they spent on sharecroppers' housing and instead began to rehire them in smaller numbers as seasonal laborers.[23] But Sylvester recognized that his relatively privileged place among sharecroppers fell well short of fair compensation and that he was likely on the verge of being phased out. He participated in the strike, seeking to not only improve his own life in the present but the futures of his children. He said, "I don't want my children to grow up dumb like I did,"[24] although he was hardly "dumb" as he would demonstrate repeatedly over the course of the following few years. But with this spirit in mind, Sylvester, his wife, and six children were the first to leave the plantation, accompanied by six other

[21] Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 14.

[22] "Winter Is Bitter Handicap for Plantation Strikers," *The Chicago Defender*, December 4, 1965, 5.

[23] Janson, "Striking Negroes are Evicted," 17.

[24] Paul Good, "Strike of Cotton Workers Agitates Separate Strands of Delta Society," *The Washington Post*, July 6, 1965, A2.

families, totaling about eighty people.[25] His first initiative represented only the first of many leadership roles that he occupied throughout the founding and maintenance of Strike City.

The strikers from the Andrews Plantation composed the plurality of the MFLU's efforts to organize a mass strike across the region.[26] Workers on other plantations often doubted the potential efficacy of the union's proposed strike and feared retaliation from local White people, but the Andrews' strikers were resolute.[27]

White Mississippians did not take kindly to what they perceived as insubordination. The strikers set up a picket line near the plantation to initiate their strike, but the Andrews' connections allowed them obtain an injunction from a local judge the next day that not only limited picketing to four people at a time, but also allowed the Andrews to evict the strikers.[28] In a show of local White solidarity (and a further demonstration of how Whites in government and private industry colluded to oppress Black Mississippians), the Washington County chief deputy sheriff used inmates to place the evicted strikers' belongings on the side of the road while owners of neighboring plantations sent their own tenant farmers to tend to the Andrews Plantation.[29] The four picketers who remained, Sylvester included, camped on the Roosevelt Adams's land, he being the only Black farmer in the area. They began their picketing at 4:30 every morning despite the violence they faced. Shots were fired over their heads, ammonia sprayed on them, their car tires were slashed, and at least one attempt was made to run them over. The house of one of the striker's elderly mother was burned to the ground.[30] The Andrews and other planters tried to circumvent the strike using other workers, but once the replacement workers encountered the picket line and spoke to the Andrews' previous residents, the replacements often decided to quit rather than work the Andrews' plantation. The picket line was so successful that few workers tended to the farm for six weeks, forcing the Andrews to turn to the labor of a disabled White man and White woman from Arkansas in order to

[25] Donald Janson, "Negro Walkouts in Delta Spurred: Rights Groups Turn Attention to Labor Activities," *New York Times*, June 7, 1965, 26.

[26] Good, "Plantation Owners Losing Strike," *The Washington Post*, July 5, 1965, A8

[27] Good, "Strike of Cotton Workers Agitates Separate Strands of Delta Society," A2.

[28] Newman, *Divine Agitators,* 96.

[29] Janson, "Negro Walkouts in Delta Spurred," 26.

[30] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 96.

maintain their plantation.[31] Local White people saw the strike as an egregious violation of local customs and harmful to both their economic stability and the social health of local Black people. Whites blamed outside agitators for rattling their relationship with "their" Blacks, whom they characterized as relatively docile and content.

Although the strikers eventually abandoned the picket line at the Andrews Plantation, their nearly two-month stay was a sign that they were serious about organizing and would not quickly give in to defeat. Indeed, strikes across the area had achieved some early victories. Thirty-seven workers in Issaquena County won a wage increase to .50 an hour and a nine-hour workday. Nine tractor drivers in Glen Allen won a raise from $6 per day to $7.50 per day.[32] And a few other workers in the area saw modest raises from the typical .30 to .35 or .40 an hour.[33] Still, it was not enough. The plantation system was already undergoing major changes, and the strikes would only hasten them so that Black people could not rely on the plantation system for long-term economic stability.

The Andrews' strikers, who were not picketing, had been living at the Greenville Industrial College building, which was owned by the Black Mississippi Baptist State Educational Association. They were eventually evicted from there as well. The local health department demanded that they leave, citing sanitation concerns, but the strikers suspected it was political.[34] Soon after, with support from the Delta Ministry, the MFLU, and SNCC, the strikers obtained thirteen army tents and settled on five acres of Roosevelt Adams's land just outside of Leland, near the Andrews Plantation.[35] On August 30, the strikers moved into their tents, and eventually they were able to purchase

[31] Janson, "Striking Negroes are Evicted," 17; Newman, *Divine Agitators*; Good, "Plantation Owners Losing Strike," A8.

[32] Mississippi Freedom Labor Union report, undated, M368, Box 4, Folder 2, Miller (Michael J.) Civil Rights Collection, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections. https://usm.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_c4b6ff3a-9b23-4541-ac8b-53263a682341/.

[33] Mississippi Freedom Labor Union State Office report, September 24, 1965, Civil Rights Movement Archive. https://www.crmvet.org/docs/65_mflu_report.pdf.

[34] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 96-97.

[35] Barnes Carr, "'Christmas Carpenters' Coming to Aid Tribbett Farm Strikers," *Delta Democrat Times* (Greenville, MS), December 22, 1965, 9; Newman, *Divine Agitators*; Betty Washington, "Tent Dwellers Ready to Return to Mississippi," *The Chicago Defender*, May 28, 1966, 3.

the land for $2,500.[36] Strike City was born. The site was originally dubbed "Tent City," and the residents endured the ever-present threat of violence as White people, both men and women, regularly fired gunshots through their camp at night.[37] They ate little more than rice and bread and pumped their water with a hand pump producing questionable fresh water. In an effort to produce income, they set up a small business handcrafting nativity scenes for sale.[38]

By this point, the MFLU, which initiated the local strikes, had started to dissipate. SNCC leadership questioned the efficacy of the strikes from the beginning and neglected to offer sufficient financial support to the tenants' union. National labor unions, save for the United Auto Workers, were reluctant to lend financial support as well.[39] The Delta Ministry did not think the strikes would yield long-term gains, but they nonetheless supported the union without the funding to feed, house, and clothe all of the out-of-work farmworkers.[40] In September, facing the threat of starvation, many union strikers were forced to return to the fields to help with the fall harvest.[41] The union was soon gone, but Strike City was just beginning.

Strike City Post-MFLU

Between the start of the strike and the founding of Strike City, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in Washington D.C. recognized Sylvester's leadership and invited him to a White House conference on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.[42] Title VII banned employer discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin or association with another person of a certain race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Though he decided to send his

[36] "Winter Is Bitter Handicap For Plantation Strikers," *The Chicago Defender*, December 4, 1965, 5.

[37] "Negroes from 'Strike City' Wonder About Poverty Aid," *Associated Press*, April 1, 1966.

[38] "Winter Is Bitter Handicap For Plantation Strikers," *The Chicago Defender*, December 4, 1965, 5.

[39] Sistrom, "The Freedom Labor Union," 191-204.

[40] Newman, *Divine Agitators*, 96-96.

[41] Memo, Margaret Lauren to the northern offices, undated, M368, Box 4, Folder 2, Miller (Michael J.) Civil Rights Collection, University of Southern Mississippi Digital Collections. https://usm.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_db4f337b-ac3b-4b12-8fa3-d0f0d4e27d7c/.

[42] "Invitation Defended," *Delta Democrat Times* (Greenville, MS), August 4, 1965, 5.

son and another striker in his place, John Henry's transition from sharecropper to social movement leader was swift, as evidenced by the White House's rapid recognition of him as the spokesperson for the strikers. He eventually made a trip to Washington D.C. on behalf of Strike City, but at the time of this first invitation, he thought his leadership was needed more at home. The community had no permanent buildings yet and was staring down one of the harshest winters in state history. Strike City consisted of primarily army tents, barbed wire clotheslines, one single-hand water pump, wood or coal heaters, and a wood and concrete block structure that served as a community center and cafeteria. Hope, resilience, and a desire to inspire also radiated from the community as exemplified by a sign that marked the outer boundary of the property. The sign featured the words "Strike City" and "M.F.L.U. Local #4" and a painting of a Black fist holding a piece of a broken chain. The concrete block structure was constructed by a group from the University of Pennsylvania that included roughly twenty students, a professor, his wife, and their eight-month-old child, who sacrificed the latter part of their holiday breaks to raise money and build the structure.[43] But Sylvester epitomized the strikers' spirit by refusing to back down. He saw the difficult winter as an opportunity to demonstrate their resilience and inspire other workers to join the strikes – despite the considerable decline of the MFLU. He said, "If we can make it [through the winter] more people might walk off the farms at planting time. If we can't last it out, people going to think a long time before they strike."[44]

As winter approached, the strikers not only faced the weather but the hegemony of White solidarity. They had begun construction on homes for eight families, but they needed heaters. The strikers sought large butane gas tanks that would allow them to set up heating systems for the homes, but White dealers refused to sell them the tanks, citing an obscure regulation that the systems must be installed by a contractor licensed through their own program. Although the contractors the strikers used were licensed, the White butane sellers insisted it was the wrong license. Even when one seller finally agreed to a deal with the strikers, other White people convinced him to back

[43] "Vacationing Students Work in Miss. Freedom Village," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), January 8, 1966, 13; "Students Try Raising $10,000 Fund in Dixie," *Chicago Daily Defender*, December 27, 1965, 4.

[44] "Winter Is Bitter Handicap," *The Chicago Defender*, December 4, 1965, 5.

out of the deal.[45]

This combination of circumstances gave additional layers to Sylvester's determination to survive the winter and serve as an example for other people across the region. The weather alone was a formidable obstacle but when paired with the backlash from local White people, the odds became increasingly stacked against them. It became imperative that the strikers demonstrate to other potential strikers that Black communities could organize and become self-sufficient and survive even the harshest circumstances.

Unfortunately, a similar mass strike would be unlikely regardless of whether the strikers survived the winter or not. The industrialization that had begun twenty years prior was increasing every year, decreasing the planters' need for labor. Coupled with federal legislation that decreased the number of acres of cotton planted beginning in 1966, the system of sharecropping that Sylvester and his colleagues fought to improve was coming to an abrupt end. Estimates at the time predicted that between twenty thousand and seventy thousand Black famers would lose their jobs in Mississippi due to a combination of mechanization and federal cutbacks in cotton production[46]. Moreover, local political activity and rumblings in Congress about extending minimum wage laws to include farmworkers encouraged planters to mechanize and adopt chemical fertilizers even more rapidly than they had already planned.[47] So the strikers' demands continued to evolve.

Sylvester Goes to Washington

By February, the population of Strike City had nearly doubled, reaching about 150 people, but over the next few months the number decreased to about fifty and often fluctuated as many families moved to temporary housing elsewhere (including another tent city in Issaquena County and Mount Beulah College in Edwards, Mississippi).[48] Sylvester

[45] Letter from Frank Smith to Marion Fiore, Montgomery—Mississippi, Tribbett and Brick Factory, fsMontgomeryR2S25000, Micro 44, Reel 2, Segment 25, "Strike City" (Lucile Montgomery Papers, 1963-1967), Wisconsin Historical Society, Historical Society Library Microforms Room.

[46] "Tent City Rises Near White House," *Daily Independent* (Kannapolis, NC), April 4, 1966, 7.

[47] "Aid to Delta Negro Often Backfires," *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1966, 4.

[48] ""Tent City' Becomes Home of Striking Delta Negroes," *The Sun* (Baltimore), February 21, 1966, A3.

was one of the few remaining mechanics in Strike City as most others had taken other jobs and/or moved out of state. He elected to continue to fight locally, assuming two formal leadership roles – vice president of Neighborhood Developers, Inc. based in Jackson, Mississippi, an organization dedicated to housing poor Blacks across the state where he would help secure funding to purchase land and construction materials for Strike City, and chairman of the Strike City workers.[49]

In his role as vice president of Neighborhood Developers, Inc., Sylvester finally made his first trip to Washington D.C. This time no invitation awaited him. John Henry and the president of the organization, Frank Smith, led a contingent of thirty Strike City strikers and about sixty other assorted Mississippi farm workers to check on an anti-poverty grant proposal, which they had submitted a few months prior and to protest the snail-like pace of the review.[50] The farmers grew tired of idly waiting for politicians and decided to take the fight to their doorstep. The set of proposals filed by Neighborhood Developers, Inc., Delta Opportunity Corporation of Greenville, Mississippi, and Poor People's Corporation of Jackson to the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) totaled about $1.4 million, which the workers intended to use to underwrite a "Freedom City" planned to cover about four hundred acres, primarily in Greenville. This Freedom City would include a variety of permanent houses and self-sustaining enterprises to ensure the economic freedom and sustainability of Mississippi's Black farm workers.[51] The group erected a set of tents in Lafayette Park, directly in front of the White House because Smith had rallied support from Democratic congressmen Adam Clayton Powell, William F. Ryan, and Jonathan B. Bingham, of New York, and Philip Burton of California.[52]

Smith spoke powerfully of the plight of the strikers to the congressmen, "We're here because Washington seems to run on a different schedule. We have to get started right away. When you live in a tent and people shoot at you at night and your kids can't take a

[49] "Tent City Rises Near White House," *Daily Independent*, April 4, 1966, 7.

[50] Al Kuettner, "Negro Migration from South is Result of Economic Displacement in Farming Revolution," *Statesville Record and Landmark* (Statesville, NC), April 27, 1966, 12; "Negroes from 'Strike City' Wonder About Poverty Aid," *Associated Press*, April 1, 1966.

[51] "Strike City Funds Stalled," *Delta Democrat Times* (Greenville, MS), May 25, 1966, 4.

[52] "Negroes from 'Strike City' Wonder About Poverty Aid," *Associated Press*, April 1, 1966.

bath and your wife has no privacy, a month can be a long time, even a day . . . Kids can't grow up in Strike City and have any kind of a chance."[53] Smith's words touched the congressmen. Burton expressed his discomfort with the situation, "I'm having a great difficulty keeping my stomach in order. Nothing we seem to do, no law, no program we pass, seems to be able to help the people who need it the most."[54] And Powell vowed to pressure the OEO to examine the farmers' requests, and although he called a special committee meeting to address their complaints and eventually sent a personal representative to assess the circumstances in the Mississippi Delta, the strikers returned to Mississippi for Easter with no more certainty about the standing of their grant proposals than when they embarked on their trip.[55] Government officials claimed they required more information before they could approve the proposals.[56] They said the grant proposals left too many unanswered questions about land ownership and land acquisition to hand money to the farmworkers even though the farmworkers claimed they had legitimate access to land acquisition and, in some cases, such as that of Strike City, already owned land.[57]

Later that year, on May 26, 1966, Sylvester, in his role as chairman of the Strike City workers, accompanied three other men—George Williams, Wallace Green, and Frank Smith—to Chicago for a two-day tent-in to bring attention to their plight in Mississippi and ask for financial assistance to construct a well to replace their water pump.[58] Sylvester emphasized the importance of the well for the health of the community. "[R]ight now we are getting our water supply from a pump and in order to purify the water now being used it would take so much chlorine that the people, along with the bugs, would be poisoned."[59]

The Strike City workers were already working with a Chicago organization that provided grants to build permanent homes, and they had already nearly completed construction on eight brick homes.

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Richard Corrigan and Robert Greene, "Camp-Out in Park Ended, Miss, Negroes to Quit City," *The Washington Post*, April 8, 1966, B1; "Adam Clayton Powell to Send Staff Member to Strike City," *Delta Democrat Times* (Greenville, MS), April 3, 1966, 3.

[56] "Strike City Funds Stalled," *Delta Democrat Times*, May 25, 1966, 4.

[57] Ibid., 4.

[58] Washington, "Tent Dwellers Ready to Return to Mississippi," *The Chicago Defender*, May 28, 1966, 3.

[59] Ibid., 3.

They had plans to raise another $25,000 to build a brick factory, and eventually other businesses, to provide trade jobs and stem the tide of Black Mississippians fleeing north for jobs.[60] One of the eight $3,500 permanent homes was undoubtedly for the Sylvester family as John Henry reiterated his commitment to his home in Mississippi, "I don't see why people should have to leave their homes in the South. I'd rather stay here and fight than come North . . . Negroes still living on plantations see what we are accomplishing and are becoming less afraid of what will happen if they decide to leave or if they are forced to leave."[61] He continued to stand strong even in the face of their ongoing adversity. One of the other strikers described their conditions, "None of us has any leisure time. We are all, men, women and children, working, building, painting. When you have to get up in the middle of the night to wring out the rain-soaked blankets and try to get your kids warm, then get up the next morning and pump for the water you need, then you understand our needs."[62]

Despite the hardships, Strike City showed glimpses of thriving. Perhaps most importantly, since leaving the plantation, children were able to attend school full-time, and the community established literacy programs for adults. Previously, the children were forced to organize their school attendance around the planting schedule, only attending during the down time of the year and working during planting and harvesting season.[63] This educational gain was a significant victory. Black education had been beholden to the farming schedule ever since Black people were allowed to attend school, and even when the state implemented a universal public education system and mandated school attendance for minors, Black students were still often unable to attend.[64] The community also demonstrated a commitment to democratic processes and community welfare programs. They met often at the community center to make governing decisions; they developed their own tax system to pay the bills for the community center and the water pump; they developed their own welfare program and law enforcement; they secured a deal to sell cosmetics to raise money for the

[60] Ibid., 3.

[61] Ibid., 3.

[62] Ibid., 3.

[63] Christopher M. Span, *From Cotton House to Schoolhouse: African American Education in Mississippi, 1862-1875* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 124.

[64] Ibid., 124.

community; and they planned to start a community corporation where residents could buy stock and most of the profits would be reinvested in the community. They also sought to deepen their political education expertise by developing a series of committees to research certain areas and to learn ways to enrich the community. The committees included a housing committee that would seek an understanding of good housing policies, one that would help people acquire housing, an education committee that would develop community-centered education that focused on the best ways to educate rural children and adults, a welfare programs committee that would improve distribution infrastructure to encourage the federal government to release control of the welfare programs to the community, and a business committee that would explore feasible business ventures for the community.[65]

Unfortunately, capital continued to be a barrier against establishing a permanent community. The wheels of federal bureaucracy continued to turn slowly, denying the strikers ready access to government assistance, and although they received a fair amount of support from a wealthy benefactor through Neighborhood Developers, they continued to lack the funds to implement and maintain most of their ideas and programs.[66] Much of the community's long-term sustainability hinged on the construction of the brick factory, which would serve multiple functions for them. Bricks would provide materials they could use to construct their own houses and buildings, a site for them to provide trade training, and ultimately a source of profit as they could sell the surplus bricks.[67] But the $25,000, in addition to other funds the community needed, proved too much for them to raise. They continued to sell cosmetics and searched for other ventures to build the community around, but nothing materialized, and the people living there could only tread water for so long.[68]

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[65] Letter from Frank Smith to Marion Fiore, (Lucile Montgomery Papers, 1963-1967), Wisconsin Historical Society.

[66] Basil Talbott, Jr., "Civil Rights Angel: A Profile," *Chicago Sun Times*, August 7, 1966, 2.

[67] Brick Factory Meeting, September 11, 1965, Montgomery—Mississippi, Tribbett and Brick Factory, fsMontgomeryR2S25000, Micro 44, Reel 2, Segment 25, "Stick City" (Lucile Montgomery Papers, 1963-1967), Wisconsin Historical Society, Historical Society Library Microforms Room.

[68] Letter from Frank Smith to Marion Fiore, (Lucile Montgomery Papers, 1963-1967), Wisconsin Historical Society.

Aftermath

By mid-1967, the tents were gone, and the remaining residents all had jobs and permanent housing in a variety of one and two-story houses and apartment structures.[69] However, their agitation and perseverance contributed to a number of legislative victories across the state.

The attention the strikers drew to the plight of Black farmworkers in the Delta helped move Congress to extend federal minimum wage coverage to farmworkers in February 1967, guaranteeing a $1.25 hourly wage.[70] But this wage increase proved to be the death knell for plantation labor across the state. Increasing agricultural industrialization had already decreased the need for massive numbers of workers on plantations. Machines and chemical weed killers displaced thousands of workers, who were forced to leave the South in search of industrial jobs in the Northeast and Midwest because the mere rumors of a minimum wage caused planters to contract their labor supply. The actual implementation of a minimum wage for farmworkers led planters to dramatically reconsider how they wanted to manage their plantations. One planter said, "[1967] was the first time we really found out what labor efficiency could mean. We knew we couldn't use any more casual labor because of the minimum wage and now we're finding we don't need as much specialized labor either."[71] That year, at least one part of the cotton growing system was completely mechanized as planters moved to machine-picking 100 percent of the cotton as opposed to 90 percent as in 1966, even outpacing previous estimates about the time to full mechanization.[72] Other concessions from the federal government included food grants that finally hired poor people to help with the food distribution (which had been a sticking point in the past), two statewide job training programs, and eighteen adult literacy and vocational programs across the state.[73]

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[69] John Carr, "The Mood of the Washington County Negro Seems to be One of Contentment," *Delta Democrat Times*, July 9, 1967, 8.

[70] Gene Roberts, "In Mississippi Delta, More Pay Means Fewer Jobs," *New York Times*, February 13, 1967, 1.

[71] Michael Sistrom, "Economic Justice and the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi," in *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2018), 198.

[72] Gene Roberts, "In Mississippi Delta, More Pay Means Fewer Jobs," *New York Times*, February 13, 1967, 1.

[73] Sistrom, "The Freedom Labor Union," 191-204.

Over the years, the number of people living in Strike City continued to steadily decrease as the community fell into ruin and residents abandoned their houses. By the 1990s, almost all of the original strikers were gone, having moved or died, but Strike City and John Henry Sylvester were still there. Sylvester and his family remained in Strike City until his death in 2008.[74]

What is the legacy of John Henry Sylvester and Strike City? The Mississippi Delta in general, and Washington County in particular, remain among the poorest places in the country, and Strike City never became more than an unincorporated community, so small that one could drive through it and never realize it was there. Arguably, the strike failed to improve the living conditions of Black Mississippians. Although they were able to force Congress to expand the minimum wage law to include farmworkers, most strikers were still forced to leave in the face of mechanization just as they would have if no strike had ever occurred. Indeed, Paul Good reported in 1965, "This will mean still more Negroes coming off farms as fewer men do more work . . . This was inevitable but the strike will speed things up. Complete mechanization is believed to be possible within three to five years."[75] Even the other concessions from the federal government did little to alleviate the widespread suffering of Black Mississippians. But the residents of Strike City risked all they had to spit in the face of racialized economic oppression and continued to fight long after the civil rights workers and northern White liberals left the state. Sylvester, especially, showed an unmatched dedication to the Black South, refusing to yield to intimidation or to leave his home, even when facing the physical and political violence of local White people and the unrelenting ire of the weather. He chose to fight for the state at a time when so many others were understandably abandoning it, and resistance, especially in the face of almost certain defeat, is valuable regardless of whether it moves the heavy pendulum of oppression. Resistance has a humanizing effect on its participants and those around them. It is a reminder to those in power that, although they may remain in control, they will not effortlessly trample the humanity of those they see as underfoot. This spirit is archetypical of resistance in Mississippi and is exemplified by John Henry Sylvester and the founders and residents of Strike City.

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[74] "Obituaries," *Delta Democrat Times* (Greenville, MS), August 21, 2008, 9.

[75] Paul Good, "Plantation Owners Losing Strike," *The Washington Post*, July 5, 1965, A8.

