

2014

## Program of the 2014 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting

Larry A. Albert

Follow this and additional works at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/jmh>

---

### Recommended Citation

Albert, Larry A. (2014) "Program of the 2014 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting," *Journal of Mississippi History*. Vol. 76: No. 3, Article 7.

Available at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/jmh/vol76/iss3/7>

This Annual Meeting Minutes and Summary is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Mississippi History by an authorized editor of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact [aquilastaff@usm.edu](mailto:aquilastaff@usm.edu).

## **Program of the 2014 Mississippi Historical Society Annual Meeting**

*by Larry A. Albert, 2014 MHS Program Committee Chair*

The Mississippi Historical Society held its annual meeting March 6-8, 2014, in Jackson, Mississippi. The program, which had as its theme “Museums across Mississippi,” began Thursday, March 6, at 5:00 p.m. with a welcoming reception at the Mississippi Museum of Art, followed by the annual dinner meeting of the Society’s board of directors at the Fairview Inn.

On Friday, March 7, activities shifted to the Old Capitol Museum, where Society president Charles L. Sullivan called the meeting to order in the historic House of Representatives chamber. “I was amazed to discover the Society had never featured museums at its annual meeting, but the idea was so obvious it hid in plain sight,” said Sullivan. “Museums are where the work of the historian reaches the public across all bounds of age, gender, race, and creed. The vast majority of people do not read very much, but whole families will visit these institutions. Museum exhibits are the single most important disseminator of historical knowledge.”

Clay Williams, director, Old Capitol Museum, Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), extended welcoming remarks that included comments on the building’s latest restoration. Kenneth H. P’Pool, deputy state historic preservation officer, MDAH, presided over the first session. In the opening presentation, Val Husley, curator emeritus, Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum in Biloxi, described how Hurricane Katrina had destroyed the museum on August 29, 2005, and reviewed the work of Biloxi native, Daria Pizzetta, who was leading the design team of H 3 Collaboration of New York in the rebuilding project that has a projected completion date of August 2014. Dr. Hulsey noted that Pizetta had referred to the design of the new building as the “Ship in the Bottle.” In his presentation, Dr. Hulsey also described some of the artifacts that had been rescued for the exhibits in the new museum. Chad Daniels, director, Mississippi Armed Forces Museum, gave an interesting description of the museum’s existing exhibits and noted that there is no charge for admission to the museum, which is located at Camp Shelby. He further described the museum’s plans for future expansion that will include new exhibits pertaining to the “War on Terror.”

Betsy Bradley, director, Mississippi Museum of Art, presided over the second general session that included presentations by Doug Myatt, director of collections and exhibitions, Walter Anderson Museum, and Tommie Rodgers, registrar, Lauren Rogers Museum. Myatt described the damage that had been wrought to the Walter Anderson Museum by Hurricane Katrina along with the destruction of nine buildings at Shearwater Pottery, where Walter Anderson’s relatives continue to live and produce art for sale. He stated that the museum exhibits and the Walter Anderson murals in the Ocean Springs Community Center had been restored by specialists

in art conservation. Myatt further noted that the Walter Anderson Museum, which opened in 1991, continues to attract visitors to Ocean Springs from all over the world. Ms. Rodgers provided a fascinating account of the history of the Lauren Rogers Museum in Laurel. She informed the audience that the museum, which has an outstanding collection of European and American art, Native American baskets, English Georgian silver, and Japanese wood blocks, had been established in 1923 following Lauren Eastman Rogers's death from appendix surgery at age twenty-three. Ms. Rodgers stated that the museum had recently undertaken a \$5 million improvement project that included the expansion of the curator's vault and the addition of a monumental space containing an eight-foot Dale Chihuly chandelier. She also noted that the museum, in addition to having permanent collections of national significance, schedules special exhibits featuring the work of prominent artists on a regular basis.

The annual meeting luncheon was held in the Old Capitol Inn with Ann Atkinson Simmons, the Society's vice president, presiding. The Reverend William Hanna of Madison delivered the invocation. H. T. Holmes, director, MDAH, introduced Lucy Allen, director, Museum Division, MDAH; Cindy Gardner, director of collections, MDAH Museum Division; and Jacqueline Dace, director, Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, MDAH, who presented an interesting and detailed report on the Two Mississippi Museums project that involves the construction of the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum that are scheduled for completion in December 2017 as part of the state's commemoration of the bicentennial of Mississippi statehood.

Following the luncheon, the Society's annual business meeting was called to order by Charles Sullivan, Society president. The actions taken at the business meeting are recorded in the minutes of the meeting that are published in this edition of *The Journal of Mississippi History*.

