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## Ole Miss's New Deal: Building White Democracy at the University of Mississippi, 1933-1941

by Jack Carey

On the afternoon of September 19, 1936, three thousand spectators sat in the “sulky humidity” of a beaming sun” and watched the University of Mississippi’s football team defeat the visiting team from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, 45-0.<sup>1</sup> The game was the first that the football team at the University of Mississippi played as the “Ole Miss Rebels.” Commentators at the university were unable to resist the play of words made possible by a game that saw the Rebels maul a squad from Union; one account described the game as a reenactment of the Battle of Bull Run.<sup>2</sup> On New Year’s Day of 1936, the team played against Catholic University in the prestigious Orange Bowl in Miami.<sup>3</sup> The decade prior to World War II when the university’s football team became the Ole Miss Rebels was one of success and increasing prominence.

On November 29, 1941, twenty-eight thousand spectators packed the university’s Hemingway Stadium to watch Ole Miss play a “brilliantly bitter game” against Mississippi State for the Southeastern Conference championship.<sup>4</sup> Although that day ended with a loss to the rivals from Starkville, the university community would remember the pre-World War II years as a “‘Golden Era’ of Ole Miss football.”<sup>5</sup>

While Ole Miss was becoming the Rebels, the University of Mississippi was benefiting from the largesse of the federal government. Through President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, the university received well over \$1.25 million in direct aid between 1933 and 1941. Federal money paid for the football stadium that fans packed to watch

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<sup>1</sup> Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, September 20, 1936, section II, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ole Miss*, Volume XLI, 1937, 194.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Wells, *Ole Miss Football* (Oxford, MS: Sports Yearbook Company, 1980), 50-51.

<sup>4</sup> Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, November 30, 1941, section I, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ole Miss*, Volume LI, 1947, 283.

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the Rebels play. It also paid for a swimming pool, a student union, an astronomical observatory, dormitories, faculty cottages, and over a dozen fraternity and sorority houses. In other ways, federal money remade the university's campus by funding maintenance projects, providing for landscaping, and paving roads and walkways. Beyond these and additional construction projects, the New Deal employed students whose poverty otherwise would have forced them to suspend their studies and expanded the university's clerical and research staffs.<sup>6</sup>

This article treats Ole Miss's New Deal benefits as a case study in the ways white southerners strengthened Jim Crow by using federal money and programs to design a future that combined the expansion of white democracy with the exclusion of African Americans. Ole Miss's use of the New Deal is one example of what historian Jason Morgan Ward has called the "long segregationist movement." Ward has argued that the white supremacists who defended "white democracy" against challenges to segregation were doing more than resorting to "knee-jerk insurgency"; instead, they were engaging in a "carefully constructed political project" to protect "a racial worldview and a political order."<sup>7</sup> Though this article responds to Ward's call for a "new periodization that complicates the linear narrative of scholarship that dates organized segregationist opposition from the 1950s," it breaks with two components of Ward's argument.<sup>8</sup> First, in describing the worldview of white supremacists, Ward writes of "longstanding anxieties" and "intertwined fears of social equality and political parity."<sup>9</sup> In other words, his thesis is a narrative of defensive white supremacists imagining the future through their fears, not their aspirations—a story of politicians and policymakers who sought to use the Democratic Party to take "refuge,"

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<sup>6</sup> According to Davis Douglas Buchanan, Jr., federal money used in the construction project alone at the University under the New Deal surpassed \$1,250,000. Buchanan's calculations do not include aid that students at the University received through FERA and NYA programs. Buchanan's study of federal spending at the University under the New Deal based its numbers on a combination of local reports and university records; Davis Douglas Buchanan, Jr., "A Million Dollars in Concrete and Steel: Federal Aid to the University of Mississippi in the New Deal Era," (Master's thesis, University of Mississippi, 1997), 25-75. For the years 1935-1940 alone, David Sansing cites "more than a million dollars" in federal money coming to the university; David G. Sansing, *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 252.

<sup>7</sup> Jason Morgan Ward, *Defending White Democracy: The Making of a Segregationist Movement and the Remaking of Racial Politics, 1936-1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 7.

and to make use of “resistance politics” in their “struggle to defend the color line” and the “segregated status quo.”<sup>10</sup> Second, Ward portrays the New Deal as a period of “racially charged confrontations” between southern and national Democrats that called into question the “mythical permanency” of white supremacy and “fueled southern unease with the changes, rumored and real, taking place around them.”<sup>11</sup> Ward’s analysis of the meaning of the New Deal for white supremacists adheres to ones made in other influential works. Glenda Gilmore, for example, has argued that the New Deal represented a pivot when white supremacists who had attempted to extend and export segregation in the 1910s and 1920s retreated and “circled their wagons to defend Jim Crow.”<sup>12</sup>

This article, however, tells the story of white supremacists’ enthusiastic embrace of the New Deal as a mechanism to build up white democracy; it is not a story about anxiety, defensiveness, or preservation. Instead of trying to shelter or protect segregation against external threats, students and administrators at the University of Mississippi sought to build a greater university that served a broader white community and moved beyond the problems of exclusivity and class tension of the institution’s past. In this vision, white supremacists confidently harnessed the New Deal for what it made possible, as opposed to fearing it for what it threatened to challenge. This article thus follows Ira Katznelson in thinking of the New Deal as an era when southerners “did more than defend the racial status quo” and, indeed, “fortified Jim Crow.”<sup>13</sup> Operating from a position of security and safety, Katznelson argues that southern New Dealers seized “a golden opportunity” and “almost giddily propelled the New Deal’s radical economic policies, a program that offered the South the chance to escape its colonized sta-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 2, 4, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 6. Other key works that have emphasized the extent to which the New Deal represented an early threat to Jim Crow include: Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), chapter 2; Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), chapter 5; John Egerton, *Speak Now against the Day: The Generation before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 104-120; and Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapter 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013), 163.

tus while keeping its racial order safe.”<sup>14</sup> As the position of southerners in Congress became increasingly significant strategically, the region “became the self-conscious arbiter of what could, and what could not, become law.”<sup>15</sup> If, as Ward suggests, some forward-thinking white supremacists looked with concern at the possible racial implications of some New Deal policies, Katznelson’s work demonstrates that the political realities of the era offered countervailing evidence that white southerners were the masters of their own futures when it came to the making of federal policy on race and economics. By enabling southerners to build up opportunities for whites, the New Deal strengthened white democracy and put further socio-economic distance between white and black southerners.

This article uses the interpretive lens developed by Jason Scott Smith to connect the physical development of the university to the emergence of a new set of ideas about funding the institution and to the alteration and expansion of the university’s identity. Smith has argued that the public works programs of the New Deal “revolutionized the priorities of the American state” by “radically transforming the physical landscape, political system, and economy of the United States.” The benefits of the new physical nation that the New Deal built enabled reformers to construct “the intellectual scaffolding to justify the federal government’s investment in public works.” The “far-reaching federal efforts” necessary to fund public works and “the long-term impact of the infrastructure itself” legitimized, both “intellectually and physically,” a new kind of state and a new form of economic development.<sup>16</sup> In the South, a region that lagged behind the rest of the nation in indexes of economic development such as mileage of paved roads, public health, and the availability of electricity, the kind of revolution that Smith describes on a national scale was particularly impactful. As Gavin Wright has noted, New Deal programs that built up the South not only carried “immediate effects,” but they also “set the stage” for the region’s “rapid economic growth during and after World War II.”<sup>17</sup> As much as the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 158.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 192.

<sup>16</sup> Jason Scott Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956*

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), quotations from 1, 136, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Gavin Wright, “The New Deal and the Modernization of the South,” *Federal History*, 2 (January 2010), 72.

public works revolution pointed toward a new future of development and building, New Deal programs adhered to and even strengthened existing “gendered and racial boundaries.” Thus as public works projects built up a new nation physically and the New Deal opened new worlds of possibility for millions of white, male Americans, some traditional hierarchies remained intact or became more firmly established.<sup>18</sup>

On a smaller scale, Ole Miss’s New Deal provides an example of an institution building itself into one that was more modern and more democratic in its appeal and service to a larger percentage of the white population, but also more firmly connected and committed to white supremacy. Nearly twenty years ago, Charles W. Eagles commented on the “asymmetry” and “imbalance” of civil rights scholarship which has “assumed that little remains to be learned about the segregationists or that they are simply too unattractive or unimportant to warrant examination.”<sup>19</sup> This article is an attempt to provide one example of how segregationists built worlds they deemed worth protecting. Only by taking seriously the future that the building of segregationist institutions like the University of Mississippi seemed to make possible can scholars understand the intensity of white opposition to the dismantling of Jim Crow.

