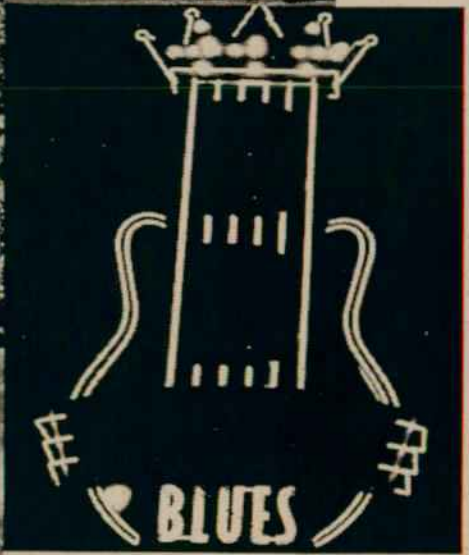


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SYMPOSIUM FINDINGS



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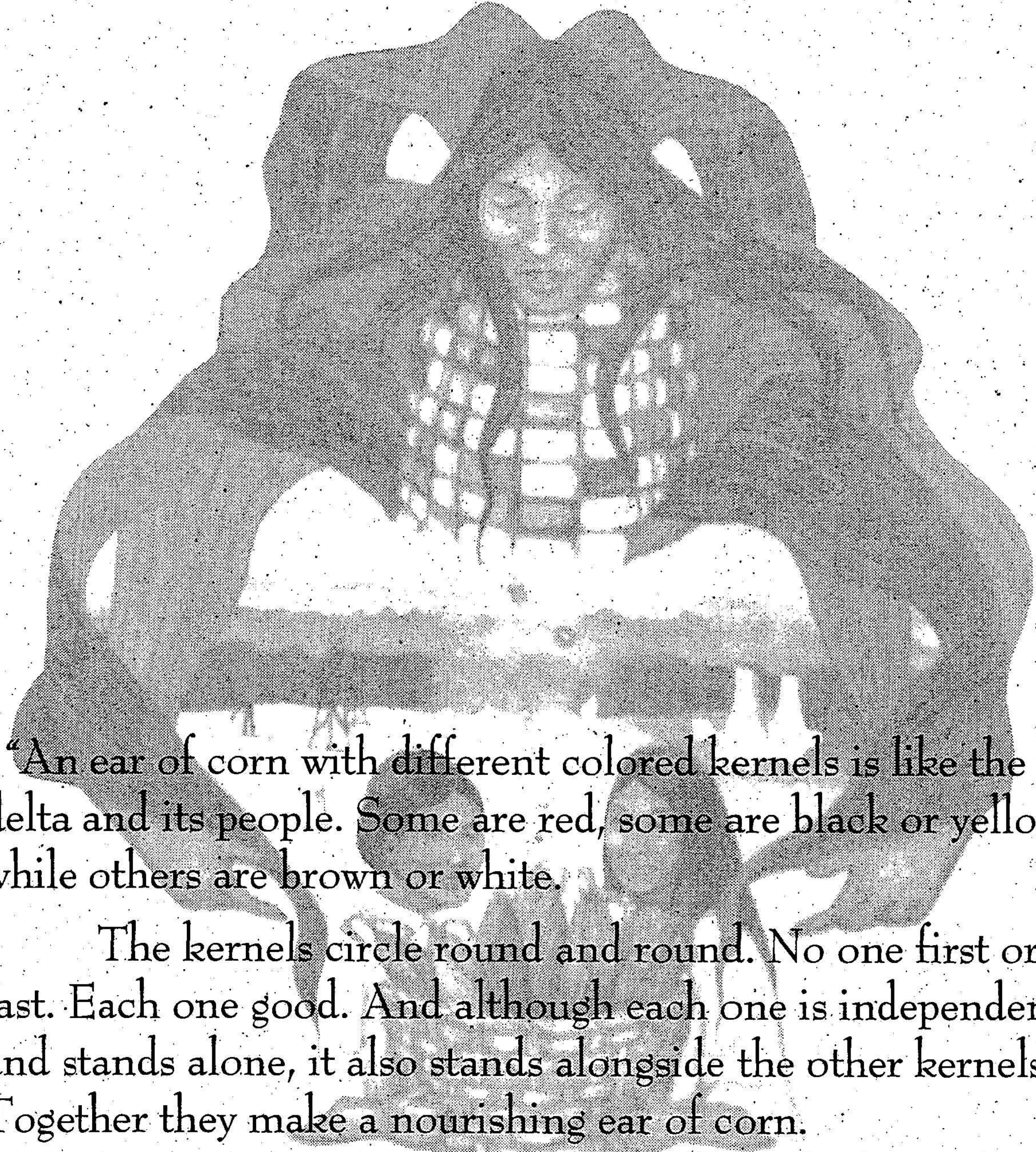
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Stories of the Delta

Color Scans

5/9/2003



“An ear of corn with different colored kernels is like the delta and its people. Some are red, some are black or yellow, while others are brown or white.

The kernels circle round and round. No one first or last. Each one good. And although each one is independent and stands alone, it also stands alongside the other kernels. Together they make a nourishing ear of corn.

Like the corn kernels, we can maintain our individual places in the overall delta story and, at the same time, respect the spaces—the stories—of others living beside us.

Through cooperating together, we hopefully will create a way for the delta to flourish and prosper for all who live here.”

—Marilou Awiakta, Cherokee/Appalachian poet, storyteller and essayist

Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium

"Stories of the Delta"

June 4, 5 & 6, 1996



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The National Park Service would like to express our deepest appreciation and gratitude to those 25 participants who gave their time and energy to articulate the most compelling and interesting "Stories of the Delta." Their deep understanding, dedication, and passion for preserving and interpreting the delta's past, present, and future is truly outstanding. We would like to thank Roger Kennedy, Director of the National Park Service, for his keynote address at the symposium. We would also like to extend our appreciation to Ray Bryant, Director of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center, for his background and insights into efforts to revitalize the delta.

These symposium findings are not intended to provide a definitive prehistory and history of the Lower Mississippi Delta region, but rather to represent those stories told by the 25 participants. The stories contained in this document will be refined, checked for technical accuracy, and analyzed for their relative importance in shaping the unique qualities of the delta. Stories will be added as research continues and participation broadens. The wide variety of stories depicted is a true reflection of the symposium participants' backgrounds and natural and cultural diversity of the region.

Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium

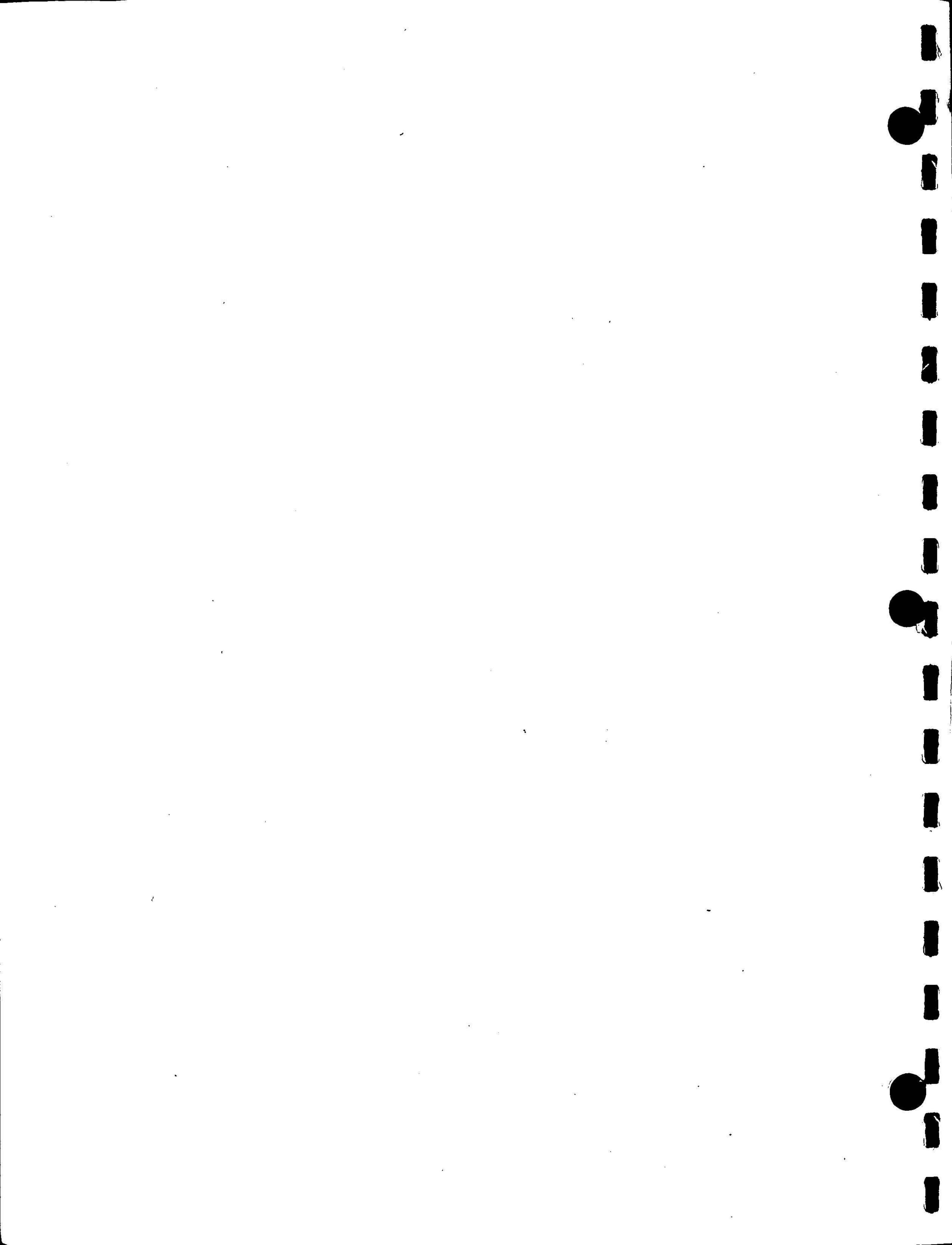
"Stories of the Delta"



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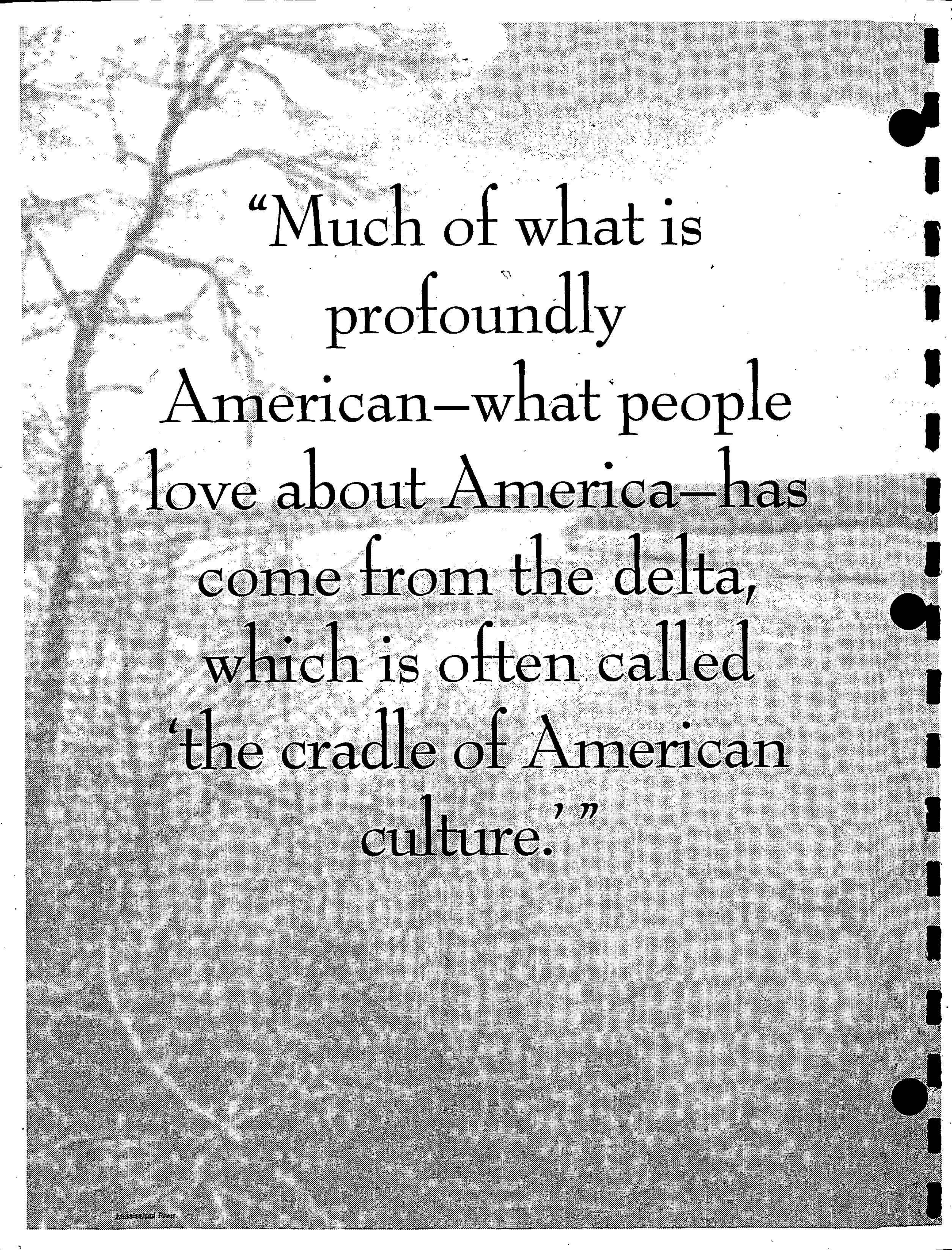
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Mississippi River

Introduction



“Much of what is
profoundly
American—what people
love about America—has
come from the delta,
which is often called
‘the cradle of American
culture.’”

Introduction

The Lower Mississippi Delta

Introduction

On June 4, 5 and 6, 1996, 25 experts on the people, history, culture, economy and natural environment of the Lower Mississippi Delta gathered in Memphis, Tennessee. Their purpose was to identify the key stories and some of the sites that make this region of the country worthy of national recognition and attention. This report attempts to capture the broad-ranging content and collaborative spirit that were generated at the Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium.

The primary product of the symposium is a framework of stories, or themes, that form a complex yet cohesive picture of the delta's natural, prehistorical, historical and cultural resources. This thematic framework serves as the foundation for the preparation of the heritage study now underway. The framework will also function as a guide for analyzing sites that relate directly to the identified stories of the delta.

This element of the Lower Mississippi Delta Heritage Study is part of a dynamic, ongoing process. The stories contained within this symposium findings document are not the final word. It is impossible to expect that in two and one-half days every major story can be told, especially considering that we are dealing with a geographic area that spans 25,000 square miles and thousands of years of history. The participants, who represent a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, articulated an equally wide range of stories. Not all stories portrayed in this document are agreed upon by all participants. However, they are a reflection of what was said. There was no attempt, except in the Key Stories chapter, to separate the major stories from the secondary ones. The stories contained in this document are subject to further research and provide the beginning steps for discovering the "Stories of the Delta." It is the intent of the National Park Service to work with a wider range of individuals, groups and organizations to ensure the technical accuracy, provide for greater inclusion and determine the relative importance of the stories that make the delta a unique region of the country.



▲ *Mississippi River*

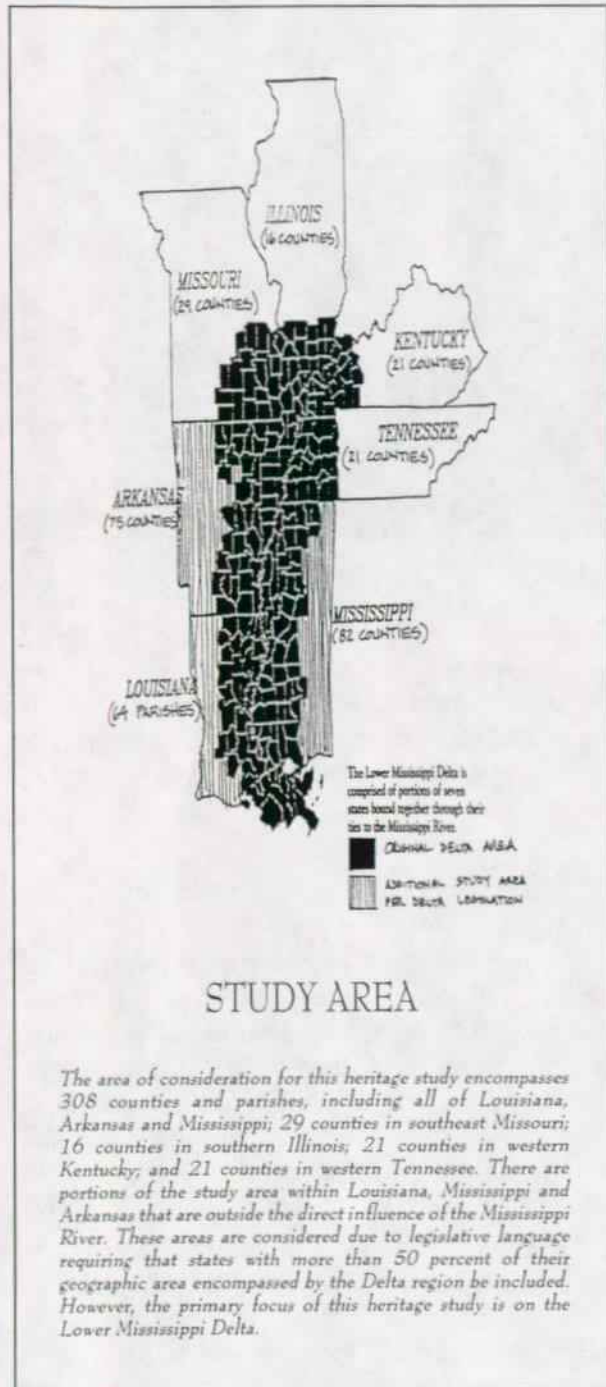
The results of this symposium provide an excellent framework for further refining the "Stories of the Delta," as well as adding new stories. There are many more people who feel just as deeply and passionately about the delta's people and resources, whose stories have yet to be told. These symposium findings are truly a "work in progress."

The Delta

The word "delta" in the region of the Mississippi River has many different definitions. According to the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives, passed by Congress in 1994, "Delta Region" means the Lower Mississippi Delta Region including 219 counties and parishes within the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, as defined in the Delta Initiatives Report."

The legislation also adds that any state defined in the Delta Initiatives Report that comprises more than half the geographic area of the state should be considered in its entirety. This brings the study area to 308 counties and parishes in Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri and Tennessee including the entire states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi (please refer to map on p.3).