Obedience to the Law is Not Liberty: The Poor People's Campaign and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Marks, Mississippi

by Jonathan Soucek

The Black community in Marks, Mississippi, a small Delta town, finally saw its first tangible political victory following the civil rights movement of the 1960s on November 8, 1983. That night, Manuel Killebrew narrowly defeated two White candidates to become the first African American county supervisor in Quitman County. This victory, however, came after years of electoral losses and legal battles. In 1979, Killebrew ran against Leroy Reid "to succeed longtime board of supervisors' president W. B. Moore," who had decided not to seek reelection. Reid defeated Killebrew 533 to 410 and then easily won the general election that November. However, after the 1979 election, a political battle ensued as county supervisors redrew the districts to suppress the Black vote further.[1]

Led by Samuel McCray, local African Americans protested the redistricting plan, and it was subsequently rejected by the U.S. Justice Department. After a federal judge approved a new plan, Killebrew again challenged Reid in the Democratic Primary in 1983. Both candidates tied on election night with 582 votes apiece, but "affidavit ballots, cast by voters who claimed they had been placed in the wrong districts under a redistricting plan, gave the election to Killebrew" by a margin of eight votes. Leroy filed a petition claiming that these "ballots were cast illegally" and asked "the court then declare him the winner . . . or . . . order a new election for that position." The circuit court judge, Gray Evans, ruled in favor of Reid and ordered a special election to take place on October 28. In the rematch, the African American community mobilized, and Jesse Jackson came to Marks to show his support. Jackson, who had announced his bid to become the Democratic Party's nominee for the presidency earlier that year, led a voter registration

[1] "Quitman Decides Supervisors Races," *Clarksdale Press Register,* November 9, 1983, p. 2; "In Quitman County: Most Incumbents Qualify," *Clarksdale Press Register*, March 18, 1979, p. 1; "Quitman Results," *Clarksdale Press Register,* August 29, 1979, p. 2.

JONATHAN SOUCEK is a teaching assistant in the Purdue University History Department.

campaign in several southern states throughout 1983. As part of that bid, Jackson came to Marks, a town of only two thousand people but of importance to Jackson's work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and its Poor People's Campaign (PPC) of 1968. Jackson spoke at Valley Queen Baptist Church, where his dear friend, the late Martin Luther King Jr., had delivered a sermon and cried at the sight of the area's poverty nearly seventeen years prior. With Jackson helping to mobilize the vote, Killebrew won the primary handily, 546 to 491, and then defeated two other opponents in the general election to become the first Black supervisor in Quitman County.[2]

Manuel Killebrew's struggle to become one of the first elected African American officials in his county came from his participation in the local civil rights struggle and the local community's role within the national movement. The little-known town of Marks, Mississippi, briefly entered the national consciousness when it became a focal point for the civil rights movement during the early months of 1968, as SCLC decided to launch the Poor People's Campaign there. Most historians consider the campaign to be a colossal failure, often repeating the words of SCLC executive director Bill Rutherford, calling the campaign "the Little Bighorn of the civil rights movement."[3] Despite this negative representation of the campaign, the city of Marks memorializes the Poor People's Campaign. Dozens of monuments lay throughout the town, and each year Marks hold its Mules and Blues festival. If the

[2] "In Quitman County: Elections to be Held Under Compromise," *Clarksdale Press Register,* July 29, 1983, p. 9; "Quitman Candidates File Challenges," *Clarksdale Press Register,* August 23, 1983, p. 2; "Election Review Petition Filed in Quitman Supervisor Race," *Clarksdale Press Register,* September 23, 1983, p. 2; "Quitman Prepares for Special Election," *Clarksdale Press Register,* October 22, 1983, p. 1; "Feds to Observe Quitman Election," *Clarksdale Press Register,* October 27, 1983, p. 1; "Marks' Light Voting Expected," *Clarksdale Press Register,* October 28, 1983, p. 2; Steve Neil, "Jackson Marches South with Black-Vote Crusade," *Chicago Tribune,* May 16, 1983, p. 1; "Rev. Jackson to Preach in Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* August 20, 1983, p. 11; "Killebrew Declared Winner in Election," *Clarksdale Press Register* October 29, 1983, p. 1; "Quitman Decides Supervisors Races," *Clarksdale Press Register,* November 9, 1983, p. 2; Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[3] William Rutherford, in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s,* edited by Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer with Sarah Flynn (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 480. Historians who repeat this view include Charles Fager, *Uncertain Resurrection: The Poor People's Washington Campaign* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1969); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1987); Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years 1965-1968* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006); Joan Turner Beifuss, *At the River I Stand: Memphis, the 1968 Strike, and Martin Luther King* (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1989), 14-16.

Poor People's Campaign failed so utterly as most historians insist, then why does the city of Marks still celebrate and commemorate it?

The reason is that the Poor People's Campaign represented the moment Marks's Black community directly challenged the White power structure and gained fruitful experiences in the process that informed their decisions for years to come. The campaign coincided with local protests in Marks, including a student walk-out and a series of courthouse protests. As a result of decades of devastating poverty and civil rights activists' efforts, thousands of students and townspeople protested, with most deciding to bring their local protests to a national level through the Poor People's Campaign.[4] During the early months of 1968, SCLC conducted extensive community organizing, mainly through educational workshops and the creation of a "Tent City," where families moved after their landowners kicked them off plantations for participating in the campaign. These activities intensified after police arrested six SCLC organizers at the African American high school in Marks on May 1. As a result, hundreds of students and teachers marched to the courthouse, where police officers violently attacked them. The Black community responded by marching downtown two more times the next day. After gaining a sense of solidarity from these marches, these people continued their protest by going to Washington D.C. to show the nation how the War on Poverty had left them behind. Many boarded Greyhound buses to live in Resurrection City, a shantytown on the National Mall, while others decided to take a "Mule Train." Despite the many obstacles that faced African Americans in Marks and surrounding communities, these resilient poor people overcame those obstacles. From the experience of protesting, they gained valuable experiences and networks that helped the community

[4] Despite the importance of the local movement in Marks to the national Poor People's Campaign, relatively few works exist on the campaign in Marks, with all of them giving the lion's share of attention to the Mule Train rather than the other civil rights activities occurring in Marks at the same time. To date, there are only five works that focus solely on the movement in Marks, including Hilliard Lawrence Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing, 2014); Roland Freeman, *The Mule Train: A Journey of Hope Remembered* (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1997); Simon Thomas Cuthbert-Kerr, "The Development of Black Political Organization in Quitman County, Mississippi, 1945-1975," (PhD diss., University of Strathclyde, 2006); Amy Nathan Wright, "The 1968 Poor People's Campaign, Marks, Mississippi, and the Mule Train: Fighting Poverty Locally, Representing Poverty Nationally," in *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up: Local Struggles, a National Movement,* edited by Emily Crosby (Athens GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 108-143; Robert Hamilton, "The Mule Train – Adult Learning and the Poor People's Campaign," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 48, no. 1 (2016): 38-64.

win limited political gains at the end of the twentieth century.

The White Power Structure and Poverty

Economic, political, and social structures within the Mississippi Delta reinforced a strict racial hierarchy that kept African Americans in positions of inferiority. Economically, most African Americans in Quitman County lived in poverty and labored on large plantations as sharecroppers. The contracts that landowners made with tenants allowed the tenant to raise a crop on a plot of land, which occasionally included a loan of tools and equipment, in exchange for a share of the crop. Almost always, the tenant either broke even or went into further debt to the landowner. Landowners held a considerable amount of economic and political power, often holding public office. A small example includes O. L. Garmon, heir to Sabino Farms, who became a state legislator in the late 1950s. The county seat, Marks, had a population of just under 2,500 people, with 1,500 living under the poverty line.[5] Socio-economic conditions worsened during the 1950s and 1960s, as planters mechanized, and sharecropping jobs began to vanish. [6]

Local White people used violence and intimidation to reinforce the racial hierarchy and plantation paternalism. The Quitman County

[5] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 21-28.

[6] A vast amount of scholarship exists on both the civil rights movement and poverty in the Mississippi Delta, and more often than not, the two are not mutually exclusive. See James C. Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: The Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 253-276; Angela Jill Cooley, "Freedoms Farms: Activism and Sustenance in Rural Mississippi," in *Dethroning the Deceitful Pork Chop: Rethinking African American Foodways from Slavery to Obama,* edited by Jennifer Jensen Wallach (Fayetteville AK: University of Arkansas, 2015), 199-214; Françoise Hamlin, *Crossroads at Clarksdale: The Black Freedom Struggle in the Mississippi Delta after World War II* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 209-243; Simon Thomas Cuthbert-Kerr, "The Development of Black Political Organization in Quitman County, Mississippi, 1945-1975"; Peter Applebome, *Dixie Rising: How the South is Shaping American Values, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996), 271-296; Chris Myers Asch, *The Senator and the Sharecropper: The Freedom Struggles of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Ellen B. Meacham, *Delta Epiphany: Robert F. Kennedy in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018). My research contributes to this already large body of work by demonstrating the interconnections between civil rights and economic justice, which not only led to the Poor People's Campaign but also contributed to an outpouring of civil rights activity through organizations such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), the Poor People's Corporation, and federally funded War on Poverty programs like the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM).

courthouse, built in 1911, embodied the mentality of Whites with big black letters on the building's façade, spelling out an Orwellian warning to local Blacks: "Obedience to the Law is Liberty."[7] Those who defied the law and racial order found themselves on the receiving end of violent and economic reprisals. According to a report written by journalist Sally Belfrage, "[In Quitman County,] the local authorities have stated that they intended to rely on private violence to intimidate [civil rights] workers."[8] One such incident of violence occurred when four White teenagers forced Frank Morse, a White civil rights worker from California, off the road and beat him. The local sheriff's office alleged that it received no complaint.[9]

The Mississippi Delta's high poverty rates caused activists in Marks to focus on economic justice in their struggle for civil rights. As local activist Bertha Johnson explained to Roland Freeman, one of the photographers following the campaign, people in Marks protested because "[t]hey are tired of being on these plantations—being poor and not being given their equal rights."[10] From the perspective of economic justice and plantation paternalism, the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty left most African Americans in the Mississippi Delta behind before 1966. Plantation paternalism affected the way local officials distributed poverty and hunger relief. New Deal legislation, which provided subsidies for farmers and relief for the poor, primarily helped wealthy Delta planters and left the poor at the mercy of local white officials (whose mercy tended to be absent when African Americans fought against the southern caste system).

Policies from the New Deal and the Great Society provided poor African Americans with surplus foods. Congress, however, passed these hunger relief policies with the intent to control agricultural markets. As historian Angela Cooley states, "New Deal policy provided such subsidies, not with the primary purpose to feed people, but rather to provide an outlet for surplus crops."[11] Furthermore, these

[7] "Quitman County Receives $400K to Restore Historic Courthouse," Quitman County, accessed September 6, 2020, https://quitmancountyms.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/QC_courthouseArticle20.pdf.

[8] Sally Belfrage, "Violence and Intimidation," 1964, Micro 599, Reel 1, Segment 13, Sally Belfrage Papers, 1962-1966, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

[9] Associated Press (A.P.), "Beating Charged," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson MS), October 22, 1964, p. 16.

[10] "Interview with Bertha Johnson Luster," in *The Mule Train: A Journey of Hope Remembered,* edited by David B. Levine (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), 113.

[11] Cooley, "Freedom's Farms," 204.

foods did not provide adequate nutrition and included lots of starches and fats, with welfare recipients only receiving "cornmeal, flour, rice, and dry beans."[12] Of the thirteen types of supplemental foods that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided to poor communities, only five were enriched with nutrients.[13] As the Poor People's Campaign's letter to the Department of Agriculture pointed out, supplemental foods only covered little "more than three-fourths of minimum diet requirements and never includes green vegetables, eggs, sugar, citrus fruits or fresh meats."[14]

Adding insult to injury, local White officials manipulated these programs to keep sharecroppers in the fields and punish them if they began violating the current social order. In other words, these poverty programs reinforced the racial hierarchy through a paternalistic distribution of poverty relief. White officials designed government policy, especially poverty programs, to reinforce their supposed "white superiority," primarily through putting Black welfare recipients through numerous scenarios that made them feel inferior. The nature of poverty relief in the Mississippi Delta made poor Blacks dependent on poverty programs. White officials and employers used this dependence to control African Americans when they protested. Local governments usually distributed foods in the winter but not in the summer, forcing African Americans to labor during the harvest season. When civil rights protests intensified in the Mississippi Delta during the mid-1960s, many local governments entirely shut down supplemental food programs to attack the civil rights movement.[15] Later, poor people in Quitman County also suffered intimidation and humiliation when they went to the local welfare office to apply for food stamps. Although applying for assistance tends to be a humbling experience anywhere in the country, counties in the Mississippi Delta made Black applicants go through several humiliating and Kafkaesque procedures that local Whites did not have to go through. These included multiple demeaning

[12] "Hunger in the Mississippi Delta," Papers of Fannie Lou Hamer, Freedom Summer Digital Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

[13] Department of Agriculture to Ralph Abernathy, June 14, 1968, Item 3, Folder 86, Box 11, Memphis Search for Meaning Committee Records (hereafter referred as MSMCR.)

[14] "Hunger in the Mississippi Delta," Papers of Fannie Lou Hamer.

[15] Laurie Green, "Battling the Plantation Mentality: Consciousness, Culture, and the Politics of Race, Class and Gender in Memphis, 1940-1968" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 11-12; ProQuest (9943070), 1-21; Cooley, "Freedom Farms," 204-207.

tasks, such as repetitive trips to the welfare office and taking out loans to buy food stamp vouchers.[16]

Great Society programs also gave local White officials options when choosing which food assistance program to adopt, almost always to the detriment of poor African Americans. The Food Stamp Act of 1964 allowed counties in the Delta to choose between the surplus commodities program and food stamps. The food stamp program allowed low-income people to buy food vouchers that reduced their price for groceries. However, this required that people pay for food stamps, and many African Americans in the Delta could not afford the government assistance. Quitman County adopted the voucher program causing many families to go hungry. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) notified its readers in its Mississippi newsletter that the "[p]oor people in Quitman County are really suffering under the Food Stamp program" and called for people to send "petitions for Free Food Stamps."[17]

The experience of Josie Williams exemplifies the typical experience of African Americans applying for food stamps in Marks. As a participant of the Poor People's Campaign, Josie Williams testified before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty on May 28, 1968, detailing her struggles to get food stamps. To buy into the voucher program, she had to take out a loan from the Mississippi state welfare office. After seven months, Williams could no longer pay back the loan, so the state of Mississippi stopped giving her assistance. Williams asked where she could get the money to pay back the loan, and the worker at the welfare office sent her to a plantation owner to get another loan. Williams took out a loan of $22 and owed him $28. Because she had no money, she paid him back with the food stamps she received. Williams did not disclose the name of the plantation owner, but his son-in-law operated a grocery store. Furthermore, the stamps only lasted for three weeks, but applicants could not apply for more stamps until thirty days had passed since they last applied. Josie Williams's testimony particularly startled the Secretary of Agriculture, Orville Freeman, who told the subcommittee chair, Joseph Clark, that

[16] Cooley, "Freedom's Farms," 208-209.

[17] Freedom Information Service, *Mississippi Newsletter,* March 31, 1967, Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, accessed on November 7, 2018, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/fis/670331_ms_newsletter.pdf

Williams had inspired him to open an investigation into the matter.[18]

Initial Cracks in the Power Structure

Although the Poor People's Campaign dealt the White power structure its lethal blow in Marks, African Americans in Quitman County increasingly began to attack the racial hierarchy in the time leading up to the Poor People's Campaign. As stated earlier, Quitman County, in the mid-1960s, remained relatively untouched by the forces that fostered the civil rights movement, such as a significant Black middle class and a significant presence of national civil rights organizations.[19] Cracks in the White power structure, however, became apparent during Freedom Summer when the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) attempted to register African Americans to vote. With Quitman County on the periphery of COFO's attention, Freedom Summer failed to find widespread support among Blacks and Whites throughout the rural county. Whites in Quitman County met COFO and their efforts to register African American voters with intimidation and violence, and many African Americans declined to help the movement because they feared violence and economic repercussions.[20]

White violence did not kill the movement in Quitman County, but Whites succeeded in stunting growing attacks on the power structure. The MFDP and the Mississippi Farm Labor Union (MFLU) retained a constant, yet small, presence in the county between 1964 and 1968. Before 1968, most of Marks' civil rights activity centered around the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Although the MFDP is remembered mostly for its role in the 1964 Freedom Summer and its attempt to unseat the regular White supremacist delegation of Mississippians at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Atlantic City, after 1964, MFDP turned its attention to attacking poverty and providing relief.

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[18] U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Hunger and Malnutrition on Hunger in the United States: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare on S. Res. 281 to Establish a Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs,* 90th Cong., 2nd sess., S. Doc. 96-214 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 118-120, 474.

[19] Cuthbert-Kerr, "The Development of Black Political Organization in Quitman County," 70, 83-85.

[20] Ibid., 94-102.

MFDP attempted to mobilize support behind crucial War on Poverty programs, such as the Community Action Program (CAP) and the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM). Ideally, CAP sought to provide community-based solutions for fighting poverty, but in Quitman County, in the words of an MFDP report, "the black and white power structures" controlled CAP and attacked CDGM.[21] According to John Dittmer, "CDGM provided poor children with preschool training, medical care, and two hot meals a day; it also provided employment at decent wages for hundreds of local people who served as teachers and paraprofessionals at Head Start centers."[22] In Marks, members of MFDP also joined efforts with CDGM. In their county reports to MFDP headquarters, the Marks chapter raised many of the same issues that came to characterize the Poor People's Campaign at the end of the decade. Reports frequently expressed distress with local officials and, like the campaign, tried to give the poor some representation on welfare boards. They also sought discussions with the federal officials in charge of poverty relief (primarily the Department of Agriculture and President Lyndon B. Johnson). One grassroots organization in Mississippi, which directly attacked poverty and plantation paternalism by raising funds from liberal allies and distributing the funds to Black-owned co-operatives, even called itself the Poor People's Corporation.[23]

Some of the people who later joined SCLC organizing efforts began their activism during this period, such as Bertha Burres Johnson, who worked as a secretary for both the NAACP and the Voter's League. Although MFDP members likely saw the NAACP and the Voter's League as conservative organizations, Burres's time in these organizations helped her form contacts with SCLC organizers, including those who

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[21] "Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Key Mailing List No. 11: Counties Reports," March 22, 1966, p. 2, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Records, 1962-1971, Wisconsin Historical Society Library, Madison WI, posted 2013, https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll2/id/40563 (hereafter referred to as MFDP Records).

[22] John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 368-369.

[23] "County Reports: Key Mailing List #6," January 22, 1966, 2, MFDP Records; "County Reports: Key Mailing List #7," February 5, 1966, 1, MFDP Records; Dittmer, *Local People,* 367-368. For more on the Poor People's Corporation see, William Sturkey, "Crafts of Freedom: The Poor People's Corporation and Working-Class Activism for Black Power," *Journal of Mississippi History* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 25-60.

eventually came to Marks for the Poor People's Campaign.[24] Not only did some African Americans continue to protest, but they changed the movement's goals to suit their struggle, protesting through organizations such as the MFDP, MFLU, and CDGM. According to historian Simon Cuthbert-Kerr, a notable change occurred in Marks in the years leading up to the campaign, with local African Americans denouncing leadership by the Black middle class in favor of the lower classes.[25] The fact that Martin Luther King Jr. had come to Marks in 1966 to give a eulogy for Armistead Phipps, a local who died of a heart attack during the Meredith March, demonstrated that the power structure in Marks had weakened since Freedom Summer. Meanwhile, during this time, King began to formulate his idea for the Poor People's Campaign with Marks in mind as the starting point.

When King visited Marks for the second time on March 19, 1968, the racial hierarchy had weakened enough that hundreds of African Americans came out to see him, and no whites threatened him. In preparation for the Poor People's Campaign, King took a break from helping the sanitation workers in Memphis and toured towns throughout the Delta "in a dented white station wagon crowded with his lieutenants."[26] Towns included in King's Mississippi tour included "Batesville, Marks, Clarksdale, Greenwood, Grenada, Laurel, and Hattiesburg."[27] Of all these appearances, Marks again touched King the most, causing him uncharacteristically to cry when he "met boys and girls by the hundreds who didn't have any shoes to wear, who didn't have any food to eat in terms of three square meals a day," and whose parents "are not getting any kind of income . . . [or] any kind of welfare."[28] King then met with poor people at Eudora African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, where, for approximately twenty minutes, he answered questions and heard cries and pleas from the crowd. Some

[24] "Interview with Bertha Johnson Luster," in *The Mule Train: A Journey of Hope Remembered,* edited by David B. Levine (Nashville, TN: Rutledge Hill Press, 1998), 113.

[25] Cuthbert-Kerr, "The Development of Black Political Organization in Quitman County," 165-188.

[26] Curtis Wilkie, "Dr. King Flays Plight of Poor in America," *Clarksdale Press Register,* March 20, 1968, p. 1.

[27] Michael K. Honey, *To the Promised Land: Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice,* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018), 161.

[28] "Conversation with Martin Luther King," in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle,* edited by Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine (1987; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 407.

in the crowd at Eudora criticized the War on Poverty, while others lamented their struggles to feed their children. King originally planned to stay the night in Marks with Andrew Young in a shotgun shack owned by Jimmy Holman on Third Street. King could not stay that night due to his busy schedule, but Young did stay, and Holman's home turned into SCLC's headquarters for the Poor People's Campaign.[29]

King's decision to make Marks the focal point of the Poor People's Campaign marked a new phase for the movement locally and nationally, but in many ways, race relations in the county remained the same. When King spoke at Silent Grove Baptist Church in Marks, a White farmer, W. B. "Money" Mobley, interrupted King's speech to hand him a one-hundred-dollar bill. Despite the donation, Mobley's true intentions were questionable because he said afterward: "Ain't nobody hungry down here in Mississippi," and he called Ralph Abernathy a "boy."[30] Mobley's offering resembled the more peaceful aspect of plantation paternalism and the opinion held by Whites in Quitman County towards the civil rights movement. Although the race hatred among some Whites cooled down by the time SCLC organizers canvassed the area, civil rights activists' increased presence caused retaliation from some Whites in the county, especially among plantation owners. Photographer Roland Freeman talked to people throughout Marks about the situation there. Freeman heard of one incident "where a plantation owner, after finding out that a woman had been visited by the SCLC field-workers, came the next morning with a shotgun in his hand, kicked open her door, and scared her kids half to death." The plantation owner threw away all of the woman's belongings, "which only consisted of a couple of spreads, ties, and rags," and kicked her off the plantation.[31] Many African Americans faced similar repercussions, with one historian estimating that approximately "fifteen percent of those signed up to participate in the PPC were evicted from their homes." After King's death on April 4, 1968, organizing in Marks increased rapidly, and so did racial tensions, causing more activists and media personnel to come to town. As a result, a crisis ensued for SCLC organizers because

[29] Ben A. Franklin, "Dr. King Plans Mass Protest in Capital June 15," *New York Times,* March 20, 1968; Samuel McCray, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[30] Curtis Wilkie, "Marks Farmer Gives $100 to Confront King's Crowd," *Clarksdale Press Register,* March 20, 1968, p. 1.