In 1928, Governor Theodore G. “The Man” Bilbo announced an ambitious plan to remove the University of Mississippi from its decaying campus in Oxford and to build a

greater institution in Jackson. Bilbo’s plan failed and eventually led to a damaging imbroglio between The Man and the university’s faculty, but the controversy made plain the need for the modernization of the state university.<sup>20</sup> One salutary effect of the affair was a special legislative appropriation of \$1.6 million that the institution received in 1928. Within a year, the university had begun planning and constructing a hospital, a gravel well, a new building for the law school, an enlarged cafeteria, a gymnasium, a dormitory for women, and six dormitories for

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Building New Deal Liberalism*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Eagles, “Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Era,” *Journal of Southern History*, 66 (November 2000), 842.

<sup>20</sup> For the best discussion of Bilbo’s plan and the controversies involved in it, see Hardy Poindexter Graham, “Bilbo and the University of Mississippi, 1928-1932,” (M.A. thesis, University of Mississippi, 1965). Of the voluminous and often sensational commentary that the controversy generated at the time, the best analysis is Clarence E. Cason, “The Mississippi Imbroglio,” *Virginia Quarterly Review*, VII (Spring 1931), 229-240.

male students.<sup>21</sup> While the boom in building that followed the special appropriation allowed for the expansion and improvement of the physical plant at Oxford, the necessity of such projects demonstrated how severely the state had neglected its university over the years. Even after the new construction of 1928 and 1929, the university lacked buildings for the departments of engineering, physics, biology, geology, music, journalism, commerce, pharmacy, and art. The new dormitories still could not accommodate all of the university's students, and faculty requests for housing frequently went unmet.<sup>22</sup> In a 1929 report to the state legislature, Chancellor Alfred Hume wrote that the difficulty of securing reliable funding from the state had created a physical plant that was both practically insufficient and aesthetically unappealing. Decades of meager legislative appropriations had prevented the university from acquiring "the physical equipment commensurate with the growth and development of the institution." Irregular funding led to the planning, suspension, and resumption of construction and landscaping projects over a number of years and under different architects and builders. The result was a campus that Hume gingerly described as "lacking somewhat in complete harmony and a thoroughly orderly and satisfactory arrangement."<sup>23</sup>

The onset of the Great Depression did not threaten to close the University of Mississippi. It ensured there would be no more special appropriations from the state legislature, though, and led to dramatic reductions in annual funding. For the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 1932, for example, legislative appropriations to Mississippi's institutions of higher learning declined by forty-two percent from the previous term. At the university, these cutbacks cost two faculty members their jobs and led to a twenty-five percent decrease in salaries for employees of the institution. Faculty took on heavier teaching loads as unfilled positions stayed vacant, and the university was only able to continue offering certain courses by enlarging their size and by hiring inexperienced and low-paid instructors and graduate students to teach the classes. Some courses and programs did not survive the cuts in funding.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Biennial Report of the University of Mississippi to the Legislature of the State and to the Board of Trustees of the State University and Colleges, July 1, 1927 to July 1, 1929* (July, 1929), 10; hereinafter cited as *Biennial Report*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>24</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1933, pp. 6, 9, 49.



Broad patterns of underfunding and inefficiency in Mississippi's system of higher education added to the negative effects of dramatic reductions in state appropriations. In

1933, the state's Board of Trustees for State Institutions of Higher Learning remarked with alarm that some buildings on Mississippi's public campuses had "stood for twenty years without a coat of outside paint and thousands of dollars will be necessary to restore property that could have been preserved with a few hundred dollars if applied where first needed." Given that earlier deficiencies in funding and maintenance had led to such a situation, the reduced Depression-era appropriations were plainly insufficient "to take care of any appreciable part of badly needed repairs and renovations." The trustees also remarked with regret upon "all the confusion caused by the present method" of allocating funds and noted that inconsistencies in how the state legislature used fiscal and calendar years had created a system by which, technically, all state-supported institutions of learning would either have to close on New Year's Day of each year or "violate the law daily until the Legislature makes the new biennial appropriation."<sup>25</sup>

These patterns in the history and character of state funding for the University of Mississippi provide an essential context for understanding the significance of the New Deal specifically and federal money more generally to the institution. By the onset of the Great Depression, the university was an institution whose campus displayed physical evidence of the negative effects of chronic underfunding and irregular patterns of appropriations. Money from the federal government would mean several important things for the university. First, it provided immediate funding for a university in need of basic maintenance and construction. Second, it brought relief for a population of students whose poverty threatened to suspend their education. Third, because New Deal programs required matching funds, the promise of federal money spurred an often reluctant state legislature to allocate money to an institution it had insufficiently and irregularly funded in the past.

New Deal money first came to the University of Mississippi through the Civil Works Administration (CWA). In November 1933, Chancellor Alfred Hume presented the Board of Trustees with a plan composed by John L. Gainey, the university's business manager, to acquire and use CWA funds on campus. Though Gainey's plan brought a relatively small

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 14.

initial allotment to the university, it established important patterns in how the university sought federal money and primed trustees and the state legislature to allocate more funds to the institution. Hume used Gainey's plan, which included a detailed accounting of how the university would spend the money to make repairs to the physical plant and to beautify the campus, to ensure the institution received its "proper share" of federal money. Importantly, this established a pattern that tied the pursuit of funding to planning for the future of the institution and used the promise of federal money to compel the state to make appropriations. The strategy worked, and the university received \$16,000. Half of that sum came directly from the CWA; half of it came from a matching allocation by the state.

Between December 1933 and February 1934, the CWA employed approximately seventy-five men on the university's grounds. Some \$12,000 of the total \$16,000 went directly to hiring workers.<sup>26</sup> Wages for laborers began at forty cents an hour, and workers could not work more than thirty hours per week.<sup>27</sup> The workers were a mixed group of students from the university, unemployed people from surrounding Lafayette County, and unemployed veterans of the U.S. armed forces.<sup>28</sup>

The crews of unskilled workers accomplished a variety of basic but badly-needed projects. One such task involved the painting of a large number of buildings. From the Lyceum, the university's antebellum administration building, down to its laundry facility, structures across campus received their first coatings of paint in "many years."<sup>29</sup> Workers used thirty-six gallons of paint on the columns of the Lyceum alone.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, December 16, 1933, p. 1.; Buchanan, "A Million Dollars in Concrete and Steel," 27.

<sup>27</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, January 13, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> The precise composition of the laborers is unclear. Various articles in the *Mississippian* identified veterans, students, and the unemployed population of Lafayette County as preferred groups in the hiring of workers. Enough veterans worked on the project that the American Legion post of Lafayette County passed a resolution honoring the local supervisors of the program for giving veterans "first choice" in the hiring process. For that reference to the American Legion resolution, see: "Many Improvements Are Made on Campus by CWA Workmen," University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, January 13, 1934, p. 1. For a reference to the unemployed of Lafayette County as a preferred group in hiring, see: University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, December 9, 1933, p. 1. For a reference to students as a preferred group in hiring, see: University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, December 16, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, December 9, 1933, p. 1.; Quotation from University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, January 13, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, February 3, 1934.

Basic repairs brought a number of neglected buildings into serviceable condition.<sup>31</sup> Work on the laundry included adding floor space that increased the facility's capacity and erecting separate rooms for dry cleaning and pressing. The expansion of this particular facility led the *Mississippian*, the university's student newspaper, to boast that the campus now housed "one of the most modern and best equipped laundries of any school in the South." The removal of two decrepit structures, an abandoned kitchen and pump house, eliminated two unsightly buildings from the campus and opened space for new construction projects.<sup>32</sup>

The most visible effect of CWA work at the university was the beautification of the campus. The planting of 1,800 shrubs fundamentally altered the appearance and atmosphere of the university. Much of this beautification occurred in the areas in front of the hospital, the building for the graduate school, the cafeteria, the gymnasium, and the new dormitories that the university had built with the 1928 special appropriation. Planting this new area of the campus made it more aesthetically pleasing and more effectively integrated it with the older sections around the Lyceum. When CWA projects at the university concluded in February 1934, the *Mississippian* remarked that the workers had produced "a very different and much more scenic campus."<sup>33</sup> This early stage of New Deal activity at the school represented a key phase in the process of transforming the University of Mississippi from a place where even the chancellor worried about the aesthetic qualities of its campus to a place whose scenic landscaping would become a defining feature of its self-image and national reputation.