In natural resource terms, the Mississippi Delta is the alluvial valley stretching from southern Illinois to central Louisiana at the junction of the Red, Atchafalaya and



valley with alluvium. At the time of settlement, the delta was an area of alluvial soils occupying a valley between higher terraces to the east and west. The soils were subject to the annual overflow of the Mississippi River and its many tributaries. Another common usage of "delta" refers to the "recent delta"—that area of new land built by the Mississippi onto the continental shelf in approximately the last 5,000 years. The "true delta" is essentially the new land built by alluvium after the valley delta was filled. The river occupied seven different deltas (deltaic lobes) and more than 30 main channels in the process of building the "recent delta", all in south-central



Delta women around 1937

Courtesy: Louise Boyle and Elizabeth Payne/DCC Archives. The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change, catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

and southeast Louisiana. The most recent of the deltaic lobes is also often referred to as the "delta" or sometimes the "modern" or "bird's foot" delta and is the area below New Orleans at the present mouth of the river where the channel forks into the various passes.

In addition to natural resource definitions of the "delta", cultural and social descriptions often refer to a core or classic delta found entirely within the state of Mississippi and encompassing the common flood plain of the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers. The traditional Arkansas "Delta" includes such notable towns as Helena, Fargo and Marianna. By extension, Louisiana's "Delta" reaches as far south as New Orleans and out into the Gulf of Mexico. Combined, these areas share a similar geography but also share common cultural and social bonds and a well-defined sense of place.

Mississippi rivers. Geologically, this was a deep valley eroded by the Mississippi during the Pleistocene when the sea level was 200 feet below its present stand. After the Ice Age, as the sea level rose, the river filled this old

As can be seen, different audiences will hear different things when the "delta" is mentioned. When the "delta" or "delta region" is referred to in this report, the Delta Region Initiatives legislation is being acknowledged.

The Place

The Lower Mississippi Delta is a vast and vital part of the American landscape. This broad, alluvial valley reaches from southern Illinois to the southeastern tip of Louisiana. The delta's 90,000 miles of rivers and streams cover some three million acres, dictating much of the region's landscape and land use.

The Lower Mississippi Delta provides habitat and ecological support for a wide variety of flora, fauna and aquatic species. The Mississippi River forms the most important bird and waterfowl migration corridor on the continent. The river bottoms comprise North America's largest wetland area and bottom land hardwood forest. Further, the Mississippi's role as a major transporter of goods and people has long distinguished the region's history and character. The river promoted trade, and the fertile land facilitated agriculture. Despite increasing industrialization, agriculture remains an important sector of the regional economy.

The delta's cultural traditions are as rich and diverse as its natural resources. This is a land of converging cultures with a unique complexity and density of history, prehistory and cultural expression. Over the centuries Native Americans of many tribes, French, Arab, Spanish, African, German, English, Irish, Scots-Irish, Jewish, Italian, Chinese, Mexican and Southeast Asian people have managed to establish and maintain their distinctive ethnic identities. Often these cultures intermingled to form discreet, new cultural elements found only in the delta.

Background

The Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium was organized by the National Park Service (NPS) as the first step of a comprehensive regional heritage study. The heritage study is part of the NPS response to Title

XI—Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives—LMDR (Public Law 103-433).

The NPS is utilizing the following three-step methodology to complete this heritage study:

Step 1. Stories (Thematic Framework): Identify and articulate the stories that make this region of the country worthy of national recognition and attention.

Step 2. Data Collection/Analysis: Collect data that relates to the identified stories. These resources will be analyzed according to their thematic representation, integrity (current and future) and their level of importance (i.e. do they represent a diversity of national character, are they part of a nationally distinctive landscape, and do they represent an important part of the national experience?)

Step 3. Recommendations/Findings: Based on the stories to be told and the identification of nationally important resources, identify the following for further detailed planning: potential heritage corridors; heritage areas; National Park System units; historically significant roads, trails, byways, waterways, or other routes; National Historic Landmarks; National Natural Landmarks; and heritage and cultural centers with a network of satellites and cooperative units. In addition, sufficient information will be gathered to enable recommendations for a future historic and prehistoric structures and sites survey, a Delta Antiquities Survey and a Historic and Archaeological Resources Program.


A key to the ongoing success of this heritage study will be to nurture the intercultural, intraregional cooperation that characterized the Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium. Although the various peoples of the delta have distinct histories, cultures and perspectives, they share a strong desire to preserve and highlight the important stories and sites of their region. Throughout the study period, the NPS will continue to engage the participants' involvement and that of institutions, communities, groups and individuals interested in the past, present and future of the Lower Mississippi Delta.

Symposium Participants

The NPS study team kept the symposium small in order to foster in-depth discussions and useful outcomes



▲ Symposium participants

6  in a brief amount of time. Representatives were invited from each state in the study area to ensure the inclusion of input from the entire region. Certain national experts from outside the region were also invited.

The Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium drew participants from many cultural backgrounds and disciplines. Some were educators, authors, museum directors and leaders of historical and cultural preservation efforts. Natural resource specialists participated, as did a state senator and a storyteller. All the participants were carefully selected for their depth and breadth of delta knowledge and for their representation of the many regional voices whose stories need to be told.

Symposium Process

For two and one-half days, Lower Mississippi Delta Symposium participants engaged in intensive, facilitated, interactive discussions of the stories and sites that make the delta region worthy of national recognition.

Roger Kennedy, Director of the National Park Service, gave the opening address and stayed through much of the first day. Ray Bryant, Executive Director of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Center, provided background on the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiatives legislation.

During most of the workshop, participants worked in concurrent, topic-specific groups of less than ten people. Grappling with their differing opinions, they began to develop and organize the stories through time. After the

allotted time periods, they moved on to other groups. Before they began to identify sites, each participant shared his or her "Key Story" with the entire group.

All workshop sessions were facilitated and recorded by members of the study team. Over the course of the symposium, participants generated an extensive amount of data in the form of flip sheets and cards. Participants did not reach total agreement on every discussion item. When differences of opinion were expressed, all points of view were noted. As the project team researches the stories generated by participants, some of the gaps and discrepancies may be resolved. However, differences of opinion will always exist and must be recognized throughout the study. They are part of the uniqueness of the stories of the delta.

During the concurrent discussions, all key points were transcribed on wall charts by members of the workshop team. The "Key Stories" section was recorded on wall charts and on audio tape. All recorded flip sheet and card data was transcribed verbatim. An impartial editor, who observed the workshop, then combined the data to reduce redundancy and organized the information in topic form.

The study team, who were workshop facilitators, made revisions based on studying the symposium data. The draft document was later sent to all symposium participants. Changes desired by participants were included in the final document. Throughout the process, we have tried to reflect accurately the thoughts and comments developed at the symposium, while respecting differences of opinions.

Discussion Framework

To keep the discussions focused, the heritage study team provided participants with an overarching topical framework that consisted of the following major subject areas:

Peopling Places: These discussions focused on the ways the varied peoples of the delta have organized and defined themselves as members of a group. Topics included prehistoric and historic patterns of family formation and social organization; life/birth, marriage, gender roles, division of labor and child rearing practices; migration patterns; health, nutrition, disease; religious and spiritual beliefs and rituals.

Creating Social Institutions and Movements: These sessions examined social systems, political movements and government policies that have shaped life within the delta. Topics ranged from religious institutions and education to warfare and slavery.

Expressing Cultural Values: This series of sessions explored how the peoples of the delta express their identity as members of different groups—to ensure that future generations know of their heritage, to celebrate their own popular or traditional culture and/or to share their cultural heritage with others.

Developing the American Economy: Participants looked at the delta's economy and its place in the national context, natural resources, agriculture, transportation and technology. They discussed the slow mechanization of agriculture, the extraction of the region's natural resources and the people who drove the economy.

Transforming the Environment: These discussions began with an overview of the geological formation of the Mississippi River Delta. Participants then focused on the impacts of natural processes and human activity on the landscape and its resources.

These topics look at the way people organize and define themselves as members of a group. They include prehistoric and historic patterns of family formation and social organization; life/birth, marriage, gender roles, division of labor, and child rearing practices; migration patterns; health, nutrition, disease; religious and spiritual beliefs and rituals.

The peoples of the Mississippi Delta embody extensive multicultural diversity including Native Americans, Europeans, Africans and Asians. In addition to discussing how the individual cultural groups of the delta maintained their heritage and cultural identity, it is also important for us to look at how fluid cultural boundaries can be, or how important economic pressures and opportunities can be in shaping communities and individual choices about cultural identity over time. Those who departed the region historically, as well as those who stayed need to be discussed. Migration of people (and cultures) both in and out of the delta has always been an important part of life in this region.

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Courtesy: Arkansas History Commission. The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

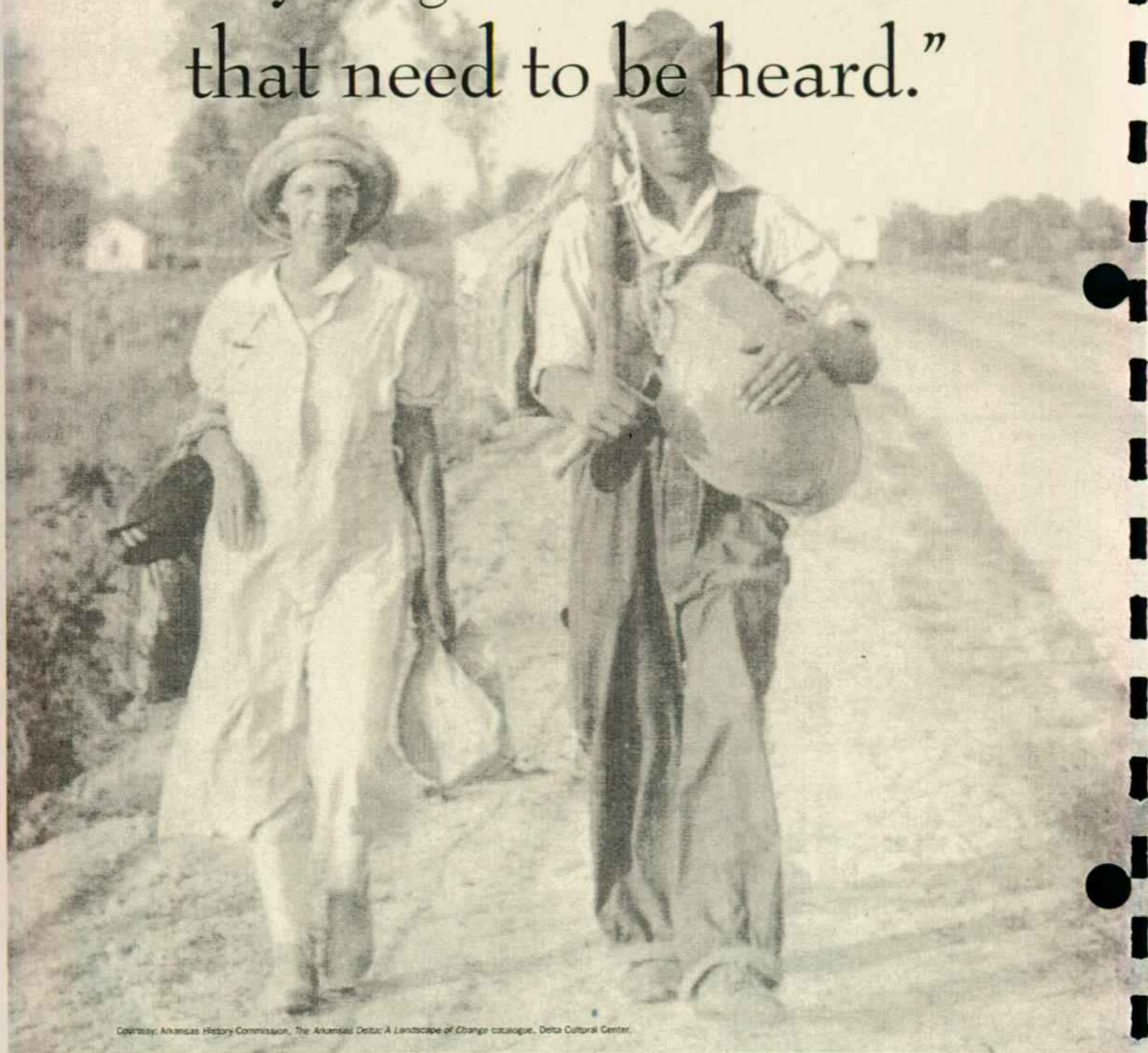


Tenant couple, around 1935

Stories of the Delta

PARTICIPANTS' KEY STORIES

“Oppress the spirit,
bruise the heart,
and you give rise to voices
that need to be heard.”



Stories of the Delta: Participants' Key Stories

Participants' Key Stories

After participants had completed the "Stories of the Delta" and before they began to identify sites, they gathered as a large group to share their "Key Stories." Each participant was given a few minutes to answer extemporaneously the following hypothetical question:

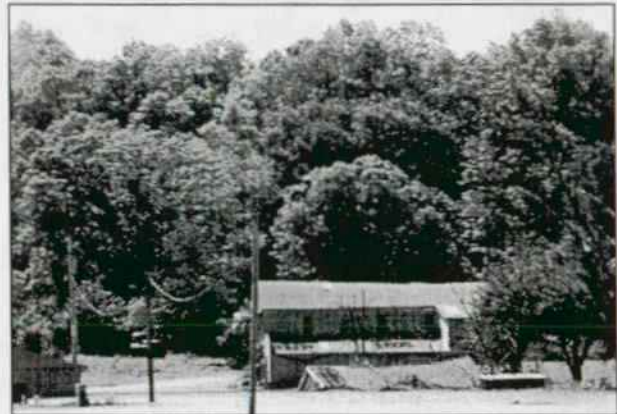
If visitors were to come to the Lower Mississippi River Delta and leave with just one, defining story about the region, what would you want it to be?

Below is a synopsis of the participants' responses. The participants' "Key Stories" were grouped into the thematic categories below. Certain story points were combined where they overlapped, built upon other statements and/or reinforced the ideas in other stories.

The River Itself

The Mississippi River and the physical landscape it has created are fundamental stories of the Lower Mississippi Delta. The river and its tributaries have overarching control of the delta. They form the landscape, creating and destroying habitats in their path. The delta has undergone three major stages of geologic history: 1) 18,000-10,000 years ago under "Ice Age" conditions when the river braided, 2) 10,000 to the present when the river meandered in its alluvial valley and 3) less than 5,000 years ago when the river's alluvial deposits created the "true delta" of southeast Louisiana. Throughout each of these stages, humans have witnessed the impact of the changing river on every aspect of life along its banks.

The Flood of 1927 was the largest hydrologic event of this century. It signaled the end of the "levees only" approach to flood control. The decision to try other approaches profoundly changed river engineering worldwide. Further, the flood attracted national attention and increased the impetus behind federally-funded public works for flood control.



▲ *Flooding in the Delta*

Sharing the Delta Cultures

We need to let the people of the delta tell their own stories.

The stories of the delta are relatively easy to identify. What is more important is how to tell them. We need to think of cultural preservation not as a product, but as a dynamic, organizing process. Living in the delta has always required improvisation. We need to create a process for story-telling that will continue to define the area.

We must be extraordinarily sensitive about telling the right stories in the ways they should be told. We shouldn't freeze dry them in 1996. And we don't want hordes of tourists to physically trample what we're trying to preserve.

We need to develop living histories of the delta and include indigenous people in the process. While we need museums with artifacts that reflect delta history, it is vital to present living histories of the region, its people, their cultures and their daily lives—not just historical facts from academic authorities. Today's visitors want a genuine experience. The only way to give them that is to be truly honest about who we are and what our experience has been.

We must show the continuity of past to present. We must present the cultures of the delta as if they are thriving now—which many of them are. A goal should be to show how people drive culture. We need to help communities continue their local events and celebrations, because they are vital elements of cultural preservation, especially for young people. Also, we need to highlight the cultures of river towns that have almost disappeared.

Foreign visitors come looking for what is famous about the delta culture—the music, food and so forth. But our culture is always changing. We need to develop a clearer definition of our culture, so we can help people discover, understand and enjoy it.

Additionally, it is important to educate our own people about the delta. We need to develop kindergarten through 12th grade delta heritage curricula for students—not just inform and entertain tourists.

Cultural Diversity

The delta is a land of contrasts and extremes—of yin and yang, black and white, opulence and poverty, pain and pleasure, literacy and illiteracy, land and water, development and underdevelopment.

The delta's cultural identity is the result of the convergence—and not necessarily the blending—of Native, European, African, Caribbean and other cultures. The diversity and complexity of the delta cultures must not be overshadowed by too simplistic a focus on the plantation system. The story of the delta is about people from many cultures—not just black and white. Ethnicity exists in the Mississippi Delta. And, just like the river, the cultures are constantly changing.

Cultural Vitality

The Lower Mississippi Delta is a prolific producer of culture. Much of what is profoundly American—what people love about America—has come from the delta, which is often called the cradle of American culture.

While the delta may be at the bottom of the U.S socioeconomic scale, the region is enormously rich with cultural and grassroots political traditions. The paradox of the Lower Mississippi Delta is how the oppression of devalued groups ultimately resulted in their political resistance, creativity and cultural vitality. Marginality breeds creativity. The response to racist oppression often results in creative and political action that is stronger than the initial urge. This unique irony still contributes to the delta's strong sense of place.

Suffering has been a reality for people of the delta, especially people of color. But suffering should not serve as the sole underpinning for examining the region's cultural heritage. The people of delta have always responded to adversity with deeply inspired forms of human expression.

Family

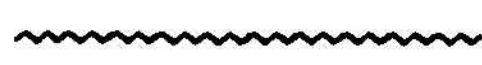
Family has always been vitally important to southern people. Down here, we know who is blood kin to who. We know who our cousins are. Family honor is important. The people with class are those who keep their word. When families started selling their businesses to corporations, the face of doing business changed. Migration and survival patterns are all based on family strength.

There is a valuing of people here, especially of the elderly.

Working People

The delta tells the story of the survival of the working poor. A legacy of poverty still exists here and, in response, the people have tremendous creative energy. You see it in how people define and sustain themselves. You see it in their gardens, folk art and crafts. Everyone has a job and a hustle.

Outside of the small upper-class, southerners are essentially working-class people. There is dignity in labor here. No matter what you do, it's noble. But time and space away from the employer is very important. You work all day and sing the blues at night.





▲ Family shelling peas, about 1937

Courtesy: Louise Boyle and Elizabeth Payne/DCC Archives
The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change, catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

We need to create spaces where ordinary people can tell their stories. The Memphis sanitation workers' strike of 1968 is just one example of a remarkable story about ordinary people.

Preserving Cotton Plantations

Most delta cotton plantations weren't white-columned mansions but were working farms that looked and functioned more like small towns. There was usually a big house, a mule barn, a cotton gin, cotton houses, a connection with the railroad, a string of sharecroppers houses, a store and a jail. During the New South Era (1880-1940), houses were dispersed across the fields; then after World War II, plantations often had a string of sharecropper houses. We need to capture some of these cotton towns before they all torn down. Midnight, Mississippi is a good example. We need to let the plantations themselves tell the story of changing agricultural practices in the Mississippi Delta.

Plantations in the delta have undergone three eras: Old South (until 1865), New South (1880-1940) and the transition to the modern, mechanized South (1935-1970). We need to tell the story of the cotton industry before and after mechanization and preserve the tools and techniques—cotton baskets, McCormick cotton pickers and other items.