[31] Freeman, *The Mule Train,* 122.

not only did many local participants lack housing but so did "out-of-town activists and media."[32]

Obedience to the Law is not Liberty

In the immediate aftermath of King's assassination, Ralph Abernathy announced that the campaign would go on, although he moved the start date from April 22 to early May.[33] The original plans to start the Poor People's Campaign included a memorial service in remembrance of Dr. King at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, a walk through the slums in Memphis, taking buses to Marks, and a Mule Train from Marks to Washington. Several civil rights activists spoke at the memorial service, including James Bevel and Coretta Scott King. However, the newspapers quoted most frequently from the speech of Dr. King's best friend and successor as the president of SCLC, Ralph David Abernathy. Abernathy struggled to fill King's shoes. One of his staff members, Hosea Williams, accidentally and frequently called him "Martin."[34] Although Abernathy's speeches were not as moving or charismatic as King's, time and time again, he gave rousing speeches to build at least a mild enthusiasm for the campaign. In particular, he tried to kick off the Poor People's Campaign at the Lorraine Motel in dramatic fashion on May 2, saying, "The moment has come. The day of weeping has ended; the day of the march has begun."[35] Abernathy, however, was only partially right. In many ways, "the day of the march" had begun the day before at the grassroots level in Marks, with the arrest of seven SCLC activists, which sparked a series of marches against the local White power structure.

Organizers came from all over the South to Marks and met with African Americans in public and private spaces. SCLC interacted with the local community at the high school, before church services, on the streets, and in people's homes. Marks did not have a hotel at the time, so all SCLC staffers, including King before his death, had to spend the

[32] Wright, "1968 Poor People's Campaign, Marks, Mississippi, and the Mule Train," 120.

[33] *Clarksdale Press Register,* April 5, 1968; *Memphis Press-Scimitar,* April 19, 1968, Folder 4, Box 36, MSMCR.

[34] Paul Good, "'No Man Can Fill Dr. King's Shoes'—But Abernathy Tries," *New York Times,* May 26, 1968.

[35] Larry Scruggs, "Emotion Outpaces Mules as Poor People's March Steps Off from Fatal Spot," *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, TN), May 3, 1968.

night with a local Black family. According to Marks resident Hilliard Lackey, "To this day, scores of residents recall who slept where from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Chester Thomas of Canton."[36] In charge of SCLC's operations in Marks, Willie Bolden arrived in Marks around April 20 and soon became a popular and controversial figure in the community. One Marks resident, Lillie V. Davis, recollected, "Willie Bolden came in and interrupted our Sunday school," and the pastor paused every class allowing Bolden to speak and entice people to join the campaign.[37] Other SCLC staffers came from Atlanta to assist Bolden, including Andrew Marrisette, Jimmie L. Wells, and Margie Hyatt. Local Mississippi civil rights veterans, who helped organize the Marks movement, included Major Wright from Grenada and Leon Hall from Mound Bayou. Hall also helped mobilize the Poor People's Campaign's Southern Caravan, which left from Edwards, Mississippi.[38]

These organizers created a sudden burst of activity. On May 1, 1968, the Black principal of Quitman County Industrial High School, Madison Shannon Palmer, called the sheriff to arrest Bolden and his cohort for "disturbing the peace and trespassing on school property."[39] Bolden had met with the principal and the school's superintendent, Cecil Sharp, the day before asking for permission to use school grounds for meetings and as a campsite. Palmer and Sharp sternly said "no," because they believed that such demonstrations would disrupt students' learning process. Bolden defied Palmer and Sharp and went to the high school the next day. Expecting the support of many students, he walked onto school grounds around noon to have a lunch hour meeting. Eventually, Bolden and his cohort went to the auditorium to sign up students for the Poor People's Campaign. Hundreds of willing students formed a crowd around the activists eagerly signing up to go to Washington. Word reached Principal Palmer, an intimidating man who, according to one Marks resident, stood tall at 6'6" and wielded a paddle for disobedient students with the words "Board of Education" written

[36] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 36.

[37] Lillie V. Davis, in "Mule Train Story (Marks MS)," Vimeo Video, 9:55, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100. The Black community in Marks created this documentary in 2015 through a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council. Unfortunately, many of the participants interviewed in this documentary have since passed away.

[38] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 36.

[39] Vincent Lee, "Marks Peaceful After Brief Outburst," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 2, 1968.

on it. Palmer, however, did not intimidate the seasoned civil rights activists, who repeatedly refused to leave the school and eventually the sheriff, L. V. Harrison, "literally arrested [Bolden] while he was in the middle of talking."[40]

Students and teachers responded to the arrest by marching to the jailhouse for a sit-in until the deputies released Bolden. Presumably, Andrew Marrisette led the march, and five other SCLC organizers followed.[41] The students, however, wanted to march as well. According to one student, Samuel McCray, immediately after Bolden's arrest, students from the auditorium returned to the cafeteria and saw "students [who did not witness Bolden's arrest] . . . refusing to eat . . . tossing food all over the place."[42] Many students ran outside and got in line to march down to the courthouse to protest the arrest. According to Vincent Lee of *The Clarksdale Press Register*, "Thirteen teachers and about a third of the school's 900 pupils participated in the demonstration."[43] The teachers risked losing their jobs and joined the march because, according to Margaret McGlown, "sometime you just have to take a stand, and sometime that stand might mean you have to suffer for it, but . . . something in your heart sometime tells you it's worth suffering for."[44] The students and teachers marched over a mile to the jailhouse singing protest songs, such as "We Shall Overcome" and "We Shall Not be Moved."[45] Meanwhile, the sheriff called state troopers to handle the situation.

A standoff ensued when the protesters reached the jailhouse and met a line of about twenty state troopers wearing riot gear, who then, unprovoked, advanced upon the students. The way the troopers looked in the riot gear and with guns pointed at the students reminded

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[40] Hilliard Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 37-38; Samuel McCray, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 10:59, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[41] "Poverty: 'We're On Our Way,'" *Newsweek,* May 13, 1968, p. 32; "Marks March has Rugged Start," *Commercial Appeal*, May 2, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR.

[42] Samuel McCray, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 11:55, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[43] Vincent Lee, "Marks Peaceful After Brief Outburst," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 2, 1968, p. 1; Samuel McCray, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 12:22, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[44] Margaret McGlown, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 13:45, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[45] Booker Wright, Jr., in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 14:09, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100; Vincent Lee, "Marks Peaceful After Brief Outburst," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 2, 1968, p. 1.

Samuel McCray of World War II movies he had seen on television. To intimidate the protestors, one student, Manuel Killebrew, remembered years later that the state troopers kept "walking right up towards [the protesters] just clicking [their triggers]," and Killebrew thought "a bullet was in the gun."[46] Andrew Marrisette nervously demanded that the local police release Bolden. The police declined and threatened to arrest the six other SCLC organizers, all of whom went peacefully into police custody. After these final arrests, troopers advanced upon the students and began to hit protestors with the butts of their guns. According to Laura Morris, the students waved their hands at the police to not hit them, but the police did and "one young lady had her teeth knocked out."[47] McCray, along with other protesters, had seen demonstrations on television, and they expected the troopers "to use tear gas . . . so when I see them moving across the street, the first thing I did, was something a lot of us, if not most of us, just bowed our head down, lay down on the ground and cover-up." However, tear gas did not go off, and as McCray lay on the ground he "just start[ed] hearing people scream and yelling . . . and so I raised up and there was this guardsman that literally hit me with a gun butt" right between the eyes breaking his glasses.[48] Like others, McCray got up and ran away, but some were not so lucky. For instance, Lydia McKinnon got caught in the action and suffered the most severe injuries of the day. Not every protester nonviolently resisted the blows, as, according to Killebrew, "We had some football players that hit back."[49]

Within minutes, state troopers broke up the demonstration with brute force, causing the protestors to run across the railroad tracks into the other side of town. While many people ran away from the police, some White business owners stood outside of their shops with shotguns aimed at protestors. One White man, Tommy Bullard, fired into the air. Even worse for the protesters, a train came down the tracks preventing them from getting to the safe side of town. One student, the athletic Alexander Mumford, beat the train, but many did not make it and had to resort to hiding between buildings and running along the tracks until the train passed. Dozens, if not hundreds, of protesters,

[46] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[47] Laura Morris, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 16:30, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[48] Samuel McCray, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[49] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

had to tend to injuries and two downtown stores had their windows broken.[50]

Many protesters, both students and teachers, received multiple injuries from the police attack; however, the sheriff said, "Nobody was seriously hurt."[51] Nobody received life-threatening injuries; however, the police still knocked people unconscious, broke their limbs, and bloodied and bruised them. Across the tracks, local SCLC activist Bertha Burres Johnson helped set up a temporary infirmary for people injured in the police attack.[52] Despite the many injuries sustained by protestors, the press only reported two people injured: Lydia McKinnon and a student, Halen Carthan. McKinnon had severe bruises and cuts all around her body, including her face. The papers reported on her bruised forehead, but she also most likely sustained a concussion. Carthan suffered from stomach pains, and the newspapers dismissed her injuries as insignificant. The next day, the newspapers also reported a possible miscarriage and then dismissed the claims. However, because most people went to the infirmary and not professional hospitals, the newspapers downplayed the number and severity of injuries, only reporting the most severe cases.[53]

In their attempt to reinforce the power structure through brute force, local police and state troopers caused a significant reaction in the Black community. Seeing so many people beaten, along with the death of Dr. King, represented the breaking point for many people. According to Bertha Johnson, "They decided that they wanted their freedom and they wanted it now."[54] Black townspeople channeled their anger by immediately marching again. Later that night, SCLC activists Leon Hall and Reverend L. C. Coleman organized another, much smaller, march at the Eudora Church consisting of "about 250 people."[55] The

[50] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 48-49; Vincent Lee, "Mule Train Leaves Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 9, 1968.

[51] "Seven Freed from Jail at Marks," *Memphis Press-Scimitar,* May 2, 1968, Folder 5, Box 36, MSMCR.

[52] Samuel McCray, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018; McCray says Bertha Burres, assumed to be Bertha Johnson.

[53] Vincent Lee, "Marks Peaceful After Brief Outburst," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 2, 1968; "Marks March has Rugged Start," *Commercial Appeal* (Memphis TN), May 2, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR; Vincent Lee and Curtis Wilkie, "Negroes Boycott Classes, March Again at Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 3, 1968.

[54] "Interview with Bertha Johnson Luster," in *The Mule Train*, 114.

[55] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 50; "Seven Freed from Jail at Marks," *Memphis Press-Scimitar,* May 2, 1968, Folder 5, Box 36, MSMCR.

marchers left the SCLC headquarters on Third Street and headed down to the courthouse. This time police did not bother the marchers and allowed them to sing and pray on the courthouse lawn.

Meanwhile, in Memphis, Ralph Abernathy and other SCLC leaders heard about the earlier student protest, immediately bailed out Bolden and the six others, and made plans to lead a large-scale march the next day. The news reached Abernathy while he was giving a late-night speech with Coretta Scott King at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple in Memphis, where King gave his famous "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech. Conveniently, Abernathy and many Memphians already had planned weeks before to take buses down to Marks the next day regardless. The trip to Marks took place after the kickoff for the Poor People's Campaign and a memorial service for Martin Luther King Jr. at the place of his assassination, the Lorraine Motel, at 10 a.m. on May 2. At the memorial service, SCLC placed a golden star at the spot where King died and a large marble memorial stone out front. Mrs. King did not join the caravan to Marks, but three hundred Memphians and SCLC staffers, including James Bevel, Hosea Williams, and Anthony Young, did.[56]

All and all, thousands of people marched onto the courthouse lawn in a triumphant nonviolent march. However, the large number of police officers present in Marks scared many of the Memphis marchers, with one passenger commenting right before they got off the bus, "I hope I don't get shot down here."[57] The buses arrived at Eudora Church around 5 p.m. on May 2, where an impromptu rally began, with an estimated one thousand in attendance.[58] However, Abernathy counted as many as "3,000 as they marched toward the courthouse."[59] The police did not resort to violence because of the national media's presence at the march. However, one White man, Thomas L. Davis,

[56] "Seven Freed from Jail at Marks," *Memphis Press-Scimitar,* May 2, 1968, Folder 5, Box 36, MSMCR; Wright, "The 1968 Poor People's Campaign," 118; Gregory Jaynes, "Poor People's March Tales Emotion-Charged First Step," *Commercial Appeal,* May 2, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR; *What Will Become of His Dreams? Excerpts from a Service in Which a Marker was dedicated to the Memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. and in which the Poor People's Campaign March to Washington was Begun* (Memphis: Southern Christian Leadership Conference, May 2, 1968), Item 2, Folder 31, Box 6, MSMCR.

[57] Gregory Jaynes, "Marks Stopover May be Longer," *Commercial Appeal,* May 3, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR.

[58] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train*, 54.

[59] Vincent Lee and Curtis Wilkie, "Negroes Boycott Classes, March Again at Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 3, 1968.

fired a 22-caliber bullet at the CBS helicopter, hitting it and causing it to make an emergency landing.[60] At the courthouse, A. D. King, Martin Luther King's brother, spoke first at the rally, introducing Abernathy as "our new dreamer."[61] Then Abernathy spoke, calling for wealth redistribution, demanding "that the rich share with the poor and" inviting "poor whites of Marks to join the march." During the speech, Abernathy looked up and saw the inscription on the courthouse façade. Immediately after, he answered, "Obedience to poverty is injustice."[62]

Tent City: A Prelude to Resurrection City

After this final march on the courthouse grounds, all the organizers, protesters, and media personnel needed a place to stay for the coming weeks as the community prepared for the Poor People's Campaign. SCLC responded by creating "Tent City" on May 4, which provided housing and safety for activists throughout the campaign. SCLC originally came into Marks on May 2, expecting the local government to have already erected tents. Abernathy and SCLC previously agreed with White officials to set aside a vacant industrial lot on the south side of town, approximately forty-four acres in size. During the speech at the courthouse that night, Abernathy accused Marks's officials of breaching their agreement. He threatened to violate the racial status quo, stating, "When we have to use restrooms, we'll come down here to the courthouse."[63] Trying to prevent negative press coverage, Mayor Howard C. Langford explained to the press that he did not know which spot the protestors chose until 2:30 p.m. and that he planned to set up the tents as soon as possible.[64]

This possibility of negative press coverage caused White officials in Marks "to permit the visitors to erect large circus-type tents on city property" the next day on May 3.[65] The city gave protestors the site to

[60] "'Copter is Target for Rifle Bullet," *Commercial Appeal,* May 3, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR; "'Poor People' Study Tactics," *Commercial Appeal,* May 4, 1968, 10, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR.

[61] Vincent Lee and Curtis Wilkie, "Negroes Boycott Classes, March Again at Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 3, 1968.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Walter Rugaber, "March in Mississippi," *New York Times,* May 3, 1968.

[65] "Walter Rugaber, "Mississippi Mayor Backs Goals of March of Poor," *New York Times,* May 4, 1968.

set up the campsite and also provided "electricity, running water, and chemical toilets" along with "an office with free Cokes for the press."[66] According to both *Newsweek* and *The New York Times,* this very uncharacteristic goodwill gesture came out of the fear "at thus being held up as a bad example," and the White power structure also hoped to make the activists leave town faster en route to Washington. Mayor Langford even partially endorsed the campaign saying that he agreed with "the goals of the campaign but not the methods."[67] Not every local White person agreed with Langford's accommodating the activists, and many tried to push him "to declare a curfew."[68] The situation put so heavy a strain on Langford that he went three days straight without seeing his wife and eventually was "ordered to bed by his physician."[69]

Although other civil rights campaigns employed the tactic of erecting tent cities, the one in Marks also served as a positive precursor to Resurrection City in Washington, D.C., with educational opportunities and community-building activities. On the first day of Tent City, over two hundred people from Memphis alone attended lectures given by James Bevel on several topics, such as economics, political science, and philosophy.[70] At one point throughout the next week, Bevel told his students, "I'm going to show you how a lion lives in the jungle," and proceeded to instruct them on how to go door-to-door in the Black community to ask if they could take a bath in their home. This tactic served the purpose of bathing for the outside activists from Memphis while also encouraging their kind hosts to return just a few hours later to recruit for an upcoming mass action the next day.[71] Other educational opportunities existed as heavyweights of the civil rights movement came to Marks to speak, including SCLC people like Abernathy, Hosea Williams, and Andrew Young and controversial figures like Stokely Carmichael.[72] While Tent City provided educational opportunities for some, it brought a chance to leave a dreary life momentarily. James

[66] "Poverty: 'We're On Our Way,'" *Newsweek,* May 13, 1968, p. 32.

[67] Ibid; Wright, "1968 Poor People's Campaign, Marks, Mississippi, and the Mule Train," 120.

[68] Walter Rugaber, "Mississippi Mayor Backs Goals of March of Poor," *New York Times,* May 4, 1968.

[69] "'Poor People's Study Tactics," *Commercial Appeal,* May 4, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR.

[70] Ibid.

[71] "Washing Time in Marks Finds Drive on Doors," *Commercial Appeal,* May 5, 1968, Folder 1, Box 37, MSMCR.

[72] Samuel McCray, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

Taper, a teenager at the time, remembered being able to eat more at the campsite than at home. Others, like Alexander Mumford's family, brought fresh food from their farm. In these various ways, Tent City helped bring the Black community closer together and provided for the needs of the poor.[73]

Conveniently, Tent City probably provided the only educational opportunities for African Americans in Quitman County during the protests. The all-Black schools closed as both the students and teachers went on strike after the student walk-out. Superintendent Cecil Sharp "said that the school was not closed by any official directive, but because no teachers or students showed up for classes."[74] In other words, the schools technically remained open, but the strong solidarity among Black teachers and students kept the schools closed while the community prepared for the Poor People's Campaign. According to Samuel McCray, graduation did not happen that year, and he did not even receive his diploma until 2018. Instead, they had summer school, the first time McCray recalled the school ever doing so.[75] The Poor People's Campaign even affected White schools, as attendance there dropped by about half. Sharp, however, attributed the drop to the tense racial situation in Marks as Whites, for the most part, did not participate in the movement, and the presence of activists likely kept rural Whites away from town. After a week of local protests, the school did not fire any teachers, and they returned to work by Friday, May 10.[76]

On the Way to Washington, By Greyhound and Mule

Tent City prepared participants for their time in Resurrection City, but the travel to Washington, D.C. also proved to be a learning experience. Most African Americans in the Mississippi Delta rarely got the opportunity to travel for reasons other than economic necessity (and in many ways joining the Poor People's Campaign still represented an economic necessity.) Activists left Marks either by the "Freedom Train"

[73] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 60.

[74] Vincent Lee and Curtis Wilkie, "Negroes Boycott Classes, March Again at Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 3, 1968.

[75] Samuel McCray, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[76] Vincent Lee, "All-Negro Schools Still Closed in Marks Area," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 6, 1968; Vincent Lee, "Marks Exodus is Underway," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 8, 1968.

or the "Mule Train." The Mule Train idea originated with Dr. King, and local activists carried out his plans in his memory and to demonstrate the poverty that African Americans faced in the Mississippi Delta.[77] Though less dramatic than the Mule Train, the Freedom Train carried far more people from Marks and gave many people different learning opportunities. Initially, James Bevel, who coordinated the Freedom Train, intended it to be a literal train to Washington, but no train company agreed to carry that many people from Marks.[78] Instead, the poor people took ten Greyhound buses to D.C. and then lived in Resurrection City for a month. Although historians who have written about the Poor People's Campaign provide lengthy discussions about the Mule Train, scholars only put the Freedom Train in their narratives' background.[79] Nevertheless, travels along both the Freedom Train and the Mule Train helped participants gain new experience and form social capital.

The Freedom Train presented a unique and exciting opportunity for the poor people of Marks. The Freedom Train carried approximately three hundred and fifty African Americans from Marks on ten double-decked Greyhound buses. People boarded the buses at eight in the morning on Wednesday, May 8, and left Marks by 10:00 a.m. According to one person who rode the Freedom Train, Dafphine Edwards, "We were supposed to have twelve Greyhound buses leaving here that day, for some reason we only had ten." That did not deter her, for she stood in line for hours wanting to be the first person on the first bus because she "was just so excited about going because we've had such a terrible living."[80] So many people boarded the buses that the passengers soon ran out of seats, and many, such as Manuel Killebrew, had to stand for a hundred or so miles until more buses joined the caravan.[81] Occasionally poor mothers brought all their children to Resurrection City because life there would be better—as one historian put it, a "break from

[77] Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 481.

[78] Vincent Lee, "Marks Exodus is Underway," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 8, 1968.

[79] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train;* Freeman, *The Mule Train.*

[80] Dafphine Edwards, in "Mule Train Story (Marks MS)," Vimeo Video, 19:05, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100.

[81] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

poverty."[82] For example, thirty-nine-year-old Minnie Lee Hills brought her eight children along the Freedom Train. On the other end of the spectrum, some people took the Freedom Train alone, such as Alvin Hamer, a minister from Memphis.[83] Buses played a significant role in the civil rights movement, not only with the Poor People's Campaign but also for the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947 and the Freedom Rides in 1961. Buses typically brought people together from widely different backgrounds.

Through the very act of leaving the Mississippi Delta, residents learned more about the United States, racism, and poverty. The buses first drove to Memphis, where the riders "were fed sandwiches and cupcakes by representatives of the Committee on the Move for Equality (COME) and Women on the Move for Equality Now (WOMEN)."[84] After Memphis, the Freedom Train stopped in Nashville, Tennessee. Manuel Killebrew remembered spending the first night in Nashville "at the Coliseum," where large numbers of friendly White people handed out food to the protestors. Throughout the rest of the stops, from Nashville through Knoxville and all through North Carolina and Virginia, White people assisted and cheered on the Freedom Train. This experience made Killebrew, and most likely others, "change my mind about peoples [sic], and I found out that not everybody's the same."[85] Others, like Margaret Henley, just found the experience fascinating and enlightening. Years later, Henley fondly remembered stopping and seeing each city and their churches, commenting, "It was really like learning [sic] experience for me."[86] All in all, the mere fact of traveling to Washington D.C. impacted the trajectory of these people's lives, showing them the world outside of Mississippi, introducing them to new people, and allowing them to testify to the government and the rest of the nation about their terrible poverty.

The Mule Train, which left five days after the Freedom Train,

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[82] Wright, "Labour, Leisure, Poverty and Protest: The 1968 Poor People's Campaign as a Case Study," *Leisure Studies* 27, no.4 (October 2008), 448.

[83] Poor People's Campaign Registration Cards, 1968, Folder 29, Box 572, SCLC Records.

[84] "Marks March is Gathering Steam," *Commercial Appeal,* May 9, 1968, 18, Item 1, Folder 30, Box 6, MSMCR.

[85] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[86] Margaret Henley, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 21:08, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100; Nathan Chambers, in "Mule Train Story (Marks, MS)," Vimeo Video, 21:21, posted January 16, 2017, https://vimeo.com/199758100..

presented a unique experience for many Poor People's Campaign protesters. Unlike the Freedom Train participants, who lived in Resurrection City, people aboard the Mule Train usually did not testify before Congress or spend a significant time in Washington, D.C. However, the Mule Train garnered much more media coverage than the Freedom Train and reminded the nation of the broken promise to African Americans of forty acres and a mule following emancipation. The focus on the forty acres and a mule juxtaposed against the images of poverty in the Mississippi Delta underscored the centrality of economic justice to the Poor People's Campaign.