A parting benefit from the CWA came early in the spring of 1934 when the Mississippi legislature matched \$200,000 in CWA funding in a package to repair public buildings across the state. The State Repair Commission allocated \$100,000 of that money to Mississippi's institutions of higher learning. Later that spring, the legislature matched a Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) grant of \$65,000 for repairs to the buildings of the state's colleges and university. All told, the Board of Trustees for State Institutions of Higher Learning was able to allocate \$230,000 for building repairs at Mississippi's colleges

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<sup>31</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, December 9, 1933, p. 1; University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, February 3, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, January 13, 1934, p. 1; University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 22, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, February 3, 1934.

and university during the spring and summer of 1934 alone.<sup>34</sup> Over the summer of 1934, the University of Mississippi benefited tremendously from its share of this round of funding. Buildings that earlier CWA work had left untouched or only minimally improved now received thorough overhauls. The renovation of Ricks Hall, the women's dormitory, included the painting of floors, the re-plastering of walls, and the addition of closets to individual rooms. The *Mississippian* made particular note of this final component of the renovations; the absence of closets had apparently made life "extremely inconvenient" for its past inhabitants. Workers renovated one male dormitory "from top to bottom." A number of classroom buildings received new floors and fresh coats of paint, and workers converted several structures into living quarters for faculty and staff. By the beginning of classes in the fall of 1934, the *Mississippian* could note that "at the present time every building on the campus is in an excellent state of repairs."<sup>35</sup>

Beyond its role in funding repairs and stimulating spending by the legislature, FERA enabled students in need of financial assistance to remain at the university and helped to build up the institution's workforce. Beginning in February 1934, FERA grants made part-time employment available to students at the university. FERA wages paid thirty cents per hour, and an eligible student could earn up to \$20 in an individual month and up to \$15 on a monthly average.<sup>36</sup> By October 1934, FERA monthly grants of \$1,965 funded the employment of 153 students at the university. The 116 male and 37 female students employed under FERA grants were engaged in a wide range of activities.<sup>37</sup> Under Lee Baggett, the university's supervisor of buildings and grounds, FERA students worked "as carpenters, masons and general handy men." Others performed clerical work in various departments and offices and assisted faculty in grading and research. In the university's dining halls, students served as "cashiers, clerks, and waiters."<sup>38</sup>

Although both the CWA and FERA operated on campus for relatively brief periods, the two programs had significant effects for the University of Mississippi. On one level, CWA and FERA projects began the process of turning a dilapidated campus into a picturesque one. On another

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<sup>34</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1935, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 22, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, February 17, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, October 6, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, September 29, 1934, p. 3.

level, the process through which officials at the university sought and acquired federal money established important patterns that enabled the institution to use the promise of matching funds to prime the state legislature and the board of trustees to allocate higher and more regular levels of support. Perhaps most importantly, by taking advantage of federal programs to put students to work, the university was able both to maintain enrollment numbers and to bind students and the institution together in projects that mutually benefited both the student workers and the university.

Beginning in the fall term of 1935, the university used funding from the National Youth Administration (NYA) to expand its work-study programs. Dr. William Lee Kennon, chairman of the Faculty Committee for Student Employment and the local administrator for the NYA, reported that the university received 1,800 initial applications for 175 positions when the NYA began operations on campus. That applications (1,800) far exceeded the number of students enrolled at the university (roughly 1,300) suggested the dire economic circumstances of the time as well as the strong desire for opportunities in higher education among the communities surrounding the Oxford campus. NYA funding not only presented students with a chance to work their way through college, but it also offered Chancellor Alfred Benjamin Butts (1935-1946) an opportunity to continue to use federal funds, as Chancellor Alfred Hume had, to put students to work "doing things which the University has needed for some time but has been unable to afford."<sup>39</sup> The NYA, which operated continuously at the institution until the program folded in 1943, benefited countless students and every department at the university. In the 1936-1937 school year, for example, 175 undergraduate students and five graduate students held NYA positions. NYA wages were thirty cents an hour; monthly earnings ranged from \$10 to \$20 and had an average of \$12.50. Twenty of the students employed that year worked at the university's YMCA; another fifteen worked at the library. The schools of medicine, law, pharmacy, education, engineering, and music each employed between six and ten students; each department within the college of liberal arts employed between three and six students.<sup>40</sup> For the 1940-1941 school year, over \$20,000 in NYA allocations provided employment for 16 percent of the university's 1,449 students. Those

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, October 5, 1935, p. 1

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, September 19, 1936, p. 12.

238 students came from sixty of Mississippi's counties, nine states, and Puerto Rico. Men and women received NYA employment in equal proportions; 159 of the university's 1,024 male students, or 15.5 percent, and 69 of its 425 female students, or 16.2 percent, worked NYA jobs. In addition to serving in every academic and administrative department at the university, that year's NYA workers assisted the band and the baseball and basketball teams; performed maintenance work on the grounds; prepared and served food in the cafeterias; and helped write and edit the law journal, yearbook, and campus newspaper. All told, NYA funds provided for student workers in fifty divisions and sub-divisions at the university.<sup>41</sup>

NYA funding positively affected every department at the university, and it was essential for the students who received it. In many cases, students employed through the program applied their paychecks directly to tuition and fees.<sup>42</sup> Of the 238 students receiving NYA employment in the 1940-1941 school year, eighty-nine percent came from families with combined annual incomes of less than \$2,000; 131 of those students came from families with annual incomes below \$1,000. Thirteen NYA students, none of whom was over twenty-four-years old, came from families unable to offer any financial support for their educations. Only twenty-five students receiving NYA funding came from households with annual incomes exceeding \$2,500; those students received funding only after securing special approval from an NYA official by satisfactorily demonstrating that they could not remain at the university without federal aid. Several of these cases involved students who came from large families or from households enduring severe economic hardships due to illnesses or unexpected financial reverses. The thirty-nine students from Lafayette County who received NYA funding represented 27 percent of the university's enrollment from its home county.<sup>43</sup> For these students, many of whom came from families who had moved to the county while they put multiple children through college, NYA employment meant a chance to endure through the Depression while securing an education that could provide for a more prosperous future. These statistics suggest that NYA funding kept students at the uni-

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<sup>41</sup> William Lee Kennon, *Preliminary Report on the National Youth Administration in the University of Mississippi for the Session 1940-1941* (University, MS: National Youth Administration, 1941), 3-9.

<sup>42</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, January 9, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Kennon, *Preliminary Report on the National Youth Administration*, 3-5.

versity who otherwise would have faced great difficulties in continuing their educations. What was more, the students who worked NYA jobs for one of the various departments at the university represented a very different socio-economic profile from the one traditionally associated with the University of Mississippi.

The university benefited from NYA students beyond the work they performed for the institution. Students receiving NYA funds consistently outperformed the overall student body academically. In the fall of 1940, for example, the grade-point average for NYA students was a full 40 percent higher than the grade-point average for the university as a whole. Close to 40 percent of NYA students that semester amassed grade-point averages that earned them the status of distinction, honor roll, or special distinction. NYA students accounted for a quarter of the perfect grade-point averages earned at the university that semester. Four of the eight Taylor Medals the university awarded in 1941 for excellence in special fields went to NYA students. The President of the Associated Student Body was an NYA student, and students receiving NYA aid were members of both of the university's literary societies, its band, chorus, glee club, and numerous other campus organizations.<sup>44</sup> NYA workers who organized a tutoring program for struggling freshmen literally kept other students in the university while working their own way through the institution.<sup>45</sup> In short, these programs embodied the promise of the New Deal for students. Through the NYA, the *Mississippian* wrote, "the strong arm of the government has taken a progressive step in its administrative affairs and has thrown the doors of learning open to striving youth."<sup>46</sup>

Plainly, the NYA not only kept students in school who otherwise would have had to suspend their studies; it employed and assisted students who made positive contributions to the institution and earned strong marks academically. This invaluable program was truly an experiment in "cooperative undertaking" that taught quite different lessons about "service" than membership in a Greek-letter society or a course of study designed to cultivate character in the sons of the state's elite.<sup>47</sup> The NYA was a program, then, with key implications regarding whom the university educated and how it served the state. Federal

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 5, 10.

<sup>45</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, November 16, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, November 9, 1935, p. 2

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, October 5, 1935, p. 1.

support for students whose families would have been unable to pay their way through college democratized who could come to and remain at the university, and the work that NYA students did at the university pointed toward new ideas about the meaning of service, leadership, and higher education.