Native American Issues

We need to explore the delta's 14,000 years of human prehistory that preceded the arrival of the Europeans. Such an exploration would follow the development of native people from the big game hunters of the Pleistocene period to the mound builders, to the agricultural warring cities described by DeSoto.

We need to bring the delta's many tribes out of the past and into the light of day. We need to show how the region's native people developed their own democracies, economies, social structures and education systems. We need to spotlight the treaties and promises that were broken by the whites.

Many people seem to think that Native Americans vanished from the South around 1830. In actuality, there has been a continuum of native people living in the delta from prehistory through the present, even after the "Indian Removal" of 1838. In the last 50 years, there has been a renaissance, a regreening, among the Indians of the delta. The various tribes are experiencing a growing desire to illuminate the history of their people. We need to let the native people tell their own stories, particularly about their conflicts with white cultures.

Conflict with People and Nature

The various people of the Mississippi Delta have always struggled with the environment, attempted to tame it and extract its riches. Further, they have struggled with the other cultures vying to control the region's resources. The people of the delta have resisted natural forces to the point of destroying the landscape itself. They have tried to dominate the river and land and adapt them to their needs. Ultimately, the history of the delta is a study of human arrogance.

The delta has long been the site of conflict between local people attempting to stay rooted and external political, social and economic powers trying to extract wealth. Too often, these struggles have involved the exploitation and dislocation of whole populations of people.

Race Relations

African-American and white race relations are fundamentally different in the delta than anywhere else in the U.S. They have permeated everything and do to this day—politics, work, education, food, music, literature, everything.

The ideology behind the plantation social structure still influences virtually every aspect of daily life. There remain huge variances and discrepancies between the African-American and white experience in income, education, school funding, cultural expression, work opportunities, voting and lifestyles. There is still an enormous gap between those who live in the big house and those who live in shacks. There are mostly African-American counties in the delta where the education level is lower than in Third World countries.

The struggle to close these gaps has a long history and continues today. The delta is the birthplace of the civil rights movement. Many of that movement's hardest battles have been fought here.

Spirituality

The delta is a land of deeply spiritual people. Religion is a powerful social force. The region's spirituality encompasses expressions of Native American, African-American, Caribbean and European ceremonial life.

For centuries, people have made pilgrimages to the delta for spiritual renewal. Even those who make pilgrimages to sites associated with early blues musicians often come for spiritual reasons.

The Blues

The blues is a complex story that is both easy to tell and hard to tell. The blues is visceral, personal, music gone naked. It is a music of people, personalities and human spirit. The blues exists wherever people bring it, so it is difficult to tie this music to sites. Many of the sites were flimsy cabins and shacks, juke joints that have since fallen down.



▲ Pectie Wheatstraw, a successful blues singer in the 1930s

Courtesy: RST Records.
The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape
of Change catalogue, Delta Cultural Center

The strength of the blues is that it has endured wherever it's been carried. We need to tell people about the conditions that forced this music to exist and give people contact with its essence.

Vicksburg National Military Park, MS.

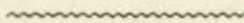


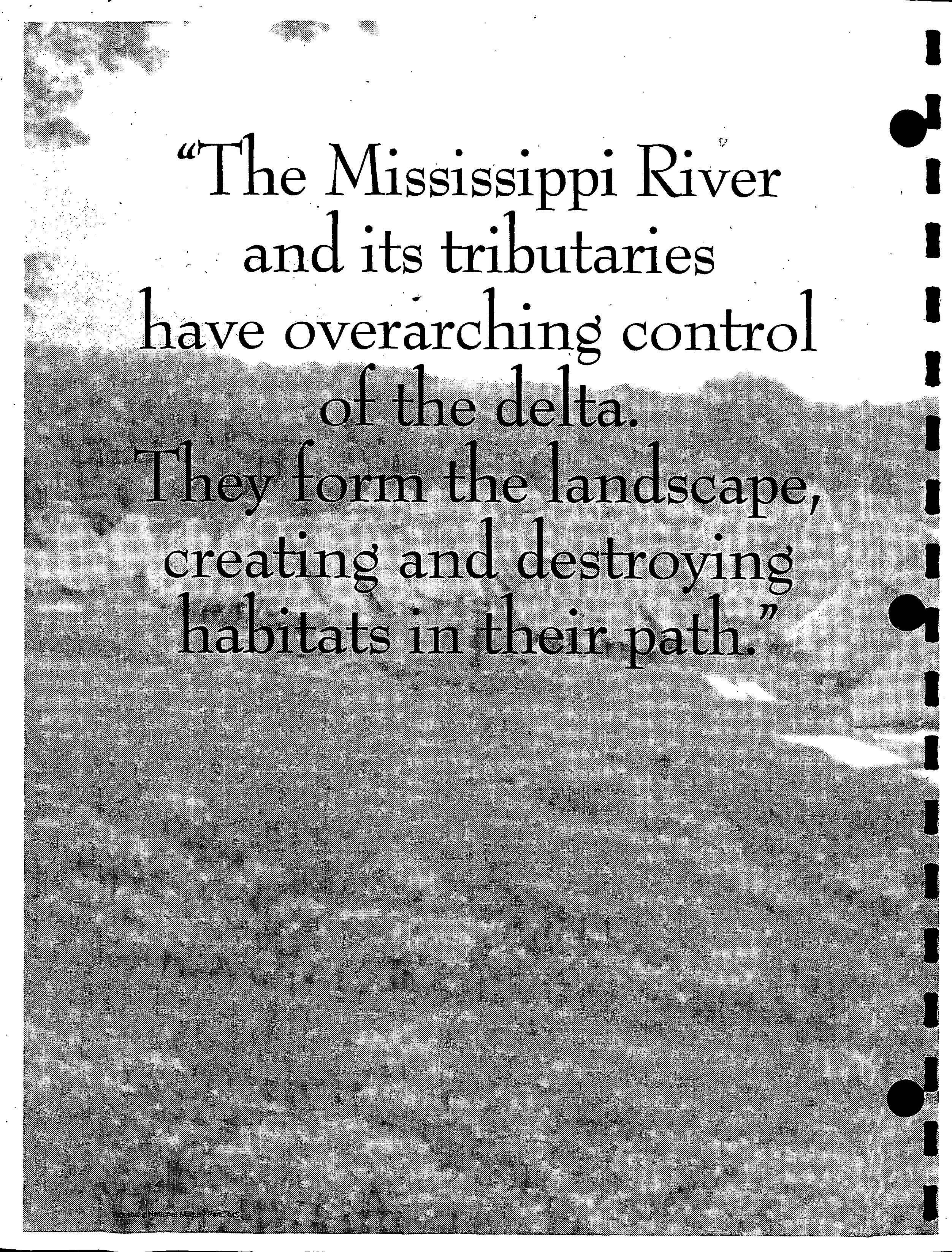
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Refugees from 1927 flood camp in Vicksburg National Military Park

Stories of the Delta

SYMPOSIUM FINDINGS





“The Mississippi River
and its tributaries
have overarching control
of the delta.
They form the landscape,
creating and destroying
habitats in their path.”

Stories of the Delta: Symposium Findings

Peopling Places: Families, Lifeways, Communities, Cultural Identity

The heart of the symposium was the discussion of "stories"—the people, places and events that have shaped the delta and given the region its universally recognized character. The following is a summary of the topics discussed at the symposium and the stories participants feel are important for understanding this extraordinary place called the Lower Mississippi Delta.

For thousands of years, the confluence of North America's great central river system has made an inviting locale for human habitation. The Lower Mississippi Delta contains sites related to the earliest recorded history in what is now the U.S. Indeed, the region has a complexity and density of history and prehistory that is outstanding.



▲ *A family at home on the edge of a Delta plantation, around 1870*

Illustration by A. R. Waud.
 Courtesy: Historic New Orleans Collection,
 The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

Successive generations of Native Americans took advantage of the region's accessibility and its varied animal and plant life. Centuries later, Europeans and the Africans they enslaved competed with the territory's native occupants and among themselves to dominate the lush, resource-rich land. The story of the mingling and clashing of the delta's various cultures in their efforts to control the environment is a still recurring theme.

The delta's cultural identity is as complex as it is important to the larger culture we call "American." Although specific to each location within the delta, a regional identity is recognizable across the cultural

landscape. First, it was born out of the struggles and triumphs of diverse peoples maintaining and melding their cultural ties through generations. Native Americans, despite devastation by disease, war and removal policies, have survived and today continue to have an important presence in the delta. Africans, brought to this country as slaves, adapted to life in the new world in spite of the overwhelming oppression of their new surroundings. They survived the years of slavery, sharecropping, Jim Crow laws and lynchings to initiate the largest civil rights movement in American history. Acadians, pushed from their homeland in Nova Scotia, established thriving, new communities in Louisiana despite prejudice and poverty.

It is important to examine the economic pressures and opportunities that have shaped communities and individual choices. The migration of people (and cultures) in and out of the delta has always been a significant part of life in this region.

Early Inhabitants and Native Americans

11000 B.C.–1600 A.D.

Migration: There is much debate over when people first settled the Mississippi Delta. Estimates range from 11,000 to 14,000 B.C. We do know that around 11,000 B.C. families of hunter/gatherers began to form small bands, or clans. Agriculture later emerged as a means of sustenance. Mounds and cities along the river's edge indicate that stable, centralized societies used the river for transportation and trade.



▲ *Pinson Mounds, Pinson, TN*


Native Americans who lived in what is now the southeastern U.S. followed these migration patterns:

Population

- Pre-12000 B.C. — No hard evidence of settlements
- 12000-10000 B.C. — Rapid migration from the North
- 6500 B.C. — Plains bison hunters
- 200 B.C.-100 A.D. — Illinois Valley peoples

Depopulation

- 6500-500 B.C. — Native Mississippians declined or moved
- 1450 A.D.-1650 A.D. — Influx of European diseases

18  Around 600 A.D. large groups of native people began to migrate elsewhere, although the exact reason for this exodus remains unknown. Later, with the arrival of Europeans and Africans, newly imported diseases caused widespread death, social reorganization and forced migration among the native peoples of the delta.

The massive depopulation of native peoples that occurred between 1450-1650 contributed to a loss of identity, as did differential death rates (elders died off first, damaging oral tradition). Changes in social organization that resulted from the depopulation included the disbanding of chiefdoms into composite tribes.

The Hopewellian Intrusion of native people from the northwest occurred around 200 B.C.-300 A.D. Semicircular earthworks exist at Marksville, LA, Little and Big Spanish Fort, MS and Leist, MS.

Spirituality: The Choctaw creation story comes out of Philadelphia, MS where the "mother mound," Nanih Waiya, is located. According to this story, the first Choctaw people emerged from hiding in a cave under the mound.

The Natchez Indians worshipped the sun. Their green corn ceremony was an important ritual.

The earliest known mounds in the delta were built around 5,000 B.C. Archaeological evidence supports their use in religious/spiritual ceremonialism and ritual feasting. The positioning of the mounds indicates that their builders used the four directions—north, south, east and west—for symbolic, as well as directional guidance.

Between 1350-1450, the native people of the southeast developed elaborate expressions of

ceremonialism. Different tribes developed new and very different religious movements and rituals, perhaps in response to the mini-ice age that was occurring simultaneously. This was a period of extensive mound building throughout the southeast.

Gender Roles: The line of descent among the delta tribes was passed down through the women. Later, Europeans, fresh from their patrilineal societies, had tremendous difficulties dealing with Native American matrilineal cultures. With women sitting on councils, the ruling Native American organizations functioned quite differently than the more competitive European governments.

The Choctaw had a particularly egalitarian concept of gender roles called "minks": whoever is best for the job does it. Choctaw use of this term continues today. The minks concept, however, has been difficult to maintain because the European mentality tends to have a much stricter separation of gender roles. The Cherokee revered grandmothers as wise counselors. Women were highly involved in decision-making, and tribal government reflected a balance of gender roles in both leadership and public participation.

Females were largely responsible for gathering and growing food, although little is known of their labors, since most prehistoric archaeology focuses on hunting.

Community Organization: It is important to look at native cultures as differently organized from others—not less civilized. For example, according to the western European traditions, agriculture is a major indicator of an advancing civilization. Although the native people farmed the delta's rich bottom land long before the whites and African-Americans arrived, they also relied on the region's plentiful food supplies that was readily available through hunting and gathering.

Most native people had participatory governments that operated as an educational system, whereby the talented are chosen to move ahead based on their achievements.

Intercultural Relations: Archaeological data suggests that the early mound builders who lived along the lower Mississippi developed trade networks with tribes to the north and west. Mounds dating back to around 800 A.D. show the existence of seven river towns near Memphis.

For centuries, Chickasaw, Choctaw and other area tribes have used "The Bluffs" near Chucalissa as an important meeting place. This area has always been a place of convergence and commerce.

Food: The Native Americans ate beans and corn as the main staples of their diet. The Native Americans introduced the Spanish to a style of indirect heat cooking called "barbacoa." Members of Coronado's expedition enjoyed tomatoes, peppers and other exotic foods unknown in Europe.

European Exploration and Settlement

1600-1800

Migration: Early Spanish settlers in southeastern Mississippi treated the Choctaw as a sovereign nation. Although their presence in the area was relatively short-lived, the Spanish left their cultural stamp on life in the delta's southern reaches. For example, much of the French Quarter's famous architecture has Spanish roots.



◀ Hernando De Soto

Courtesy: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior

In 1686, a French settlement at Arkansas Post became the first permanent white settlement in the Valley. Mobile, New Orleans, Natchez and St. Genevieve followed.

During the 1720s the delta became home to an influx of French colonists, along with a large number of Germans. The influence of the French Creole culture can still be seen along the Gulf Coast from Pensacola, FL to Biloxi, MS, to New Orleans, LA.

By the 1720s European slave traders began transporting enslaved Africans to the delta. During this

same time period, free people of color migrated to the delta from Haiti and other Caribbean countries.

In 1755 the British forced French Acadians out of Nova Scotia. Many Acadians subsequently migrated to Louisiana.

As many as 1,000 Cherokee Indians, seeking to escape the pressures of white settlement in the southeast, migrated to the delta and settled along the St. Francis River in northeast Arkansas in the 1790s. The Cherokee had the permission of the Spanish colonial government to settle there. The Spanish welcomed emigrants from eastern Indian tribes to settle in the delta as trading partners and to provide a buffer against more hostile Indian tribes to the west. These "western" Cherokee continued to live along the St. Francis until the New Madrid earthquake and its aftershocks in 1811-1812 destroyed their villages, after which they moved to the west, out of the delta region.

Spirituality: European missionaries and their religion had a devastating effect on the Native Americans and their linkages to their native spirituality. Some Native Americans maintained and modified their spirituality through underground religions and practices, while others became Christians; many of their descendants have continued as practicing Christians.

Intercultural Relations: In general, the French were more cooperative and successful than the English at interacting with the indigenous peoples of the delta. The more inclusive, partnership-oriented approach of the French towards Native Americans and others underlies the delta's spirit of acceptance and merging of diverse cultures.

By 1720 settlers in the delta were mostly French bachelors who often married Native Americans and African-Americans. The French were affected by Indians in balancing gender roles. "Casket girls" were sent over from European orphanages to become brides in the "New World."

The Choctaw Civil War pitted pro-English against pro-French tribe members.

Slavery: By 1720 the African slave trade was growing, along with the new sugar cane industry. Many enslaved Africans were brought over from the Gambia River Valley and elsewhere along Africa's west coast. By the early

1800s slavery was a deeply embedded southern institution. During the early years of African slavery, more men were sold into bondage. Later, slave traders brought over more African females to help increase the slave population.

British traders and Native American agents acting for colonial plantations and Charleston, SC, sought both furs and slaves in the region. Choctaw and Quapaw Indians (from Arkansas) were taken for the slave trade. The French added to the disorder and violence in the area. They persuaded southern Indian groups to attack British allies in the east and capture slaves for French Louisiana's plantations.

The Cajuns: In 1755 French Catholic settlers were driven from their homes in Nova Scotia by the British. Many eventually settled in "New Acadia" in southern Louisiana. The Acadians became known as Cajuns.

The Cajuns strongly influenced the region's local cultures. Their observations of Catholic holy days included special Christmas, Mardi Gras, Easter and New Year's celebrations. Cajun processions, such as their observance of Mardi Gras, and birth and death rituals are still deeply embedded in Louisiana culture.

The River: The Cajuns and Creoles of southern Louisiana shared connections with French colonial cultures along the upper Mississippi in Missouri and Illinois. These French settlements of the northern delta were extensions of and linkages with the Louisiana French. Paradoxically, the river is a dividing line, as well as a connecting link. The scale of the river with its swamps on both sides often separated peoples that lived in close proximity.

Agriculture: Sugar cane and rice were introduced from the Caribbean. The introduction of rice had an enormous impact on agriculture. Africans brought with them agricultural knowledge and technical skills that far superseded their contributions of labor.

Food: The Native Americans taught the Europeans and Africans how to prepare the strange native plants and animals. The new settlers often combined the foods and cooking traditions they brought with them with those of the native people. Also there was a strong taste of the Caribbean connection in Louisiana cuisine.

U.S. Western Expansion and Antebellum Period

1800-1860

Migration: Sephardic Jews migrated to New Orleans from the Mediterranean. Many Irish day laborers came to the delta in the 1830s where they often were considered more expendable than slaves. They were expected to work at the most dangerous and unpleasant jobs, such as heavy construction work in malaria areas. Free English African-Americans migrated to the delta. By 1830 a small community of Filipinos had established a fishing village in southern Louisiana.

In the 1830s, many African-American slaves were transported to the delta from Virginia and the Carolinas. Transpiedmont Scots-Irish moved to the lower delta from the mountains. Also in the 1830s, other Euro-Americans migrated from the east and southeastern U.S. to the delta which was then known as the "Southwest."

A period of Native American migration converged with the rise of Blackhawk, a renown Native American spiritual leader.

Native American Issues: Despite efforts by the Choctaw to emulate the white people's ways and their petitions to Congress in the 1830s, both the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes were displaced from their homelands during Andrew Jackson's "Indian Removal" of the 1830s. The removal was "completed" by 1838. Some Choctaw hid in the Mississippi hill country, managing to remain in the delta after the removal.

During the 1830s, most removal routes for the Five Civilized Tribes (Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole) from the east went through Arkansas, either by land or up the Arkansas River.

Slavery: African-American women were transported from the upper South to increase the slave population on delta plantations. By the 1800s, a few of the larger plantations were worked by hundreds of African-Americans. Most plantations did not have large numbers of enslaved people. However, Louisiana was known for its concentration of large slave holdings. Friar's Point was the place where the first African-American slaves came into Mississippi.

Intercultural Relations: The largest free African-American population in the U.S. was in Louisiana. By the 1850s,

many African-American Creoles from New Orleans were part of that city's upper-class. After the Civil War, African-American Creoles lost their social standing. There were numerous Creoles of color near Natchitoches, as well as in New Orleans. Native Americans and African-Americans shared a sense of being outcasts.

People of the Caribbean and their traditions coming up through the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans influenced delta culture.