Riders of the Mule Train had experiences similar to those of the Freedom Train, but they did not have as many chances to build social networks. The Mule Train left Marks for Atlanta on May 13, expecting to board a train to Washington. The entire trip took over a month because of challenges its riders had to overcome, such as the agonizingly slow speed at which mules moved and continued violent attacks against the participants. Delta author William Faulkner described the mule experience in his novel, *Light in August,* saying, "Though the mules plod in a steady and unflagging hypnosis, the vehicle does not seem to progress."[87] The Mule Train moved only tens of miles per day and frequently broke down, certainly teaching those onboard patience. The Mule Train broke down on its first day out of Marks on its way to Batesville.[88] The slow pace made threats directed at the team of wagons worse. James Taper remembered "hearing the dreadful whine of a bullet before the sound of gunfire" as passing motorists fired several rounds into the teams of wagons without hitting anyone.[89] The walk proved especially hard on the mules, and at one point, wagon master Willie Bolden openly thought of shipping them by truck to the Alabama border. Nevertheless, the mules held up, and the train lost only one wagon throughout the whole trip.[90]

The Mule Train's final hurdle came on June 13, when Georgia Governor Lester Maddox ordered state troopers to arrest every adult on the train for blocking Interstate 20. Police initially arrested the

[87] William Faulkner, *Light in August,* introduction by Cleanth Brooks (1932; reprint, New York: Modern Library, 1968), 4.

[88] Vincent Lee, "Mule Train Washington–Bound," *Clarksdale Press Register,* May 14, 1968.

[89] Lackey, *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 84.

[90] George Metz, "Hoof-Sore Already: Mule Train Limps Off, Bound for Alabama," *Birmingham News,* May 14, 1968.

children too, but eventually let them stay with their parents. Georgia law prohibited pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles from traveling on the highway, and Maddox, known for obscene and racist comments, jumped on the opportunity to block the Mule Train. However, Maddox said he ordered the arrest of activists to "protect their own safety and welfare, as well as the safety of motorists."[91] Bolden doubted the altruism of Maddox because Mississippi and Alabama had allowed the Mule Train to travel on interstates. Governor Maddox also offered to haul the train to Atlanta on flatbed trucks, but SCLC refused the offer. All of the people on the Mule Train "were taken to a National Guard armory where a state patrolman filled out warrants."[92] Meanwhile, the wagons lay on the side of the road with the mules tied to a nearby fence. Willie Bolden worked out a deal with Douglas County Sheriff Claude Abercrombie, which allowed the Mule Train "to travel along the emergency lane of Interstate 20." The Mule Train did that for the next day until it reached Atlanta. From Atlanta, the Mule Train passengers boarded trains to Washington, D.C. and arrived in Resurrection City just in time for the Solidarity Day festivities.[93]

By the time the Mule Train rolled into Resurrection City, the enthusiasm for the campaign had waned because the federal government largely had ignored their demands, and grassroots activists had become disillusioned with SCLC. At its height, Resurrection City had a population of approximately 3,000 people and even had a zip code, but by Solidarity Day, only three hundred protestors remained. Nonetheless, protesting poverty on SCLC's dime allowed the poor people from Marks to take a momentary break from poverty. On May 13, Minnie Lee Hills and eight of her children had the privilege of being the first family to move in. She also had five other children die before the Poor People's Campaign, perhaps from the lack of adequate food and health care. Minnie Lee Hills's only form of subsistence came from her husband's monthly income of $155, which he earned as a city employee. Although SCLC turned the move-in into a moment of grand celebration, SCLC did not allow Hills to speak to the press. Instead, Abernathy gave a speech to commemorate the moment. Despite the fanfare around the Hills's move in, most protestors could not move into

[91] "Georgia Yields on March Mule Train," *Washington Post,* June 15, 1968.

[92] Don McKee, "Mule Train Halted Just Outside Atlanta," *Clarksdale Press Register,* June 14, 1968.

[93] "Georgia Yields on March Mule Train," *Washington Post,* June 15, 1968.

Resurrection City until the next day.[94]

Despite troubles with the campaign, some positive experiences came from life in Resurrection City. For instance, interactions between peoples of different backgrounds occurred every day, providing opportunities for developing social capital through the intersection and expansion of worldviews. Manuel Killebrew had life-changing experiences when kind Whites in Washington invited him and other protestors into their home for supper and a night's rest. Already stunned from the sight of kind Whites, Killebrew spent weekends with some families who gave him much-needed clothes and life advice. Killebrew noted the excellent living conditions of both Whites and Blacks who told him that if he and his friends wanted to succeed in life, they needed "to go back and make sure we finished school."[95] Nonetheless, very few people, including Killebrew, remained in Resurrection City long enough to see its end. The Mule Train never got the opportunity to enter Resurrection City because it entered Washington the day after bulldozers demolished the shantytown. The shantytown only stood for five days after Solidarity Day. The police evicted the protestors with tear gas and billy clubs. With little legislation accomplished, most historians labeled the campaign as a failure.

Success Through Failure: Coming Back from Resurrection City

In this instance, success in the long term came from short-term failures, which transformed and taught individuals important skills. To view the Poor People's Campaign as a failure oversimplifies both the campaign and the notion of failure. The Poor People's Campaign represented an embarrassing failure for SCLC, one that damaged its reputation for years to come. Nevertheless, for grassroots activists and oppressed peoples, who had never participated in activism, the campaign represented the moment Marks's Black community united to attack the racial hierarchy. In doing so, the protests transformed the participants' lives. The African American community in Quitman County still commemorates the Poor People's Campaign, not because of the national press coverage it brought to the area or because of Dr.

[94] Fager, *Uncertain Resurrection,* 35; Poor People's Campaign Registration Cards, 1968, Folder 29, Box 572, MSS 1083, SCLC Records.

[95] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

King's influence, but because the campaign changed the trajectory of many lives and began to shift the local power structure. Although the Mississippi Delta's socio-economic conditions did not improve, these people used the education, experiences, and social capital they gained in the Poor People's Campaign to take political power in their local and regional governments.

After the Poor People's Campaign, African Americans in Marks became disillusioned with SCLC and formed local political organizations. By September of 1969, the Quitman County Youth Movement (QCYM) formed as an extension of the local SCLC project there. The Quitman County Action Committee (QCAC) led QCYM and included many of the Mule Train organizers, such as Reverend L. C. Coleman, Bertha Burress, and Evon Richmond. Most other members of QCAC, such as Robert Morris, came from either the Freedom Train, the student movement, or both.[96] On September 13, QCYM sent a passive-aggressive plea directly to Ralph Abernathy for assistance. The letter made it clear that QCYM had attempted to reach Abernathy multiple times before, saying, "We have kindly corresponded to your office seeking your help, but there has been no response . . . We are willing . . . to make Dr. King's dream a reality if you would only co-operate with us."[97] QCYM also informed Abernathy about their upcoming convention, with speakers from all over the country to present on poverty or Black Power. Despite being an extension of SCLC, QCYM members felt they needed to invite SCLC to attend, revealing that SCLC, for the most part, had abandoned its Marks project. Someone, perhaps Rev. L. C. Coleman or Leo Martinez, took the invitation and handwrote to Abernathy, "[H]ave you forgotten about our staff and poor in Marks . . .?"[98] There is no indication in the historical record that Abernathy ever responded to these letters.

Although SCLC practically forgot about poor people in Marks, they did not forget their lessons learned from the Poor People's Campaign. Although material conditions did not improve in Marks, massive changes to the racial power structure occurred over the next thirty years. African Americans in Quitman County continued to protest and

[96] Quitman County Action Committee, 1969, Folder 13, Box 64, MSS 1083, SCLC Records.

[97] Quitman County Youth Movement to Ralph Abernathy, September 13, 1969, Folder 13, Box 64, MSS 1083, SCLC Records.

[98] Local SCLC Youth Convention, September 12, 1969, Folder 13, Box 64, MSS 1083, SCLC Records.

advocate for their rights. For instance, James Figgs, who participated in the student protests and lived in Resurrection City, held leadership positions in both the Quitman County Democratic Party and the NAACP throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[99] The Black community took some control of education in their county, when in 1978, for the first time, Quitman County elected a Black majority to the school board. This electoral victory preceded several African Americans' election to prominent local government positions throughout the 1980s.

A shift occurred in Quitman County politics and race relations throughout the 1980s as more and more African Americans won county seats. At the beginning of the 1980s, when Killebrew first ran for office, politics in Quitman County was "black versus white," with Black candidates mostly receiving the African American vote and Whites receiving the White vote. However, as the decade bore on, many Whites started to support African American candidates. For example, when Killebrew ran for reelection in 1988, he was unopposed. When he ran again four years later, he soundly defeated his White opponent. As a supervisor, Killebrew made sure that the majority-Black community college, Coahoma (located in Clarksdale), and the majority-White community college, Northwest (located in Senatobia), received equal funding from the county government. After Killebrew, other Black officials slowly began to replace White government appointees as they retired or quit. Usually, Black officials did not fire White appointees, and in fact, Killebrew kept some White officials and helped them improve their work and themselves.

Jimmie Holman's path to become the first Black mayor of Marks mirrored that of Killebrew. In 1983, the same year Killebrew won his first election, Holman ran for supervisor of Beat 3 but lost to James H. Reed in the Democratic primary.[100] In 1987, the incumbent, Mayor L. J. Vincent, decided not to seek reelection. Holman defeated a tough primary challenge from Lee Lundy, and in the general election, "Holman edged Independent candidate Jimmy McArthur by a 20-

[99] Ben Pryor, "Marks School's Failure to Change Sex Segregation by Suit," *Clarksdale Press Register,* October 19, 1977, p. 1; Connie White, "Most Quitman Demo Delegates Fail to File Important 'Card,'" *Clarksdale Press Register,* April 3, 1980, p. 1.

[100] "Harrison Faces Runoff for Sheriff," *Clarksdale Press Register,* August 13, 1983, p. 2.

vote margin, 400-380."[101] Both Lundy and McArthur (who then joined the Republican Party) again challenged Holman for office in 1989 but lost.[102] Holman remained in office until he lost a reelection bid in 1993 against Dwight "Figgs" Barfield. Barfield, an African American, became the youngest mayor in Mississippi and won reelection against Holman in 1997.[103]

As more African Americans became officials in Quitman County, they worked towards two primary goals. First and foremost, to try and improve the socio-economic conditions within the county. Unfortunately, in Quitman County, and throughout most of the Mississippi Delta, socio-economic conditions have not significantly improved since the 1960s. However, the Poor People's Campaign probably could not have changed the deeper historical currents behind rural poverty, such as mechanization and the resulting emigration to urban areas. Officials, both Black and White, in Quitman County continue to struggle to find ways to bring capital to the poor county. In the 2010s, Quitman County officials scored a significant victory when Amtrak agreed to build a station in Marks as part of "its 'City of New Orleans' route between Chicago and New Orleans," popularized by the Arlo Guthrie's song of the same name. Quitman County officials also tried to bring tourists to the county by showcasing the birth sites of music legends Charley Pride and John Lee Hooker.[104]

Another effort to promote tourism characterizes the second goal of the officials in Quitman County—memorializing the Poor People's Campaign. Black officials found allies among their White counterparts, who now viewed the commemoration of the Mule Train "as a source of economic opportunity."[105] In an editorial, Hilliard Lackey connected the rise in Black leadership with the celebration of the Poor People's Campaign, noting, "Concurrent with recent rise to leadership of homegrown black elected officials has been observance of the 50th

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[101] "Holman is Marks's First Black Mayor," *Clarksdale Press Register,* April 8, 1987, p. 1; Ray Mosby, "Elections in Marks and Tutwiler: Also Runoff for District 30 Seat," *Clarksdale Press Register,* April 4, 1987, p. 1.

[102] "4 Challenge Holman for Mayor in Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* April 10, 1989, p. 1.

[103] "Barfield New Mayor in Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* June 10, 1993, p. 1; "Vote," *Clarksdale Press Register,* June 4, 1997, p. 2.

[104] *Quitman County Mississippi: Civil Rights, Civil War, Music Legends, All in One Place,* (Jackson MS: Visit Mississippi, n.d.), 19.

[105] Bennie G. Thompson, "Foreword," in *Marks, Martin, and the Mule Train,* 14.

Anniversary Poor People's Campaign." Signs greet visitors entering Marks saying, "Welcome to Marks Home of the Mule Train." Historical markers are scattered throughout the town commemorating the churches and neighborhoods where Martin Luther King visited and cried, the high school where students walked out, the courthouse lawn where protestors and police clashed, and the grassy lot where Tent City stood. Local leaders even hope to open a Mule Train Interpretive Center. Although to outsiders these markers may seem to romanticize a failed campaign, they demonstrate the reverence that Marks has for the day (as Martin Luther King said of Birmingham) they "decided to straighten their backs up . . . because a man can't ride your back unless it is bent."[106] The Poor People's Campaign and Marks demonstrate that, although a protest may not achieve legislative goals, the protestors still gained from the experience of protesting.

Perhaps no story represents this transformation, as well as Manuel Killebrew's struggle to become a county supervisor. After returning home from Resurrection City, Killebrew took the advice of many people that he met along the way to Resurrection City and finished high school. Afterward, he earned an associate degree in elementary education at Coahoma Community College in Clarksdale. Then he changed majors and received a bachelor's degree in industrial arts from Jackson State University. After college, Killebrew worked as a bus driver until he encountered a high school friend, Sylvester Reed, who pushed Killebrew into politics. Right out of high school, Reed had run for alderman in the small town of Crenshaw, Mississippi, just sixteen miles north of Marks on the border of both Quitman and Panola counties. Reed lost and went to college at Jackson State for a few years. While there, Reed and Killebrew became close friends because they happened to live in the same apartment building. Afterward, Reed moved back to Crenshaw and ran for county supervisor. Killebrew "helped him to campaign." Reed also encouraged Killebrew to go into politics, but Killebrew declined because he did not think of himself as a politician. Reed won the election, but White officials in the county prevented him from serving his term right away, and he had to sue to be seated on the board. Reed won reelection but again faced the process of opposition and legal battles to serve his term. According to

[106] Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've Been to the Mountaintop," April 3, 1968, in "*All Labor Has Dignity,*" edited with introductions by Michael K. Honey (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 194.

Killebrew, "[Reed] never did serve a full term."[107] Manuel Killebrew finally took Reed's advice to run for office. While helping Reed with his campaigns, Killebrew worked as general manager and vice president of a funeral home, Delta Burial Corporation, and as a schoolteacher in Quitman County.[108] With his election in 1983, Killebrew completed his rise from bus driver to county supervisor.

As Killebrew's story demonstrates, the Black community in Marks went through many trials and tribulations, learning each time they overcame challenges. Killebrew does not represent an anomaly because many other people who participated in the campaign later became community leaders. For example, Samuel McCray became a noteworthy local activist, working as social services coordinator for Coahoma Opportunities Inc. (a War on Poverty program) and as a field organizer for U.S. Representative Bennie Thompson. McCray focused his coordinating efforts to help the poor and frequently spoke about new economic initiatives.[109] With the Poor People's Campaign, Marks's Black community started to overcome decades of oppression under the White power structure and to take a firm stand, as a community, against poverty. Although teachers and students did not attend classes for a week during the campaign, they learned about poverty and protesting through workshops. Many continued to miss school but still learned by visiting cities and interacting with locals on the way to Washington, D.C. This experience changed the worldviews of many on the Freedom Train and the Mule Train, challenging their views on race and poverty and also the views of the people who watched the trains pass by.

[107] Manuel Killebrew, interview by author, Marks, Mississippi, July 30, 2018.

[108] "Delta Burial Corp. Held Its 53rd Anniversary Recently at Marks," *Clarksdale Press Register,* January 23, 1979; "Delta Burial Officers are Elected," *Clarksdale Press Register,* March 1, 1983; Bill Minor, "Pittman Undercuts Ethics Panel," *The Greenwood Commonwealth,* November 25, 1985.

[109] "COI to Co-sponsor Forum," *Clarksdale Press Register,* October 27, 1981, p. 2; Roshella Cole, "Glendora Celebrates Housing," *Charleston Sun-Sentinel* (M.S.), September 7, 1995, p. 1; David Healy, "Marks Gets New Center: Volunteer Efforts Pay Off Citizens," *Clarksdale Press Register,* September 9, 2004, p. 1.

Fighting for Legitimacy: The Impact of Football and Stadium Expansion at the University of Southern Mississippi

By Chad S. Seifried, J. Michael Martinez, John Miller, and Chris Croft

The University of Southern Mississippi (USM) began playing football in 1912, the same year it opened for instruction as Mississippi Normal College. Since then, the institution and the city of Hattiesburg have benefited greatly from the positive attention generated by the football team's overall success and economically from the tens of thousands of fans who have annually attended games on campus at Carlisle-Faulkner Field at M. M. Roberts Stadium. As an example, USM football teams produced an overall record of 607-447-27 through 2021 and two College Division National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) national championships in 1958 and 1962. Furthermore, USM football has produced fifty-two All-Americans, over 125 professional football draft picks, and nearly 150 professional football players.[1] Collectively, these achievements generated opportunities for regional coverage of the sport and university by thirteen newspaper outlets, nine television stations, and fifteen radio stations that combined made-up the Southern Miss IMG Sports Network.[2] Moreover, the participation of USM in Conference-USA (C-USA) since 1995 provided national coverage of the football program and university through network agreements with the Fox Sports, CBS Sports Network, BeIn Sports, and ESPN along with various postseason bowl commitments the conference provided.[3]

[1] *Southern Miss 2018 Football Almanac* (Hattiesburg, MS: University of Southern Mississippi Sports Information), 102, 131-134.

[2] Ibid., 4-5.

[3] Ibid., 55, 57. USM also won five C-USA titles (1996, 1997, 1999, 2003, and 2011).

CHAD S. SEIFRIED is a professor and graduate coordinator for the School of Kinesiology at the Louisiana State University.

J. MICHAEL MARTINEZ is an associate professor for the School of Kinesiology at the Louisiana State University.

JOHN MILLER is a professor for the School of Marketing at the University of Southern Mississippi.

CHRIS CROFT is an assistant professor for the School of Marketing at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Despite the coverage and attention generated by USM football, there is an underexplored legacy regarding its football stadium construction history and its impact on both the university and the southern region of Mississippi. For example, Chester M. Morgan's history of the university offered notable scholarship on USM, but little on the impact various stadiums provided in determining the institution's legitimacy. Further, that work did not contain an adequate review of the critical events and significant individuals that helped build the institution's reputation through football and stadium-related building activities.[4] John W. Cox and Gregg Bennett also completed a remarkable book on the history of USM football. However, it focuses primarily on the football program and not on how football facilities contributed to the growth and development of the university and the southern region of Mississippi.[5]

The lack of interest in USM's stadium history is notable because football stadiums are highly recognized social anchors for fan communities (e.g., local citizens, students, and alumni). Furthermore, they generate a significant amount of media attention, and their complexity often makes them architecturally and organizationally compelling. As an example, "well-intentioned progressives" made football and college sports permanent through the development of athletic departments, building concrete and steel-reinforced stadiums, and "hiring a corps of professional experts."[6] Sports facilities like stadiums are also often associated with technological advances and reflective of a changing consumer society that scholarship has recognized as capable of providing legitimacy to institutions.[7] Finally, football and its stadiums also are capable of facilitating brand awareness and business partnerships, increasing student enrollment, and enhancing alumni relationships and gifts or giving campaigns that

[4] Chester M. Morgan, *Treasured Past, Golden Future: The University of Southern Mississippi 1910-1920* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

[5] John W. Cox and Gregg Bennett, *Rock Solid: Southern Miss Football* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2004).

[6] Brian M. Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2012), 9, 149, 171.

[7] Chad S. Seifried, "The Development of Death Valley in Louisiana: The Modernization of Tiger Stadium," *Louisiana History 57* (2016): 187-188.

provide significant revenues and resources to universities.[8]

This article offers a descriptive history of the football grounds—Kamper Park, Faulkner Field (renamed Carlisle-Faulkner Field in 2004), and M. M. Roberts Stadium—developed at USM from 1912 to 2022. Throughout the story, we reveal that football was strategically used to promote USM and Hattiesburg and explain how the development of the football stadium enhanced the school's legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy involves assessing an entity (e.g., product or service) "within a socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions to determine if actions or behaviors" meet the practices and expectancies of the internal and external stakeholders.[9] In this regard, internal legitimacy "reinforces organizational practices and mobilizes organizational members around a common ethical, strategic or ideological vision."[10] Meanwhile, external legitimacy encompasses association and/or comparison with outside groups/organizations and often seeks to understand their perspectives, not just what they are doing but how outside groups perceive them.[11]

This article also complements previous ones published in the *Journal of Mississippi History* (JMH) that addressed the history of football and stadiums at the University of Mississippi and Mississippi

[8] Raymond Schmidt, *Shaping College Football: The Transformation of an American Sport, 1919-1930* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, 2007), 151; Chad S. Seifried and Patrick Tutka, "Southern Methodist University Football and the Stadia," *Sport History Review* 47 (2016): 172-192; Chad S. Seifried, Carli Faulkner, Samantha Baker, and James Piker, "The Development of Razorback and War Memorial Stadiums," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly, 75* (2016): 181-205; Benjamin Downs, Patrick Tutka, Chad Seifried, and Cameron Dean, "The Development of TCU Football and the Construction of TCU Stadium: Building Community and Establishing Legitimacy, 1896–1930," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 123, no. 2 (2019): 204-223; Chad Seifried and Clay Bolton, "The University of South Carolina Football Stadia through the Founding of Williams-Brice Stadium," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 118, no. 4 (2017): 289-316.

[9] Dylan P. Williams, Chad S. Seifried, and Brian P. Soebbing, "The Five-stage Process of Legitimacy Building within a Sport Interest Association," *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* 12 (2019): 263; Mark C. Suchman, "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches," *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3 (1995): 571-610; Monica A. Zimmerman and Gerald J. Zeitz, "Beyond Survival: Achieving New Venture Growth by Building Legitimacy," *Academy of Management Review* 27, no. 3 (2002): 414-431; Roy Suddaby, Alex Bitektine, and Patrick Haack, "Legitimacy," *Academy of Management Annals* 11, no. 1 (2017): 451-478.

[10] Israel Drori and Benson Honig, "A Process Model of Internal and External Legitimacy," *Organization Studies* 34, no. 3 (2013): 347.

[11] Williams, Seifried, and Soebbing, "The Five-stage Process of Legitimacy Building," 265; Drori and Honig, "A Process Model of Internal and External Legitimacy," 368.

State University.[12] Finally, this work on USM offers a unique story about the institution and southern region of Mississippi's legitimacy building efforts through answering: How and in what ways did football serve the school as a social anchor for various stakeholders of its fan nation? How did changes in USM's football stadium over the years, with respect to size, services, and amenities, impact the legitimacy (internal and external) of the university and region? Moreover, how was stadium-related construction associated with enrollment, and alumni relationships, business partnerships, and revenue production? Finally, how did various construction projects and renovations match the larger pattern practiced by other southern universities?