If the NYA student worker seemed to represent a new type at the University of Mississippi, no figure more neatly embodied traditional stereotypes about the institution's student body than the fraternity man. However large a role fraternities may have played in the ways Mississippians imagined the university socially and historically, Greek organizations had a limited physical and spatial presence on its campus until the New Deal. For a period during the antebellum era, the university's administration had banned fraternities, and the societies had existed only as *sub-rosa* organizations with no official houses, lodges, or meeting spaces on campus. Between 1912 and 1926, state anti-fraternity laws again forced the organizations underground. Even before the legislative action of 1912, only the Delta Psi and Sigma Chi fraternities had erected meeting houses on the campus. In 1934, Chancellor Alfred Hume announced a tentative set of regulations that would have permitted the construction of meeting houses under the supervision of the university. Under this plan, houses could serve as the site for meetings, initiations, and social functions, but not as living quarters for fraternity members.<sup>48</sup> As late as September 1935, though, only the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity had built a lodge under this arrangement.<sup>49</sup> While the Sigma Chi fraternity had begun the early phases of planning a house, no plans existed for thirteen other available lots on campus.<sup>50</sup>

The availability of New Deal money made the building of fraternity and sorority houses at the University of Mississippi possible, and the institution's need for housing made such construction a necessity. In March 1936, the university announced that the Public Works Administration (PWA) would build campus houses for eight fraternities and two sororities. Under the arrangement, the houses could not exceed \$5,000

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<sup>48</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 13, 1934, p. 2; That five of the sixteen members of the Interfraternity Council and two of the twenty-one members of the Pan-Hellenic Council for the 1940-1941 school year were NYA students further complicates the neat dichotomy between Greeks and non-Greeks at the university and undermines the idea that Greek organizations, at least by the era of the New Deal, served to reinforce rigid class lines between students and the university. Kennon, *Preliminary Report on the National Youth Administration*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 21, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1935, p. 8.



in cost, and each Greek-letter organization had to provide \$3,000 of its own funding before becoming eligible for PWA aid. Each house came with a twenty-five year lease on its lot. The construction of this initial group of houses, which went to the Chi Omega and Phi Mu sororities and the Sigma Nu, Delta Tau Delta, Kappa Alpha, Sigma Chi, Pi Kappa Alpha, Kappa Sigma, and Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternities, represented the first step in establishing fraternity and sorority “rows” at the university.<sup>51</sup> All of the new houses, the *Mississippian* assured readers, were “either English or colonial” in design, and none showed “modernistic strains.”<sup>52</sup> Befitting the style and arrangement of the homes, the university named its new fraternity row “Lamar Road” in honor of L. Q. C. Lamar, “the greatest of all Mississippians to be identified with the University.”<sup>53</sup> Inside the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house, guests could admire a portrait of Lamar that his daughter-in-law had painted in 1899.<sup>54</sup>

The PWA sorority houses occupied a separate space on campus, but the structures on “Sorority Circle” largely resembled the stately fraternity houses—if in a more feminine form. The Kappa Delta house, colonial in style, featured “slender columns and green shutters.” A red porch ran along the west and north sides of Delta Delta Delta’s white-brick early colonial house. The most notable feature of Phi Mu’s two-story English cottage was a “luxurious sun parlor.” The women of the Chi Omega sorority could enjoy an “exceptionally high-ceilinged living room” in their Middle English house. A white picket fence surrounded the front yard of the Delta Zeta house, and green shutters adorned the white brick of the colonial structure. The women of the Delta Gamma sorority worked with contractors to design a home to “follow antebellum or late colonial lines.”<sup>55</sup>

Greek organizations raised their share of the money through a combination of methods. Some borrowed money from their national organizations, some received donations from alumni, and some borrowed substantial amounts directly from the university.<sup>56</sup> The combination of PWA grants and various forms of Greek funding allowed the university

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, March 14, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, September 19, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, October 17, 1936, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Lamar had been a charter member of the university’s SAE chapter. University (Miss.)

*Mississippian*, September 21, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, May 1, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, April 18, 1936, p. 1.

to add \$100,000 worth of housing in 1936 and 1937 alone.<sup>57</sup> By 1938, fourteen fraternity houses and six sorority houses stood on the university's campus.<sup>58</sup> "Greeks, Greeks, Greeks," the *Mississippian* marveled, "from every quarter they come, fraternity 'eds and co-eds.'" Taken together, the newspaper concluded with approval that "the entire unit on 'Fraternity Row' . . . and 'Sorority Circle' is a thing of beauty."<sup>59</sup> As early as the first semester of the existence of the Greek houses, campus organizations announced plans for a decoration contest among the fraternities and sororities in advance of the football game against Mississippi State. Almost before the paint was dry on the houses, students at the University of Mississippi were celebrating the institution's "unique setting of fraternity and sorority houses."<sup>60</sup> Tri Delta's display, which won the sorority category, included a cow with the name "State" signed on it.<sup>61</sup> Old jokes, apparently, accelerated the invention of new traditions.

The construction of fraternity and sorority rows at a university that had seen intense anti-Greek activity and even banned the organizations from campus in two separate eras may have seemed an odd use of PWA funding, but insufficient housing was a problem so longstanding at the university that it necessitated and justified any number of measures. The housing shortage had reached a point of crisis in late August 1934 when a fire destroyed Gordon Hall, a three-story, one-hundred-room building that was the university's largest dormitory.<sup>62</sup> For the 1934 fall term, the university filled "every available" room on campus and converted unused portions of several buildings into living quarters. Forty-four students in the school of medicine took rooms in the new hospital on campus. Sixty-two athletes lived in sections of the gymnasium; eight members of the football team bunked in the field house next to the playing field. Twenty-six undergraduates lived in converted lecture halls and laboratories in the old biology building.<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the last year of Chancellor Alfred Hume's tenure (the 1934-1935 school year) and Chancellor Alfred Butts's first year in office (the 1935-1936 school year), the university attempted unsuccessfully to

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<sup>57</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1937, p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*, July 21, 1938.

<sup>59</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 18, 1937, p. 9

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, November 12, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, December 4, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1935, p. 46.

<sup>63</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 29, 1934, p. 4.

convince the state legislature to replace Gordon Hall and the bed-space that had burned with it.<sup>64</sup> From the time of his appointment, Butts repeatedly identified the lack of housing at the university as the primary impediment to increasing enrollment at the institution.<sup>65</sup> Relief for the university's housing shortage ultimately came through a series of PWA projects. In addition to the Greek houses constructed between 1936 and 1938, the PWA built six new dormitories at the university in the spring and summer of 1938.<sup>66</sup> Funding for the dorms came in a PWA package of \$438,181. Of the PWA money, \$197,181 was an outright grant, and \$241,000 was a low-interest loan that the university could repay with housing fees it charged students to occupy the new rooms.<sup>67</sup> Plans called for the construction of four dormitories for male students with the capacity to house 288 students and two dormitories for females with space for 158 students.<sup>68</sup> In September 1938, students moved into the new dorms, which the *Oxford Eagle* described as "ultra modern."<sup>69</sup> The *Mississippian* gushed that the living quarters featured "the latest and most modern in campus room equipment" and made special note of the maple furniture that adorned the individual rooms and the hardwood and tile that lined the floors, baths, and showers of the halls.<sup>70</sup>

The modern dormitories that the PWA built were part of a larger project to "add impressiveness" to the university's campus.<sup>71</sup> In addition to the new dormitories, PWA money built a student union building that housed eleven offices, four guest bedrooms, three auditoriums, a post office, a grill, a dancehall, a game room, a beauty parlor, and a barber shop. The union's main lobby and several other rooms contained stone and marble fireplaces. The building's south end opened to a terrace furnished with umbrellas and porch furniture.<sup>72</sup> When the union opened in the spring of 1939, its total cost exceeded \$100,000. A direct PWA grant provided for at least thirty-five percent of the funding. The university

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<sup>64</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1935, p. 46; *Biennial Report*, 1937, p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> *Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*, June 24, 1937.

<sup>66</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 17, 1936, p. 1; *Ibid*, October 24, 1936, p. 12. The headline in the *Mississippian* incorrectly identified the PWA as the WPA, but the text of the article referred to the correct organization.

<sup>67</sup> *Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*, September 2, 1937; *Biennial Report*, 1939, p. 21.

<sup>68</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 18, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> *Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*, September 22, 1938.

<sup>70</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, July 8, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, October 14, 1939, p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, May 13, 1939, p. 5.

also paid some of the costs through the sale of timber from its holdings in South Mississippi. Some \$35,000 in funding came from the estate of Rush C. Weir, a businessman from Vaiden, Mississippi, who bequeathed over \$100,000 to the university and for whom the trustees named the union building.<sup>73</sup>

Another result of the university's courting of federal money was an outdoor swimming pool. Nearly \$15,000 from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) went to the construction of the \$23,000 pool, which reached depths ranging from three to ten feet and was capable of accommodating 750 swimmers at a time. A boardwalk surrounded the pool, and construction included a refreshment stand and extensive landscaping of the area between the gymnasium and the pool. The WPA initially put up \$13,000 for the project, with the university contributing \$7,000 of its own money. The pool was open to students, faculty, and staff at the university, as well as white members of the public who paid a small fee. Supervision and maintenance of the facility fell to the university's athletic department.<sup>74</sup> Poor weather conditions delayed construction of the pool through March and April of 1936.<sup>75</sup> When the pool finally opened in the summer of 1936, its total cost had risen to \$23,296.40, with the university paying \$8,442.01 for the project and the WPA's portion coming to 14,854.39.<sup>76</sup> Two hundred sixteen feet long and ninety feet wide, equipped with steel diving boards and a chlorination and filtration system, the pool was "one of the most modern in the state."<sup>77</sup>

At first glance, clear differences separated the erection of badly-needed campus housing from the construction of expensive luxuries like a modern swimming pool and an ample student union building. All of these projects, though, were part of a larger plan to boost enrollment at the University of Mississippi through the promotion of the institution. Enrollment at the university declined, improved, and then plateaued in the era of the Depression and the New Deal. During the 1928-1929 school year, 1,162 students attended the university's regular sessions.<sup>78</sup> Between 1929 and 1933, the combined effects of the Depression and an accreditation crisis that followed the Bilbo imbroglio caused enrollment

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, October 14, 1939, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, January 11, 1936, p. 1; *Biennial Report*, 1937, p. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, April 18, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1937, p. 27.