Spirituality: Voodoo was brought to the delta by enslaved Africans from Haiti. Voodoo spread up river and eventually influenced African-American religion in the South. It is a spiritual system that is based on the Dahomey religion of West Africa and that merges with or borrows from Christianity. Voodoo is a story that should be told very carefully and from the inside. It is a very private cultural belief and not for public domain.

Whites on the Gulf Coast tended to be Catholic; they tended to be Protestants upriver.

Gender Roles: White women helped introduce their religions and organized churches. The Methodist and Presbyterian denominations flourished, as women played the role of home missionaries.

Frances Wright was an early white civil rights worker who started the Tennessee Communal Community. She arranged to move an entire African-American community to Haiti from Neshoba County, MS.

The role of the African-American woman in the white woman's household increased. African-American women influenced many white families and children.

During and after plantation period, women of all races experienced a disconnection with the land. Until inns became commercialized, women used to operate them along the traces. Women also used to lay out bodies in cemeteries until embalming became a business.

Civil War, Reconstruction, Populism

1860-1900

Migration: The first great migration of African-Americans out of the Mississippi River Delta occurred just after Reconstruction.

The small town of Mound Bayou, MS, was founded in 1887 by Isaiah Montgomery, son of Jefferson Davis' slave, Benjamin, the foremost African-American businessman in the Reconstruction delta. It was a community where African-Americans could obtain social, political and economic rights in the post-Reconstruction South.

In 1873, 1878 and 1879, devastating yellow fever epidemics struck the city of Memphis, causing many deaths and much migration out of the area.

In the 1870s Chinese sharecroppers and laborers were recruited from China and from New Orleans.

After the abolition of slavery, whole family groups left plantations, although many stayed on as tenant farmers or sharecroppers. After Reconstruction, many formerly enslaved people from the delta moved to other parts of the South or out of the region altogether. In 1879, hundreds of African-Americans migrated from Vicksburg, MS, Memphis, TN and Helena, AR to Kansas. Different ethnic groups moved up and down the river. There was a scattering of people.

In the 1880s many Sicilian, Jewish, Lebanese people migrated to the delta.

Intercultural Relations: Most whites did not view themselves as racists but believed that the races were fundamentally different and that white supremacy was a function of "natural order."

In 1866 race riots erupted in Memphis and Vicksburg. Also in Memphis, there were conflicts between the free African-American local community and migrating African-Americans from the lower delta. In 1873-4, large numbers of African-Americans were massacred in Louisiana.

In 1893 Sicilians were lynched in Talullah, LA and New Orleans.

Gender Roles: Mississippi was the first state that allowed women the right to keep property after marriage.

Working Life: African-American women, young girls and children hired on as domestic workers. Within the African-American communities of the delta, survival was seen as a form of resistance to oppression. There was a belief among many whites that field work and manual labor were beneath them.

Process of Change: Progressivism, World Wars I and II, Great Depression

1900-1950

Migration: The second great migration of African-Americans out of the delta immediately followed World War I. People began using the railroad to travel between the delta and industrial centers in the North. The railroads and railroad stations became very important. The third great migration followed World War II.



▲ Tenant couple, around 1935

Courtesy: Arkansas History Commission.
The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

Poverty and oppression, coupled with job opportunities in the North, were major causes for these migrations.

The mechanization of agriculture and the availability of domestic work outside the delta played huge roles in the African-American migration story. Many waves of migration occurred throughout the 20th Century. In some cases, whole families moved together. African-American newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier* helped African-American families adjust to life in these huge northern cities. The south and west sides of Chicago became satellites of the delta. Families and cultures went back and forth. There is still a very wealthy central business district in Chicago with several large African-American corporations.

The River: The Flood of 1927 was one of the greatest natural disasters in American history. The Red Cross

organized relief efforts which in some cases brought African-Americans and white people closer together. These relief efforts occurred even though certain plantation owners wanted to limit aid on their plantations.

Intercultural Relations: The first White Citizens Council was formed in Indianola, MS, in 1954.

Between the 1890s and the 1950s, African-American merchants and businessmen were lynched or driven out of their communities. In some cases, the Chinese moved in to fill the vacuum. Often the Chinese and African-American communities interacted and intermarried.

The Native Americans and African-Americans cooperated in their resistance to the Ku Klux Klan.

Progressive journalists at newspapers in Little Rock, AR and Lexington, MS began to cover racial problems. In 1919, the Elaine race riot in Phillips County, AR became a national story.

In 1919, African-American sharecroppers grew discontented with the economic squeeze put on them by white landowners in Phillips County. African-Americans began organizing the "Progressive Farmers and Household Union" to fight for fair treatment. Whites feared the unionization of so many African-Americans, particularly those employed in their households. The Union also threatened lawsuits against white landowners. Eventually, the tensions erupted into violence, with whites from Mississippi crossing the river to join in the fray. The official body count was five whites and eleven African-Americans killed, although numerous stories claim the African-American death toll ran into the hundreds. The Arkansas governor, sure that this was the start of the long-awaited African-American rebellion, called out the state guard and all African-Americans were rounded up and kept for days in stockades. Sixty-five African-Americans, all with union ties, were indicted for murder. Twelve were convicted and sentenced to be executed, although subsequent appeals of the verdicts resulted in none of the 12 being executed.

In 1946, the Choctaw Nation was officially recognized.

After World War II, Cajuns experienced a revival in cultural pride against ongoing pressure to lose their language and customs.

Working Life: According to the white plantation culture, social change and manual labor were equally undesirable. However, the hard-working, white yeoman farmers of the South were very different from their plantation counterparts. Independent farmers were generally quite poor. Even poorer and just as hard-working were the African-American farmers. The African-American sharecropping culture was a legacy of resistance.

Native American Issues: The flu epidemic of 1918 caused the deaths of many delta residents, including a large number of Choctaw. Their deaths caused the government to recognize the tribe's continued existence after the Native American Removal.

Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam

1950–Present

Migration: The African-American migrations upriver established a particularly strong and ongoing link between Chicago and the delta. Days of remembrance were set aside to commemorate migrations to northern cities.

In the 1950s many Cubans moved to New Orleans. Also in the 1950s there was a great deal of Native American migration within the region. Many Choctaw relocated to Chicago and Dallas during this period. Some returned 1970s and 1980s.

The migration of Vietnamese to southern Louisiana in the 1970s aroused initial problems. Perhaps the region's strong French influence, humid climate and spicy food mitigated their assimilation. Many of them became shrimpers.

Intercultural Relations: In the 1950s there began a restoration of the public dignity of French-based cultures. In the 1970s the University of Southern Louisiana began to offer degree programs in Acadian culture. Creoles of color reexamined their identity during the Civil Rights era.

Civil Rights Movement: White politicians omitted the votes in the African-American precincts of Mound Bayou, a town whose residents were African-American.

The 1955 lynching of 14-year-old African-American child Emmett Till in Money, MS created widespread

national awareness of racism in the South. The murders of three white voting rights workers in Philadelphia, MS increased public support for the growing civil rights movement. Fannie Lou Hamer from Ruleville, MS drew national attention for her work as a civil rights organizer.

The NAACP had begun focusing their organizing efforts on the South between the World Wars. Also churches and schools played key roles in organizing institutions to serve the needs of the African-American community.

Integration actually caused the failure of numerous African-American businesses when former customers began to patronize white merchants.

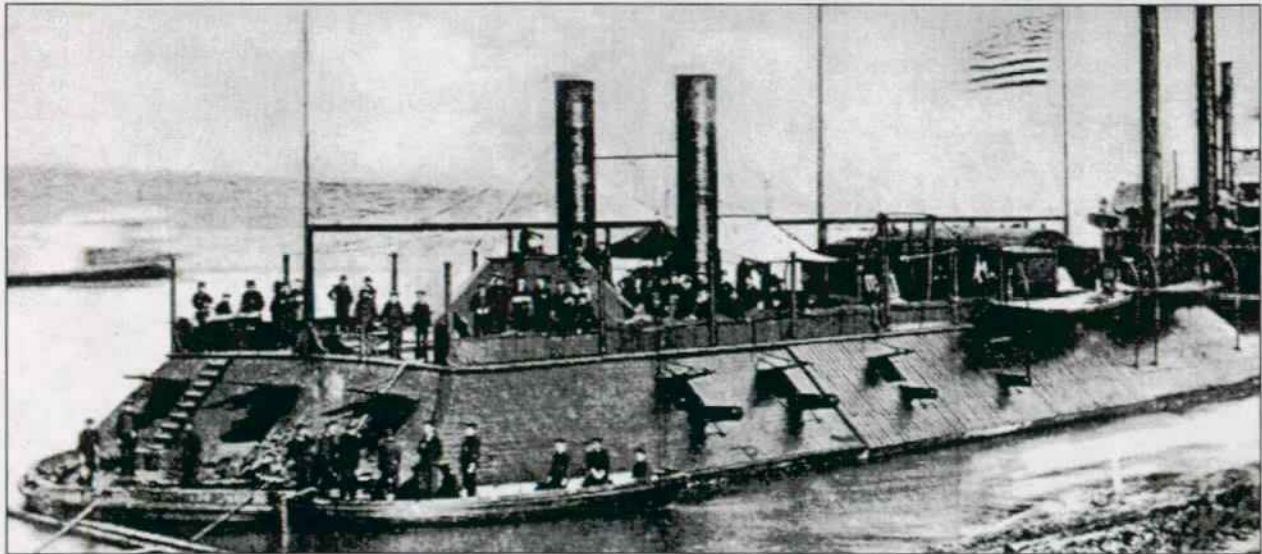
Stories of the Delta: Symposium Findings

Creating Social Institutions and Movements: Shaping the Political Landscape

Social systems, political movements and government policies have a long history shaping life within the delta. Trade patterns and political institutions of the mound building peoples predate the Europeans by many centuries. The struggles caused by European migration, slavery, Native American Removal, the Civil War, Reconstruction and the civil rights movement are only the most recent reflections of human interaction within the Mississippi River Delta.

enslaved Africans. It was a grassroots movement in which ordinary people changed the entire nation, not just the South. Incidents in the delta—in particular the confrontation at Central High School in Little Rock, AR and the murder of young Emmett Till in Money, MS—played a major part in launching the modern civil rights movement.

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▲ Union ironclad gunboat, Cairo

Vicksburg National Military Park, MS.

Before the arrival of white settlers, the delta region was the scene of much armed conflict between Native American groups seeking to control hunting land and to redress wrongs between tribes. The largest, most defining military struggle for the region, however, was the Civil War. While it freed thousands of slaves, the Civil War was an armed conflict that tore families apart and devastated the economy. The destruction of towns and cities left people homeless and without jobs. Many, especially poor African-Americans, migrated out of the region.

Identified with the 1960s, the civil rights movement was not just a 1960s phenomenon. It began with the uprisings, rebellions and the Underground Railroad of

Early Inhabitants, Native Americans

11000 B.C.–1600 A.D.

Social Structures: The Natchez Indians were sun worshippers with a highly stratified society. The upper-class was considered semi-divine, while the lower-class was equal to the untouchables of India.

Clans were present in most native societies, and most were matrilineal. Most clans were also exogamous—they had to marry outside the clan. Ceremonial complexes from 1350–1450 reveal elaborate socio-religious institutions.

Government: Chiefdoms of the North collapsed. Small groups of survivors fled south and organized composite tribes of several remnant groups. They formed a confederation which serves as the new tribal structure. Around 1350, there was a shift from local to regional chiefdoms. Exchange networks shut down.

Warfare: The period of 800–1000 A.D. was one of much warfare. Raiders from Arkansas attacked the Mississippian tribes who fortified their villages with palisades. This period coincided with the introduction of the bow and arrow. Warfare apparently continued for centuries, as witnessed by DeSoto in 1541.

European Exploration and Settlement

1600–1800

Role of Women: Often Native American women controlled marketplaces before white settlers took over. The Choctaw practice of property ownership eventually influenced white settlers and their laws.

Native American Relations: During the late 1700s leaders of tribes under siege by American expansionism visited Washington, D.C. They tried to win the respect of the white leaders by showing their civility and generosity, although this did not serve them in the end.

The Native Americans had more influence on Anglo-American culture and government than many realize. The convergence of the principles of Jeffersonian democracy and Choctaw confederacy affected both cultures. For example, early western settlers were influenced by Native American democracies and matrilineal societies. Years later, Mississippi passed the nation's first state law that gave married women property rights—an adaptation of a long-time tribal practice.

European ideas, institutions, plants, animals and diseases were introduced to the native people.

Warfare: Early European forts included Ft. Maurepas near Ocean Springs, MS; Ft. Rosalie in Natchez; Ft. St. Pierre near Vicksburg; Ft. Nogales near Vicksburg and Ft. Tombigbee.

The revolt of the Natchez Indians in 1729 resulted in the burning of Ft. Rosalie. Subsequent French retaliation resulted in destruction of the Natchez nation. In 1740,

the Chickasaw defeated the French and the Choctaw at Agoula Tchtoka near Belden, Lee County, MS.

Cajun and Creole soldiers fought in the delta alongside Anglo-Americans in the War of Independence.

US Western Expansion and Antebellum Period

1800–1860

Slavery: Slave conditions were worse in the delta than in the mountains and hill country of the Ozarks and the Appalachians. Louisiana, a true cultural melting pot, had a more accepting attitude about color. Free people of color generally had it better in Louisiana than in other parts of the South.

The abolition movement and the emerging Underground Railroad exerted great pressure on the slavery system. However, be careful of mythic representations of the Underground Railroad. More slaves escaped through New Orleans and Texas to Mexico than to the northern states.

Politics: Slavery required a police state and secure borders as one aspect of social control. Delta politicians were expansionists, always trying to move and expand U.S. borders. They were big supporters of the Texas War, Mexican War and even attempts to annex Cuba. Politics in Louisiana had a multicultural quality, in contrast to Mississippi.

Native Americans Relations: In the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the U.S. government did not actually buy the real estate from France; it bought France's "right" to the territory. Between 1819 and 1892, the U.S. fought more than 50 wars and made more than 50 treaties with the Native Americans, the original "owners" of the territory.



▲ *The Trail of Tears*

Courtesy: National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior.

The native people became "invisible" after the "Indian Removal" of 1838, even after returning to region. They were not counted in the U.S. census.

Role of Women: Memphis and Nashville became known as wild drinking towns. Women alerted churches to fight drinking.

Education: The Choctaw valued learning and had a fine education system.

Both white and African-American children were seen as a source of cheap labor, and schooling was not emphasized. This attitude is common in agrarian societies. White parents often taught children at home. African-Americans were rarely educated.

Warfare: During the War of 1812, regiments of Native Americans, free African-Americans and Cajuns joined in the successful defense of New Orleans against the British. Reflecting the cultural diversity of that city, this victory was very important to the delta and to the nation.

Civil War, Reconstruction, Populism

1860-1900

Role of Women: The Sisters of Mercy nursed both Confederate and Union wounded. The Order has a long history of service in the delta. They educated not only Catholics, but African-Americans, Creoles and non-Catholic whites for 150 years. They developed a hospital system that still has a presence in Louisiana.

Do not over-valorize the role of white women during the Civil War. African-American women also helped nurse Confederate soldiers and hold plantations together.

Politics: After Reconstruction, there was a huge backlash against African-Americans and poor whites by the white planter class. Post-Civil War politics in the delta emphasized the disenfranchisement of poor people, so they could not gain power. The "nadir of race relations" occurred from about 1890 to 1910 or so. During this time, the planter class resorted to violence and lynchings as a way to discourage political participation and voting among those they deemed unworthy.

Education: The goal of the African-American community was to have all of their community involved and able to vote and to get a good education and decent jobs. During Reconstruction, state legislatures started talking about

public education. However, children were still regarded as cheap labor. African-American schools were underfunded and the few African-American children who were educated had a shorter school year than white children. Prior to World War I, there was an infusion of federal dollars for African-American education, enabling the creation of schools such as the Rosenwald School and Cahoma Junior College.

Choctaw children were denied admission to both African-American and white schools.

Movements: There have been three Ku Klux Klan movements, which despite a clear line of descent and strong family resemblances, were separate from one another in time, organization and purpose. The first Klan flourished during Reconstruction and was all but exclusively southern in its membership and concerns. Its objective was to perpetuate white supremacy following emancipation and the conferral of civil and political rights on former slaves. It was founded at Pulaski, TN, in 1866 as a social fraternity but rapidly became a local vigilante organization. Former Confederates including Nathan Bedford Forrest converted the Klan into a paramilitary force in 1867.

Religion: African-American churches took on enormous importance in people's lives. The church assumed many roles and had an expansive, influential effect on education, civil rights, social justice and politics. The church was especially important since public school education for African-American children was so poor.

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) was founded in Memphis and later became the largest African-American denomination in the U.S. COGIC was one of the first churches to encourage its members to stand up to racism.

Warfare: Significant Civil War campaigns fought in the delta include the Corinth Campaign (Battle of Shiloh, Battle and siege of Corinth); the Vicksburg Campaign (including actions along the Yazoo River and north of Vicksburg) and the Final Campaign south and east of Vicksburg. Battles in the Final Campaign included Grand Gulf Forts, Port Gibson, Raymond, Jackson, Champion Hill, Big Black River and the Vicksburg siege. Major river battles were in New Orleans, Island #10, Memphis, Port Hudson, Fort Pillow and Helena, AR (1863).



▲ Grounds of Vicksburg National Cemetery

Vicksburg National Military Park, MS.

Some Acadians who supported the plantation system volunteered for Civil War duty. Many others were drafted. Among these, the rate of desertion was as high as 80 to 90 percent.

The African-American population in Vicksburg helped Grant's army in their campaign. Former slaves who entered the U.S. Colored Troops experienced a violent backlash after the war.

Process of Change: Progressivism, World Wars I and II, Great Depression

1900-1950

Native American Relations: In 1918, the Bureau of Indian Affairs opened an office in Mississippi, finally recognizing that Native Americans did not disappear from the delta. The Choctaw remerge from being "invisible."

Role of Women: African-American women assumed strong roles in North America, perhaps as a continuation of their African roles. African-American women became nurturers and catalysts for political action.

The women's club movement continued to have a strong impact on social and political life in urban southern communities. White women's clubs fostered

historic preservation and gardening, while African-American women's clubs focused on education and other community issues.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) sponsored rural projects all over the U.S. Through WPA-funded projects, delta women learned how to preserve food, organize school lunch programs and start visiting nurse services. Women brought libraries and writers' projects to remote rural places.

The Tennessee Legislature was the last to support women's voting rights; the bill passed by one vote. Many states never ratified the amendment, but Tennessee did so during the last year that the amendment needed to be passed to be added to the constitution. If Tennessee had not passed it, it would have been years before the effort could be launched again. Years later, the Equal Rights Amendment was not passed by enough states, and that campaign has not continued.

Social Organization: Institutions and community events were completely segregated along racial lines. For example, Memphis had one Cotton Carnival for whites and one for African-Americans.

As more African-Americans migrated to northern cities, the meaning of "extended family" became more important. Family reunions became major events where family members provided one another with social supports and work connections. The organizational skills required to gather 100 to 200 family members not only kept people connected, but provided good practice for the upcoming civil rights movement.