Origins of USM, Football, and Kamper Park

USM was established by the Mississippi legislature as Mississippi Normal College (MNC) in March 1910. The initial goal of the state was to create qualified teachers for Mississippi public schools. To incentivize enrollment decisions, MNC offered free tuition to prospective students if they committed to teaching three years at state public schools, which included two years in rural areas near the student's residence.[13] Opening in 1912 with an enrollment of 230 students and eighteen faculty members, MNC administrators included organized sports almost immediately to attract students by formally recognizing athletics as a major activity, even incorporating it into the launch of the university. For instance, MNC created an athletic association, and science professor Ronald G. Slay served as the first athletic director. Student athletic associations were common by the 1890s throughout the South. In the case of MNC, sports generated interest from a "local area vaudeville show," which helped subsidize the college's football program because the vaudeville operators believed promoting through

[12] Adam G. Pfleegor and Chad S. Seifried, "Mississippi State's Davis Wade Stadium: The Modernization of a Football Stadium," *Journal of Mississippi History* 77, no. 1 and no. 2 (2015): 147-176; Chad S. Seifried and Milorad M. Novicevic, "Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field and Ole Miss: 100 Years in the Making," *Journal of Mississippi History* 77, no. 1 and no. 2 (2015): 115-146.

[13] John P. Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi, 1912-1949," Master's Thesis, University of Southern Mississippi, 1967, p. 1.

the sport could help draw more guests to their own shows.[14]

Many other schools throughout the country at this time also recognized athletics as a vehicle to create a unique campus identity and spirit. Moreover, the football spectacle with its exciting plays, festival of colors, celebratory music, and crowded stands provided schools with important opportunities to entice potential students to enroll, media to publish information about the institution, and alumni to reconnect.[15] Southern schools also needed to figure out how to prevent the migration of potential students to the North. Thus, athletic programs were often cultivated by southern universities and promoted on campuses through association with positive character traits such as sportsmanship, competitiveness, and responsibility.[16]

The first MNC football games were played at Hattiesburg's Kamper Park, a preexisting recreational complex about forty acres in size, which was deeded by John Kamper in 1902 to the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), Hattiesburg Chapter. The UDC chapter spent approximately $2,000 to beautify the park after assuming control. In 1908, UDC conveyed the park to the city of Hattiesburg, which supported a levy to maintain and improve the grounds and buildings. The levy produced about $250,000 in park spending to grade, layout driveways, and build a pavilion, in addition to larger construction projects like the creation of bridges and an artificial lake.[17] Managed by the city's park commission, the renovated Kamper Park was developed for "all general recreational and athletic purposes, including the right

[14] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 2, 4; Siegfried W. Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," Dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 1970, pp. 23-24; Gregg Bennett, "David Wants to Be Goliath: Southern Mississippi's Attempt at Affiliation," North American Society for Sport History Conference, University Park, PA (1999), 43, accessed https://digital.la84.org/digital/collection/p17103coll10/id/11440/rec/1.

[15] Patrick Miller, "The Manly, the Moral, and the Proficient: College Sport in the New South," *Journal of Sports History* 24 (Fall 1997): 298; Michael Oriard, *King Football* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 13.

[16] Lovick Pierce Miles, "Football at the South," *Outing,* December 1894, pp. 3-4; Chad Seifried, Tiffany E. Demiris, and Jeffrey Petersen, "Baylor University's Football Stadia: Life Before McLane Stadium," *Sport History Review* 52, no. 1 (2021): 3.

[17] B. L. McGregor, "A Condensed History of Kamper Park," Kamper Park Commission 1915-1917, Jessie Morrison Collection, Box 1 Folder 12, McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, 1-2; Kamper Park- Legal, 1891-1949, Jessie Morrison Collection, Box 1 Folder 13, McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, 2; Mayor Moran M. Pope: Kamper Park Legal Documents 1902-1956, Hattiesburg Municipal Records—Mayoral Records, Box 7 Folder 14, McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, 1.

to erect and maintain swimming pools, playgrounds, . . . and athletic purposes such as foot-ball (sic)."[18]

Although Kamper Park did not initially support any stadium or grandstand seating for football and other athletic contests to be staged at the facility, MNC was attracted to the complex because of its natural beauty for festival seating and the accessibility it offered via streetcars to the school's campus. Of significance, student-athletes were provided special rates to get to and from the facility with their personal equipment for games and practices. Meanwhile, regular students interested in attending only needed to walk approximately one mile to the park.[19] The Kamper Park arrangement was not unlike that offered by other southern schools in previous decades when they established their own football programs. For example, the University of Tennessee started in 1891 at Chilhowee Park, an area best known for its boating and recreation space that was accessible through a newly created streetcar line. Mississippi State played its first football games in 1895 on Starkville's parade grounds.[20]

The first football game at Kamper Park was played on October 13, 1912, between MNC and the Hattiesburg Boy Scouts.[21] Although the sport generated significant interest from the student body, it did not initially engender significant attendance from the local community. A subsequent contest played against the Gulf Coast Military Academy also was not considered a prestigious event. Fortuitously, a Thanksgiving Day game between Ole Miss and Mississippi State (then known as Mississippi A&M) was arranged to be played at Kamper Park in 1912. Sponsored by the Hattiesburg Commercial Club to draw visitors to the town (particularly from Jackson), the event received significant

[18] "Kamper Park-Legal, 1891-1949," 1.

[19] Yvonne M. Arnold, "A Summary of the History of The University of Southern Mississippi 1910-1999," Box 1 Folder "Faculty," McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, 4; Venues with festival seating do not support actual physical seats but allow patrons or invitees to create their own seats. Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 25; Fagerberg referred to an interview with Frank Montague Sr. by Dr. W. D. McCain from January 11, 1965.

[20] Pfleegor and Seifried, "Mississippi State's Davis Wade Stadium," 153; Chad S. Seifried, Benjamin J. Downs, Jeffrey Graham, and Adam Love, "Life before Neyland: The Early Development of Football Fields at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 79 (2020): 232-233.

[21] Bennett, "David Wants to Be Goliath: Southern Mississippi's Attempt at Affiliation," 43; Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 5; "Football," *The Hattiesburg News*, October 14, 1912, p. 3.

promotion. However, that contest was canceled due to a player eligibility disagreement shortly before Thanksgiving, prompting the Commercial Club to find an alternate game, which featured Howard College (now Samford University) and Mississippi College. Despite the disappointment regarding the potential Ole Miss and Mississippi A&M match-up, the Howard College-Mississippi College contest was successful in gaining attention from the local community, increasing local knowledge about football, and attracting out-of-town visitors to Hattiesburg.[22]

The success of the first Thanksgiving Day event eventually set the stage for a future relationship between MNC and the Hattiesburg Commercial Club to continue promoting football to the local community. Moreover, interest by the club eventually led them to assist in securing funds to help Ronald Slay, the 1912 MNC head coach, hire W. J. "Blondie" Williams as his replacement. Williams was formerly a popular star quarterback at Mississippi A&M in 1911, leading them to a 7-2-1 record, including a win over Ole Miss and a tie with Alabama. It is likely that his celebrity status, along with the success of scheduling Ole Miss to play at Kamper Park on Thanksgiving, produced the larger crowds that MNC enjoyed in 1913.[23]

Unfortunately, the momentum MNC generated from 1913 did not carry over into 1914 and beyond for several reasons. First, Williams's team was not very good in 1913 (1-5-1 record), which compelled him to step down as head coach shortly after the season concluded. Second, the transition to a new coach, A. B. Dillie, combined with the previous year's dismal record did not make the MNC program attractive enough to schedule better opponents. For instance, from 1914 through 1916, Dillie's teams produced a 6-10-1 record, which included several unattractive games against high schools such as Perkinston, Poplarville, Copiah-Lincoln, and Meridian. The only colleges willing to travel to Hattiesburg were smaller, less prestigious football-playing schools like Spring Hill and Mississippi College. Third, the United States joined World War I, and as happened at many institutions,

[22] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 6; "Mississippi College Football Team is Strong Aggregation," *The Hattiesburg News*, November 27, 1912, p. 1.

[23] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 7; "Normal Eleven Will Battle University Thanksgiving Day," *The Hattiesburg News*, September 17, 1913, p. 1; "Ole Miss Given Hard Battle by Normal," *The Hattiesburg News*, November 28, 1913.

football was discontinued at MNC in 1917 and 1918.

As athletic director, Ronald Slay resurrected the MNC football program in 1919 and "journeyed throughout the state" to contact "several students who had football experience and planned to attend Normal College."[24] Within this effort, Slay made it a point to pursue student-athletes returning from war who previously played at better known schools like Ole Miss to promote MNC and improve the school's football program. To entice their interest, Slay developed a "football training table" in the school cafeteria.[25] The provision of a training table was important for MNC because many schools offered such tables by 1900, not only to provide special meals to players but to improve the morale and cohesion of the team.[26] Overall, the goal for MNC and Slay was to produce a legitimate team with a "first class rating . . . hard to equal in this State."[27]

To help promote MNC, Slay improved the quality of opponents and the support offered at Kamper Park. For instance, in addition to scheduling a game against Ole Miss in Hattiesburg for 1920, Slay successfully scheduled a contest for 1919 against the Gulf Coast Military Academy because its head coach, Ray Morrison, was a former star player at Vanderbilt University. Other recognizable institutions Slay pursued games with included Tulane, Millsaps, Spring Hill, and Mississippi College.[28] Before he left MNC in 1921, Slay also was instrumental in supporting the development of a formal relationship with the Women's College of Hattiesburg and the subsequent creation of a "special ladies section" to cheer for opponents. With this innovation, Slay and others believed the cheering section would entice other schools to visit Kamper Park.[29]

In 1921, the MNC football program and Kamper Park experienced

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[24] Ibid., 8; "Football Team of Normal Will be Formed Soon," *Hattiesburg American*, September 19, 1919, p. 12.

[25] "Laurel's Team May Come for Game Saturday," *Hattiesburg American*, October 8, 1919, p. 3.

[26] Chad Seifried, Jim Evans, and Allison Mosso, "Renown to Rubble: The Rise and Fall of Pitt Stadium 1925-1999," *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* 11 (2018): 54.

[27] "Normal to Have a Fine Team this Year," *Hattiesburg American*, September 10, 1919, p. 3.

[28] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 9.

[29] "Mississippi Normal is Nosed Out in Great Football Game by Mississippi College Warriors," *Hattiesburg American*, November 18, 1919, p. 8.

some interesting but mixed results as Hattiesburg and the wider region's high schools started to expand their investment in football. Kamper Park was generally viewed as inadequate for producing the gate receipts necessary to create contractual guarantees with many high-profile football-playing colleges. However, high schools required no guarantees. Thus, their football games assumed a greater portion of the Kamper Park calendar because the area high schools did not pressure the city of Hattiesburg to improve the size and quality of grandstand seating.[30]

With the poor condition of Kamper Park and its inability to produce revenues through gate receipts, MNC sought to play games in Jackson, Mobile, and New Orleans beginning in 1921. MNC viewed playing in Jackson, the state capital, as an opportunity to legitimize the school amongst its peers in Mississippi and to enhance student recruiting efforts.[31] Other schools in the southern region chasing gate receipts and publicity also played at neutral sites in more populated areas.[32] However, it was obvious that moving MNC home games was a result of an inadequate facility.[33] With the potential for significant financial losses at Kamper Park, new head coach O. V. "Sprout" Austin made appeals to Hattiesburg's businessmen to "underwrite the game expenses" and improve the venue to attract a potential commitment from schools like Ole Miss to send a team to Kamper Park.[34] Although local businessmen did not provide the financial support Coach Austin desired, their failure to do so prompted the formation of the Alumni Athletic Club in 1924, which was specifically formed to help raise money for athletics and potentially a new football field.[35] Coincidentally, MNC

[30] "Football is Played First Time by High," *Hattiesburg American*, September 24, 1921, p. 3; Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 12-15.

[31] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 12. As one example, MNC's games against Millsaps from 1921 to 1923 were all played in Jackson.

[32] Blake Gumprecht, "Stadium Culture: College Athletics and the Making of Place in the American College Town," *Southeastern Geographer* 43 (2003): 35, 39.

[33] W. O. Kincannon, "Magnolia Grid Teams Lacking Power of Lore," *Hattiesburg American*, October 8, 1923, p. 3.

[34] "Frosh Eleven of Ole Miss May Play Here," *Hattiesburg American*, October 17, 1923, p. 3.

[35] "Normal-Fresh Tilt Now Off, Is Announced," *Hattiesburg American*, October 24, 1923, p. 3; Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 31, 34; Fagerberg refers to an issue of the *Normal College News*, March 1, 1924, p. 5.

was also rebranded in 1924 as Mississippi State Teachers College (STC).[36]

In 1925, STC applied for membership with the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA). Although he did not personally view athletics as a critical part of the curriculum, President Joseph A. Cook (1912-1928) supported the SIAA application. Cook understood that football was attractive because of the spirit it engendered among the students and the subsequent prestige it could provide through its ability to create favorable comparisons (i.e., winning on the field meant a school—not just a team—was perceived as better than another). Cook also recognized that conference affiliation was considered to be part of what makes a legitimate athletic program.[37]

Improving the identity of the institution remained a priority with athletic and academic administrators, and the SIAA appeared desirable for additional reasons. First, the SIAA was formed in 1894 for "the development and purification of college athletics throughout the South" and specifically to assist the formation of eligibility standards, define amateurism, and establish standardized rules for contests. Second, the SIAA was attractive because it helped secure schedules and provided an opportunity for faculty oversight of athletics to gain their support.[38] Third, State Teacher's College was not publicly considered a major school so affiliation with the SIAA, and the prospect of earning championships and all-conference player honors, was viewed as a boost for the school's name recognition with potential students and business partners.[39]

STC's initial application to SIAA failed to secure enough votes for an invitation to join, but the school annually applied for membership until finally receiving acceptance in November 1929. A major reason for the lack of consideration given to STC concerned the unwillingness of potential conference members to travel to Hattiesburg. As previously emphasized, SIAA members negatively viewed Kamper Park's inability to produce sufficient gate receipts for

[36] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 16.

[37] Fagerberg, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 25, 31, 61; Bennett, "David Wants to Be Goliath," 43.

[38] *Southern Inter-collegiate Athletic Association* (Athens, GA: E.D. Stone Printing, 1895), 3.

[39] "Football Fans in State Will See 15 Battles," *Hattiesburg American*, September 2, 1927, p. 2.

them to share. Moreover, the Hattiesburg area was still considered to be underdeveloped technologically, and transportation to the region was still a bit challenging.[40] In response to the criticism, STC created an Athletic Advisory Council in 1929, which benefited the school's application to the SIAA. The Athletic Advisory Council was developed to inspire interest of Hattiesburg fans in STC athletics and to create an advertising committee able to "solicit public support for the athletic department."[41]

The creation of similar advisory committees also was implemented at other schools because critics of football, although in the minority, were still vocal. As evidence, writing for *The North American Review*, Samuel Grafton presented football as not only a spectacle to behold but also as an activity viewed as a "blight" by others.[42] The blight that critics cited included cheating, professionalism, and the lack of genuine interest in education by participants. By contrast, athletic advisory committees and new stadium projects, in particular, were viewed as vehicles to unite "men of different [university] departments on common ground" and to develop significant bonds across communities. Overall, this viewpoint may explain why nearly fifty new college football stadiums were built in the nation during the 1920s.[43]

Enrollment at STC grew to 810 by the end of the 1920s, but annual financial losses associated with Kamper Park's failure to produce revenues provoked more discussion about building a new football facility. President Claude Bennett (1928-1933) wanted to maintain public support in the 1930s after joining SIAA and viewed losses associated with football as unacceptable, thus justifying his backing for a new venue.[44] By 1930, college alumni and residents of Hattiesburg also realized the benefits to the college and community that a thriving

[40] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 17-24; "Four S.I.A.A. Games Played at Home," *Student Printz*, February 5, 1930, p. 1.

[41] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 36; "The Worth of S.T.C.," *Hattiesburg American*, October 9, 1929, p. 16.

[42] Oriard, *King Football,* 13; Samuel Grafton, "A Million Dollars for Football," *North American Review* 5 (1928): 582.

[43] Patrick Tutka and Chad Seifried, "An Innovation Diffusion Ideal-type on the History of American College Football Stadia," *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* 13 (2020): 324.

[44] Fagerberg, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 35; See Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 62.

athletic program could provide, especially as transportation and communication in the area improved.[45] For example, local business leaders at the time believed STC had channeled roughly $20 million into the Hattiesburg area's economy since 1912. Further, they worried that the lack of a good football program and a legitimate facility would eventually become a liability, impairing the image of the region, thus, preventing visitors from spending money in the area.[46]

Faulkner Field

The 1930 STC football schedule was comprised of SIAA members, including the likes of Union University as well as Delta State Teachers College, Louisiana College, Millsaps College, Mississippi College, Spring Hill College, Louisiana Normal College, and Louisiana Institute Southwestern in a nine-game lineup.[47] It is clear that the STC schedule was considerably better than previous seasons because it included only four-year institutions and SIAA members. Importantly, this upgrade helped demonstrate to the community a genuine effort to produce a more attractive set of games to benefit fans and local businesses.[48] The increasing attention STC gave its athletic program also motivated Mississippi's governor-elect, Martin (Mike) Conner, to promote STC's membership in the SIAA and offered a rationale for subsequent public support and financial investments by the state during the Great Depression.[49]

STC produced a 3-5-1 record in 1931 and had several players receive All-State and SIAA recognition, a source of pride for the institution. Still, school authorities declared the 1931 season a "financial flop due to a large measure from the lack of a good playing field and gate crashers" that Kamper Park's physical condition and/or arrangement

[45] Morgan, *Treasured Past, Golden Future*, 59.

[46] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi," 27.

[47] "Four S.I.A.A. Games Played at Home," *Student Printz*, February 5, 1930, p. 1; "Jackets Close Season Friday," *Hattiesburg American*, November 26, 1929, p. 9.

[48] "Four S.I.A.A Games Played at Home," *Student Printz*, February 5, 1930, p. 1; "Jackets Close Season Friday," 9; "State Teachers College Admitted to Membership in S.I.A.A.," *Hattiesburg American*, December 16, 1930, p. 6.

[49] "State Teachers Defeated," *Hattiesburg American*, October 5, 1931, p. 6.

could not prevent.[50] For instance, approximately 1,500 people attended a November game in Hattiesburg, but this figure is misleading as 500 were students who did not pay admission, and another 215 boys, attending the Older Hi-Y Boys conference, were guests of the college. As a result, the lack of paying customers and aforementioned gate crashers created low box office receipts, but burgeoning student and community interest compelled STC officials to pledge to build a new facility.[51]

Unfortunately, the timing for a new stadium could not have been worse for STC. The Great Depression saw national average incomes fall nearly 50 percent between 1929 and 1932, which reduced game attendance at STC and other institutions of higher education by 25 percent.[52] As with other state-supported schools at this time, the most significant concern for STC was insufficient financial support from the state and a drop in enrollment. To counter the monetary difficulties and to oversee higher education in the state, the Board of Trustees for Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) was established in 1931. STC was reported to be $25,000 to $40,000 in debt at this time, prompting the IHL Board to introduce initiatives that allowed STC's athletic program to be positioned as an investment.[53]

STC President Claude Bennett (1928-1933) announced that the college would construct a new stadium by the fall of 1932. He envisioned the facility to be the focal point for all athletics at STC and a source for the development of favorable academic qualities.[54] As an investment, Bennett hoped "to have an athletic field that will make Hattiesburg and Teachers College a mecca for all high school and

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[50] "Teachers Can Use Freshies," *Hattiesburg American*, September 30, 1930, p. 7; Without the freshman exception, STC would only be able to support a team of ten players. "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," *Hattiesburg American*, December 9, 1931, p. 1.

[51] Cox and Bennet, *Rock Solid,* 26-27.

[52] John Watterson, *College Football* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 177.

[53] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 38; Interview with R. E. Rivers by Siegfried W. Fagerberg, January 1970; *Report of the Functions of the State Institutions of Higher Learning in Mississippi* (Nashville, TN: Division of Surveys and Field Studies of George Peabody College for Teachers, 1933), 53; STC enrollment dropped to 556 for the fall semester of 1932.

[54] "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," 1B; Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 28.

college athletic tournaments in South Mississippi."[55] It should be noted that the conditions presented by the Depression and annual financial losses by football and other athletic teams predictably created some critics of the stadium project, who believed any money provided by the state should be used to enhance the academic programs at STC.[56] Still, the decision of the IHL and Bennett was not unlike other projects approved across the country. Many universities were receiving support from state and federal sources to be spent on athletics during the 1930s because government and education leaders collectively felt that positive attention from athletic competition helped boost enrollment, which in turn helped to recruit alumni gifts as well as increased gate receipts.[57] The development of stadiums generated significant publicity and excitement that schools could capitalize on because "[t]here is no one activity on a campus that arouses as much interest and enthusiasm as a football game."[58] Former Southeastern Louisiana College coach Lloyd J. Stovall (1938-1940) supported this conclusion and went one step further saying that state schools in Mississippi were "excellent illustrations of the attempts made to increase the enrollment through means of publicity engendered by prominent football teams."[59] Overall, the stadium was viewed as "becoming just as much a requisite of up-to-date university equipment as a gymnasium or physics laboratory."[60]

The diversity of people beyond the campus community interested in football was also a significant reason groups like the IHL decided to support athletic facility construction at STC. The 1930 U.S. census documented that Forrest County and surrounding counties were growing in population.[61] This growth meant the various hotels,

[55] "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," 1B.

[56] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 39.

[57] Abraham Flexner, "American Universities" in *Opinions and Attitudes*, ed. S. Morgan and W. Thomas (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1934), 18; Lloyd J. Stovall, "Present Trends in Intercollegiate Football," Master's Thesis, Louisiana State University (1940), 11, 35, 39, 59. Stovall cites Auburn and Ole Miss as examples of schools using football as part of a university strategic plan to boost enrollment.

[58] Stovall, "Present Trends in Intercollegiate Football," 16; Ingrassia, *The Rise of the Gridiron University,* 165.

[59] Ibid., 87.

[60] Ernest Quantrell to Amos Alonzo Stagg, December 5, 1922, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, Box 24, Folder 5, Football General 1921–1925, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

[61] *Decennial Population 1930,* United States Census Bureau, accessed, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1930/population-volume-3/10612963v3p1ch10.pdf.

gas stations, restaurants, storekeepers, and other businesses often profited from football being played in their region.[62] Alumni voices also were prominent for STC as the number of its graduates continued to grow. Collectively, these stakeholders all rationalized and promoted the social value of football by associating it with social bonding opportunities amongst Hattiesburg locals, STC students, and visitors, along with the development of personal traits such as perseverance and competitiveness.[63]

The initial groundwork of the new STC stadium started in December of 1931 under the leadership of project director L. E. Faulkner, who donated important materials and equipment. Faulkner was vice president of Mississippi Central Railroad and also chairman of the Central Relief Committee of Hattiesburg. He offered President Bennett about thirty unemployed laborers to do the construction and help with the grading of the athletic field. In the end, due to his efforts, the stadium was constructed at no cost to the college and named after Faulkner.[64]

It should be noted that Faulkner was a strong opponent of integration. In 1948, he opposed President Harry Truman's attempt to make the Fair Employment Practices Commission a permanent agency. In 1955, he worked with the Citizens Council to attempt to get the NAACP's tax-exempt status revoked.[65]

Faulkner Field opened on October 29, 1932, with 4,000 wooden seats filled to capacity for a match against Spring Hill College and with much acclaim as it coincided with the Hattiesburg Golden Jubilee, a festival organized by White leaders to celebrate the city's fiftieth anniversary. Notable features of Faulkner Field included a press box (described as comfortable) and a large speaker stand in the south end zone. The facility was also characterized as conforming to national trends that maximized "the number of seats in preferred locations" and in "controlling access to and from the building" for the collection of

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[62] Stovall, "Present Trends in Intercollegiate Football," 24; John R. Tunis, "What Price College Football?" *The American Mercury* 48 (October 1939): 139.