<sup>77</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 19, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1929, p. 9.

to plummet below 800 students. Beginning with the 1933-1934 session, which coincided with the increased availability of federal money to assist students whose families could not afford their tuition and the early stages of the restoration of the university's reputation, enrollment began to climb until it settled around 1,400 for the duration of the 1930s.<sup>79</sup>

From the time he became chancellor on July 1, 1935, Alfred Butts identified increased enrollment as the key index of the health of the institution and the best way to guarantee that the university served the people of Mississippi. Butts repeatedly pleaded with trustees to pressure the state legislature to allocate more money for campus housing. In 1937, he urged the state to give "earnest attention" to the inadequate housing at the university and called the lack of dormitories "one of the outstanding needs" of the institution.<sup>80</sup> Once the PWA dormitories enabled the university to house its existing students, Butts warned the trustees that annual allocations from the State Building Commission were "far from adequate" and that the university was having difficulty keeping older dormitories "in a state of preservation and in a livable condition."<sup>81</sup> Even when arrangements with the PWA permitted the building of enough dormitories to solve the immediate housing shortage, Butts expressed frustration that the state would not fund building projects capable of increasing the university's enrollment capacity. Before a meeting of the Oxford Junior Chamber of Commerce in June 1937, Butts encouraged attendees to prod the state to make allocations during the 1938 legislative session that would allow the university to build for a greater future. "Give us the facilities," the chancellor urged, "and we'll have 1700 students at the University within a year; 2000 students within five years."<sup>82</sup>

Butts's frustration with the refusal of the state legislature to replace Gordon Hall or to make allocations that went beyond the matching funds required by PWA grants was a product of a basic reality: the university could not enroll more students if it could not physically house them. In this way, constructing housing was about building up the university's future, not merely ensuring it could function in the present. Projects

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<sup>79</sup> For annual enrollment figures and general trends in these years, see the annual University of Mississippi, *Bulletin of the University of Mississippi*, for 1928-1941, Special Collections, J. D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.

<sup>80</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1937, p. 25.

<sup>81</sup> *Biennial Report*, 1941, p. 30.

<sup>82</sup> *Oxford (Miss.) Eagle*, June 24, 1937.

like the student union and the swimming pool did not literally produce spaces to house students, but their construction was part of an active campaign to “sell” the university and to make it more appealing to prospective students.<sup>83</sup> In the spring of 1938, the university formed a faculty committee on high school publicity and launched an aggressive plan to increase enrollment by reaching out to towns and schools throughout Mississippi. More than 7,000 white graduating high school seniors received bulletins outlining the advantages of the university and highlighting its recent expansion and upgrades. Campus organizations sent speakers to schools throughout the state, and the Omicron Delta Kappa society produced a short publicity film, “Ole Miss,” to be shown in every town throughout the state. Fifty newspapers in the state received weekly copies of a bulletin titled, “Your University,” which provided updates on various developments on campus. The *Mississippian* challenged every student at the university to “boost the school to your neighbors and friends at home” and to encourage five graduating high school seniors in their hometown to come to Ole Miss.<sup>84</sup>

On November 12, 1938, the university held its first “high school day.” The event brought 2,500 high school students from across Mississippi and from several counties in Tennessee and Arkansas to the Oxford campus on the day of the football game between Ole Miss and Sewanee. The day began with an assembly that featured addresses from Chancellor Butts, the head coach of the football team, the captain of the football team, and the president of the Associated Student Body. Following the football game, interested students could attend open houses on Fraternity Row or a tea hosted by the Pan-Hellenic society. A theatrical performance and a dance provided evening entertainment.<sup>85</sup> The *Mississippian* pronounced the event a “big success” and reported that all attendees “went away with a smile and a good word for the University of Mississippi.”<sup>86</sup> It was, after all, an opportunity to show that Ole Miss was “the friendliest school in the country.”<sup>87</sup>

High school day and the campaign that led up to it were the creations of an institution in the process of developing modern techniques for marketing and publicity. The selling of the University of Mississippi

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<sup>83</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 8, 1938, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, March 5, 1938, p. 1; *Ibid.*, April 9, 1938, p. 3; *Ibid.*, May 21, 1938, p. 1

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1938, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, November 19, 1938, p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1938, p. 3.

to prospective students marked an important shift in the history of the institution. Reaching out directly to towns and schools throughout the state inverted the old process whereby local communities sent off their young people to an unfamiliar and remote campus with which they had limited direct contact and about which they had only vague ideas. Now the university, in the form of touring speakers or various forms of media, brought itself to the people of the state, or invited students to make themselves at home on the Oxford campus. This program enabled the university to promote itself by pointing—literally—to the concrete buildings and material benefits it could offer to prospective students, not the spiritual or abstract atmosphere of an exclusive and mysterious campus. Increasingly, Ole Miss was opening its doors to a larger number of white Mississippians.

While recruitment programs brought larger numbers of high school students to campus each year, and publicity campaigns kept interested citizens all over the state informed about developments in Oxford, the Ole Miss Rebels were becoming the embodiment of the institution for many Mississippians—and for a growing number of people outside the state. The name “Rebels” had emerged from a process with the explicit purpose of increasing publicity for the university’s football team. During the spring of 1936, the *Mississippian* acknowledged that “the Flood” and “the Red and Blue” had failed to gain wide usage among journalists, lamented that the university’s football team “has no real nickname with which to be properly identified,” and announced a contest for a new nickname. In remarking upon the high expectations for the university’s football squad in the fall of 1936, the paper emphasized the urgency of efforts to “publicize the team” and noted that the selection of a “name to catch the public eye and fancy” had become “essential.”<sup>88</sup> After two weeks of “insufficient interest” in the contest, the *Mississippian* issued a second call for submissions. In addition to re-issuing its call for nicknames, the paper announced the formation of a “South-wide” selection committee. The committee included three members of the university’s alumni association; the outgoing and incoming presidents of the student government; Ed Walker, the head coach of the football team; C. R. “Tex” Nelson, the captain of 1935 football team; William Hemingway, the chairman of the university’s athletic committee; and sportswriters from newspapers in Jackson, Meridian, Memphis, New Orleans, Nashville,

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, May 2, 1936, p. 5.

and Atlanta.<sup>89</sup>

In this second round of solicitation, Ben Guider, an alumnus of the university from Vicksburg, suggested “Rebels” as the nickname for the school’s football team. In addition to its “short, musical, inspiring, [and] simple” style, Guider wrote, the name carried the effect of calling “to mind the glories of the Old South and that historic struggle of the Civil War in which the State of Mississippi took so noble and outstanding part, and for which every Mississippian should feel proud.” Sportswriters from across the South apparently shared Guider’s logic; an overwhelming majority of those who responded to a questionnaire from the university chose the name from a list of possibilities that included “Raiders,” “Stonewalls,” and “Confederates.” After approval by the university’s athletic committee and its chancellor, “Rebels” became the official nickname for the school’s athletic teams in July 1936.<sup>90</sup> In announcing the new nickname, the *Mississippian* pointed to its “news value” and predicted that Rebels would “prove a valuable whip” in attracting attention to the university’s football team. It was a name “suggestive of a spirit native to the old south and particularly to Mississippi,” one which “not only catches the sportswriters’ [sic] eye but also the eye of every sport fan.” Because Rebels possessed “local color,” it would “enhance national interest” in the institution.<sup>91</sup> Just as the Congressional realities of the era made southern Democrats a much-watched group within the Democratic Party and the New Deal coalition, an athletic team from the Deep South held special appeal to sports fans across the nation. The following spring, a goateed cartoon of an antebellum gentleman called “Colonel Rebel” made his debut on the cover of the university’s yearbook.<sup>92</sup>

Selecting a catchier nickname was one way to use athletics to boost the university’s profile, but an ambitious national schedule represented a more aggressive attempt at attracting publicity through the football squad. Between 1933 and 1938, the university’s football team played three times in Washington, DC, three times in Milwaukee, three times in New Orleans, twice in Philadelphia, twice in St. Louis, and twice in Miami. The 1936 season alone took the Rebels to six states and the District of Columbia. Nine off-campus engagements, including road games

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, May 19, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, September 19, 1936, p. 7; Ibid, October 24, 1936, p. 1; Sorrels and Cavagnaro, *Ole Miss Rebels*, 107-109.