Politics: The racial idealism of the Republican party waned in the U.S. after 1877. This is shown in the delta in important ways: 1) Theodore Roosevelt appointed an African-American woman as postmistress of Indianola, MS. Whites then refused to get mail there. 2) Herbert Hoover toured the delta after the Flood of 1927 and met with Mary Booze and her husband in Mound Bayou, MS. Leaders of the "Black and Tan" Republican party had been "charged" by white racists for dancing with her. 3) In 1964, many whites in the delta switched to the Republican party.

Religion: There was a rise in religious activity in the delta, including an increased number of white

Pentecostal denominations and Church of God in Christ congregations. African-American churches became increasingly involved in political and community issues. They practiced a "Social Gospel" that involved tending to the needs of the congregation.

Between 1900 and 1940, the Catholic church started parochial schools in Memphis, Clarksdale, Greenville and Vicksburg. Some are extant today. Since public schools for African-Americans were so bad, these institutions played an important role. Most students were non-Catholic, although some converted.

Movements: Class and race divisions grew more severe, and white vigilante activities were more common. This extreme political atmosphere reflected a perversion of Populism that came out of plantation culture. At the turn of century, Jim Crow laws made apartheid legal in the American South.

In the African-American communities, "accommodation," or living so the next generation can survive and have a better life, became an act of resistance.

In the 1930s, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) was formed by a group of white and African-American sharecroppers in Marked Tree, AR. Later, Union headquarters were moved to Memphis. With a peak membership of 30,000, the STFU was the nation's first and largest interracial trade union. In addition to staging a successful cotton strike in 1936, the STFU opened refuges for tenant farmers who were evicted for participating in strikes. The union organized a farming cooperative called Providence Farm in Holmes County, MS, that was the only place in the state known to house Socialists. Another STFU cooperative was called Hillhouse Farm in Cahoma County, MS. The first use of a mechanical cotton picker was at Hillhouse Farm. Later, some of the STFU's union organizing skills were put to use to help establish the civil rights movement.

The struggle to organize the Pullman Porters Union in the delta brought African-American men valuable organizing skills that also carried over to the civil rights movement. The church was yet another, powerful harbinger of the movement. The goal preached from pulpits in African-American churches across the delta was "maximum feasible participation"—i.e. to be fully integrated and involved in every aspect of community life.

After World Wars I and II, African-American soldiers wanted more rights in recognition of service to country. The Cajuns also experienced a surge in cultural pride and resistance to discrimination after both World Wars.

The Ku Klux Klan underwent surges of popularity in the early 1900s and 1920s.

Education: Public school systems in the delta generally provided a poor education, especially for African-Americans. The delta's history of education is unique, involving plantation schools, Rosenwald schools, Freedom schools and Head Start. After the Civil War, there was an infusion of northern philanthropy for all-African-American schools (for example, the Rosenwald Fund). Prior to World War I, there was an infusion of Federal dollars for African-American high schools. Although white state politicians were not eager for this money to reach poor, rural schools, some African-American communities figured out how to by-pass state government to get the added Federal support.

African-Americans in the South generally valued education, because they knew it would help them overcome racist conditions. But whites tried to deny African-Americans the power of literacy, thereby denying them the right to vote when they could not meet literacy rules. Depriving African-Americans and poor whites of a quality education was simply a control tactic.

The struggle for quality public education continued in the delta because the old planter class thought education should be private. After World War II, the Federal government recognized the delta's illiteracy problem and allocated more money for public schools in African-American counties. However, the emphasis remained on vocational skills training, such as bricklaying, carpentry and other trades that would keep African-Americans in the servant class. Agricultural high schools were at the root of the Community College System in Mississippi. Hines Jr. College in Jackson, MS is a good example.

A law that passed in the Louisiana Legislature in 1916 made it illegal to speak French in public school classrooms. This was a great blow to the Cajun community and served to disintegrate their culture and language. Since most Cajun children only spoke French, they were, in essence, humiliated by their initial inability to deal with schooling. Eventually, many abandoned their

language and taught only English to their own children. This process began to be reversed in the 1960s as efforts were made to restore the French language through the schools.

Choctaw children still had to go to Oklahoma for their high school education.

The first African-American college in Arkansas was built in the delta town of Pine Bluff in 1881.

Prisons: Angola in Louisiana, Parchman Farm in Mississippi and Cummins Farm Plantation Prison in Arkansas were treacherous, hard-labor prisons made famous by delta prison blues songs such as "Midnight Special." The guards ran convict leasing and prostitution businesses. The treatment of African-American prisoners was inhumane and worse than slavery.

Prohibition: The Lower Mississippi Delta harbors many stories about bootlegging, including tales of Bonnie and Clyde and of rum-running submarines that stole beneath the Mississippi.

Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam

1950–Present

Native Americans Relations: As the Choctaw continued to remigrate to the delta, they brought back their democracies, schools and other institutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. Diverse native groups returned to the Bluffs at Chickasaw Heritage Park at Chucalissa south of Memphis. The reemergence of the Native Americans was supported by African-American and white communities.

Role of Women: Most delta people highlighted in the civil rights movement were men. However, there were many women who played major roles. The region's heroines included Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer and others.

Daisy Bates played a significant role during the Central High Crisis in Little Rock in 1957. Bates was the primary counselor for the "Little Rock Nine." She was also editor at the time of the *Arkansas State Press*, a black newspaper. One might call her the Ida B. Wells of Little Rock.

Mae Bertha Carter of Drew, MS, put her seven children into all white schools in 1955.

Civil Rights: African-American resistance to racism is a recurring theme in the delta. The delta was the national focus for the civil rights struggle in the 1950s and 1960s. African-Americans have not been "victims." They have a strong tradition of resistance and have long taken an active part in the struggle against racism.

In 1954, the Klan reemerged more determined than ever to stop integration. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional and ordered that African-American students be allowed to attend Central High School in Little Rock, AR. From the beginning, high school students were very active in civil rights movement.

Later, battles for control over the Freedom schools and Head Start programs increased the spotlight on the delta's racial problems. Emmett Till's murder also drew the glare of national media to the delta. However, there were cases of peaceful, successful integration in the delta. For example, African-Americans registered without incident at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette in the early 1960s.

The civil rights movement came to full bloom in the 1960s. African-American church leaders, especially members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), became the recognized organizers of the movement. Local African-American churches were springboards for local action (example: Love Feast Baptist Church in Louise, MS). Also, many whites were committed to the struggle for African-American civil rights. The YWCA's mission called for local chapters to offer their facilities as a meeting place to facilitate integration.

One important outcome of the "Mississippi Freedom Summer" was its impact on its own volunteers. Mario Savio went on to organize the free speech movement at Berkeley. William Kunstler became a famous attorney for the oppressed. James Foreman and John Lewis remained active in civil rights. Marion Berry, Benny Thompson and others went into politics.

At the 1964 Democratic Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer put the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the national spotlight. Her actions led to rule changes regarding the racial imbalance of southern state delegations.

The black power movement split the civil rights movement in the middle 1960s. The "Meredith March" became the "March Against Fear" and finally the "Black Power March" in 1966. Black power energized the civil rights struggle for a time, especially in the North.

Both the civil rights movement and War on Poverty brought significant changes to the delta. In the 1960s, "Freedom City" in Fayette County, TN and other tent cities drew attention to the plight of poor people. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis in 1968. The Poor People's Campaign, which began in Memphis after Dr. King's assassination, attempted to link racism, poverty and lack of jobs in the minds of the American people.

National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN



▲ National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN. Site of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination

Politics: The War on Poverty was important throughout the delta. The goal was to improve health care, nutrition, housing and social services. The War on Poverty especially affected counties with the highest concentration of African-Americans in the nation.

Education: The delta's first public high school for Choctaw students opened in 1963.

Although the New Deal allocated federal money for local school projects, the money was in block grants

controlled by the states. There was competition for War on Poverty funds and a battle over Head Start control. Head Start organizers figured out how to by-pass state government to access the money. Once politicians realized the purpose of Head Start, they undermined its funding.

The early childhood education concepts behind the Freedom schools played a role in the development of African-American preschools around the nation.

Stories of the Delta: Symposium Findings

Expressing Cultural Values

The Lower Mississippi Delta is known worldwide for its richness of cultural expression. Some believe the blues were born in the delta, while gospel, ragtime, jazz, rhythm & blues, rock & roll, zydeco and country music flourished there. The literature produced by delta writers has profoundly influenced our national identity. The performing arts are at the foundation of the Native American and African-American cultures, although in very different ways. The architecture, painting, folk art, food and other reflections of culture reflect the adaptation of many peoples to the delta's physical environment and gives the region a special sense of place.

Music is a language that interprets life in the Lower Mississippi Delta in a way that no other mode of expression can. Music teaches family values and respect for traditions, is an emotional outlet, brings the community together (funerals, births and celebrations), and reflects family life and the lives of the people who compose and perform it.

Music in the Lower Mississippi Delta is a result of the integration of many cultures coexisting and interacting with each other. It is the result of an interweaving of Creole, Cajun, Anglo, Celtic and African-American musical traditions. Delta music has had a significant impact on musical forms around the world.

Notwithstanding its many assets, the delta has been (and, to some extent, still is) a region of oppression, hardship and poverty. In fact, some experts assert that this very oppression is at the root of delta's remarkable cultural ingenuity. The stories of the delta are strongly connected to the local environment, the climate, the cultures and the hardships of life. The delta's hot, humid climate has had a major affect on the region's cultural values and the way people do things.

Delta Cultures

Cultural Diversity: The delta is the place where many cultures converged—but not necessarily combined—in a neutral territory. It is important to look at both the

fluidity and strength of the various delta people's cultural boundaries.

The South is a myth-making region. Many great American stories come from the delta. Similar in romanticism to the myths of the frontier West, the myth of the antebellum South endures to this day.

The Creoles tell an important delta story. The term "Creole" has many different and complex meanings that are defined differently by those who are speaking. Some say the Creoles were the descendants of the French and Spanish who first settled Louisiana. Others say the term refers to people of color with light skin and mixed racial backgrounds.

Exploitation: For many, the river created the illusion that great opportunities were just around each bend. The endless fertile fields, abundant wildlife and vast forests conjured up fantastic possibilities to exploit the land and make money quickly. Few were successful.

New Orleans: New Orleans was atypical of American cities. Not Anglo in origin, New Orleans was home to people of French, African and Mediterranean descent. New Orleans society was strong, intellectual and fluid.

The River: There is a rich folklore and many folk tales associated with work on the river. Those people who live and work on the river, once referred to in unflattering terms as "river rats," are few now, but once they were well known up and down the river and its tributaries. The rich culture of these people should be explored and their heritage celebrated before they disappear completely. Shreveport Bottoms music is already gone.

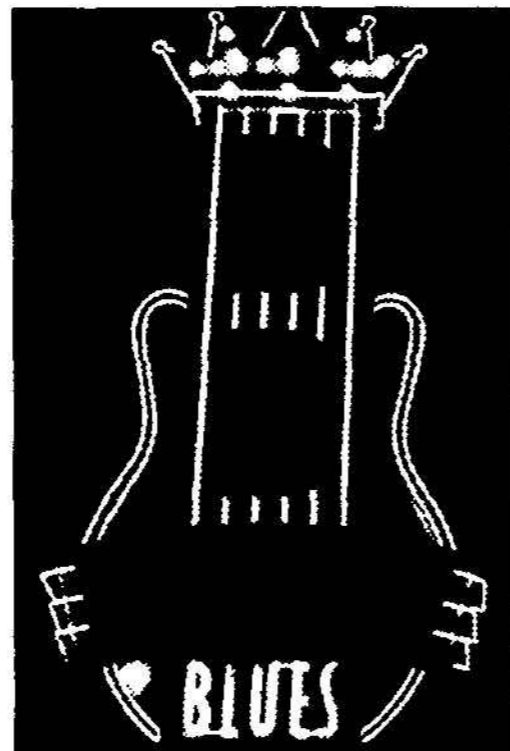


▲ River home in the Delta

Music

Music Styles: The music of the delta is complex and difficult to categorize. The following music forms should be included in stories of the Lower Mississippi Delta:

- Native American:
Ceremonial, rituals, spirituals.
- Christian Religious music:
Spirituals, gospels.
- Cajun & Zydeco music:
Creole la-la, Decima singing, Isleña Spanish, old time Cajun traditional style, swamp pop, Cajun rock, Mardi Gras music.
- French music:
Guillonnee and mumming.
- Jazz:
Tin pan alley, Dixieland jazz, funeral marching bands and other brass bands, modern jazz (New Orleans and Memphis).
- Folk (non-commercial, community oriented):
Field hollers, work songs, jug bands, street bands, street singers, tap dancing, New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian songs.
- Blues:
Delta, Memphis, Baton Rouge, St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City.
- Rhythm & Blues:
New Orleans style and Memphis soul music.
- Country music:
Blue yodels, honky tonk.
- Rock & Roll music:
Rockabilly.
- World music:
African, Caribbean.



▲ Blues places in the Delta

Native American Music: The music of the Native American people was and is communal and ceremonial in nature. Traditionally not a performing art, much Native American music is still private and not widely commercialized. Native American music is a form of storytelling. Its songs tell of traditions and historical events and provide information about how to live in the world. It is familiar yet dynamic community music that has held the native cultures together for a long time.

Often African-Americans and Europeans thought Native American music was based on the music of non-typical tribes such as the Mardi Gras Indians. The powwow is generally taken from the Plains Indian tradition

and is an overlay of public performance that is not part of the delta native cultures.

Cultural Crossover: Music arises from the common roots we all have to sing and dance, to express feelings, to feel alive. It is a mistake to tell the music stories of the delta as separate stories. They are complex, often integrated and frequently influenced each other.

The delta is the cradle, the bread basket of American music. The confluence of the various cultures made the music which spread via the Mississippi and its arteries all over the country and eventually the world. The river and its tributaries facilitated the movement of music. It is no accident that New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis and Chicago share similar music forms.

Frontier and rural areas near major cities attract different cultures. Music forms arise from encounters with different cultures. Cultural creativity in the delta is synergistic, resulting from the region's European/African-American/Native American roots. Thus, the hymn "Amazing Grace" was written by a white man, but "Precious Lord" is by an African-American. Elvis had white and African-American musical roots as did Aretha Franklin. Country music has been influenced by jazz, blues and other forms of African-American music. The banjo was an African instrument taken up by white musicians.

Many of the African-Americans and many of the European-Americans felt displaced in the delta. With this displacement from their cultures and homes of long standing, their personal values came to life. The love of land was tied in with the delta's unusual sense of place and contributed to the creation a strong, vibrant musical culture.

European Musical Heritage: The wealthy frequently look outside their own physical environment for high culture. In New Orleans, the wealthy French went to great lengths to import European culture to the American frontier. They did not create their own institutions, but instead brought in French musicians and opera companies. The folk music of New Orleans' early German and Italian settlers made its way into the vernacular music of the region.

Jazz: In New Orleans' Congo Square, African-Americans were permitted to congregate and play music

in the 18th and 19th centuries. Congo Square was important as a site for the development of African-American music which lead eventually to the development of jazz. Storyville, located on the site of old Congo Square, later became the Basin St. "Red Light District." This area was associated with many jazz legends such as Buddy Bolten, Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton.

The Blues: The blues was developed by people engaged in struggle, infused with spirit and speaking in dialect. Rooted in African music, the blues evolved from field hollers, the work songs that often carried deeply layered, coded messages.

It is said that misery produces creativity and resiliency. The blues tells stories of frustrated love, broken homes and other miseries of displaced people. The blues is the act of telling your story to confirm your loss and reassert control of your life. You can weep your blues away, or you can sing your blues away.

The blues has a class situation that must be experienced. To understand the blues, you must feel the delta's oppressive heat, see the cotton fields and grasp the poverty. The blues is a music of hard working people. People who sang the blues were tenant farmers and sharecroppers—not the plantation owners.

It is distinct, indigenous music that came from front porches and back yards. It is played by musicians with no formal training. Often political messages were sung; spirituality was exchanged. The blues was a source of comfort and a way to be uplifted. One old song told of a man named "Stutter" Williams who did not stutter when he sang the blues.

The success of the blues was a relatively recent phenomenon. For years it went unrecognized as a commercially viable form of music because issues of race limited its exposure and enjoyment. It was also subsumed under other types of music such as jazz and rock & roll. Delta blues was a rural sound that was strongly connected to place. Through a complex process, Delta blues evolved into urban blues and eventually into rock & roll and other modern musical styles. As the blues developed and moved on, some forms were no longer connected to place.

The early recording of the blues was generally done by folklorists. Over time, the blues began to circulate the nation, thanks largely to radio. Elvis Presley crossed the blues over to white music. Rap music is contemporary blues that draws on past blues themes and musicians.

The delta blues was played in places that rarely exist today. The plantations may still be there, but the shacks where the music was generated are gone. Old time delta blues barely exists and is now mostly for new types of audiences. Pilgrims come to the delta from Japan, Germany, France—all over the world—to see where the blues was born. Many Mississippi bluesmen were born in Arkansas.

Regional and local styles of the delta blues present subtle changes that may need to be reintroduced.

Cajun Music: The white French Cajuns had their own blues, as befitting an exiled people. Cajun blues was sung in French. Cajun music has some linkages with rag time and country music. As part of the Louisiana blend of cultures, Cajun music complemented other Lower Mississippi Delta styles.

Zydeco: The music of the African Creoles of Louisiana was called la-la or Creole music. Later jurés or Creole shouts were instrumentalized to produce Zydeco. Sung in French or English, this was a style that developed parallel to Cajun music.

Music Industry: The connection between the delta and the music industry of New York and other urban centers began when W.C. Handy introduced the sounds of Beale Street to tin pan alley. Later Stax Music, one of several enterprises in Memphis in the 1960s and 1970s, pioneered the southern recording industry in Memphis. In fact, Stax, Sun Studios, Millers and other delta recording companies brought the sounds of the delta to the nation and the world.

The blues was recorded in Memphis before the Depression and then in Chicago. The blues was rural by nature but recorded in the city.

The emergence of Elvis via Sun Studios opened up a whole new genre of delta recording artists, many of whom had been performing for years. Swamp poppers, Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, Bobby Charles, Rod Bernard, Dale & Grace, Cookie & the Cupcakes and more.

Early recording companies such as Columbia, RCA (Victor, Bluebird), and Decca recorded African-American and white musicians playing together. Later, Louisiana record men such as J. D. Miller, Eddie Shuler, Floyd Soileau, and Carol Redeau took over the production of Cajun, Zydeco and swamp pop music.

Festivals: Festivals are a vital part of southern life. Harvest festivals help express feelings of heart and religion. Most festivals are ethnic and include music, dancing, related crafts and regional foods.

Music festivals are critical to music evolution in the South. They bring together musicians who make new music. Blues festivals were started by African-Americans after World War II as an effort to strengthen their cultural identity. In the 1960s and 1970s, Memphis was the site of several blues festivals that brought together "counterculture" whites and African-Americans of Memphis, Arkansas and northern Mississippi. When these blues festivals became profitable, they were taken over by big promoters and spread throughout the world.

