

2017

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Brother Rogers

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Program of the 2017 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

*by Brother Rogers,
2017 MHS Program Committee Chair*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Jason Ward Morgan accepted the McLemore Prize from Max Griuno.

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

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

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



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

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

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