[63] Stovall, "Present Trends in Intercollegiate Football," 25, 66-67; "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," 1B.

[64] "Governor's Day and Football Game Bring out Many Smart Costumes," 5; "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," 1B; "Work Started on S.T.C. Field," *Hattiesburg American*, December 15, 1931, p. 10.

[65] Ashton Pittman, "Protesting Racism, USM Football Players March From Stadium Named For Segregationist" *Mississippi Free Press*, August 30, 2020.

gate receipts.[66] The venue itself was officially dedicated by Mississippi First Lady Alma Graham Conner, a member of STC's (i.e., MNC) first graduating class.[67] Many other women also similarly turned out for the game to show off their fashion in "Southern Mississippi's finest athletic arena."[68]

It should be noted that football victories in the early 1930s, better local attendance, and enhanced media interest helped to settle some of the persistent financial and enrollment challenges STC faced during the decade. Regarding enrollment, STC's shortages were not quite as severe as other peer schools in the South, suggesting that the football investment may have benefited the school. More specifically, enrollment remained steady at near 550 after the severe early drop.[69] To support the move into the new facility and football specifically, STC athletics employed a variety of strategies. For instance, STC dropped the price of admission to 60 cents per game so that more spectators from Hattiesburg would be able to attend home football games during the Depression.[70] Next, the Alumni Athletic Association emerged to assist players in purchasing clothes and other school or living essentials. To further cut costs, the STC freshman football team was discontinued in 1934 along with the sports of basketball and baseball in 1935.[71]

With these changes, STC strategically decided to invest more into varsity football, beginning by adding lights in 1934 to elevate the spectacle at Faulkner Field. Lights were considered in the original plans for Faulkner Field in 1931, but STC waited until 1934 to save on the cost and to see whether other schools that added lights realized gate receipt benefits. Eventually, STC saw several southern schools, such as LSU and Loyola of New Orleans, enjoy "an enormous increase in patronage, as well as a sharp gain in interest." The cost of STC's

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[66] Bacon, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Southern Mississippi, 1912-1949," 27; Schmidt, *Shaping College Football*, 41.

[67] "Teachers Show Well in Game," *Hattiesburg American*, October 24, 1932, p. 6; "Governor's Day and Football Game Bring out Many Smart Costumes," *Hattiesburg American*, October 31, 1932, p. 5.

[68] "Governor's Day and Football Game Bring out Many Smart Costumes," 5; Fagerberg "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern," 28.

[69] *Biennial Survey of Education in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 154.

[70] "Governor's Day and Football Game Bring out Many Smart Costumes," 5.

[71] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 41; "S.T.C. Gridmen Grind Away in Lengthy Spring Workouts," *Hattiesburg American*, February 22, 1935, p. 7.

lights was paid by the Emergency Relief Agency and gained STC considerable attention from local citizens and peers who characterized Faulkner Field as the "best athletic stadium in the state."[72]

This statement finds support for this position from Stovall, who criticized the quality of Scott Field at Mississippi State College (changed from Mississippi A&M in 1932). More specifically, Stovall commented that the poor condition of Scott Field forced Mississippi State to play all their games on the road one season. Further, Stovall said that school officials at Mississippi State wanted a better on-campus stadium to not only generate more revenue for the institution but to bring more visitors to Starkville, which had a smaller population and fewer businesses than the Hattiesburg area. Mississippi State, like other schools with small local populations and inadequate playing facilities, was often forced to play games at neutral sites near large population centers to generate gate receipts capable of sustaining their athletics program. Gate receipts remained the main source of revenue from football. Some universities with large on-campus facilities were providing profits to their institution for the construction of academic buildings and student service programs.[73] In the case of Mississippi, regional peers Mississippi State and Ole Miss responded by expanding their own facilities for these purposes in 1936 and 1937 to seat 26,000 and 24,000 respectively.[74]

Interestingly, internal initiatives and external pressures from the aforementioned regional peers led to the creation of an STC booster organization known as the 500 Club in 1937.[75] Its purpose was to generate support for college athletics at STC, which at the time only budgeted about $2,400 for football. President Jennings Burton George (1933-1945), an alumnus himself, described the 500 Club as "a group of interested citizens in Hattiesburg, feeling that they should do more to make a greater institution out of State Teachers."[76] The 500 Club included leaders from a variety of local civic groups such as the Lions

[72] "Lights Will be Installed," *Hattiesburg American*, September 4, 1934, p. 7; "State Teachers and Louisiana College to Meet at Faulkner Field," *Hattiesburg American*, November 4, 1932, p. 6; "Southwestern Beaten 12 to 6," *Hattiesburg American*, October 20, 1934, p. 3; "S.T.C. Plans Concrete Stadium to House Varied Sports Events," 1B.

[73] Stovall, "Present Trends in Intercollegiate Football," 88-89.

[74] Pfleegor and Seifried, "Mississippi State's Davis Wade Stadium," 159; Seifried and Novicevic, "Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field and Ole Miss," 130.

[75] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 28.

[76] "Workers Will Meet Tonight," 1.

Club, Business and Professional Women's Club, Kiwanis Club, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, PTA, Garden Club, and Alumni.[77]

The 500 Club connected the importance of the athletic program to the growth of the school as well as the southern Mississippi region. Its leaders pointed out that the athletic department and its facilities had steadily improved, but stressed the need for more progress to elevate the status of athletics and the institution. As one example, the locker rooms at Faulkner Field were considered poor and small, which often discouraged high-quality opponents from playing at STC.[78] Notably, Hattiesburg's mayor, Travis H. Boykin, also supported the 500 Club after proclaiming "that a sound athletic program was necessary to the growth of the community and college."[79] Further, the president of the Hattiesburg Chamber of Commerce urged all residents of the city to support STC's athletic program to help bring better teams and improved facilities to the area.[80]

To achieve its goal of becoming a major college athletic power, STC needed to improve revenues to help fund athletic scholarships. Thus, improvement to Faulkner Field required renovations perceived as modern and capable of producing both gate and now radio revenues.[81] Connecting to the latter point, the next initiative was produced by the student body (Class of 1937) and the staff of the *Student Printz*, the student-run newspaper, which donated money for a new loudspeaker system capable of being integrated into radio broadcasts for WFOR and additional stations. To that end, production space was built into the press box because every major football-playing school had a press department by 1930, and many were generating revenue from radio

[77] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern," 44; "Workers Will Meet Tonight," *Hattiesburg American*, August 10, 1937, p. 1.

[78] Ibid., 43. Beginning with Coach Allison "Pooley" Hubert in 1935, continuing with Reed Green in 1937 and Thad "Pie" Vann in 1949, STC produced thirty consecutive non-losing football seasons.

[79] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern," 45.

[80] "Map Drive to Build S.T.C. Athletics," *Hattiesburg American*, August 5, 1937, p. 1.

[81] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 43-44.

broadcasts before the end of the decade.[82]

To accommodate housing needed for returning students and growing enrollment, STC also announced plans to construct a stadium-dorm on the east side of the football field.[83] Other southern schools such as LSU, Alabama, Ole Miss, and Arkansas, had already successfully incorporated the dorm-in-a-stadium idea to support student housing needs and interest in producing more gate receipts. Thus, Chancery Court judge Ben Stevens of Hattiesburg "validated $77,000 worth of the college revenue bonds purchased by the Federal Government at 4%." Additional support from the Public Works Administration and other federal agencies awarded another $63,000 and $38,000 respectively for the construction.[84]

The concrete stadium-dorm addition was built over the winter of 1938-1939, with members of the football team working on the construction. The construction project created a new residence for 165 students, which included football players, and it provided players with "extra money by working on the construction team, hauling concrete for about 19 cents an hour." Since the players both literally and figuratively built the 10,000-seat stadium with rock and poured the concrete, the facility became known as "The Rock."[85] The subsequent success enjoyed by the football team in "The Rock" led to increased exposure for both the team and school and to accompanying gains in attendance and gate receipts between 1938 and 1949.

Legitimation of the institution and football program improved through not only better performing STC teams but the improved facility. As evidence of this point, STC generated more revenue from the renovated facility to expand the number of number of football scholarships and team members from twenty-six to thirty-three. Further, STC successfully convinced Ole Miss to visit the new venue in 1939. As the administration and school enlarged the football program and facility, there was noticeable demand for continued improvement to meet the expectations for a more modern academic institution. However, as the institution entered a new decade and rebranded into

[82] "Teachers Open Season Tonight," *Hattiesburg American*, September 24, 1937, p. 1; Oriard, *King Football*, 133; Kathleen M. O'Toole, "John L. Griffith and the Commercialization of College Sports on Radio in the 1930s," *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 2 (2013): 241-257.

[83] Morgan, *Treasured Past, Golden Future*, 59

[84] "Stadium Bonds are Validated," *Hattiesburg American*, November 26, 1938, p. 1.

[85] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 39.

Mississippi Southern College (MSC) in 1940, MSC athletics suffered from new challenges during World War II as building materials required for potential renovations were redirected to the war effort.[86]

The Search for New Affiliations: Success and Struggle

MSC struggled during World War II as its enrollment declined again and as happened in World War I, the school dropped football competition from 1943 to 1945. Yet, from a facility standpoint, the athletic dorms were beneficial because they supplemented the war effort, resulting in $25,000 in rental fees for future athletics interests via the Army Administration Program and the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.[87] The college's leaders sought ways to rebuild an enrollment that dropped to 350 in 1945. Markedly, athletics soon became a major component in MSC's plan in 1946 to reestablish previously lost enrollment momentum.[88] New president Robert C. Cook (1945-1954) echoed this focus in 1946 stating, "A well-rounded program in physical education and athletics was important to any college."[89]

Confidence in football likely resulted from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill, which offered funding to soldiers interested in returning and/or enrolling in college. Such support by the federal government flooded campuses with new students, new money, and eventually new members of the alumni base. Football was noticeably supported and promoted during World War II as having significant synergy with troop training, mass mobilization, and various military strategies. Exposure to football occurred with coaches recruited to serve as military training officers and through the Office of War Information sending out daily broadcasts and news releases about the sport.[90]

As football competition resumed at MSC following the war,

[86] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 46; Morgan, "Treasured Past, Golden Future," 84; Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 39.

[87] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 100.

[88] Ibid., 82-83.

[89] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 46.

[90] Chad Seifried and Matthew Katz, "The United States Armed Forces and their Bowl Games from 1942 to 1967," *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 22 (2015): 231-247; Oriard, *King Football*, 116.

budgetary concerns proved difficult, but success on the football field was reestablished. After breaking even in 1946, due in large part to a $10,000 Reconstruction Finance Corporation payment and winning its first SIAA championship, the school's administration sought to increase the athletic program's legitimacy by doubling its budget from $48,000 to $100,000 (excluding employee salaries).[91] Enrollment grew to more than 2,000, which allowed MSC to invest more revenue into its athletics program. Next, it should be noted that the SIAA, geographically, was too big and possessed too many members. Major football-playing schools gradually left the conference to play schools like themselves in their own geographic area. Likewise, MSC moved to the Gulf States Conference (GSC) in 1948, following the lead of other regional schools with ambitions of "major college status."[92]

The conference affiliation helped address the post-war scheduling and travel issues that MSC had experienced with the SIAA, but administrators still found scheduling games against prestigious teams difficult. Eventually, head coach and athletic director Bernard Reed Green worked towards establishing the legitimacy of MSC football by utilizing contacts cultivated from his time serving in WWII. As an example, coaches such as Paul "Bear" Bryant (Kentucky), Bud Wilkinson (Oklahoma), Don Farout (Missouri), and Jim Tatum (Maryland) enjoyed a relationship with Green, who was hopeful he could schedule future games with their teams.[93]

Entering the 1950s, Green hired Thad "Pie" Vann to replace him as head coach. Under Vann's leadership, MSC achieved incredible success on the football field, while also benefiting from increased external support. For instance, in early 1950, the Mississippi legislature appropriated money for several Mississippi schools (MSC, Mississippi State, and Delta State) to build new stadium dorms. MSC received $350,000, leading to the construction of additional seats on the west side of the stadium, which expanded the facility's seating capacity to

[91] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 101.

[92] "Southern is Member of New Conference," *Hattiesburg American*, May 10, 1948, p. 10.

[93] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 53, 87.

15,000.[94] During this time, MSC's excellence within the Gulf States Conference took hold, including one undefeated conference slate in 1948 and four-straight conference titles under coaches Green and Vann.[95]

Concurrently, struggles with the conference started to escalate almost immediately. The GSC had wanted its members to play more games within the conference, a move that would have resulted in lost revenues for MSC and a diminished regional status with aspirational peer schools in the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and Southern Conference, whom MSC had begun to play more regularly.[96] MSC ambitiously attempted to schedule bigger name opponents with the hopes that such affiliation might prompt an invitation to join their conferences. As evidence, Coach Green contacted schools such as "Houston, Texas Tech, the University of Miami, Alabama, Wake Forest, George Washington, and Wyoming in the fall of 1952 for possible 'big games'." This change also came in response to growing concern from fans and students who "were not satisfied with the caliber of teams" MSC played in the GSC.[97]

In 1952, MSC left the GSC to become an independent while also receiving acceptance as a full member of the NCAA. Reflecting on the decision to leave the GSC in 1952, Green stated, "It may be that we are more ambitious than some of the other teams in the conference, but it is necessary that we continue our relationship with larger schools."[98] President Cook echoed this sentiment believing that the GSC was problematic because it was not nationally known. Big wins over Alabama in 1953 and 1954 helped convince Cook and likely many internal and external stakeholders that MSC should look to join a major conference.[99]

MSC eventually pursued entrance into both the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and SEC during the 1950s, citing regional advantages

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[94] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 105. This information came from an interview Fagerberg completed with Bernard Reed Green in January 1970.

[95] "*Southern Miss 2019 Football Almanac*," 89.

[96] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 71.

[97] "Green Explains Withdrawal from GSC," *Student Printz*, October 10, 1952, p. 2.

[98] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 71.

[99] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 61, 64; House Resolution No. 7 Mississippi State Legislature, September 20, 1954.

to draw from markets in New Orleans, Mobile, and Jackson.[100] During this time, it should be noted that MSC moved some of its home games to Jackson to play against Louisville (1952) and Georgia (1953) as SEC schools Ole Miss and Mississippi State had similarly done.[101] Notably, moving games to Jackson served a financial purpose, as it allowed MSC to generate a large enough gate to pay up to a $25,000 guarantee. Winning 19 of 21 games during the 1952 and 1953 seasons and receiving back-to-back invitations to the Sun Bowl those years also offered evidence to re-affirm MSC's pursuit of membership with the SEC or ACC.[102] Still, despite these achievements, the attempts to join a new conference failed, leading MSC to remain an independent.[103] Part of the failure to join either the SEC or the ACC stemmed from the smaller athletic budget MSC had compared to schools in those conferences and the size of MSC's on-campus football facility, which was already considered too small within five years of the 1950 renovation.[104]

While success with football was steady, enrollment continued to be a major interest for MSC in the 1950s. Cook considered the emerging middle class in Mississippi as a demographic that could be tapped to improve enrollment beyond the initial boom that the G.I. Bill had provided shortly after WWII concluded.[105] To reach the emerging middle class, school administrators initially rationalized that moving games to different locations away from Hattiesburg would benefit enrollment by prompting renewed interest from athletic success to advertise the legitimacy of the university near Mobile, Jackson, and New Orleans.[106]

However, visiting these locations ultimately created a scenario where less attention was provided to Faulkner Field. MSC administrators and Hattiesburg business leaders wanted to build a larger, more state-of-the-art stadium on campus to better legitimize the school and town. Larger facilities already had been built at Mississippi State (1947: 32,000 seats) and Ole Miss (1948: 34,500 seats) with

[100] "Green States Southern Open for Conference," *Student Printz*, September 25, 1953, p. 11.

[101] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 83.

[102] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 92.

[103] "New League Heads Goals," *Student Printz*, December 11, 1953, p. 7.

[104] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 91.

[105] "Welcome to Alumni," *Hattiesburg American*, November 6, 1953, p. 1.

[106] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 57.

amenities to accommodate the maturing interests of spectators and media partners.[107] Further, MSC students were paying a $13 annual fee to help support athletics and likely preferred to stay in Hattiesburg versus traveling to Jackson.[108]

Interim President Richard A. McLemore (1955) also positioned athletics as "responsible for the growth of the school and area." Further, he felt that a larger, more state-of-the-art, on-campus stadium would help bring and/or keep games in Hattiesburg, while also providing for a better on-campus experience for students and fans. Supporting this notion, Coach Green attributed continued growth of enrollment to the publicity that wins over Alabama, Auburn, and Georgia provided MSC and the fact that MSC had played against notable star athletes such as Johnny Unitas (Louisville) and Bart Starr (Alabama).[109] President Cook added that the presence of football helped MSC secure attention from state officials, who provided the school with more money. Moreover, he thought football decreased student unrest and increased campus pride. Their opinions were significant because all these individuals were respected by "professional, religious, and civic groups."[110]

The middle and later 1950s also saw MSC again explore conference affiliation. Within this consideration, the institution's leadership did not want to be in a conference with smaller Texas, Louisiana, or Alabama schools that would prevent MSC from achieving major school status.[111] For instance, in 1955, MSC considered forming a new conference with Miami, Florida State, Memphis State, and Chattanooga, with the possibility of Tulane and Vanderbilt who were beginning to explore the possibility of leaving the SEC.[112] When school enrollment reached 3,000, conversations about expanding the football stadium also reemerged as a priority for MSC.

With many of the school's major games going to neutral sites due

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[107] Ibid., 69; This information came from an interview Fagerberg completed with Richard A. McLemore in November 1969. For information on the nationwide stadium building boom see: Patrick Tutka, "An Ideal-type Through Innovation Diffusion," PhD Diss., (Louisiana State University, 2016), 201-266.

[108] "Athletic Staff Plans Freshman Team for Approaching Football Stadium," *Student Printz*, March 25, 1955, p. 11.

[109] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 85.

[110] Ibid., 70.

[111] "New League Heads Goals," 7.

[112] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 94.

to their larger stadium size, there was concern that this hindered MSC's escalation into a "big time" college program in the eyes of major conferences.[113] Eventually, the success of the 1950s prompted the Mississippi legislature to give the "school authority to issue revenue bonds worth up to $750,000 to expand Faulkner Field."[114] The goal was to more than double the size to 40,000 seats. The Landry and Mattis firm of Hattiesburg drew preliminary plans for the expansion of the football stadium in 1955. Inflation only allowed the stadium to increase by 4,000, and the legislature failed to back the general obligation bonds. Instead, MSC was forced to itself issue the bonds, which carried a higher interest rate. To help retire the bonded indebtedness, MSC added a 20 percent stadium fee to the cost of tickets.[115]

The expansion of Faulkner Field was done with the purpose of attracting major football-playing schools to Hattiesburg and to build MSC's national athletic ranking. However, Faulkner Field was still small compared to its regional SEC and state peers. Even with new seating and a ticket tax, not enough money was generated to pay SEC schools to visit Hattiesburg as their guarantees approached $35,000.[116] Still, MSC desired to have a major college football program, so beginning in 1956, the school adopted the SEC player-eligibility rules that Mississippi State and Ole Miss practiced.[117] Without an opportunity to join the SEC by 1957, MSC continued to build its legitimacy by scheduling road games against SEC and ACC schools in order to bask in their opponents' reputations.[118] The challenging schedule eventually paid off as MSC won two NCAA College Division football national championships in 1958 and 1962. While these championships provided recognition for the institution, they also made many major schools (in the NCAA University Division) less likely to schedule MSC in the 1960s. In a bizarre twist, this success on the field hindered MSC's efforts to rise to major college status since the NCAA required teams in the University Division to schedule at least 60 percent its games

[113] "Athletic Staff Plans Freshman Team for Approaching Football Stadium," *Student Printz*, March 25, 1955, p. 11.

[114] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 83.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Willie Simpson," Southern to Play 3 Major Foes, Seating Capacity Presents Problem," *Student Printz*, October 18, 1957, p. 7.

[117] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 84.

[118] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 95.

against other larger schools.[119]

Faulkner Field Becomes a Real Stadium

Following the disappointment of the efforts to join either the ACC or SEC in the 1950s, MSC officials reflected on the quality of the football stadium and program throughout the 1960s and 1970s as the school transitioned into the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in 1962. Achieving university status motivated school officials' desire to upgrade Faulkner Field into a modern football stadium.[120] Improving the facility's capacity was critical because it was still the primary source of revenue for the athletic department, which had to provide monetary guarantees to opponents. At Faulkner Field, visiting schools were typically guaranteed $5,000 to $18,000. However, SEC member schools required at least a $35,000 minimum guarantee, with the elite programs requiring $45,000 to $50,000. This requirement often forced USM to either play on the road or to continue playing games at neutral sites like Mobile, New Orleans, and Jackson that possessed bigger stadiums.[121]

In 1969, USM contracted with consulting engineers B. M. Dornblatt and Associates, Inc. of Gulfport and New Orleans to develop a feasibility study for the prospects of building a new stadium. Enrollment had increased to nearly 8,000 from 6,300 in 1965 and was anticipated to grow to 12,000 by 1980. Faulkner Field was condemned for failing to match enrollment trends unlike regional peers that had successfully completed their own renovations at this time.[122] The lack of parking at Faulkner Field was also a hindrance to scheduling home games with big-name opponents whose fans increasingly enjoyed participating in tailgating activities.[123]

With respect to parking, Dornblatt and Associates determined that

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[119] Ibid., 96.

[120] Jim Cleland, "Southern Could Lose Major Status," *Student Printz*, March 3, 1961, p. 2.

[121] Fagerberg, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 69, 104.

[122] B. M. Dornblatt and Associates, Inc., "Stadium Feasibility Study for the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS," December 1969, Box 4 Folder "Stadium Feasibility Study McCain Library and Archives," University of Southern Mississippi, 1, 3, 5; "Let's Go Ahead with a New Stadium," *Hattiesburg American,* March 31, 1971, p. 6.

[123] Ibid., 3, 5, 14; See "Let's Go Ahead with a New Stadium," 6.

1.1 million cars were registered in Mississippi. With the popularity of USM's success, they thought a 30,000- to 40,000-seat facility capable of expansion and supporting roughly 8,600 cars in ninety acres of parking was appropriate. Dornblatt and Associates used predictions for regional population and previous attendance figures as reference points. For instance, they reported on USM-Alabama games played in Mobile and Montgomery along with games played at Memphis. Another point of consideration involved the amount of land USM owned, which was deemed to be considerable.[124]

The stadium capacity and design recommendations were also influenced by the comparison to stadiums at both Ole Miss and Mississippi State. However, construction activities completed or underway at other schools such as North Carolina State, Colorado State, and Auburn were also of interest. For instance, Dornblatt and Associates recommended the use of pre-cast concrete similar to construction at Colorado State that would help save $100,000. Next, Dornblatt and Associates provided information about the potential installation of synthetic turf, citing examples of installation costs (e.g., $250,000) at places like the Houston Astrodome, Camp Randall Stadium (Wisconsin), Michigan Stadium, and Razorback Stadium (Arkansas). Referencing a study conducted by Monsanto Company of 185 schools, Dornblatt and Associates relayed that knee and ankle injuries are less likely on artificial turf than on natural grass (i.e., 1.6 to 9.3).[125]

Inside the facility, Dornblatt and Associates also suggested that USM construct a state-of-the-art press box and install $75,000 worth of lighting capable of providing sufficient power for television broadcasts. Furthermore, they recommended the construction of a VIP or President's Box, which had gained popularity in football stadium renovations throughout the nation. Other observations argued for more restrooms and particularly women's restrooms based on "discussion with stadium managers." The study also proposed improved accommodations for visiting teams, along with a modern scoreboard and stadium sound system.[126] Overall, Dornblatt and Associates anticipated their recommendations for a new stadium could range from

[124] Ibid., 9, 15, 28, 29, 53; See "Engineers Finalize Stadium Study," *The Student Printz*, April 30, 1970, p. 1.