Music events of note include blues festivals at Helena, AR, Greenville, MS, Clarksdale, MS and Memphis, TN. The Jazz & Heritage Festival in New Orleans is also a very popular event.

Festival Acadiens in Lafayette serves as an annual focus for Cajun music, while the Zydeco festival in Plaisance does the same for Creole music.

Dance

Native American: The Choctaw were accomplished dancers and used dance as part of their ceremonial rituals. There is good evidence that dance rituals still in use date back to the Mississippians in 1300 A.D. Some say they date back to at least 4500 B.C. Choctaw house dances are still popular.

Blues: The blues is unusual since it has never had a specific dance associated with it. However, there is plenty of dancing to the blues.

Visual Arts and Crafts

Native American: The visual arts of the native people told stories and helped their people understand their community traditions.

Some of the most notable craft work of the delta Indians is their basketry. Some baskets are woven from cane that grows only in certain parts of Mississippi. Some are made from pine needles and others from bark. The Native Americans believe that their baskets reflect their philosophical way of looking at life. Rooted in land and spirit, the baskets come back to the community to serve a community function. The Native Americans do not differentiate their art forms into categories of "functional" and "ornamental."

European Traditions: When the delta was settled by whites, European painting traditions were very formal. French settlers preferred their fine art (like their music) imported. With fine art came status.

The visual arts document a culture. In 1850, French priest, Joseph Peritt, documented the delta's plantations, buildings, costumes and plants that truly represent the area.

Folk Traditions: While the rich got their art from Europe, the art of working delta people was folk art.

Much of the visual arts of the delta is practical. Folk art is produced for utilitarian purposes and is integrated into people's lives. The people of the delta produced many "life crafts"—survival items such as quilts and tools that they used themselves or sold so they could live. Handmade items were a necessity of life. Now many of these life crafts are valuable.

Folk art uses images of country folk life—the buildings, fields, plants and animals that truly represent the delta. It is vernacular art with the strong pull of folk culture. Quilt making reflects the design traditions of the different cultures. For example, 3-D design and bright colors were African contributions. Signs and murals made by hand were photographed by America's greatest photographers. Yard art, such as gourd bird houses, wooden windmills and tire planters, are locally crafted public displays of ethnicity and culture.



▲ Folk art

The art and decorations inside juke joints include some spectacular representations of vernacular art, but much of this is gone.

Locals sometimes plant cedar trees and replace odd side crosses and/or Virgin Mary statues to mark the places on the road where someone has died.

A validation of all forms of folk art started to occur after World War II.

Painting: Painting in the delta has often been linked to music. Clementine Hunter's paintings told the stories behind blues and gospel singers. More primitive forms documented playing of music itself. Carol Cloar, George Rodrigue and Floyd Souder all painted music themes.

In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, African-American artists at Tougaloo painted wonderful murals of local scenes and social practices.

Architecture

Native American architecture: Mound sites reflect the size, scale, political systems, religious views and systems,

trade centers, commerce and social structures of Native Americans. The moundbuilders may have been the ancestors of the Natchez, Tunica-Biloxi and other Native American groups still in the area today.

Most southeastern Indian houses were built by digging wall trenches in a rectangular pattern. Upright poles were inserted and covered, the tops were bent together and tied, walls were split, and woven cane plastered with thick mud (daub). Roofs were thatched.

The Choctaw built log cabins in fields. They sometimes constructed special buildings above the ground. Sometimes their houses had seven sides.

In the winter, the Choctaw extended family lived in the center of a house rimmed with porches. In warmer weather, they moved out onto the thatched porches and slept in the open shelters.

For centuries, the Bluffs of Memphis has been a gathering place for Native Americans. It is a place where oral traditions have been furthered through storytelling around camp fires. More recently, it has been the site of the Camping of Nations.

Environment: Adaptations to the southern climate include hip porches, tall ceilings, no trees on the north side and no glass on the south side. Because builders used local materials, structures were made mostly of wood, devoid of rock work. Cypress wood was a very important building material because of its durability and water resistance.

Folk Buildings: There are many styles of folk buildings in the delta, including dog trot, shotgun, Creole cottages (several variations), raised cottages, I-house, center passage house and undercut galleries (or porches), plus barns and gins.



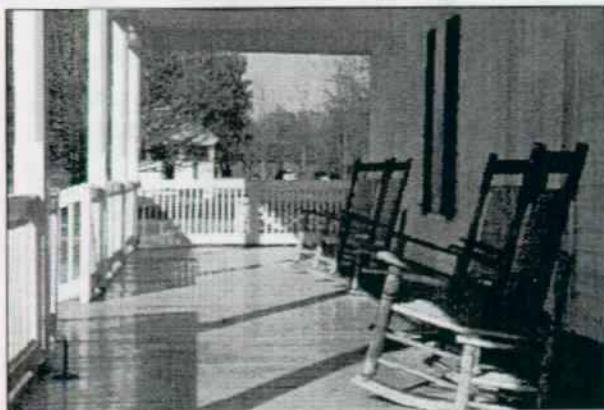
▲ Folk building

European Influences: Many styles of European architecture were brought to the delta including Mediterranean, northern European and southern French building styles. There are nationally significant examples of high-style architecture in the delta, representing all the major styles of 19th century architecture.

The wealth of many planters attracted some of the best known American architects to work in the region. Also, some fine local architects designed many houses in the high-style architecture preferred by the upper-class. The French Bouki Plantation house is an example of this style. Plantation architecture needs to be told as a total story that included slave quarters, gins, barns and other farm structures, as well as the big house.

Vernacular Architecture: Up until 1830 log cabins were found all over Memphis, as well as the delta area. Simple three-room cabins with full front porches are still fairly common.

Sharecroppers were tied to the rural landscape and cabins. Since sharecropping is a story of extended slavery, houses, barns, gins and related structures looked much as they did during slave times. "The quarters" is a rural plantation phenomenon that consisted of a cluster or row of shotgun houses or cabins. Historic farms and small towns are an important element of delta culture and architecture. Many have been lost.



▲ Floewood Plantation House porch, near Greenwood, MS

The porch is an important architectural feature connected to climate with Caribbean and African influences. Dog trot houses have breezeways to keep

cool. Sometimes people built houses by moving abandoned shacks from other areas and adding them to their existing homes.



▲ Porches in the Delta

In southern Louisiana, some Cajun people lived in family clusters on prairies called coves. Camps for hunting, fishing and relaxing also were developed in southern Louisiana.

The story of delta architecture needs to tell of the homes of ordinary people, rich and poor, and should include vernacular structures of today, such as the trailer.

Locally Important Architects: Local architects of some importance came from the delta, including Galliers and Henry Howard, as well as some African-American architects.

Non-Residential Architecture: The region's distinctive non-residential architecture includes churches, riverside warehouses, courthouses, country stores, rice mills, gins and sugar mills. Before integration, most public buildings required whites and African-Americans to use separate washrooms and drinking fountains.

Flat topped pyramidal mounds often had temples on them.

European cemeteries were sometimes located on Native American mounds—some of which were prehistoric burial grounds. Funerary design is a distinctive architectural form in the delta. The exact origin of the above-ground burial vaults in New Orleans is not known. It could be an adaptation to the high water

tables or from the Spanish colonial period. Cedar trees were often planted near cemeteries. Some cultures believed that cedar trees kept ghosts away.

Literature and Storytelling

The literature of the delta comes out of the oral traditions of its people. Many of these traditions are shared by cultures. Uncle Remus stories from the tidewater Atlantic Coast, and Bouki and Papin animal stories from the Louisiana Gulf Coast, are good examples.

Native American: Storytelling is an important tradition for Native American tribes to carry forward their beliefs, morals and ways of life.

Choctaw stories are moral in nature and often told why things are the way they are. Creation and origin stories are common themes.

In 1830, the New Testament was translated into Choctaw. Its impact and written style were considered significant.

Southern Themes: From the earliest oral traditions, delta storytellers have had a strong sense of place. The land, water and heat form the background. Kinship and family are also important in delta literature. Mark Twain's "life on the river" writing encompassed both place and family themes.

Southern class differences have long given rise to written expression. Oppress the spirit, bruise the heart, and you give rise to voices that need to be heard. The themes of delta writers often parallel those of delta blues songs.

Tragedy and melodrama are popular southern genres. Strong protagonist vs. antagonist, and good vs. evil themes appear repeatedly. Trickery tales often deal with unlikely heroes getting the advantage. Other literary themes include preachers, violence, racial conflict, supernatural, herbs and badmen.

Elementalism and a focus on "blood, sweat and tears" reality (as exemplified by Faulkner) is another powerful southern theme. These are the people tenuously hanging on to what little they have.

There is a self-conscious southern rage to explain that pervades the region's literature. The South has felt separated and misunderstood since the Civil War. Outsiders have misinterpreted the South for centuries. The region is often perceived by others as a violent place. Stories like "Deliverance" and "Southern Comfort" do not accurately portray this aspect of southern culture.

Outsiders also misinterpret the role of justice and injustice in the South. For example, a common image of southern law enforcement officers is that they are all non-educated racists. There is a parallel between the depiction of the South in movies and that of the West—reality and fiction do not correlate.

African-American: Enslaved Africans brought their West-African Sea Isle culture with them to America. Certain central African folk tales were unique to the delta.

Recreation

Some games expressed wealth, poverty and the dictates of the environment. For example, many poor children played stick ball because there was no money for bats.

In the wetland areas, many games centered around water. However, some people considered swimming to be too dangerous because of currents, alligators, snakes and insects. Children caught tadpoles, giggered for frogs, hand-fished and "grappled" (a method of fishing that involves sticking one's hand into a submerged log and pulling out whatever fish is found).

Because the Mississippi River is a major flyway, bird hunting has always been popular in the region. Cajuns enjoyed backwater hunting and recreational camps that were similar to the Native American camps. There was and is much camp lore surrounding these camps where people share communal meals, card games, storytelling, and practical jokes.

Boats

Influenced by Native Americans, the art and craft of boat building is a big story in the delta. Boats ranged from small craft such as the Lafitte skiffs and pirogues

that traveled in the shallow waters, to the steamboats designed to handle the mighty Mississippi. The Mississippi River has a tradition of dredging and dredge boat lore.

There also is a strong tradition of homemade boat building. Fishermen (especially those fishing for shellfish) had to invent boats, tools and nets so they could fish the delta's waters.

Food

Food is a primary form of cultural expression that is superbly expressive throughout the Lower Mississippi Delta. The foods of the delta expressed the economics and cultures of the various peoples, as well as the availability of ingredients. As people migrated to the delta, they needed to find ways to prepare the strange animals and plants of the region. They became quite adept at cooking with local ingredients. Often they applied the cooking styles and flavorings they brought with them to these new foods.

Sometimes food is related to class. Poor people often flavor foods with spicy seasonings to make them edible. They frequently use main ingredients, such as pig's feet and tails, that wealthy people would not eat. Many famous delta specialties, such as gumbo, catfish, crawfish and oysters, were considered "poor people's" foods before they became chic. "White trash" recipes have also become popular.

Cajuns and Creoles blended European (especially French and Spanish), African, and Native American influences to produce a distinctive cuisine in south Louisiana. This cuisine continues to develop today, influenced by the more recent arrival of Hispanics, Vietnamese and Middle Easterners.

Origins of some Common Foods:

Foods native to the New World:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Corn (100's of varieties) | Beans (100's of varieties) |
| Squash & Pumpkins | Tomatoes |
| Chili & Sweet Peppers | Wild Rice |
| White Potatoes (numerous varieties) | Plums |
| Sweet Potatoes | Wild Grapes & Scuppernongs |
| Strawberries | Pineapple |
| Persimmons | Blueberries |
| Raspberries | Cranberries |
| Blackberries | |

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Avocado | Black Walnuts |
| Hickories | Chestnuts |
| Pecans | Fillberts |
| Brazil Nuts | Chocolate |
| Vanila | Sassafras |
| Jerusalem Artichoke | Peanuts |
| Maple Sugar | Turkeys |

Foods brought to the New World by Europeans:

- | | |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Wheat | Rye |
| Barley | Oats |
| Rice | Millet |
| Honey | Apples |
| Pears | Peaches |
| Plums | Melons |
| Cherries | Some Grapes |
| Almonds | Walnuts |
| Bananas | Figs & Olives |
| Fava Beans | Chick Peas |
| Lentils | Soy Beans |
| Garlic | Leek |
| Cucumber | Lettuce |
| Onion | Cabbage |
| Turnip | Carrot |
| Radish | Parsnip |
| Spices | Coffee |
| Tea | Sugar |
| Chickens | Dometic Ducks & Geese |
| Sheep | Goats |
| Beef | Pork |

Foods brought to the New World by Africans:

- | | |
|-------------|---------|
| Sesame Seed | Okra |
| Coconut | Cowpeas |

Stories of the Delta: Symposium Findings

Developing the American Economy: Expanding Science and Technology

The Mississippi River's presence ties the region together economically. America has long utilized the river system as a major transportation corridor for shipping goods to international markets, as well as for supplying goods to the interior of the country. The river's value to the agricultural economy of the delta region and the nation is not contested. However, time and mechanization have made the Mississippi River less critical to the local economy. For example, Federal Express is now much more important to Memphis than the entire total of the Mississippi River industries.



▲ A logger from Bluff City Lumber Company, 1909

Courtesy: Library of Congress.
The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change, catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

For centuries, the delta economy was driven by the exploitation of people and resources. The economy was based on colonial concepts such as limited ownership of land and abuse of local workers. The late arrival of mechanization and the government's policies of passivity and non-intervention played major roles in the region's prolonged poverty.

Cotton, for many years the most important crop of the delta, has been a mainstay of the region's economy for more than 150 years. This single crop, with its roots secure in the rich alluvial soil, has had an impact on markets around the world. It was cotton grown in the delta that supplied the textile markets of England and New England, which, in turn, prospered and perpetuated the slave labor system in the South. Later, soybeans, corn and rice cultivation, timbering, oil refining operations and the chemical industry helped diversify the region's economy.

Commerce and business opportunities in the delta are limited by lack of access to capital and the low skill levels among workers. The changes brought on by the civil rights movement and recent reforms in education policies and spending have helped to make up for decades of low investments in human development. However, much work remains if the region is to overcome the legacy of its past.

Travel and tourism is becoming another major industry to impact the delta and the nation. As the number one industry of the late 20th century, travel and tourism can be a vehicle to stimulate the economies of the Lower Mississippi Delta. However, infrastructure improvements and their appropriate distribution must be part of any viable tourism proposal.

Scientific research and technological advances have changed the face of the delta in a variety of ways. Research led to the control of the boll weevil, cotton's greatest enemy. Chemical fertilizers have kept worn out soils productive. The introduction of the tractor had enormous repercussions for agricultural workers throughout the region. Improvements in levee construction combined with river controls have impacted flood cycles in the region. Today scientists believe they are close to producing a non-polluting pesticide.

Early Inhabitants and Native Americans

11000 B.C.-1600 A.D.

Economy: Salt, rocks, shells and bow wood were exchanged as currency.

Resource Extraction: Native Americans mined salt and quartz crystals; these industries continue today. The mining of novaculite (whetstone) began 6,000 years ago, making it one of the world's oldest industries. Numerous cherts and igneous rock exchanged over a wide area.

Agriculture: Native Americans farmed the Lower Mississippi Delta, but also hunted, fished and gathered. Both men and women worked in the fields. "Slash and burn" agriculture was the prevailing approach.

Corn, beans and squash became important foods after 1200. The Native American people also grew tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and other native foods. By the 1500s, many native people were raising corn on small farms.

Transportation: The Mississippi River was a commerce corridor from the earliest days of human habitation. The Choctaw called it "the big river." They easily and routinely crossed the wide river and traveled up and down it.

Natchez Trace was in use in 1682 and probably dates back to 5,500 B.C. Other traces were in use by DeSoto's arrival in 1540.

European Exploration and Settlement

1600-1800

Economy: White trappers and hunters brought the European fur trade to the delta in the late 1600s. The delta also supplied timber, tar, pitch and other raw materials to the British naval stores.

In the 1700s, the Tunica shifted from a feudal chieftom to a small, agriculturally-based tribe. Trading with other tribes and Europeans, they also became successful merchants and horse traders. Many of the Tunica were wealthy.

There was a surge in land grants for building such infrastructure improvements as roads and levees.

Agriculture: Before the cotton gin made cotton processing cost-effective, agriculture revolved around tobacco near Natchez and indigo in lower Mississippi.

French and Spanish landowners rented large tracts of land to individuals. These tracts eventually became plantations. Farmers began to grow crops on the levees.

Technology: The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 revolutionized agriculture and virtually every other

aspect of life in the delta. The introduction of rifles and heavy metal implements, such as plows, made life easier.

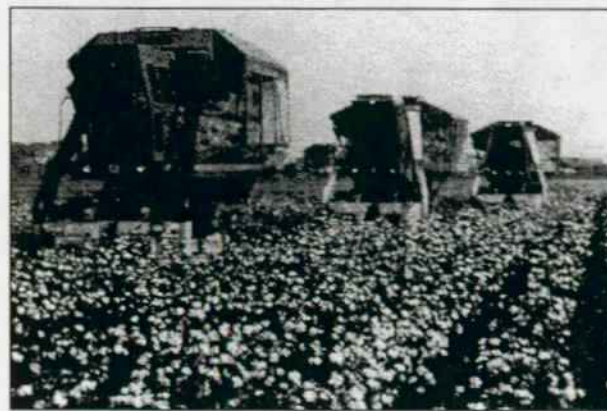
Transportation: By the 1720s, New Orleans was a center of international commerce. New Orleans' new boat building industry produced flat boats and bateaux, among others.

US Western Expansion and Antebellum Period

1800-1860

Economy: Cotton emerged as the basis of the delta economy. Cotton plantations had numerous buildings including the big house, slave quarters, barns and a store.

Agriculture: Most agriculture focused on cotton. Slaves performed most of the labor under worsening living and working conditions. Planters believed that the alluvial soils of the Mississippi were perpetual and would always renew themselves.



▲ Mechanical cotton picker

Courtesy: Diana Lee Wilson, *The Arkansas Delta: A Landscape of Change*, catalogue, Delta Cultural Center.

Transportation: Steamboats arrived on the Mississippi in 1811. A new, informal, underground economy emerged among people living along the river who sold firewood and other necessities to the steamboats. Riverboat gambling also took hold. The new underground economies run by enslaved Africans helped them stay alive.

In addition to traveling up and down the Mississippi, whites began crossing the river for jobs and trade opportunities. Ferries facilitated this east-west travel.

Fishing (Especially for Shellfish): From the beginning of human habitation, fishing (especially for shellfish) has been important. During this time, fishing was primarily for subsistence living and not for enterprise. Fish weirs were employed in south Mississippi. This tradition goes back to prehistoric times.

Civil War and Reconstruction:

Populism 1860-1900

Economy: The hardwood timber industry boomed right after the Civil War. The delta has always had economic advantages: fertile soil, a major river, excellent river transportation and a central location.

