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Program of the 2016 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

*by Brother Rogers,
2016 MHS Program Committee Chair*

The Mississippi Historical Society (MHS) held its annual meeting March 3-5, 2016, at the historic King Edward Hotel (Hilton Garden Inn) in Jackson. The program began on Thursday, March 3, with a meeting of representatives of the Federation of Mississippi Historical Societies, followed by a late afternoon reception at the Mississippi Governor's Mansion hosted by Governor Phil Bryant and First Lady Deborah Bryant. Following the welcoming reception, the board of directors gathered at the Fairview Inn for their annual dinner meeting. Afterward, MHS sponsored a hospitality suite at the King Edward Hotel.

The program sessions began on Friday, March 4, with a welcome by three individuals: Elbert Hilliard, secretary-treasurer, MHS and director emeritus, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH); Katie Blount, director, MDAH; and Dennis Mitchell, president, MHS and division head, Arts & Sciences, Mississippi State University-Meridian.

The morning program featured concurrent sessions on various aspects of Mississippi history. Jason Morgan Ward, associate professor, Mississippi State University (MSU), presented a paper entitled, "There is a Revolution in Mississippi Today: Black Women, Federal Dollars, and White Backlash in the Civil Rights Movement." Charles Westmoreland, assistant professor, Delta State University, spoke about his book, *Southern Pharisees: Prayer, Public Life, and Politics in the South, 1955-1996*. Ann Abadie, associate director emerita, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, moderated the session.

Jo Miles-Seely, project coordinator, Mississippi Digital Newspaper Project, MDAH, explained her work archiving the state's newspapers online. Julia Marks Young, director, Archives and Records Services Division, MDAH, showed clips from the documentary, "50 Years and Forward: The Voting Rights Act in Mississippi." Jennifer Brannock, associate professor, University Libraries, University of Southern

Mississippi (USM) and Curator of Rare Books and Mississippiana, McCain Library and Archives, served as the session moderator.

Following the morning break, the next set of concurrent sessions began with University of Mississippi assistant professor Shennette Garrett Scott, who presented a paper on "Everything that is Mean, Damnable, and Cursed: Minnie Geddings Cox, the Indianola Affair, and the Uses of the Past." Kasey Mosely, a Ph.D. candidate at MSU, read her paper, "Cotton Isn't King Anymore: Mississippi Press Women, the 1958 and 1977 National Conventions, and the Reimagining of Mississippi's Identity." Daphne Chamberlain, assistant professor of history, Tougaloo College, presided over the session.

In addition, Jo Miles-Seely of MDAH, moderated a three-person panel. USM associate professor Jennifer Brannock and Andrew P. Haley, associate professor of American cultural history, USM, and author of *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class*, together presented their work to collect and digitize community cookbooks from Mississippi. Kevin Greene, co-director, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, USM, gave a presentation on the center's work and the Mississippi Oral History Project.

Victoria Bynum, distinguished professor emerita of history, Texas State University-San Marcos, delivered the keynote address at lunch on her book, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War*. The movie *The Free State of Jones* was scheduled for release on June 24, 2016, making her presentation timely. Brother Rogers, vice president, MHS, introduced Dr. Bynum. K. C. Morrison, professor and head of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Mississippi State University, delivered the invocation. The MHS annual business meeting followed the luncheon.

Attendees had a choice for two afternoon tours in Jackson. Both the Eudora Welty House at 1119 Pinehurst Street and the Medgar Evers Home at 2332 Margaret Walker Alexander Drive hosted visitors. Hinds Community College provided complimentary bus transportation to the Evers Home. Afterward, the president's reception, sponsored by the MSU Department of History, and the annual banquet were held at the King Edward Hotel.

For the first time, the winner of the McLemore Prize for the best book written on Mississippi history was the featured speaker at the banquet. Justin Behrend, associate professor of history, State University of New York at Geneseo, won the McLemore Prize for his book, *Reconstructing*



Author Victoria Bynum (left) signing copies of her book, *The Free State of Jones*

Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War. Former McLemore Prize winner Charles C. Bolton, professor and chair of the Department of History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, presented the award to Dr. Behrend. Aubrey K. Lucas, former president of both the University of Southern Mississippi and the Mississippi Historical Society, delivered the invocation.

On Saturday, March 5, the first program session featured student research papers from members of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. Anna Gray of Mississippi College, Sophie Lipman of Millsaps College, and James Theres, graduate student, Jackson State University, all made presentations. Christian Pinnen, assistant professor of history, Mississippi College, organized the students' participation and served as moderator.

The final program segment focused on the history of the King Edward Hotel and downtown Jackson. Presenters were Toby G. Bates, associate professor of history, MSU-Meridian, Kenneth H. P'Pool, deputy state historic preservation officer, MDAH, and Todd Sanders, architectural historian, MDAH.

Dennis J. Mitchell, president, MHS, presided over the awards luncheon. Anne Lipscomb Webster, retired director of reference services, MDAH, delivered the invocation. Incoming president Brother Rogers, associate director, John C. Stennis Center for Public Service, adjourned the meeting.

The following members of the program committee deserve thanks for an outstanding job: Toby Bates, Jennifer Ford, Velvelyn Foster, Jeanne Luckett, K. C. Morrison, and Stuart Rockoff. In addition, secretary-treasurer Elbert Hilliard and the staff at MDAH are to be commended for helping organize and implement the many details that made the annual meeting a success.