[125] Ibid., 15, 32, 33, 36, 38.

[126] Ibid., 44, 45.

$6.15 to $6.38 million. Moreover, they offered several viable financing strategies, which included a combination of revenue bonds, an alumni campaign, and federal assistance (via College Housing Program, Open Space Land Program, and Advance Acquisition of Land Program).[127]

Unfortunately, Hurricane Camille, one of the strongest storms ever to make landfall in the continental United States, slammed into the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 1969 and disrupted planning for a new stadium. However, renewed enthusiasm for the potential project emerged from several prominent individuals and groups.[128] President William D. McCain (1955-1975) thought athletic programs should be built to win and that football should have a new stadium because athletics were a major factor in the previous growth and development of the school.[129] To complement the last point, the student body was behind a new stadium along with many USM alums and the local media, who "organized concentrated campaigns in every corner of the state." Next, several state legislators via the State Building Commission worked for a prospective USM stadium project. The commission initially approved $2 million in funding in 1970, recognizing that previous appropriations provided to USM were substantially less than Ole Miss and Mississippi State.[130]

Coach Vann and athletic director Green strongly supported the project, arguing that football is big business and that a modern stadium was a necessary prerequisite for any school to claim or assume status as a major institution. Again, Green promoted the idea that football and athletics generally brought important publicity to the school and again cited wins against SEC schools as support for his thesis. Coach Vann further remarked that any plans to join a conference or to develop USM into a strong independent like Notre Dame, Syracuse, and Penn State required a major football-playing facility to establish

[127] Ibid., 48, 50.

[128] Fagerberg, "A History of Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 108.

[129] Ibid., 74, 77. This information came from an interview Fagerberg completed with McCain in January 1970.

[130] "Let's Go Ahead with a New Stadium," 6.

legitimacy.[131]

There were obviously some critics of the proposed stadium project. For instance, some citizens felt that millions in state monies should be used for educational programs rather than sport facilities.[132] Moreover, some condemned the idea that a new football stadium should have priority over new classrooms. State senators Ed Pittman and Bill Burgin discovered this first-hand when a small but vocal minority criticized their support for a new stadium.[133] Ultimately, this criticism pushed USM to compromise and pursue the renovation of Faulkner Field because the subsequent renovation plan was cheaper and still viewed as an attractive alternative.[134]

Recognizing USM was already late to the stadium game, state senator Ray Chatham reported on January 5, 1973, that a "joint study of the State House and Senate would recommend to the legislature a $2,886,000 appropriation to expand Faulkner Field" rather than build a new stadium.[135] Preliminary plans for a 36,000-seat facility were provided by Finch and Heery (Atlanta) to the lead architect Steve H. Blair, Jr. (Hattiesburg) and Polk Construction (Columbia, Mississippi). The renovated facility was envisioned to possibly be larger than that of both Ole Miss and Mississippi State and designed to expand, possibly to 60,000.[136] Also included in the proposed facility were other recommendations by Dornblatt and Associates, such as a modern press box and a scoreboard capable of electronic messaging. The construction activity over 1974 and 1975 required USM to play eleven road or neutral site games that would previously have been

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[131] Fagerberg, "A History of the Intercollegiate Athletic Program at the University of Southern Mississippi," 85, 98, 102, 145, 306, 334; This information came from an interview Fagerberg completed with Vann in February 1970. Steve Sparks, "Feasibility Study Gives Green Light," *Student Printz*, April 16, 1970, p. 4; The notion that football and athletics generally were big business is supported by a review of the financial records. For instance, from 1958 to 1968, the athletic department made $100,000 profit, and football was the only revenue producing sport.

[132] Mickey Edwards, "They Say," *Hattiesburg American,* March 26, 1971, p. 14.

[133] "Senate Votes $2 million for Stadium or Something," *Hattiesburg American*, March 26, 1971, p. 1; "Pittman Amends Burgin Bill," *Student Printz*, January 21, 1971, p. 1.

[134] Jack Elliott, "Hopes for New Stadium Depend on Compromise, *Student Printz*, March 31, 1971, p. 1.

[135] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid,* 147; The state legislature ultimately approved $4.8 million.

[136] Rick Cleveland, "USM Stadium Work May Begin March 18," *Hattiesburg American*, March 6, 1974, pp. 1, 6; Polk Construction Company (Columbia, MS) won the construction contract with its $5,784,338 bid.

played at home. More specifically, USM rescheduled homes games to be played in Jackson (1974 Texas-Arlington, 1975 BYU), Birmingham (1974 Alabama), Mobile (1974 VMI and Bowling Green), Biloxi (1975 Cal-State Fullerton), and New Orleans (1975 Lamar).[137]

The new facility opened as M. M. Roberts Stadium in September of 1976 with a seating capacity of 33,000. Roberts was a 1917 graduate and football player on MNC's 1915 and 1916 teams. Roberts was also a longtime member of the IHL Board of Trustees, even serving a term as president. As an advocate for USM for nearly fifty years, Roberts was instrumental in helping the institution raise faculty and staff salaries, address various legal matters the school faced, and provide financial support to nearly 500 students via scholarship programs. Roberts was also a well-recognized supporter of USM athletics as an active participant in the school's Century, Big Gold, and Hardwood clubs, which were often used not just to support athletics but also academics at the institution. His support of athletics led to his being named the 1973 recipient of the annual USM Department of Intercollegiate Athletics Distinguished Service Award."[138]

For the record, it should be noted that Roberts strongly opposed integration. As president of the IHL Board of Trustees, he voted to withhold a degree from James Meredith, who had integrated the University of Mississippi. Roberts also worked with the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, a state sponsored spy agency that fought advances in civil rights for African Americans. He further sought unsuccessfully to ban civil rights leader Charles Evers from speaking on Mississippi college campuses.[139]

A Conference to Call Home

The next significant change to M. M. Roberts Stadium did not occur until 1985 when new locker rooms, coaches' offices, a meeting room, and a weight room expansion project were added. The renovation was supported by a large single donation of $250,000 recruited by the Big

[137] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 147, 151-152. A beverage contract with Coca-Cola helped cover the expense of the scoreboard.

[138] M. M. Roberts Stadium: USM vs. Ole Miss Game Program—Stadium Dedication, September 25, 1976; "Howard Sit, USM Construction: Up, Up, and Away," *The Southerner* (Hattiesburg, MS: University of Southern Mississippi Press, 1975), 284.

[139] Ashton Pittman, "Protesting Racism, USM Football Players March From Stadium Named For Segregationist" *Mississippi Free Press*, August 30, 2020.

Gold Club. According to athletic director Roland Dale, the gift was "largest single cash donation the school has ever received."[140] The single meeting room accommodated up to 150 people while the addition of two new offices for coaches brought that total to nine.[141] The weight room facility doubled in size and received air-conditioning in addition to offering a welcome space for visitors in an enlarged lobby area.[142] These facility upgrades were supported by President Aubrey K. Lucas (1975-1996) as part of a clean campus initiative and highlighted both student and student-athlete recruiting as a point of emphasis and motivation for renovation.[143]

In 1986, expenditures in college athletics were rising nationally and at USM, although the university experienced a $417,000 decrease in state funding as the state of Mississippi set a new policy not to provide more than $300,000 for school athletics.[144] This development prompted USM football to look for new opportunities to increase revenue. USM agreed to a television deal with the College Football Association (CFA) for $140,000 following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* case in 1984. This decision provided institutions and conferences the ability to control their own television contracts rather than rely or depend upon the NCAA to manage such affairs for them. Before the end of the 1980s, television contracts were a growing source of revenue even though gate receipts still remained the largest source for athletic departments.[145]

Following the last of the renovations in the 1980s (i.e., installation of a new drainage system in 1989), USM joined Conference-USA (C-USA) in its inaugural season in 1995.[146] C-USA was initially comprised of twelve member institutions, six of which would compete for the league's first football championship in 1996 with the winner going to the St.

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[140] Chuck Abadie, "Renovation Project Planned," *Hattiesburg American*, March 29, 1985, p. 1C.

[141] Ibid., 4C.

[142] Van Arnold, "Renovations Refresh USM," *Hattiesburg American*, July 28, 1985, p. 2C.

[143] Abadie, "Renovation Project Planned," 1C; Arnold, "Renovations Refresh USM," p. 2C.

[144] Teresa L. Hollifield, "USM Football Revenue Expected to Increase by $325,000 This Year," *Student Printz*, July 9, 1986, p. 1.

[145] *NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, 468 U.S. 85 (1984).

[146] Smith, "Stadium Field Gets Drainage System," 1.

Jude Liberty Bowl in Memphis.[147] After USM joined C-USA, athletic director Bill McLellan stated, "This is the most important step that Southern Miss has ever taken in its athletic history." Most important were the television contracts C-USA enjoyed with ESPN, ESPN2, ABC, CBS, and Fox Sports Net who produced a "game of the week" for the new conference.[148]

To prepare for competition in the new conference, USM athletics added a new scoreboard and signage to spruce up the stadium. Handrails, exterior fences, and south end speaker towers were painted black, and unsightly barbed wire around the stadium was removed. Associate athletic director Nick Floyd stated, "Some of the things we're doing were suggested by our fans." The changes to the stadium and move into a conference provided an immediate boost in attendance. Facilitating the attendance growth was the creation of a new support campaign called "Sellout '95" that helped sell "blocks of tickets to local businesses and organizations."[149]

One year later, USM continued to improve Roberts Stadium through the addition of a new $1.3 million state-of-the-art video display board by Daktronics, a popular scoreboard manufacturer. The new video board was a significant upgrade that showed live action and replays along with graphics, statistics, and animations. It also used LED lights that "last three times longer than cathode-ray tubes and use half as much energy." Regarding this point, David Bounds, USM assistant athletic director, acknowledged the school wanted the stadium to use less energy. The video board was financed through advertising sales and collectively accepted as improving the spectator experience and enhancing the overall appearance of the venue and university.[150]

Over 2002 and 2003, a new 60,000-square foot building opened that housed the athletic department's administrative offices and coaches' offices, along with training space and locker rooms for the players. Approximately 25 percent of the money for the addition came from a 1996 state appropriation, while the remainder of the funding

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[147] Cox & Bennett, *Rock Solid,* 226. Other C-USA schools vying for the conference crown were the University of Houston, Tulane University, University of Memphis, University of Cincinnati, and University of Louisville.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid.; See Tim Doherty, "USM Stadium Gets Facelift," *Hattiesburg American*, August 20, 1995, p. 1B.

[150] Tim Doherty, "Lighting Up the Board" *Hattiesburg American*, April 5, 1998, pp. 1B, 4B.

was provided by private donations from the Circle of Champions, a support group that promised to donate $10,000 per year for ten years.[151] Soon after the completion of the new athletic department building, USM athletic director Richard Giannini heralded the stadium renovation capital campaign entitled "Building Dominance" as the most comprehensive building endeavor in the department's history. The "Building Dominance" campaign expanded and renovated M. M. Roberts Stadium, but it also provided enhancements to other athletic venues.[152] To put into perspective the need for athletic facilities upgrades at USM, Giannini stated, "Many of our facilities have had an only cosmetic renovation since their construction and, by today's standards, are fast becoming obsolete. To remain competitive in C-USA and in NCAA Division I-A, this is a move we have to make."[153]

The "Building Dominance" campaign raised roughly $32.7 million to renovate Roberts Stadium mainly through the establishment of premium football seating and enclosing the south end zone. Designed by Trahan Architects (Baton Rouge, LA), additional renovations included the installation of new artificial turf, a refurbished press box, new concession space and restrooms, and updated dressing rooms for visiting teams.[154] The success of the fundraising campaign permitted the USM Athletic Department to create the "Touchdown Terrace" of thirty luxury suites that seated twenty to twenty-four people at a cost of $26,000-$31,000 per year on five, seven, or ten-year leases.[155] Finally, more than 3,000 club seats were added in the end zone and east side of the M. M. Roberts Stadium, while more than 1,800 bench seats were added to the south end zone. Elsewhere, the west side club section added 650 new seats that swelled the stadium capacity to 41,300.[156]

Giannini stressed the importance of the upgrades by stating, "In today's world of college athletics, you're either moving ahead or you're falling further behind. Maintaining the status quo is not an option."[157]

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[151] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 250.

[152] Ibid., 256.

[153] "Athletic Facilities Renovation Unveiled," *University of Southern Mississippi Athletic Department*, para. 4, accessed https://southernmiss.com/news/2003/4/10/Athletic_Facilities_Renovation_Plan_Unveiled.aspx.

[154] Daimon Eklund, "USM Details Facility Plan," Hattiesburg American, April 11, 2003, pp. 1B-2B.

[155] Eklund, "USM Details Facility Plan," 2B.

[156] Cox and Bennett, *Rock Solid*, 256.

[157] "Athletic Facilities Renovation Unveiled."

USM felt they would fall behind Ole Miss and Mississippi State, which were well ahead of USM in the number of premium suites and club seats after renovations during the late 1990s and early 2000s.[158] Furthermore, an overwhelming number of USM supporters believed that luxury boxes and club seats were symbols of legitimacy because they help get more people to games and convey to prospective students that USM is a major university. Luxury suites and club seats also are attractive to businesses. Since Hattiesburg is near several large southern cities with well-to-do alumni and businesses, the stadium improvements were perceived as capable of potentially producing the revenue needed to be perceived as legitimate by other schools.[159] USM fans and business partners responded by leasing all the suites for the 2006 season. USM coordinator for athletic development and community relations Reggie Collier considered the suite designs to be on par with other institutions around the country.[160]

In 2004, Giannini revealed that the football field would be renamed, Carlisle-Faulkner Field at M. M. Roberts Stadium.[161] USM athletic and university officials renamed the facility in honor of USM graduate and Golden Eagle supporter, Gene Carlisle, who donated money to install a hybrid natural-artificial turf field (Momentum Turf) in Roberts Stadium.[162] The new Momentum Turf cost approximately $300,000 and was supposedly capable of maximizing "player stability, speed, and performance, while maintaining a natural grass surface." Giannini also added that the new surface reduced maintenance costs.[163]

In 2013, a new $550,000 artificial surface called Matrix Turf was installed by Hellas Construction as a result of damage to the field from a tornado that earlier swept through Hattiesburg.[164] There was also the installation of a new high definition videoboard in the north end zone to

[158] Pfleegor and Seifried, "Mississippi State's Davis Wade Stadium," 169; Seifried and Novicevic, "Vaught-Hemingway Stadium at Hollingsworth Field and Ole Miss,"142.

[159] Stan Caldwall, "Most USM Sky Boxes Leased," *Hattiesburg American*, October 26, 2004, p. 8A.

[160] Daimon Eklund, "USM Leases All Suites for Roberts Stadium," *Hattiesburg American*, March 23, 2005, p. 6A.

[161] "*Carlisle-Falkner Field to be Dedicated on Saturday*," University of Southern Mississippi, October 20, 2004, accessed https://southernmiss.com/news/2004/10/20/Carlisle_Faulkner_Field_To_Be_Dedicated_On_Saturday.aspx.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Jared Florreich, "New Football Turf Unveiled," *Student Printz*, April 20, 2004, p. 1.

[164] Tim Doherty, "End in Sight for Turf Work," *Hattiesburg American*, May 2, 2013, p. 1B.

improve the spectator experience.[165] In December of 2015, USM athletic director Bill McGillis revealed that $1.6 million had been allotted for the renovation of a new football locker room, an expansion of the strength and conditioning center, and the development of a nutrition center for athletes. McGillis stated, "There may be bigger places, but the quality and functionality and aesthetics of what we're about to have, we won't have to take a back seat to anybody that we compete against. This locker room will be as nice as any in the SEC, as nice as any in the Pacific-12 Conference, as nice as any in America."[166] Head football coach Todd Monken further claimed, "To have a championship program, you've got to have great facilities. We've had that, we want to sustain that, we want to build upon it. We're on the cutting edge. We want to be ahead of our competition, not even, we want to be ahead of our competition."[167]

Conclusion

Collectively, the information in the present article demonstrates that reflexive thinking by key social actors (e.g., student-athletes, administrators, coaches, fans, alumni, and business partners) showcases their focus as often strategically employed to establish and/or pursue legitimacy. Further, the pursuit of legitimacy was often motivated by interest in increasing enrollment, alumni relationships and gifts, business partnerships, brand awareness, and revenue. Therefore, press boxes were built for media groups, premium seats for well-to-do patrons, businesses, and alumni, and advertising spaces like scoreboards with advanced technology were added. Next, internal spaces (e.g., weight rooms, locker rooms) and amenities (e.g., restrooms, concessions) were improved for fans and participants, along with the development of campaigns to help raise funds for athletics and academics. Overall, these advances helped improve the football program, its facilities, and the institution of USM over time. However, we also found the timing, scale, and frequency of changes to USM football and its facilities did not always meet the rate of progress

[165] Anna Grissett, "*M. M. Roberts Stadium-Southern Mississippi Golden Eagles*," October 6, 2016, accessed https://stadiumjourney.com/author/anna-grissett/.

[166] Alan Hinton, "Southern Miss Announces $1.6 Million Upgrade of Football Locker Room, Strength and Conditioning Facilities," *Sun Herald*, December 14, 2015.

[167] Ibid.

shown by aspirational peers, thus preventing USM from accelerating its institutional status.

Finally, we show the pursuit of legitimacy by enhancing the football program and improving the stadium has provided other benefits for USM. For instance, efforts to join a conference (SIAA, GSC, and C-USA) and/or successful affiliation with high-prestige football-playing institutions in the South (SEC schools) or beating them (e.g., the five wins against the University of Alabama) boosted USM's reputation and financial situation. Moreover, these affiliations and commitment to football and stadium development provided USM with the opportunity to join the Sun Belt Conference in 2022. In this instance, the Sun Belt Conference made sense to USM and its supporters for a variety of the previously stated reasons that USM pursued changing conferences. First, the Sun Belt was attractive because its reputation and play has improved substantially in recent years, thus lending additional external legitimacy to USM. Second, USM athletic director Jeremy McClain noted that playing more regional peers will decrease yearly travel expenditures by $500,000 for the athletic department, thus providing internal legitimacy. Third, the Sun Belt actually has a more attractive television agreement (i.e., coverage range and slight financial improvement) with ESPN than what C-USA offered with the CBS Sports Network, which is less viewed and heralded.[168]

[168] Rick Cleveland, "Southern Miss Move to Sun Belt Makes Sense on so Many Levels," *Mississippi Today*, October 26, 2021.

Mississippi Historical Society Awards Prizes at the 2022 Annual Meeting

Ellie J. Dahmer (second from left) received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Daphne Chamberlain (right), vice president for strategic initiatives and social justice at Tougaloo College and MHS vice president.

The Mississippi Historical Society held its annual meting March 10–11, 2022, in Hattiesburg to honor its 2022 award winners, including the best Mississippi History Book of 2021, the lifetime achievement award, teacher of the year, and awards of merit.

Ellie J. Dahmer, widow of Vernon Dahmer, received the Lifetime Achievement Award for preserving the memory and accomplishments of Vernon Dahmer and promoting civil rights education.

Christian Pinnen, associate professor of history at Mississippi College, received the Book of the Year Award for *Complexion of Empire in Natchez: Race and Slavery in the Mississippi Borderlands.* According to the selection committee, "Pinnen weaves together legal history, race, and gender to show how the interplay of Native Americans, people of African descent, and European and American settlers created the changing landscape of slavery in early Mississippi."

Stuart Levin won the *Journal of Mississippi History* Article of the Year Award for "Beeson Academy/Hattiesburg Prep: A History in Context," which recounted the formation of a segregation academy in the 1960s. The Civil War & Reconstruction Governors of Mississippi

Project received the first Excellence in History Award. The digital documentary project is a collaboration between MDAH, the Mississippi Digital Library, and the University of Southern Mississippi. It is digitizing the papers of governors in the 1860s and 1870s. The Outstanding Local Historical Society Award was presented to the Dancing Rabbit Genealogy and Historical Society for its preservation work in Carthage. The Teacher of the Year Award was presented to Steven R. White of Pearl High School.

The Teacher of the Year Award was presented by USM associate professor of history Rebecca Tuuri to Steven R. White of Pearl High School.

Awards of Merit were presented to Deborah Delgado for being the founder and director of the Historic Mobile Street Renaissance Festival, which for seventeen years has raised awareness about the historical importance of Mobile Street as a hub for civil rights activism in Hattiesburg; Glenda Funchess for leading the effort to erect four historical markers civil rights markers in Hattiesburg: Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Vernon Dahmer home, Rev. W.D. Ridgeway, and Peay v. Cox federal court case; Edwina Carpenter for modernizing the interpretation at the Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center at Brices Crossroads in Baldwyn; Russell Guerin for writing *Early Hancock County, A Few of Her People and Some of Their Stories*; Else N. Martin for restoration and preservation of the Granly Danish-American colony in Jackson County; Friends of Raymond for providing funding to secure almost 44 acres at Raymond to preserve land at the

site of the Battle of Raymond in 1863; Institute of Southern Jewish Life for their virtual vacation program featuring Mississippi sites; the Historical Society of Gulfport for the digitization of the Ralph Bean Architectural Collection as the Gulfport Museum of History's initial entry in the Mississippi Digital Library; the Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County for their excellent virtual programming featuring history during the pandemic; the African American Military History Museum for recognizing and celebrating the service and sacrifice of African Americans in the military; the Mississippi Armed Forces Museum for serving as the military history museum for the state of Mississippi; Visit Hattiesburg for creating the Freedom Summer Driving Tour; and The Admissions Project, an online project on how private academies and public schools dealt with integration through firsthand accounts of students.

MHS board member Carter Burns present an Award of Merit to Latoya Norman for the African American Military History Museum.

Millsaps professor Stephanie Rolph completed her term as president of the Society and welcomed new president Daphne Chamberlain of Tougaloo College. Will Bowlin of Northeast Mississippi Community College was elected vice president. New board members are Roscoe Barnes, cultural heritage tourism manager at Visit Natchez; Barbara Boschert of Coahoma Community College; Keena Graham, Superintendent of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National

Monument; Anne Marshall, executive director of the Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library at Mississippi State University; Perry Sansing, special assistant to the chancellor for governmental affairs, University of Mississippi; and TJ Taylor, executive director of the Mississippi Cable Television Association (MCTA).

MHS vice president Daphne Chamberlain of Tougaloo College gave the Book of the Year Award to Christian Pinnen, associate professor of history at Mississippi College.

Program of the 2022 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

By Rebecca Tuuri

The Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) held its annual meeting March 10–11, 2022, in Hattiesburg. The program began on Thursday morning, March 10, with the board meeting and annual business meeting. All sessions on Thursday took place at the Trent Lott National Center on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). All sessions on Friday took place at the museum of the Historic Eureka School, which opened in 1921 and has served as a focal point of history and heritage for African Americans in the Hattiesburg community.