<sup>91</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 26, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Ole Miss*, Volume XLI, 1937.



at Tulane, Temple, George Washington, Marquette, and the University of Miami, contributed heavily to the 11,000 miles of train travel the team logged that season.<sup>93</sup> On September 30, 1937, two planes carried thirty-three players, coaches, and trainers from Memphis to Philadelphia for a game with Temple, making the Ole Miss Rebels among the first college football teams to travel by air to a contest.<sup>94</sup> George Boehler, the assistant coach and trainer who arranged the flights, calculated that flying the squad out on a Thursday and back on a Sunday was more efficient than traveling by train and paying for meals and lodging over the course of a week. "Travel by air," Boehler commented, "is definitely a thing of the future for football teams."<sup>95</sup> In a playful blend of new ideas and old animosities, the *Mississippian* praised its Rebels and called air travel a "fitting entrance for a progressive team, returning to seek victory and prestige among the doubtful Yankees."<sup>96</sup> There were several reasons that the University of Mississippi arranged for 11,000-mile seasons on the road, week-long train trips, and airline flights for its football teams. The most basic was that the schedules made the school money. Billy Gates, the sports editor for the *Mississippian*, explained the team's heavy road schedule for 1936 by noting that the share of gate receipts from games played as the visitor in front of crowds numbering in the tens of thousands would bring in more money than hosting games in front of small groups in Oxford. Ole Miss, Gates wrote, needed "all the money a terrific alien card can bring."<sup>97</sup> In response to comments from students at Mississippi State that officials at the University of Mississippi were "losing the real point of the game in an effort to fill their athletic coffer," the *Mississippian* wrote, "[c]ollege football is a business proposition as well as an entertaining feature of university life." The university, the paper concluded, would "profit in more ways than one" from such an ambitious schedule.<sup>98</sup> A national schedule also allowed alumni who had moved out of Mississippi or surrounding sections of the Deep South to reconnect with their university and former classmates. During the football team's trip to play Marquette during the 1935 season, for example, alumni living in Chicago; Iowa City; Evanston, Illinois; and Madison,

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<sup>93</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 19, 1936, p. 7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, September 18, 1937, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, October 2, 1937, p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, October 2, 1937, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, September 26, 1936, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, October 3, 1936, p. 3.

Wisconsin met in Milwaukee, gathered behind the Ole Miss bench, and shouted for the alma mater to "Give 'em Hell."<sup>99</sup>

Beyond the direct monetary benefits of gate receipts or the connections with far-flung alumni that a national schedule offered, sending the football team on the road to play established powers brought publicity and name recognition to the university. When the athletic committee secured an invitation for the 1935 squad to play Catholic University in the Orange Bowl on New Year's Day of 1936, the *Mississippian* wrote with pride that the team had assumed a position as the "cynosure of the football eyes of America."<sup>100</sup> An appearance on such a prominent stage promised to "mean more to the school than any appropriation ever could" by providing "favorable advertisement" for the university.<sup>101</sup> Even when Ole Miss lost games, as it did in that Orange Bowl and in many of its intersectional contests between 1933 and 1938, it won when it traveled by moving the university "into the national spotlight of sport fans."<sup>102</sup> By squaring off the Rebels with national opponents, in other words, the University of Mississippi was affirming its ties to the rest of the nation, not engaging in another act of civil war with feared or hated outsiders.

To play more favorable schedules and to host more games in Oxford, the university had to expand and upgrade its athletic facilities. Beginning in the fall of 1934, New Deal money played a direct role in the promotion and building up of Ole Miss's football team. That October, William Hemingway, chairman of the university's athletics committee, secured funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) to begin the process of converting a dusty campus football field into a modern stadium. First, the construction of "a heavy wire fence . . . of the most modern type" made it "impossible for one to enter the field other than through the gates." Second, FERA workers built walkways to and from the football field and the bleachers that alleviated the problems of "dust or mud" making playing conditions difficult and negatively affecting the experience of fans. FERA workers also erected a press box made of pine, tin, and brick above the bleachers that surrounded the field. This was a "most needed addition," as visiting reporters had found it "especially distasteful . . . to write up games without shelter or necessary materials." What was more, a modern press box, equipped with

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, November 2, 1935, p. 4.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, December 14, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, December 4, 1935, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, October 2, 1937, p. 3.

“wires direct to Western Union,” ensured “that no time will be lost in dispatching details of games.”<sup>103</sup> Fred Glass, the editor of the *Mississippian*, called the construction of the press box “one of the wisest moves that could be made in the interest of the University.” According to Glass, Ole Miss received “less publicity than perhaps any university in the South.” The student editor attributed the “near hostility on the part of various newspapermen” to the lack of appropriate facilities at the institution. A press box that would make covering games at the university more convenient for regional dailies, Glass assured the administration, “will more than repay the cost of its construction in additional publicity for the University.”<sup>104</sup>

The early allotment of FERA funds for upgrades to the football field was only an opening sequence in a larger series of federal aid to the Rebel athletic program. In November 1936, Congressman Wall Doxey assisted Chancellor Butts in securing funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to build a planned \$54,000 concrete football stadium at the university.<sup>105</sup> Delays in approval at the state level meant that construction on Hemingway Stadium did not begin until the following summer. Work continued throughout the 1937 football season.<sup>106</sup> The WPA provided \$37,500 for the stadium, and the university’s athletic committee contributed an additional \$12,500 to the project. The initial phase of construction involved the clearing of ground, the removal of 2,400 existing bleachers, and building concrete grandstands capable of seating 9,500 spectators.<sup>107</sup> By Thanksgiving of 1937, workers had completed two concrete sections with a seating capacity of 2,400 and erected wooden bleachers capable of holding an additional 19,600 spectators.<sup>108</sup> On May 11, 1938, the university received an additional grant of \$28,348 from the WPA.<sup>109</sup> Before workers had completed the new concrete stands on the stadium’s west side, a third grant in January of 1939 provided funds necessary to build identical stands on the stadium’s east side. This grant brought the total sum of WPA aid for the stadium to \$72,908. WPA

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, October 27, 1934, p. 1; Ibid, November 3, 1934, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, October 6, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, November 21, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, October 23, 1937, p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> *Oxford Eagle*, July 22, 1937; Chancellor Butts and the university’s athletic committee began working in October 1936 to secure WPA funding for the stadium project. University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 24, 1936, p. 12.

<sup>108</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 30, 1937, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, May 21, 1938, p. 1.

aid also provided for the construction of a sprinkler system underneath the football field, a new practice field for the football team, a baseball diamond, and several tennis courts. When workers completed the east side stands in 1941, Hemingway Stadium had a permanent seating capacity of over 19,000 and temporary room for several thousand more spectators.<sup>110</sup> Thus when 28,000 spectators overflowed Hemingway Stadium a week before the attack on Pearl Harbor to watch Ole Miss and Mississippi State square off for the Southeastern Conference championship, they were occupying a monument to the benefits derived from the federal government.

No person who walked the University of Mississippi's campus during the era of the New Deal could have ignored the material benefits and physical changes that federal programs brought to the institution. But the university underwent a transformation of expectations and ideas during this era that extended beyond the overhaul and expansion of its physical plant. As early as September 1933, leading students at the university spoke of "our 'New Deal' here on the campus" and called for the "undivided support and enthusiastic cooperation of the student body" in the pursuit of a "University of Mississippi like we have dreamed of and desired—a competent and sympathetic administration, the official respect of the state and South, a beautiful and well-equipped institution, a growing student body, and above all a cheerful spirit of optimism and determination that will overcome any obstacles."<sup>111</sup> A year later, Fred Glass of the *Mississippian* described the campus as "imbued with a new spirit of optimism and self-confidence unequal in the history of the institution."<sup>112</sup> Throughout the era, students watched their campus transform so rapidly as to make it possible "to look ahead and see a real change."<sup>113</sup> The continuous development of campus and the stacking of projects had the effect of producing tangible evidence that the university had "reached a new era of progress" and entered the "topmost point in its existence." More importantly, the New Deal created an expectation that more programs and more building were coming—that the university, in other words, was "still marching forward to even higher standards."<sup>114</sup> New Deal projects made the development of the University of Missis-

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, February 11, 1939, p. 1; Ibid, May 9, 1941.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, September 23, 1933, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, October 27, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, May 18, 1935, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, July 8, 1938, p. 1.

sippi material and tangible; the future of the institution was becoming something to see, touch, and experience.