Agriculture: Planters continued to raise cotton the same way, without the benefit of any agricultural research and development.

Sharecropping and tenant farming replaced the slave-dependent plantation system. Sharecropping was a system of racial control that inhibited the use of progressive agricultural techniques. Eventually, the delta began to feel the mechanization of agriculture. African-Americans began to leave the plantations and move into towns and cities.

The clearing and drainage of wetlands increased lands available for tenant farming.

Sugar cane farming was primarily an African-American enterprise.

Transportation: In the 1830s, the railroads caused major changes in the way America transported products and people, dictating the success or failure of numerous towns and cities. The introduction of railroads also created time zones.

Process of Change: Progressivism, World Wars I and II, Great Depression

1900-1950

Economy: Under the New Deal, the South was declared the nation's number one economic problem area. Most of the region's population was poor. There was no moneyed middle class in the delta until the middle of the 20th century. The professionals that lived and worked in the region were poorly paid as public sector workers, and the entrepreneurs, like Atticus Finch, the fictional attorney

in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, often bartered for their services because their clients were poor. Thus, the South had a tiny middle class, but they were not an independent force in the political economy.

Many workers moved to areas outside of the delta. The northern auto industry was a big draw for delta-born African-Americans.

The petroleum industry began in the 1920s. By the 1940s, offshore drilling had begun to displace fishing and other economies. The industry employed mainly whites and Cajuns. There was an effort to keep African-Americans out.

In the 1930s, the petrochemical industry came to the delta. Refineries sprang up along the river and hydrocarbon production began.

The timber industry continued to be an important segment of the delta economy, although most operations were owned by midwestern companies.

Commercial hunting became a thriving delta industry. Hunting clubs flourished when early environmental regulations turned the river into a waterfowl flyway.

Memphis became an industrial center with new Ford and International Harvester plants. Although African-American men worked at the auto plants, they were paid much less than their white co-workers.

Agriculture: As the mechanization of agriculture took hold, women continued to leave the fields and go into service work, while the men drove tractors and worked on farms.

The mechanical cotton picker developed by John Mack Rust was used by the Southern Tenant Farmers Union local at Hillhouse, MS in 1936.

Land was released to farmers once it was "used up" from clearing and a lack of quality management practices. Ground water used for crop irrigation was beginning to drain the delta's alluvial aquifer.

From the late 1930s through the 1950s, the delta experienced an agriculture boom. This was a period of extensive soil erosion, particularly in Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri and Illinois.

Under new federal economic policies, the U.S. government paid some planters not to plant cotton. New or renewed agricultural endeavors included catfish, poultry, rice and soybean farming.

Infrastructure: The WPA ushered in an era of much needed improvements to the delta's roads and bridges. After World War II, the delta underwent another period of infrastructure improvement. The new oil industry, with its strong research and development focus, drove some of these activities.

Work Force: During World War II, women were employed in large numbers. African-American women used their education to pursue careers in teaching and health, so they could give back to their communities.

Although African-Americans were eligible for military service in World Wars I and II, they served in segregated units. They returned from war with new work skills, but severe job discrimination continued. Domestic and service work remained the major source of income for African-American women and men. The new oil refineries employed African-Americans at low wages and surrounded their communities with industrial development.

Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam

1950-Present

Economy: The urbanization of economy and culture picked up speed. Many family-owned businesses, which were integrated into the community and its way of life, were changed to national corporate absentee ownership. There was much passivity at federal, state and local levels. The government intervened primarily for corporate interests. Finally, in the 1970s, governments started to intervene on behalf of disenfranchised people and the environment.

Fishing (especially for shellfish) became a major industry. Catfish farms proliferated, partly due to pollution of wild catfish habitats.

Gaming became part of the delta's service economy and displaced communities in the process. This new industry had no roots to traditional riverboat gambling or to the Native American's longstanding enjoyment of gambling.

The Choctaw continued their long relationship with white economies. Choctaw craft cooperatives became a viable component of the region's economic development.

The modern reservation economy is largely based on local production and at self-run assembly plants and gaming operations.

The economic cycles of the delta are constantly changing. When agriculture is down, technology is up and visa versa. The Lower Mississippi Delta could improve its economy by determining where it should be going.

Work Force: The economy demanded that women work. However, society tried to keep them from working side-by-side with men. Before the mechanization of the delta, both worked in domestic and field jobs.

Labor unions were not very successful at organizing in the delta. Those unions that did organize caused some companies to move out. Other companies left because they were threatened by the civil rights movement. The sanitation workers strike in Memphis had broad community support.

Many middle class workers moved to the delta to work for national corporations. Others returned to the region as it urbanized. The middle class was, in essence, imported to the delta.

Agriculture: The mechanization of agriculture came late to the delta. Agriculture relied on African-American labor for centuries. The urbanization of African-Americans led to vacuums in work availability that was filled by migrant workers from Mexico who worked in poultry, cotton and strawberry operations. Many family farms were replaced by large corporate-owned farms with plantation-style labor.

Rice farms blended midwestern and southern production technologies.

Delta Pine Lands Corporation, a division of Monsanto, is developing cotton and soybean seed that doesn't need pesticides. This could have major positive consequences in the delta.

Petroleum Industry: The petroleum industry has significantly changed the Lower Mississippi Delta and brought in many outside corporations. Oil and petrochemical companies required greater levels of infrastructure and, until recently, hired mostly whites.

Stories of the Delta: Symposium Findings

Transforming the Environment

Different cultures brought different ways of interacting with the environment when they arrived in the Mississippi Valley. Over the course of history, the delta landscape has been manipulated by successive generations of people.

With only a tiny middle class until well into the 20th century, the delta environment was controlled by a small group of wealthy individuals who made decisions about land, water and other natural resources that left devastation in their wake. Worldwide trade further intensified the exploitation of delta resources on a global scale. Until the 1950s, everyone thought the delta's restorative qualities would keep renewing the area's ecosystem. Until very recently, resource extraction, not sustainable use, has been the focus of the delta's ecologic history.

Prehistoric practices of burning, hunting and settlement were the first human influences on the delta's landscape and ecology. The diversity and concentration of resources intensified a growing desire to control and own the delta. Natural phenomena such as floods, river meanders and sediment deposits were seen as obstacles to overcome through engineering—not as part of a dynamic, renewable resource system.



▲ *Reelfoot Lake*

The increased use of mechanization led to erosion, over-reliance on pesticides and other damaging

agricultural practices. The rising demand for timber and agricultural development further increased erosion problems through the loss of natural vegetation. The transformation of prairie grasslands, hardwood forests and lowland riparian areas to high plains corn production dramatically reduced cover and species diversity.



▲ *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Diversion Control Structure*

The building of dams, levees and locks has altered and, in some cases, eliminated the natural shoreline and wetlands. The increased development and pressures along the majority of tributaries has resulted in an enormous cumulative impact on the Mississippi River.

Prehistorical Activity

16000–3500 B.C.

Natural Activity: From 16,000 to 8,000 B.C., "ice age" conditions prevailed in the delta, with glaciers forming as far south as southern Illinois. The Mississippi River was in the "braided" period of its development.

From 8,000 B.C. the river took on its present "meandering" state as glacial movement stopped and melting ice started to form other rivers and lakes. During this period, the Mississippi Valley developed the "meander belt" environment of ridges and natural levees we know today.

From 3,000 B.C. to the present, the river formed the "true delta" of southern Louisiana. Sediment deposits created the lower delta, while rising oceans have destabilized it.

Manipulating the Environment: At around 10,000 B.C., nomadic hunters following now-extinct animals left the first evidence of human occupation. The settlement of the delta actually began about 4,500 B.C. From the beginning, humans tried to manipulate the river and the environment's wealth of resources.

Early Inhabitants and Native Americans

11000 B.C.-1600 A.D.

Natural Activity: The cold and wet glacial climate was replaced by conditions drier and warmer than the present. Swamp and aquatic environments became widespread.

Manipulating the Land: Native people built the region's first known mound structures about 4,500 B.C. in Louisiana. The mounds were among the earliest in the world. After cooling triggered by a mini-ice age, there was a resurgence of mound building activity, around 100 B.C. and again around 900 A.D.

People became less nomadic and settled the region in large numbers about 500 years ago. There is evidence that the Mississippi Valley was much more heavily forested with hardwoods. Fires used by hunters and slash and burn clearing may have contributed to the reduction of hardwood forests.

Manipulating the River and Land: Mounds were often built on high ground. However, due to the manipulation of the river and flooding, we do not know much about mound sites that may have been in the lower parts of the flood plain. Much of the older landscape of the "true delta" in Louisiana is now underwater, and many archaeological sites have been lost to the river.

Native people set fires, hunted, grew crops and manipulated the environment. By 1,500 B.C., the native people were actively engineering the environment for water management but could not directly affect the mighty river.

European Exploration and Settlement

1600-1800

Manipulating the Land: White fur traders started the widespread removal of animals and altered the ecosystem.

The invasion of whites was not the only reason Native Americans moved out of the delta. They also moved on because of the region's resource depletion that included decreasing soil fertility.

Manipulating the River: The first levee was constructed around New Orleans in 1730. In the late 1700s, flood control became a major issue. Levees were built and the first wetlands were lost. Some of the best agricultural land was taken for flood control purposes.

From about 1760s onwards, there was a growing understanding that the delta could not rejuvenate itself.

Western Expansion and Antebellum Period

1800-1860

Natural Activity: The New Madrid earthquake of 1811-12 caused the Mississippi River to run backwards for a brief period. Resulting in extensive bank caving and forest destruction, it was the largest series of earthquakes ever recorded in the U.S. and the second largest in North America.

Manipulating the Land: In spite of human encroachment and exploitation, most people still thought the delta's abundant natural resources were never-ending. A "loot and move on" attitude towards the land deviated from the traditional sense of "sacred places" that had preceded it. The acquisition of real estate became a fixation.

An agriculture boom from the 1830s to the 1850s caused extensive soil erosion. In the 1830s, midwestern companies entered the delta lumbering industry and deforested a tremendous amount of land.

Henry Miller Shreve and eventually, the Corps of Engineers, altered the river and its tributaries. Shreve's creation of the snag boat and his breaking of the Red River log jam were among the first activities to alter seriously the ecology of the river.

Civil War and Reconstruction, Populism

1860-1900

Manipulating the Land: Sharecropping inhibited the use of progressive agricultural techniques, which led to overuse of fertilization, soil depletion and economic stagnation. Ironically, population stagnation actually protected the environment.

Cypress harvests into the 20th century almost depleted this native hardwood.

Manipulating the River: In New Orleans, swamp drainage and reclamation began to change the landscape dramatically. From 1880 to 1920 was a period of much building of levees. The big program of artificial cutoffs to drain the water faster began in 1930s and continued into the early 1940s.

The Corps of Engineers created artificial cutoffs on the Mississippi to get the water out to the Gulf faster. They dredged and constructed spillways and constantly fought to control the river and its tributaries.

Process of Change: Progressivism, World War I and II, Great Depression

1900-1950

Manipulating the Land: Water hyacinth, kudzu and other highly invasive exotic plant species were introduced. The Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) planted many trees, bringing major change to the environment.

There was a growing recognition among hunters for the need to preserve wildlife. This led to the creation of the Mississippi Flyway. A story about Theodore Roosevelt on tour highlights the continuing devastation of animal life. While visiting Onward, MS, the president refused to shoot one of the region's nearly extinct bears, and the "Teddy Bear" was born.

The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the New Deal brought new development to the delta. The petroleum industry and its offshore operations began to transform the Gulf of Mexico coastline in the 1950s.

Manipulating the River: The Flood of 1927 caused enormous change to the river and to river engineering. The main levee break happened at Mound Crevasse. Engineers created an "alluvial empire," altering the land

to control floods. Construction of floodways at New Madrid, Bonnet Carré and Morganza designated acreage to be flooded.

The Waterways Experiment Station at Vicksburg conducted pioneering research in flood control and river navigation. As a result of the 1927 flood, the development of the fields of fluvial geomorphology and sedimentology were rapidly accelerated and much was learned about how rivers work.

It was more clearly understood that effective river engineering contained a large measure of undoing the mistakes of previous generations.

Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam

1950-Present

Manipulating the Environment: Different cultures brought different ways of dealing with the environment when they arrived in the Mississippi Valley. The environment has been seriously altered by many generations. Until the 1950s, people thought the Delta could renew itself.

Mechanization was late to agricultural operations in the delta because of the inexpensive labor pool. This resulted in a misuse of technology that led to problems with erosion, water pollution and other environmental damage.

The agriculture, lumbering and petroleum industries have left devastation in their wake. Technological advances only made the destruction more rapid. A new condition of "environmental racism" emerged in which a disproportionate number of poor people bear the brunt of the ecological burden. Lower Mississippi has one of the highest cancer rates in the nation.

Manipulating the Land: The delta is flat and rich, and some of best land was sacrificed for flood control purposes. Entire ecosystems, especially vital wetland habitats, continue to be lost to human development. Many of the big lumber companies own environmentally sensitive areas.

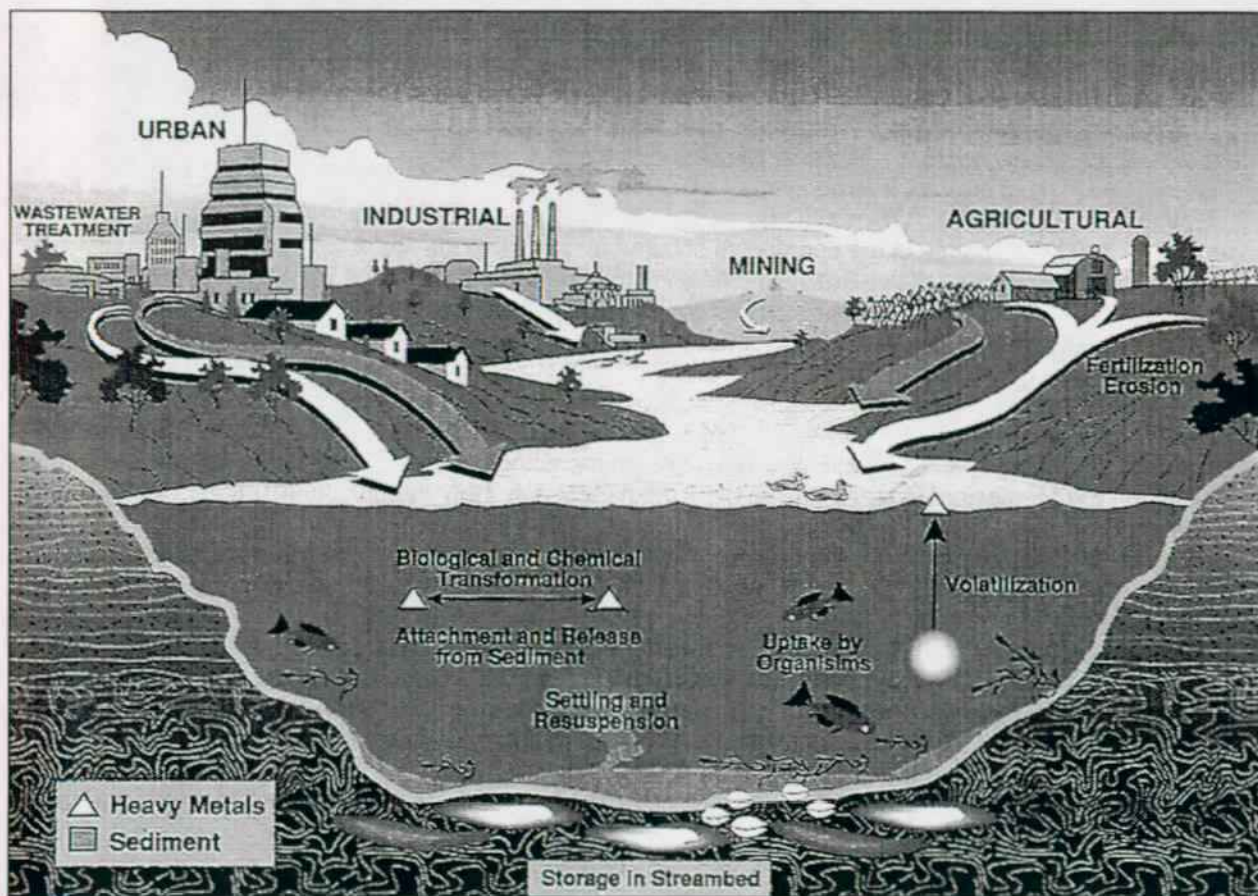
Manipulating the River: Technological advances made resource destruction more rapid. The river became a "chemical corridor" from Baton Rouge to the Gulf. The bass population was nearly wiped out due to

contaminants. The upper river was a conduit of agricultural chemicals. Further, mining operations and midwestern wheat farms were extracting ground water from the aquifers in excess of recharge. Attempts to control water levels resulted in backwater siltation that required drainage, which then changed the backwaters further.

Hurricane protection along the coast had consisted of ring levees to protect entire areas, but they were abandoned in an effort to protect subdivisions and other new development more effectively.

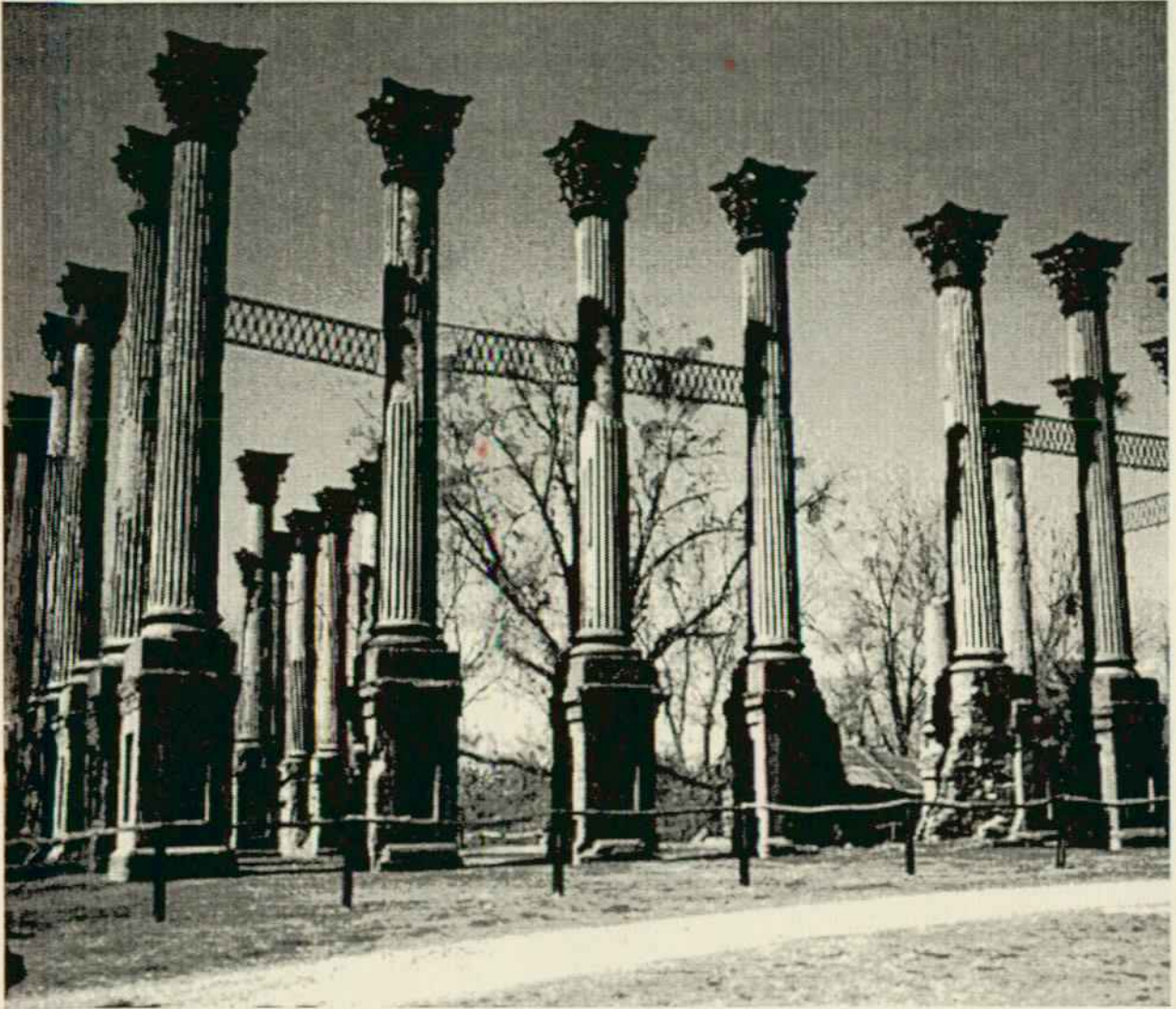
The environmental awareness that began in the 1970s has positively influenced water legislation on floodway improvement, levee construction, clean water issues and wetlands preservation. The Mississippi Delta is not just an environmental disaster. There are positives. The Army Corps of Engineers is beginning to learn to let flooding occur in some areas to undo channelization and look at a more natural system approach to management.