The third general session was held at the Old Capitol Museum at 3:00 p.m. with the Society's immediate past president, Mary Carol Miller of Greenwood presiding. Malika Polk-Lee, chief administrative officer of the B. B. King Museum in Indianola, delivered an interesting presentation on the museum that interprets the life of the renowned musician. She described the museum's state-of-the-art exhibits, as well as the varied educational programs that are scheduled each year. Shelley Ritter, director of the Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, informed the audience that the Delta Blues Museum had been established to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of Blues music, which has become very popular in Europe and other areas of the world. Ritter also described the various educational programs that are sponsored by the museum. Malcolm White, director, Tourism Division, Mississippi Development Authority, presented an interesting description of the Mississippi Music Trails project that involves the erection throughout the state of distinctive historical markers related to historical personages, events, and sites associated with the history of Mississippi music. He noted that, in many respects, Mississippi can be considered the birthplace of Blues, Rock and Roll, and Country

Music and emphasized that the Mississippi Music Trail project provides our state the opportunity to relate its own story about the birthing of much of the great music enjoyed around the world.

The President's Reception, which was sponsored by Professor Sullivan's sister, Janet Sullivan of Natchez, was held at the Old Capitol Inn at 6:00 p.m. on Friday evening. Charles Sullivan, Society president, presided at the banquet that followed the reception. The banquet invocation was delivered by Dr. Westley F. Busbee, Jr., chair, Department of History, Belhaven University and former president of the Society. William "Brother" Rogers, assistant director, John C. Stennis Center for Public Service and member of the Society's McLemore Prize Committee, presented the 2014 McLemore Prize to Dr. Charles C. Bolton, University of North Carolina/Greensboro, for his splendid biography, *William F. Winter and the New Mississippi: A Biography*, which was published by the University Press of Mississippi. Peggy W. Jeanes, chair of the Society's Awards Committee and editor emerita, *Mississippi History Now*, presented the Society's B. L. C. Wailes Award to William R. Ferris, Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History at the University of North Carolina and senior associate director of the University's Center for the Study of the American South. The Wailes Award is presented periodically as merited to a Mississippian who has achieved national distinction and recognition in the field of history. In her remarks, Jeanes noted that Ferris was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, as well as a former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. In his acceptance remarks, Ferris noted that "Benjamin Leonard Covington Wailes has cast a long shadow across my life on both the professional and the personal level. As one of the founders of the Mississippi Historical Society in 1858 and as a passionate collector of historical documents, Wailes has been an inspiration for my career as a folklorist who shares his deep ties to Mississippi. As an advocate for improved agricultural practices, Wailes's career paralleled that of my grandfather Eugene Ferris who was our state's first agronomist. The farm where I grew up in Warren County was originally owned by Judge Alexander Covington, whose daughter Sue Covington married Wailes in 1820. Wailes and his wife Sue inherited Fonsylvania Plantation, along with "Fonsylvania," a Greek Revival plantation home built by Judge Covington in 1825 that still stands on the farm."

Former governor William F. Winter, who served as Society president in 1954-1955, introduced the banquet speaker, Bertram Hayes-Davis, president, Beauvoir Foundation and great-great-grandson of Jefferson Davis. Hayes-Davis described the new Jefferson Davis Presidential Library and Museum that is nearing completion near the site of the earlier building that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. He also talked about the Foundation's plans to interpret to Beauvoir visitors the entirety of Jefferson Davis's life and career, rather than focusing solely on his service as president of the Confederate States of America.

The fourth general session, which was held in the House of Representatives chamber of the Old Capitol Museum at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 8, was chaired

by Lucy Allen, director, Museum Division, MDAH, who introduced the “Local History Matters” session that included interesting and informative presentations by Bo Miller, director, Amory Regional Museum; Brandy Steen, executive director, Crossroads Museum in Corinth; Kay Allen, director, Lawrence County Civic Center and History Museum in Monticello; and Brian Hicks, director, DeSoto County Museum in Hernando.

The fifth general session entitled “Remembering Freedom Summer” began with Robert Luckett, director, Margaret Walker Center, Jackson State University, presiding. This session, which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Freedom Summer, included presentations on “The Council of Federated Organizations and the Summer that Changed America” by Daphne Chamberlain, assistant professor of history, Tougaloo College and founding director, COFO Civil Rights Education Center, and Precious Vines, graduate student, Jackson State University and graduate assistant, COFO Civil Rights Education Center.

The annual Awards Brunch was held at 12:15 p.m. in the Old Capitol Inn with Society president Charles Sullivan presiding. The invocation was delivered by Kenneth B. Shearer of Madison. Following the brunch meal, various Society awards were presented. Professor Sullivan introduced the Society’s new president, Ann Atkinson Simmons of Columbia. During her remarks prior to adjourning the meeting, Mrs. Simmons briefly described her years of involvement with the Society and stated that she was honored to have the privilege of serving as president. She encouraged those present to help spread the word about the Society and expressed her intentions to work on reactivating the Federation of Mississippi Historical Societies.

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to Society president, Charles Sullivan, who envisioned the “Museums Across Mississippi” theme for the annual meeting program and provided full support to the Program Committee chair and members throughout the program planning process. The Program Committee included Lucy Allen, George Bassi, Chad Daniels, Robin Krohn David, Jack McWilliams, Bo Miller, Kenneth H. P’Pool, and Stuart Rockoff. The program speakers and session chairs also contributed to a very successful and interesting meeting. We are also grateful for the assistance provided to the Program Committee by Elbert Hilliard, the Society’s longtime volunteer secretary-treasurer.