Students at the University of Mississippi were loyal Democrats and enthusiastic New Dealers. Beyond championing funding that directly benefited their institution, several editors of the *Mississippian* promoted New Deal programs “foreign to [the university’s] local interests.”<sup>115</sup> Following the 1934 midterm elections, the *Mississippian* cheered the Democratic landslide as “the most convincing display of confidence that has as yet been evidenced by the American people in Roosevelt and the New Deal.” The paper attributed the poor performance of the Republicans “to the fact that they have not issued a constructive idea or plan during the past two years.” In contrast, the Democrats had “gone forward” and responded to the nation’s desire for “aggressive, inspired leadership.”<sup>116</sup> In advance of the 1936 presidential election, a poll found that 82 percent of students at the university favored President Franklin D. Roosevelt over his challengers.<sup>117</sup> The *Mississippian* explained the wide support that Roosevelt enjoyed at the university and among college students nationally by stating that “the youth of today is liberal in its thinking.” The experience of living through the Depression and observing the benefits of aggressive public assistance and development, the paper concluded, had convinced young white Americans of the necessity of “a government that will be able to take care of the needs of its people.”<sup>118</sup>

The embrace of the New Deal and the championing of ambitious and innovative expansions of government programs kept students at the University of Mississippi in step with the political leaders of their state. In 1934, Theodore G. Bilbo won election to the U.S. Senate by pledging to support Roosevelt and the New Deal. Once in Washington, Bilbo, in the words of Chester M. Morgan, “backed the president faithfully” and “marched on with enthusiasm” “as a loyal soldier in the New Deal army.” Bilbo’s voting record on relief spending, labor legislation, public housing, and additional programs of social and economic welfare made him one of the strongest and most reliable supporters of the New Deal.<sup>119</sup> His support for the New Deal may have been notable for its

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, October 20, 1934, p. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, November 10, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, October 24, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, November 7, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>119</sup> Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1985), 57-77; 161-185; quotations from 161 and 185.

tenacity and endurance, but Mississippi's congressional delegation as a whole offered reliable and prominent support for Roosevelt's programs. A 1937 biographical sketch described Pat Harrison, the state's senior U.S. Senator, as the "right hand man of President Franklin D. Roosevelt" and boasted of Harrison's role in the creation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the passage of the Social Security Act, and the winning of appropriations for secondary education and a number of public works programs.<sup>120</sup> Congressman John Elliot Rankin of Tupelo and the state's first district was likewise "a firm administration man."<sup>121</sup> In 1936, a staggering 97 percent of voters in Mississippi voiced their support for the New Deal by backing Roosevelt.<sup>122</sup>

At the state level, politicians experimented with New Deal-style programs. Under the first administration of Governor Hugh L. White (1936-1940), Mississippi enacted an aggressive plan of economic development known as Balance Agriculture With Industry (BAWI). Under BAWI, a state industrial commission oversaw the public financing of manufacturing plants throughout Mississippi with the intent of developing the state's local communities through outside investment. Twelve firms ultimately came to Mississippi under BAWI. Though only two of the new plants—the Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula and the Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company in Natchez—brought high-wage, heavy-industry jobs to the state, BAWI improved the economic prospects for depressed local communities and enhanced rates of consumption and tax revenues throughout the state. Connie L. Lester has referred to BAWI as a "home-grown New Deal" and notes that the program "mimicked New Deal initiatives" by creating a two-tiered system of state sponsorship and local operation. More broadly, the ambitious plan adhered to the spirit of the New Deal by moving Mississippi towards state-sponsored development and central planning. BAWI reflected a "breathtaking change in attitude," as "[f]or the first time in the state's history, Mississippi actively sought and accepted responsibility for economic growth and the general welfare of its citizens."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> W. H. Grayson, "Pat Harrison," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 16.

<sup>121</sup> "John Elliot Rankin," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 81.

<sup>122</sup> Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 165.

<sup>123</sup> Connie L. Lester, "Balancing Agriculture with Industry: Capital, Labor, and the Public Good in Mississippi's Home-Grown New Deal," *Journal of Mississippi History*, LVII, no. 3 (Fall 2008), 235-263; quotations from 235, 237, 247, and 262.

During White's administration, communities across Mississippi attempted to sell and market themselves in ways that resembled the publicity project at the state university in Oxford. The unifying theme of municipal promotion was the modernity of the state's local places and their potential for future development. The city of Gulfport pointed to its brand new \$1.5 million pier, forty-mile seawall, \$350,000 recreation center, and \$885,000 yarn mill in explaining why its citizens were "highly optimistic over the future development" of the city.<sup>124</sup> Boosters for Laurel advertised their community as one that had made the "transition from a primitive wilderness into a thriving city of 25,000 people in a comparatively few short years" and assured potential investors that "Laurel is looking just as far down the future's path as possible."<sup>125</sup> In Brookhaven, "a thriving and wide-awake industrial center," citizens believed in "doing things now, instead of trying to live up to their past reputation."<sup>126</sup> Meridian, which advertised itself as "the commercial hub of eastern Mississippi and western Alabama," boasted that it had "made more industrial, agricultural and commercial growth in the years of 1934, 1935, and 1936 than during the entire preceding quarter of a century!"<sup>127</sup> The expansion of natural gas and electric services and the recent construction of "schools, academies, churches, paved thoroughfares, new sand beaches, and seawalls" ensured that Biloxi, "a city of progress," was "truly up-to-date in every respect."<sup>128</sup> In Hattiesburg, where the population had increased from 8,000 to 21,000 between 1900 and 1937, the chamber of commerce conceded that "[t]here may be somewhere in these United States a more desirable place to live," but concluded, "if that be true, then a beneficent providence has thoughtfully hidden such a place from the ken of man!"<sup>129</sup>

As Mississippi's congressional delegation enthusiastically supported

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<sup>124</sup> M. P. Smith, "Port of Gulfport: Mississippi's 'Gateway to the Seven Seas,'" *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 48.

<sup>125</sup> "Laurel and Jones County," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 58-59.

<sup>126</sup> "Brookhaven," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 61.

<sup>127</sup> "City of Meridian, An Aibly Managed Municipality," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 66.

<sup>128</sup> "Biloxi—City of Paradise and Progress," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 73-74.

<sup>129</sup> "Hattiesburg and Progress Are Synonymous," *The New Mississippi: A Magazine Dedicated to the Achievements of the New Administration* (Jackson, MS: Bedford F. Pace, 1937), 77.



an expansive federal program with dramatic implications for the nation's physical landscape, political system, and economy; its state government embraced a new role in the planning of the economy and the promotion of public welfare; and its local communities imagined unlimited economic development and growth, one old idea remained safely protected from challenge or alteration: that Mississippi was and would remain a white man's country.<sup>130</sup> At the state level, BAWI officials blocked black Mississippians from the overwhelming majority of new industrial jobs. Advertisements from local communities and promotional materials from chambers of commerce did not count African Americans when they compiled statistics of available laborers. When Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company hired a small number of black workers at its Natchez plant, the industrial commission sought assurances from the firm that it would set wages for African Americans well below the wages for white workers. As Connie Lester has noted, BAWI regulations "intended to sustain . . . Mississippi's finely crafted racial" arrangements. Even in communities where BAWI plants modernized the local economy, black Mississippians "would continue to provide cheap agricultural labor in a sharecropping system built on white supremacy."<sup>131</sup> Experiments in economic development were safe—desirable, in fact—so long as they elevated white Mississippians while keeping African Americans in their special place in the state.

On the national level, the support that Bilbo and other Democrats from the South offered to the New Deal granted tremendous leverage to proponents of white supremacy. As Ira Katznelson has demonstrated, southern Democrats held votes that Roosevelt (and later Harry Truman) simply could not lose if they wanted to pass domestic or international legislation. "The Jim Crow South," in Katznelson's words, "was the one collaborator America's democracy could not do without."<sup>132</sup> The Democratic South used this position to great effect—not merely in protecting white supremacy, but in strengthening its structural basis. For Roosevelt's first term and into the early years of his second, southern

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<sup>130</sup> This phrase, of course, borrows from Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Oct. 1928), 31. As Katznelson notes, it is not insignificant that Phillips wrote his famous essay late in the 1920s and that his thesis "expressed the era's common sense across the ideological and racial spectrum." Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 136-138.

<sup>131</sup> Lester, "Balancing Agriculture with Industry," 238, 258.

<sup>132</sup> Katznelson, *Fear Itself*, 95.



Democrats felt confident that “economic policies crafted in Washington might transform [the South]’s desperate plight without endangering Jim Crow.” In other words, for a time it was possible to support the New Deal fully, bring home federal money to states and congressional districts, and not worry that federal policies would alter the region’s racial arrangements. Even after the second half of the 1930s, when anxieties increased regarding the potential effects of labor legislation and other programs on racial hierarchies, southern Democrats used “strategic voting behavior” and temporary “coalitions” to block or alter laws that might have undermined white supremacy.<sup>133</sup> Whether supporting or blocking federal legislation, segregationists took an active and commanding role in securing the rigidity of the color line.

Because state policies barred African Americans from holding BAWI positions and congressional voting behavior blocked federal legislation from undermining Jim Crow, it became possible for Mississippians to imagine that economic development and aggressively forward-thinking planning could proceed without altering existing racial arrangements. On a smaller scale, a similar pattern emerged at the University of Mississippi. During the course of Ole Miss’s New Deal, administrators worked with federal and state officials to find innovative means of funding and building up the university, and students at the institution heralded the coming of a new era and celebrated all forms of material progress on campus. In various ways, the university community embraced new ideas for the future during this era. Ideas about white supremacy, however, underwent no such alteration.

A telling example of the strengthening of the old racial ways came in September 1936, when the university responded to a crisis involving a cherished figure named James E. Ivy. Known on the campus as “Blind Jim,” Ivy was a black man who had been born in Alabama in 1872 and had come to north Mississippi in the 1890s. He lost his sight permanently after an accident while painting a bridge over the Tallahatchie River in 1894. Beginning in 1896, Ivy made a living by selling candy and peanuts to students on the university’s campus. His booming voice made him famous for his cheers and yells at sporting events, and Ivy became a

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 156-194; quotations on 161 and 194.

beloved figure at the university.<sup>134</sup> On September 26, 1936, the *Mississippian* announced that the “loveable old Negro,” a “vital part of this institution for many years,” was in danger of losing his home through foreclosure and called on students and alumni to raise money to assist Ivy.<sup>135</sup> Subsequent notes in the paper explained that “the old ‘darkey’” was \$450 behind on a two-year-old loan that he had used to build “a one-room shanty” on the outskirts of Oxford. The *Mississippian* reminded students and alumni that “Jim is an integral part of the university.”<sup>136</sup>

Aid to Ivy came from a variety of sources. Fifty-five black cafeteria workers, the employees with whom Ivy ate lunch each day, pooled money from their paychecks for him.<sup>137</sup> Students contributed a small sum as well. The overwhelming majority of the money came from alumni of the university. In announcing that the university community had paid off Ivy’s debt, the *Mississippian* described Ivy as a “faithful negro,” free of “troubles,” and now holding “in his trembling hands for the first in over three years” the “deed of trust on his humble dwelling.”<sup>138</sup> The *Jackson Daily News* described Ivy as a “harmless, inoffensive, lovable old darkey, loyal unto death to the team, and always the most enthusiastic rooter for any form of sport, whether the home boys were winning or losing.” The paper explained that, while Ivy had “borrowed beyond his ability” and possessed “no way to pay” his mortgage, he “didn’t worry much,” as he “felt sure white folks would come to his rescue.” For the *Jackson Daily News*, the saving of Ivy’s home was evidence of a basic truth that “while folks who dwell above the Mason and Dixon line” would never understand: “Down here we love our Negroes and our Negroes love us. We are willing and ready to go to the limit for them and they are ready and willing to do the same thing for us.”<sup>139</sup>

On one level, the language and images in the coverage of the Ivy affair were notable for the cartoonish and paternalistic tropes that newspapers used to discuss Ivy and his white saviors. More significantly,

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<sup>134</sup> For discussions of Ivy, his background, and his significance at the university, see: Anthony James, “Paternalism’s Demise: Blind Jim Ivy and Ole Miss, 1896-1955,” *Mississippi Folklife*, Volume 28, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1995), 17-24; Charles W. Eagles, *The Price of Defiance: James Meredith and the Integration of Ole Miss* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 43-48; Sansing, *The University of Mississippi*, 275-276.

<sup>135</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, September 26, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 17, 1936, p. 6; *Ibid*, October 24, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, October 24, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, November 21, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> *Jackson Daily News*, November 17, 1936, p. 6.

though, the affair revealed that the New Deal had actually strengthened the old racial ways by putting further distance between white and black southerners. Consider, for example, the different living conditions that distinguished students at the University of Mississippi from Jim Ivy or the other African American employees with whom he took his noon meal each day. Thanks to the New Deal, students walked a scenic and beautified campus, one undergoing continuous expansion and filled with newly built and freshly renovated buildings and classrooms. Some lived in PWA-built dormitories that featured maple furniture, hardwood floors, and tiled showers; others occupied PWA-built fraternity and sorority houses that included such amenities as sun parlors. For entertainment, students could swim in a brand-new, two-hundred-foot pool or play in the game room of the new student union. Ivy, by contrast, occupied a small lot on the outskirts of town and lived in what the *Mississippian* referred to variously as a “shack” or a “one-room shanty.”<sup>140</sup> For entertainment, none of these new facilities would have been available to Ivy or any African Americans who worked at the university. Throughout the state, bowling alleys, roller rinks, and tennis courts were for whites only. Until World War II, not a single swimming pool existed in Mississippi that was open to blacks.<sup>141</sup>

In April 1937, a feature in the *Mississippian* reported on the summer destinations of students at the university. Some planned to vacation in England, Scotland, Mexico, Pasadena, California, and Chautauqua, New York. Others had accepted scholarships for summer study at institutions including the University of Virginia. The feature concluded with a description of the summer plans of an African American woman who worked in one of the campus's dormitories: “And Isom Hall's Jetty said, punctuating her remarks with gum as she made a bed,” the passage began, “I's gwine work, But Ah hopes to git a month off and ef Ah do den Ah's gwine play 'round a little. Ah's gwine pick cotton an' wuk my garden an' raise chickens an' enjoy mysef. Ah's gwine com' back to wuk.”<sup>142</sup> Ivy, Jetty, and other black presences at the university may have played, as students and alumni put it, “an integral part” in life on the campus, but it was a circumscribed and limited part. Although “an entirely new student body passed through the portals of this institution every four

<sup>140</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, October 17, 1936, p. 6; *Ibid.*, October 24, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 10-11.

<sup>142</sup> University (Miss.) *Mississippian*, April 24, 1937, p. 5.

years,” the *Mississippian* noted, figures like Ivy and Jetty remained “here all the time.”<sup>143</sup> As the university modernized, built itself up, and opened its doors to a wider community of white Mississippians—in other words, as it became a laboratory for white democracy—stories about Blind Jim Ivy’s shanty or Jetty’s chickens indexed white progress against black immobility. Ambitious programs for expansion and experimental forms of development threatened nothing so long as white supremacy appeared secure. In the halls of Congress, white Mississippians could observe southern politicians who had achieved mastery and control of federal policy regarding race. At home, an ambitious plan for diversifying the state’s economy was underway and had secured guarantees that outside investors would do nothing to upset or alter Mississippi’s racial ways in hiring or compensation. And at the university in Oxford, white students occupied sparkling new dormitories and attended class on a growing campus, black men who depended on the charity of white folks peddled peanuts and candies and shared witticisms with freshmen, and black maids chewed gum while they contentedly changed linens. The New Deal had opened new possibilities for the University of Mississippi and made possible the building of a more democratic and more economically prosperous future. It had not, however, imperiled the state’s most important and most cherished founding myth. If experience was any lesson, no reasonable observer of life at the University of Mississippi would have imagined that more federal money and more ambitious expansion would endanger the white democracy that had become integral to the institution’s identity and future.

In revealing the future that segregation seemed to make possible for one community of white southerners, this article suggests two areas that historians might explore throughout the larger Jim Crow South. First, scholars might investigate what southern universities developed, not just what they represented. Even institutions like the University of Mississippi, one which as a cultural symbol has seemed to embody the past-obsessed and tradition-bound South, have served as mechanisms for social mobility and sites for the production of knowledge. Second, given that the segregationists who built institutions like the University of Mississippi did so with their eyes and minds on the future, scholars might investigate the interior dynamics of Jim Crow by examining what it seemed to make possible, not by explaining how it responded to

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<sup>143</sup> “Help Blind Jim,” *Mississippian*, September 26, 1936, p. 3.

external threats. Invented traditions and violent acts of reaction may not have prevented the desegregation of the South, but they apparently have succeeded in presenting Jim Crow as a fixed order to be defended, not an expansive project in development. If white supremacists and segregationists built a world designed to fulfill their aspirations, perhaps contemporary historians can tell fuller stories about the southern past by recovering the futures that the region's planners envisioned.