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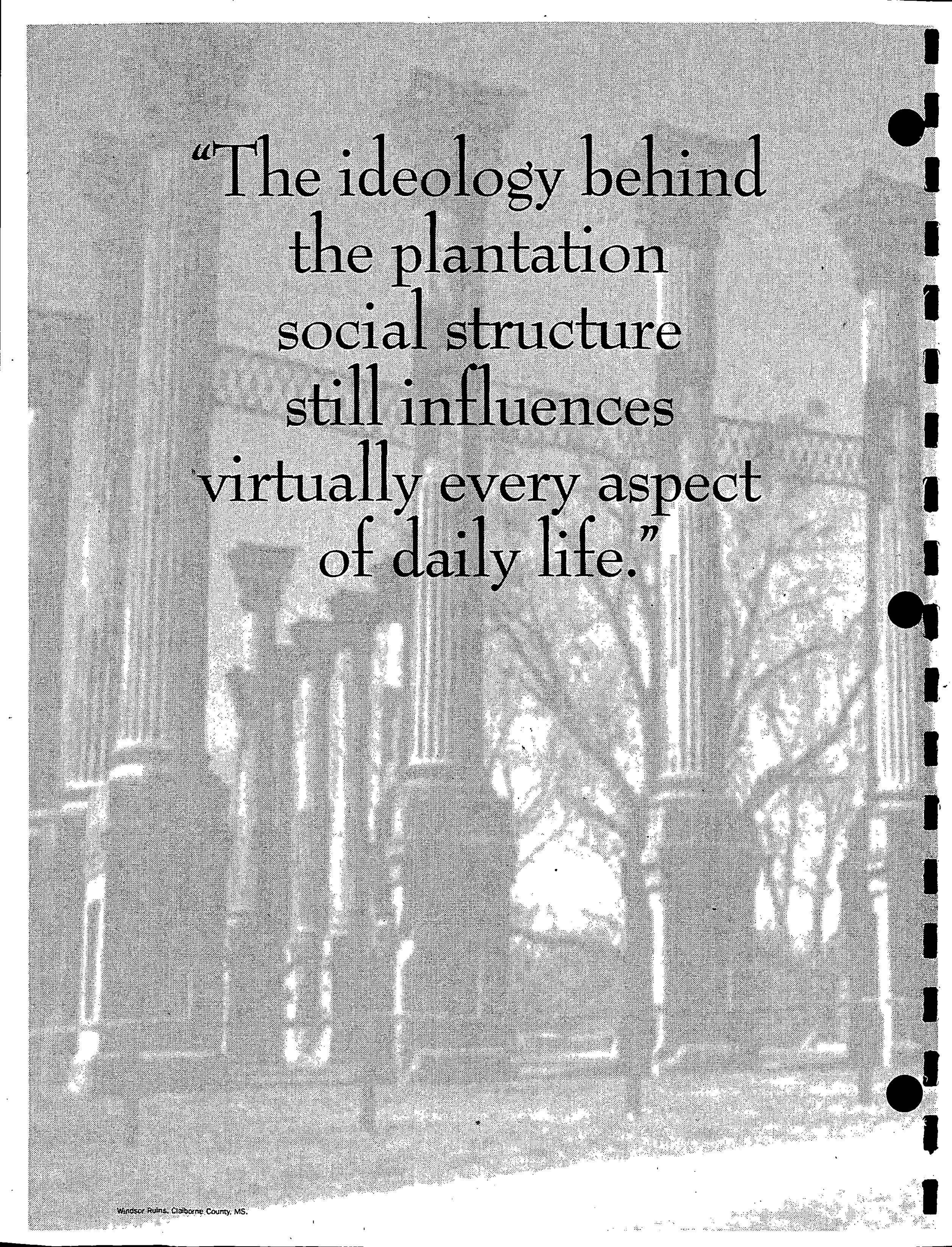
▲ *Contaminants in the Mississippi River, 1987-1992*

U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1133



Windsor Ruins, Claiborne County, MS

Sites of the Delta



“The ideology behind
the plantation
social structure
still influences
virtually every aspect
of daily life.”

Sites of the Delta

Peopling Places

The following section lists sites within the delta that begin to illustrate the stories discussed by participants at the symposium. The list does not contain all sites in the delta. Rather, it is the beginning of an effort to identify sites that could be utilized to tell the stories of the delta. As the Heritage Study progresses, more sites will be added.

Arkansas

Helena, AR:

- DeSoto crossed Mississippi
- Delta Cultural Center
- Bagge Building
- Phillips County Museum
- Centennial Baptist Church—Reverend E. C. Morris
- Crowley's Ridge State Park
- Clover Bend in Lawrence County

McGehee, AR:

- Rohwer Japanese World War II Relocation Cemetery and Monuments

Pocahontes, AR:

- Old Davidsonville State Park

Wilson, AR:

- Hampson Museum State Park

Dumas, AR:

- Arkansas Post National Memorial

Parkin, AR:

- Parkin Archaeological State Park

Illinois

Cairo or Carbondale, IL:

- Cairo Oral History Project

Louisiana

Bayou Boeuf, LA:

- Solomon Northrup Trail

Monroe, LA:

- Lebanese Bubba Hadad sign

New Orleans, LA:

- Basin Street
- Louis Armstrong Municipal Park
- Congo Square
- Storyville ("red light district" where ragtime transformed into jazz.)

Poverty Point, LA:

- Major mound and trading site

Natchitoches, LA:

- Melrose Plantation

Ferriday, LA:

- Home of Jerry Lee Lewis, Jimmy Swaggart, Mickey Gilley

Mississippi

Clarksdale, MS:

- Fourth Street business district in conjunction with Blues Museum
- Moon Lake cottages
- Friar's Point
- Home of Conway Twitty and Tennessee Williams

Cleveland, MS:

- Natural History Museum
- Chinese boarding school

Drew, MS:

- Subsistence living of the Chinese and Jewish

Edwards, MS:

- Southern Christian Institute

Greenville, MS:

- Jewish and Chinese cemeteries
- Families that live on boats
- Winterville mounds

Holly Springs, MS:

- Southern architecture from the 1850s
- Elvis Museum

Jackson, MS:

- State Street
- Farish Street Historic District
- Old public library
- Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center
- Old Capitol/State Historical Museum
- Manship House

Midnight, MS:

- Abandoned plantations

Natchez, MS:

- Emerald Mound (on Natchez Trace)
- Grand Village of the Natchez Indians (mounds and museums)
- Antebellum homes

Oxford MS:

- Center for Southern Culture
- Sardis Lake
- University of Mississippi

Vicksburg, MS:

- Old Courthouse Museum
- 1927 flood exhibit
- St. Francis Xavier Convent Cultural Complex
- River people who live in house boats (important culture)

Utica, MS:

- Museum of Southern Jewish Experience

Yazoo City, MS:

- Plantation and civil rights activity

Missouri

Cape Girardeau, MO:

- French settlements in upper Mississippi Valley (1720)

Tennessee

Memphis, TN:

- Chucalissa (restored 15th century Native American village owned by the University of Memphis with a museum on site)

Rutherford, TN:

- Home of Davy Crockett

Mounds:

- Chucalissa Mounds, Memphis
- Chickasaw Mounds (north of Memphis)
- Menard-Hodges Mound
- Toltec Mounds (state park)
- Winterville Mounds (north of Greenville, MS)
- Poverty Point, LA
- Towosahgy Mounds, MO
- Wickcliff Mounds, KY
- Marksville Mounds, LA (state owned)
- Emerald Mound, MS (on Natchez Trace)
- Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, Natchez, MS
- Parkin, AR



Sites of the Delta

Creating Social Institutions and Movements

Arkansas

Cummins, AR:

- Prison farm

Helena, AR:

- Centennial Baptist Church (designed and built by an African-American)
- Tappan Hall
- Pillow Thompson House
- Grant's March to Vicksburg
- White Citizen's Council buildings
- Estevan Hall
- Almer Store
- Magnolia Cemetery
- Moore Horner House
- Civil War batteries

Little Rock, AR:

- Old State House

Marked Tree, AR:

- Sites related to Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU)

Marvel, AR:

- Sites of desegregation
- Louisiana Purchase marker stone

McGehee, AR:

- Japanese Relocation

Parkin, AR:

- Quapaw Settlement (archaeological site)
- "Histories of Dissent"
- Ellisville
- Lanrel New Knight

Tyronza, AR:

- Home of H. L. Mitchell, founder of STFU

West Helena, AR:

- Southland School

Louisiana

Angola, LA:

- Prison

Baton Rouge, LA:

- Old and new State Capitol
- Rural Life Museum

Chalmette, LA:

- Site of battlefield with multi-ethnic participation

Lafayette, LA:

- Vermillionville (Cajun village/living history site—largely replica buildings)

New Orleans, LA:

- Calbido—Jackson Square
- Louisiana State Museum
- Sala Capitular (where Louisiana Purchase documents signed)
- Ursuline Convent
- Slave Market
- Tezucó (African-American Museum)
- Fort Jackson (War of 1812 and Civil War)

Port Hudson, LA:

- Civil War site where African-American soldiers fought

Poverty Point, LA:

- Major mound and trading sites

Natchitoches, LA:

- Melrose Plantation

Mississippi

Clarksdale, MS:

- Cahoma Junior College (former African-American high school)
- Greyhound bus station (civil rights strike)
- King and Anderson Plantation (cutting edge agricultural practices)

Edwards, MS:

- Southern Christian Institute

Holly Springs, MS:

- Mississippi A & I
- Home of Boss Crump, Ida Wells Barnett

Holmes County, MS:

- Providence Farm (STFU), Milestone Farms (largest African-American resettlement in New Deal era)
- Saint's Industrial Junior College
- Edible dirt of the Yazoo hills

Fort Adams, MS:

- Territorial outpost

Sunflower County/Drew, MS:

- House of Fannie Lou Hamer, birthplace of Mississippi Democratic Party, among first desegregated schools in the delta

Mound Bayou, MS:

- Founded by African-Americans in 1887

Fort Massachusetts, MS:

- Ship Island (built after War of 1812)

Greenwood, MS:

- Floewood Plantation (reconstructed plantation)
- Freedom schools

Jackson, MS:

- Farish Street office of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
- LCDC
- NAACP-LDF
- Piney Woods Country School
- Tougaloo College
- Meredith March encampment
- Medgar Evers House (where he was killed)
- Old Capitol Building
- Jackson Military Road

Jones County, MS:

- Free State of Jones
- Jones County Courthouse

Louise, MS:

- Love Feast Baptist Church: plantation church with much civil rights activity

Midnight, MS:

- Abandoned plantation buildings

Mileston, MS:

- Many African-American churches

Money, MS:

- Site of the Emmett Till murder

Mt. Carmel, MS:

- Prentiss Institute

Natchez, MS:

- Natchez Mound and Museum
- Origins of Natchez Trace
- Forks of Road
- Fort Rosalie

Okolona, MS:

- Old agricultural high school

Parchman, MS:

- Prison farm

Philadelphia, MS:

- Site where civil rights workers were killed

Rosedale, MS:

- Rosedale Court House (Rice vs. Gong Lun in 1925)

Vicksburg, MS:

- Old Courthouse Museum
- 1927 flood exhibit
- National Military Park

Yazoo City, MS:

- Plantation and civil rights activity

Tennessee

Jackson TN:

- Casey Jones home and museum

Memphis, TN:

- Auction Street
- Beale Street Police
- Memphis Temple of Church of God of Christ (where Martin Luther King gave his last address)
- Hunt-Phelan House (first African-American school in Memphis on Beale Street)
- National Civil Rights Museum/Lorraine Motel

Holly Springs, MS:

- Rust College (1866 African-American college)

Magnolia Union Cemetery:

- Jews, Italians and Asians were also buried here



Sites of the Delta

Expressing Cultural Values

Architecture

Arkansas

Clarendon, AR:

- Rural (along White River)

Gillett, AR:

- Dog trot

Lave Village, AR:

- Collections of workers' housing on plantations

Parkin, AR:

- Dog trot houses

Helena, AR:

- Tappan Pillow House

Powhatan, AR:

- Powhatan Courthouse State Park

Louisiana

New Orleans, LA:

- Urban
- Shotgun houses
- French Quarter
- Creole plantation townhouses

Ruston, LA:

- 1840 log dog trot (in vicinity) (Autrey House)

Shreveport, LA:

- Ledbetter Heights (shotguns)

New Roads, LA:

- Parlange Plantation House (French Creole)

Rural Plantations:

- Franklin
- New Iberia
- Plaquemine (plantation townhouses)

Abbeville, LA:

- Urban Cajun

Mississippi

Jackson, MS:

- Bemis Mill Town

Natchez, MS:

- Woodlawn Historic District

Vicksburg, MS:

- AME Shorter Church
- Kathryn's Grocery
- Old courthouse
- Antebellum houses

Tennessee

Atwood, TN:

- Churches side by side

Herring, TN:

- Oaks Mansion (free people of color)

Memphis, TN:

- Urban

Parkers Crossroads, TN:

- Cabin log dog trot

Various

WPA Architecture:

- Bus stations, schools, courthouses
- Synagogues in Natchez, Vicksburg and Port Gibson
- Catholic churches all down River Road
- Steamboat dock, warehouses, ferry sites

Music

Arkansas

Helena, AR:

- King Biscuit

Louisiana

Ferriday, LA:

- Home of Mickey Gilley
- Jimmy Swaggart
- Jerry Lee Lewis

Shreveport, LA:

- Ledbetter Heights
- St. Paul's Bottoms ("red light district" home of Leadbelly)

New Orleans, LA:

- Louis Armstrong
- Fats Domino



- Jelly Roll Morton
- The Nevilles
- Sidney Becket
- Irma Thomas
- Kid Ory
- The Meteors and many others

Eunice, LA:

- Liberty Theatre and clubs
- La Poussiere Club
- Breaux Club

Crowley, LA:

- Miller Studio

Ville Platte, LA:

- Swallow Studio, Mannou
- Fred's Lounge
- Bassile
- Beareat and Avalon, plus many others

Mississippi

Clarkdale, MS:

- Blues Museum

Jackson, MS:

- Farish Street

Tupelo, MS:

- Elvis' birthplace

Tutwiler, MS:

- Sonny Boy Williamson's (Aleck Miller) gravesite

Natchez, MS:

- Hezekian and the House Rockers

Tennessee

Brownsville, Ripley, Nutbush and Jackson, TN:

- Country blues (also elsewhere in rural Tennessee)

Memphis, TN:

- Beale Street
- W. C. Handy House
- Blues Museum
- Graceland
- Housing project in Memphis where Elvis lived when he first started
- Tom Lee Park
- Jug band music

Blues:

- Blues people did not want to be tied down
- It had a great deal of movement making it hard to pin down; sites not related to the music
- Sites related to blues musicians such as Amédé Ardoin, Robert Johnson, B. B. King, Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Willie Dixon, Furry Lewis, Bo Diddley, Leadbelly, Fred McDowell and John Hurt
- Sleepy John Estes' home and blues museum, Brownsville, TN
- Sonny Boy Williamson's gravesite, Madison County, TN and Tutwiler, MS

R & B and Soul:

- Rufus Thomas from Memphis
- Aretha Franklin
- Percy Sledge
- Sam Cooke
- Fats Domino
- Red Tops

Zydeco:

- Clifton Chenier
- Amédé Ardoin

Cajun Music:

- Joseph Falcon
- Amédé Breaux
- Lawrence Walker
- Dewey Balfa
- Iry Lejeune and many others

Country:

- Charlie Pride
- Jimmie Rodgers Museum (trains) in Meridian, MS

Rock and Roll:

- Elvis
- Jerry Lee Lewis
- Carl Perkins
- Johnny Cash
- Fats Domino, Professor Longhair
- Chuck Berry
- Barry White
- Louie Jordan

Jazz outside New Orleans:

- Milton Hilton (also a fine photographer)
- Jimmy Lunceford



Classical Music:

- William Grant Still
- Gottschalk

Important Music Studios:

- Sun and STAX (gone) in Memphis
- Miller in Crowley, LA
- Cossimo Matassa in New Orleans, LA
- Swallow in Ville Platte, LA

Juke Joints:

- Columbus, MS
- Leadbelly played Silver Dollar, Shreveport, LA
- Nelson Street, Greenville, MS

Writers

- William Faulkner (Oxford, MS)
- Tennessee Williams
- Earnest Gains
- Walker Percy
- George Washington Cable
- Kate Chopin (Clouterville, LA)
- Alice Dunbar
- Richard Wright
- Samuel Clemens
- Alex Haley
- Etheridge Knight
- Sterling Plump
- Margaret Walker Alexander
- Eudora Welty
- Ellen Douglas
- Alex Haley (Henning, TN)
- John Grisham
- William Alexander Percy
- Bontemps House, Alexandria, VA
- Lilly Peters

Visual Artists

Homes:

- James Son Thomas
- George Rodney
- Walker Anderson
- DeWit Jordon

- William Eggleston
- Robert Jones
- Marian Post Wolcott
- Walker Evans
- Elmore Morgan
- Russell Lee
- Earnest Withers
- Roland Freeman
- Audubon
- Belloch
- Leroy Evans
- