

2020

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Mississippi Historical Society 2020 Annual Meeting Program

by Stephanie Rolph



Outgoing MHS President Chuck Westmoreland (right) and incoming MHS President Marshall Bennett

The Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) held its annual meeting March 5-6, 2020, on the campus of Delta State University and at the Cotton House Hotel in Cleveland. The program began on Thursday morning, March 5, with the board meeting and annual business meeting.

The opening session and luncheon started with a welcome by Charles Westmoreland, president, MHS; Bill LaForge, president, Delta State University; and Billy Nowell, mayor, city of Cleveland. The speaker was Jarvis McInnis, assistant professor of English at Duke University and a graduate of Tougaloo College, whose topic was “From the Mississippi Delta to Panamá: The Curious Case of *The Cotton Farmer* Newspaper.”

The first afternoon session was titled The Long Shadow of the Civil War and featured three student presentations: “How the Mighty

Fell: The Decline of Generational Wealth Among the Planter Elite Families of Desoto County, Mississippi, 1836-1870," by Matthew Powell, University of Mississippi; "The Philosopher-Statesman: L.Q.C. Lamar, Henry Adams, and National Reconciliation," by Ashley Steenson, University of Mississippi; and "African-American Health, the Lost Cause, and Public Health Policy in Bolivar County, Mississippi," by Wayne Dowdy, Millsaps College.

The second afternoon session was titled Culture, Religion, and Professional Wrestling. It featured three presentations: "James 'Kamala' Harris: From the Mississippi Delta to the Jungles of Uganda Professional Wrestling and Race Relations in Mississippi and the Deep South," by Sean Buckelew, University of Southern Mississippi; "Bobbie's B-Side: Mississippi Delta," by Laura Kate Fortner, Delta State University; and "Church Discipline, Dancing, and a Lynching in Summit, Mississippi, 1909-1910," by Ted Ownby, University of Mississippi.

The afternoon concluded with Ask an Archivist: Preservation Roadshow. Preservation professionals from the Society of Mississippi Archivists gave brief talks on preserving various formats followed by a question and answer time that provided advice on preserving records, objects, and other materials in any format, including digital files. Panelists included Jennifer Brannock, University of Southern Mississippi; Jenifer Ishee, Mississippi State University; Emily Jones, Delta State University; Jessica Perkins-Smith, Mississippi State University; Lorraine Stuart, University of Southern Mississippi; and Mona Vance-Ali, Columbus-Lowndes County Public Library.

The President's Happy Hour was held at the top of the Cotton House Hotel followed by the banquet and best book award ceremony. Marshall Bennett, MHS vice president, presided. The banquet speaker and McLemore Prize winner was Dave Tell, professor, Communication Studies, University of Kansas, whose book is *Remembering Emmett Till*. Tell addressed how historical tourism has transformed seemingly innocuous places like bridges, boat landings, gas stations, and riverbeds into sites of racial politics, reminders of the still-unsettled question of how best to remember the murder of Emmett Till and its impact on the state and the nation.

The first morning session on Friday, March 6, was called Mississippi, My Home. It featured four presentations: "Home as People, Not Place: Eudora Welty's Personal Sense of Home," by Kasey Mosley,



Kevin Allemand of Hancock High School received the John K. Bettersworth Award for best history teacher from Rebecca Tuuri, associate professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Mississippi State University; “Mississippi’s First Jewish Immigrants: The ‘German Coast’ in the Eighteenth Century,” by Milt Grishman, past president, Congregation Beth Israel; “The Grander Age Colony: Cooperative Living and Socialist Migration into Mississippi,” by Thomas M. Kersen, Jackson State University; and “Broker and Sponsor: Albert T. Callicott and Displaced Persons Resettlement in Mississippi, 1948-1952,” by Andrew Marion, University of Mississippi.

The second morning session was titled Catalysts to Civil Rights Activism in the Twentieth Century. It featured three presentations: “Righteous Struggle: Medgar Evers, Religious Biography, and Civil Rights Historiography,” by Patrick Connolly, Mississippi College;

“Lawrence Guyot and His Upbringing and Education into Civil Rights Activism,” by Chris Danielson, Montana Technological University; and “An Ounce of Mississippi Was Worth a Pound of Massachusetts: Chronicling the Mississippi Suffrage Movement through the Local Press,” by Jennifer Ishee, Mississippi State University

Charles Westmoreland, president, MHS, presided over the awards luncheon. Incoming president Marshall Bennett, adjourned the meeting. Afternoon activities continued with tours of the Amzie

Moore House, Mississippi Delta Chinese Heritage Museum, and Railroad Heritage Museum in Cleveland.

The following members of the program committee deserve thanks for an interesting program: Stephanie Rolph, Erin Kempker, Jennifer McGillan, and Susannah Ural. In addition, secretary-treasurer William "Brother" Rogers, MDAH staff, and Delta State staff members Rolando Herts, Emily Jones, and Charles Westmoreland are to be commended for organizing and implementing the many details that made the annual meeting a success.