The opening session and luncheon started with a welcome by MHS president Stephanie Rolph, associate professor of history and director of experiential learning at Millsaps College, and Toby Barker, mayor of Hattiesburg. The keynote speaker was Patricia Boyett, director of the Women's Resource Center and a visiting assistant professor of history at Loyola University New Orleans, who gave an overview of the civil rights movement in Hattiesburg.

Patricia Boyett of Loyola University New Orleans delivered the keynote address.

The first afternoon session was titled "Mississippi Religion, Race, and Violence" and featured three presentations: "Foundations of Mississippi: Slavery, Christianity, and Crisis" by Andrew Gardner, curator of education at the Two Mississippi Museums and a graduate

student in history at Jackson State University (JSU); "Theosophical Endeavors in the Magnolia State," by Thomas M. Kersen, associate professor of sociology at JSU; and "Murder in a Small Town: The Forgotten Story of Mack Charles Parker," by Alan Wheat, director of education at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) and a graduate student in history at JSU. Jeff R. Rosenberg, a MHS board member and historic preservation coordinator at the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, moderated the session.

MHS board member Carter Burns presented USM professor of history Susannah Ural and her students with the Excellence in History Award for The Civil War & Reconstruction Governors of Mississippi Project.

The second afternoon session was titled "Digital History and Archival Projects." It featured three presentations: "Digital Snapshot Projects," by Joseph Jarrell, graduate assistant in the Center for Digital Humanities and a graduate student in history at USM; "Digital Collections of Historical Resources," by Elizabeth La Beaud, assistant director at the Mississippi Digital Library and digital lab manager at USM; "The Lantern Project: Legal Records of Enslaved Persons," by Jennifer McGillan, MHS board member and coordinator of manuscripts at Mississippi State University; and "Dear Mr. Meredith: Mapping Responses to the Integration of the University of Mississippi" by Abigail Norris, Digital Initiatives Librarian and assistant professor in the University Libraries, and Adam Clemons, research and instruction librarian and assistant professor, at the University of Mississippi. Susannah Ural, director of the Center for Digital Humanities and professor of history at USM, moderated the panel.

The President's Happy Hour was held at the Trent Lott Center

followed by the banquet and best book award ceremony. Daphne Chamberlain, MHS vice president, presided. Katie Blount, director of MDAH, updated the group on the activities of the state historical agency, such as the upcoming exhibit, *The World of Marty Stuart*. The banquet speaker and winner of the Book of the Year Award was Christian Pinnen, author of *Complexion of Empire in Natchez: Race and Slavery in the Mississippi Borderlands* and associate professor of history at Mississippi College. Pinnen's book weaves together legal history, race, and gender to show how the interplay of Native Americans, people of African descent, and European and American settlers created the changing landscape of slavery in early Mississippi.

The first morning session on Friday, March 11, was called "Mississippi Change Agents." It featured three presentations: "A Catt Among the Pigeons: Southern Suffrage Rivalry, 1917," by Bernadette Cahill, independent scholar; "Fred Clark Chaney, Hodding Carter, Jr., and the Whitfield Editorials," by Bo Bowen, independent scholar; and "Exploring the Influence and Importance of Middle-Class Black Women in Mississippi" by Jessica O'Connor, exhibits content specialist at MDAH. Kelly Cantrell, MHS board member and instructor of history at East Mississippi Community College, moderated the session.

MHS board member Carter Burns presented members of the Dancing Rabbit Genealogical and Historical Society of Carthage with the Outstanding Local Historical Society Award.

The second morning session was titled "Commemorating and Preserving Local African American History." It featured four presentations: "African American Military History" by Latoya

Norman, director of the African American Military History Museum; "Preserving School History" by Stella Mackabee, representative of the Eureka, Rowan, and Hattiesburg High School (EUROHA) Education Committee; "Mobile Street Renaissance Festival" by Deborah Delgado, festival founder and Hattiesburg City Councilwoman; and "Teaching and Preserving Our History," by local historian and attorney Glenda Funchess. Rebecca Tuuri, associate professor of history at USM, moderated the panel.

MHS president Stephanie Rolph presided over the awards luncheon. Incoming president Daphne Chamberlain, adjourned the meeting. Afternoon activities continued with tours of the African American Military History Museum, Mississippi Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby, Freedom Summer Driving Tour, and a walking tour of downtown Hattiesburg.

The following members of the program committee deserve thanks for an informative and engaging program: chair Rebecca Tuuri; Latoya Norman; Ryan Schilling, instructor of history at Mississippi Gulf Coast College Perkinston; Deanne Stephens, professor of history at USM; and Susannah Ural. In addition, MHS secretary-treasurer William "Brother" Rogers, MDAH assistant to the director Emma McRaney, and other staff at MDAH are to be commended for organizing and implementing the many details that made the annual meeting a success.

MHS president Stephanie Rolph of Millsaps College (left) passed the gavel to incoming president Daphne Chamberlain of Tougaloo College.

Mississippi Historical Society
Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting
March 10, 2022

The annual business meeting of the Mississippi Historical Society was held at 11 a.m. on Thursday, March 10, 2022, on the campus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

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

The following business was transacted:

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

II. The president suggested that the minutes of the March 5, 2021, annual business meeting be approved as distributed. A motion to approve the minutes by acclamation was made by Maria Bowser, seconded by Joyce Dixon-Lawson, and unanimously approved.

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

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

V. The president expressed her appreciation for the Local Arrangements Committee, annual meeting sponsors, and the Program Committee.

VII. The president recognized and expressed appreciation for the following individuals who were completing their terms of service on the

board of directors: Carter Burns, Wilma Clopton, Angela Cockerham, Missy Jones, Jennifer McGillan, and Angela Stewart.

VII. Rogers gave an update on the *Journal of Mississippi History* on behalf of Dennis Mitchell. After years of being behind, the Journal is back on schedule, although still publishing two joint issues per year. He stated that a new issue, Spring/Summer 2022, will be published soon. This special edition about the legislature adopting a new state flag will feature color photos, which is rare for the journal.

VIII. Rogers gave a report from the Publications Committee on behalf of John Marszalek. He stated that a new *Heritage of Mississippi Series* book, *Colonial Mississippi: A Borrowed Land* by Christian Pinnen and Charles Weeks, was published in 2021, and another book in the series, *Frontier Mississippi, 1798–1840* by James Michael Bunn and Clay Williams, will be ready in 2023.

IX. Rogers gave an update on *Mississippi History Now*. He stated that the Mississippi Humanities Council awarded a grant to MHS to modernize the MHN website. This work was finished in the fall of 2021, and he encouraged all members to browse the website: www.mississippihistorynow.mdah.ms.gov.

X. Rogers stated that the 2023 annual meeting will be held in Jackson at the Two Mississippi Museums, and then it will be in Oxford in 2024. It will be in Jackson again in 2025.

XI. Al Wheat gave an update on National History Day, which is again happening online due to the pandemic. He also reminded the membership that MDAH is the official sponsor for Mississippi History Day.

XII. Immediate past president Marshall Bennett presented the Nomination Committee Report. He presented officers and board members for consideration. On a motion by Carter Burns, seconded by Marcus Ward, the Nominations Committee recommendations were unanimously approved. The nominations are listed below.

Officers for the term 2022–2023

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

Tougaloo College

Vice President—William J. Bowlin, Instructor, Government andHistory, Northeast Mississippi Community College

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

Immediate Past President—Stephanie Rolph, Associate Professor of History, Millsaps College

The following five individuals are nominated to serve three-year terms on the Society's Board of Directors (2022–2025):

Roscoe Barnes III, Cultural Heritage Tourism Director, Visit Natchez

Barbara N. Boschert, Coahoma Community College

Keena Nichelle Graham, Superintendent, Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument

Anne Marshall, Executive Director, Ulysses S. Grant Presidential Library, Mississippi State University

Perry Sansing, Special Assistant to the Chancellor for Government Affairs, University of Mississippi

TJ Taylor, Executive Director, Mississippi Cable Telecommunications Association

XIII. Carter Burns presented the Awards Committee Report. The awards are listed below.

Lifetime Achievement Award
Ellie J. Dahmer, widow of Vernon Dahmer

Book of the Year Award
Christian Pinnen–*Complexion of Empire in Natchez: Race and Slavery in the Mississippi Borderlands*

***Journal of Mississippi History* Article of the Year Award**
Stuart Levin–"Beeson Academy/Hattiesburg Prep: A History in Context" from *The Journal of Mississippi History*, Vol. 82, No. 3 and No. 4–Fall/Winter 2020

Outstanding Local Historical Society Award
Dancing Rabbit Genealogy and Historical Society

Teacher of the Year Award
Steven R. White, Pearl High School

Awards of Merit
Edwina Carpenter: Retired after serving for 23 years as the director of the Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center in Baldwyn.

Deborah Delgado: Councilwoman Delgado is recognized for being the founder and director of the Historic Mobile Street Festival, which for 17 years has raised awareness about the historical importance of Mobile Street as a hub for civil rights activism.

Glenda Funchess: For keeping civil rights history alive by leading the effort to erect four historical markers (Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Vernon Dahmer home, Rev. W.D. Ridgeway, and *Peay v. Cox* federal court case).

Russell Guerin: Researched and published history in Hancock County, including *Early Hancock County, A Few of Her People and Some of Their Stories*. Documented the early families at Pearlington, Logtown, and Gainesville along the Pearl River.

Friends of Raymond: Provided funding to secure almost 44 acres at Raymond in March, a substantial addition to the total preserved land at the site of the Battle of Raymond in 1863. The site of a major portion of the Union advance, the tract will be transferred to Friends of Raymond after a conservation easement is put into place.

Institute of Southern Jewish Life: Virtual Vacation program from the Institute of Southern Jewish Life: The series of 18 videos covers the South more generally, but there are many Mississippi-specific stories told. Some Mississippi-specific episodes include "Visit Natchez, Mississippi," "The Movement in Mississippi," and "Visit the Mississippi Delta." In addition, "Summer (Camp) Magic," "Southern Jewish Cemeteries," "Holiday Shopping in the Jewish South," and "Southern Jewish Restaurants" also include stories about Mississippi businesses and landmarks.

Historical Society of Gulfport: For the digitization of the Ralph Bean Architectural Collection as the Gulfport Museum of History's initial entry in the Mississippi Digital Library

Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County: For their excellent virtual programming featuring history during the pandemic and for being featured on *CBS This Morning*.

African American Military History Museum: For recognizing and celebrating the service and sacrifice of the African American soldier through programs and exhibits. The museum also preserves the only remaining USO Club constructed (in 1942) specifically for African American soldiers.

Mississippi Armed Forces Museum: For serving as the military history museum for the state of Mississippi. The museum honors the service and sacrifice of Mississippi veterans from all military branches.

Visit Hattiesburg: For creating the Freedom Summer Driving Tour.

The Academy Stories: An online project on how private academies have shaped the South. It contains firsthand accounts of the segregation academy experience, especially in Mississippi.

XIV. Rogers stated that Katie Blount would provide the MDAH report at the awards banquet.

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

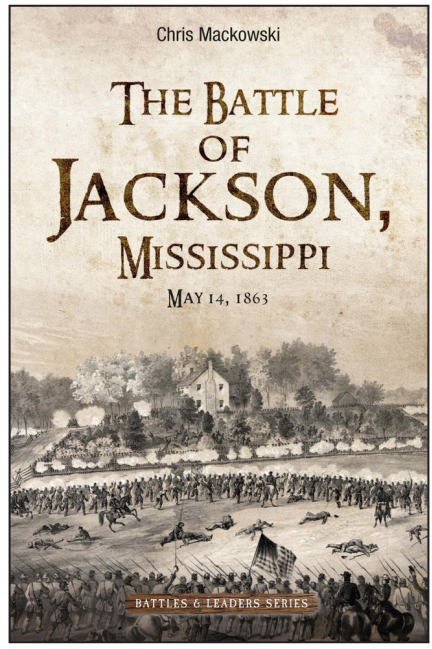
Stephanie Rolph, President
William "Brother" Rogers, Secretary-Treasurer

BOOK REVIEWS

The Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, May 14, 1863

By Chris Mackowski (El Dorado Hills, California: Savas Beatie, 2022. Maps, acknowledgements, points of interest, order of battle, sources, index. Pp. 171. $29.95 hardback. ISBN: 13:978-1-61121-655-4)

The Vicksburg Campaign has been written about extensively, but some of the battles of that campaign have been written about more than others. As the author points out in his introduction, "The May 14, 1863, battle does not rank as the most important of Grant's Mississippi campaign, but it does probably rank as the most overlooked." In his new book *The Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, May 14, 1863* Chris Mackowski has rectified this oversight with a well-researched study of the short yet consequential fight for Mississippi's capitol city.



Mackowski devotes Chapter 1 to General Joseph E. Johnston, overall commander of the Confederate forces in Mississippi and Tennessee. The general was ordered to Mississippi by President Jefferson Davis to offer his aid to General John C. Pemberton, the commander of Confederates forces in the state. Johnston had repeatedly put off a trip to the Magnolia State, citing a litany of excuses. The author makes the assertion that "The thing Johnston worried about most, though, was his reputation," and that he stayed as far away from Vicksburg for as long as possible, fearing that the loss of the city might tarnish that reputation.

The effort to defend Vicksburg in 1863 was hampered by the differing strategic visions held by President Jefferson Davis and General Joseph E. Johnston. Davis "advocated a defense of key geographical positions," of which Vicksburg was the most important on the Mississippi River. Johnston however "sought to consolidate troops for mobility; he was willing to give up territory to preserve his combat forces." Caught between these two competing visions was General John C. Pemberton, who

attempted to split the difference by attempting (and failing) to appease both masters.

Standing in sharp contrast to the Confederate command problems was the strategic thinking of Union commander Ulysses S. Grant. He landed his troops at Bruinsburg, Mississippi, on April 30–May 1, 1863. Once on Mississippi soil he moved quickly and decisively with his troops, never allowing Generals Pemberton and Johnston to unite their superior forces against him. Grant defeated the outnumbered Confederates at the battles of Port Gibson, Mississippi, on May 1, and Raymond, Mississippi on May 12. After the battle of Raymond, Grant ordered his army to march on Jackson, a move lauded by Mackowski as "one of his most important improvisations of the campaign."

On the night of May 12, Grant sent his corps commanders their orders for the next day's march. Major General James B. McPherson, commander of the XVII Corps, was at Raymond, and he was to move at first light for Clinton, then pivot his troops to the east and advance on Jackson using the Clinton-Jackson Road. General Sherman's XV Corps was to march through Raymond to Mississippi Springs, five miles east of the town. On May 14 he was to move his men via the Mississippi Springs Road, bringing them into Jackson from the southwest. Generals McPherson and Sherman marched their respective corps all day on May 13 to reach their assigned positions, and by the time they halted for the night, Grant had approximately 24,000 men in the two corps within a few hours marching time of Jackson.

On the night of May 13, General Joseph E. Johnston arrived in Jackson and found that only 6,000 troops were on hand to defend the city. He then sent to Richmond the message "I arrived this evening, finding the enemy's force between this place and General Pemberton, cutting off the communication. I am too late." After this pessimistic note, "Johnston made a show of trying to save the city," and never moved to concentrate his forces "to significantly complicate" matters for Grant and keep him from taking Jackson.

Johnston came to the conclusion that Jackson should be evacuated as quickly as possible. To buy time for this withdrawal to take place, Johnston ordered Brigadier General John Gregg to stay behind with a rear guard and fight a delaying action to slow the Union advance. This led to the fights at the O. P. Wright Farm and along Lynch Creek, which did allow for a successful evacuation of the city.

The battle of Jackson, although a minor skirmish by Civil War standards, was an important engagement of the Vicksburg Campaign. The Federal capture of the city broke up the Confederate troop concentration that was just beginning to take shape in the city, and neutralized an important communication, transportation, and supply center. General Pemberton's army in Vicksburg was isolated, and never able to affect a junction with General Johnston's troops, allowing Grant to concentrate his forces against the Confederates in the Hill

City. Vicksburg fell to Union forces on July 4, 1863.

Mackowski's well-researched book is a delight. His clear and concise prose makes the action easy to follow as the campaign unfolds. In addition, he concludes the book with a very useful guide to the Civil War sites associated with the fighting at Jackson that can still be viewed today. *The Battle of Jackson, Mississippi, May 14, 1863* will probably stand as the definitive guide to the battle for many years to come.

By Jeff Gambrone

Outposts of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians in the Nineteenth Century

By Robert Milton Winter. Second Edition. (Holly Springs, Mississippi: Published by the author, 2021. Includes bibliographical references and index. Pp. 507. $20.00 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-9914041-7-9)

Citadels of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians, Vol. I: 1900-1960

By Robert Milton Winter. Second Edition. (Memphis, Tennessee: Published by the author, 2021. Includes bibliographical references and index. Pp. 544. Price unknown paperback. ISBN: 978-0-9914041-8-6)

Citadels of Zion: A History of Mississippi Presbyterians, Vol. II: 1960-2016

By Robert Milton Winter. Second Edition. (Memphis, Tennessee: Published by the author, 2021. Includes bibliographical references and index. Pp. 530. Price unknown paperback. ISBN: 978-0-9914041-9-3)

Milton Winter's three-volume history chronicles—with unparalleled breadth, depth, and detail—more than two centuries of Presbyterian activity in Mississippi. Winter combines the comprehensiveness of E. T. Thompson's regional denominational study *Presbyterians in the South* (John Knox Press, 1973) with the state-specific approach of Randy Sparks's *Religion in Mississippi* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001) to make a massive (more than 1,500 pages) and unique contribution to the histories of Mississippi, southern religion, and American Presbyterianism.

The first volume, *Outposts of Zion*, studies Mississippi Presbyterians in the nineteenth century. In it, Winter gives readers "a flavor of the church's life, a sense of its beliefs, and an understanding of its mission (iv)," with special attention to Presbyterian educational efforts and ministers who defended the disenfranchised Indians and African Americans. Winter traces the growth of Presbyterianism in the Mississippi Territory from: (1) the pioneer missionaries to the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes in Northeast Mississippi, (2) to the organization of the first congregations near Natchez, (3) to the establishment of Mississippi Presbytery at Pine Ridge in 1816. He continues through the century describing: (1) James Smylie's influential biblical defense of slavery, (2)

Oakland College president Jeremiah Chamberlain's 1851 assassination, and (3) Mississippi Presbyterians' involvement in the Civil War including that of: (1) Confederate apologist B. M. Palmer of New Orleans, Louisiana, and (2) unionist and slavery reform advocate James A. Lyon of Columbus, Mississippi. After the war, Mississippi's White Presbyterians struggled to define their relationship with both White Presbyterians in the North and newly emancipated Black Presbyterians in the South. Winter believes that over the nineteenth century, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) "removed itself from the center to the margins of the civil society, restricting itself to matters of individual salvation and a certain concept of personal piety (486)." But he concludes, nonetheless: that advocacy for dispossessed Indians, Lyon's work for the amelioration of slave conditions, and support for denominational educational institutions provided inspiring examples for the present (488).

The second volume, *Citadels of Zion, Vol. 1.* studies Mississippi Presbyterians from 1900 to 1960. Winter declares that, although Presbyterians had lost their intellectual fire by this time, they directed their energy towards a "second Civil War" over segregation and fought that war on religious grounds (vi, viii). For Mississippi Presbyterians, the early twentieth century was a time of hope, marked by efforts to develop denominational academies and colleges such as Belhaven in Jackson (22, 14). Their hopes were dampened by ominous disagreements in the PCUS. Southern Presbyterians constantly wrestled over reunion with their northern counterparts. Conservative Mississippi Presbyterians expressed concern over what they perceived to be burgeoning theological modernism on the mission field, embodied by Mississippi-connected author Pearl S. Buck, who was raised in the PCUS China mission (155, 294). At home, they led inquiries into the orthodoxy of denominational colleges (Southwestern in Memphis) and seminaries (especially Prof. E. T. Thompson at Union in Virginia). Though smaller in number than their Baptist and Methodist contemporaries, Mississippi Presbyterians held significant state and national political positions in this period, including Governor Hugh White, Senator John Stennis, and later Governor William Winter.

The third volume, *Citadels of Zion, Vol. 2.*, brings the story from 1960 through 2016, with some observations on topics straying into the 2020s. Winter focuses on Presbyterian engagement with integration and the Civil Rights Movement, which played an influential role in the approaching division of the PCUS. In 1963, theological conservatives in Mississippi began what became Jackson's Reformed Theological Seminary (156ff). The PCUS finally divided in 1973, when many of the same conservatives established the Presbyterian Church in America (239ff). About one decade later, more theological conservatives left the PCUS to form the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (363). These

departures from the PCUS paved the way for its reunion with the UPCUSA in 1983, which established a national mainline Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (361). However, when the dust settled from divisions and reunion, Mississippi had become the only state in the country with more Presbyterians outside of the mainline PCUSA than within it (229).

Winter suggests that social and political differences, especially over integration, played a more important role in the division of the PCUS than did theological divisions. For example, he writes, "the issues before congregations, presbyteries, and synods aligned with the PCUS from the 1940s to the 1980s focused on two matters: racial integration and union with the United, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A (221)." However, many conservative leaders in that period, including Reformed Theological Seminary president Sam Patterson, whom Winter quotes, said that theological differences, especially the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, were the primary cause of division (160). In a recent study of the decades preceding the division, Sean Michael Lucas' *For A Continuing Church* (P & R Publishing, 2015), also identifies theological differences as the main cause. Lucas and Winter agree that both social and theological differences influenced the split. However, by identifying social and political disagreements as the primary cause, Winter departs from Lucas' study and from Patterson's firsthand explanation of the division.

This three-volume history includes: (1) stirring accounts of pioneer missionaries, (2) descriptions of worship services and clerical attire, (3) stories of student life at Presbyterian schools, orphanages, and camps, (4) quotes from Presbyterian Citizens' Council members, (5) remembrances from urban and rural congregations, and much more. All of these topics are often helpfully described within their broader ecclesiastical, social, and political contexts. The three volumes also contain a combined 136 pages of photographs of significant church members, ministers, facilities, and events. The text is usually printed in two columns per page, with headings marking subject changes, and the volumes read more like a series of journalistic articles than a thesis-driven academic monograph.

Professional historians of southern religion and culture as well as church historians will appreciate Winter's volumes for their analysis of myriad primary sources as well as the author's engagement with key historical works. Readers interested in religious history, Presbyterianism, and the history of Mississippi will appreciate the books' accessible prose and interesting content. The volumes represent a lifetime of research and personal experience in Mississippi Presbyterianism.

By David T. Irving

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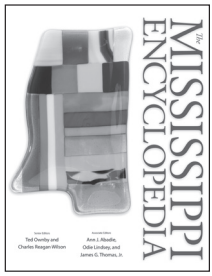

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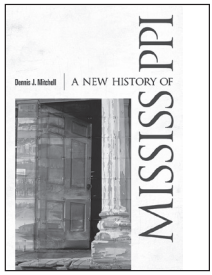

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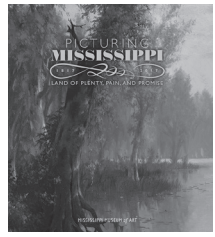

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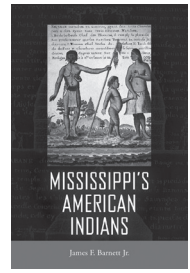

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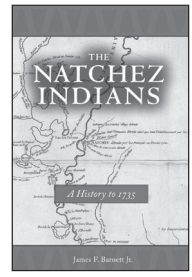

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The Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition) should be followed, with some exceptions (primarily dates: the *Journal* prefers "December 1, 1866," to Chicago's "1 December 1866").

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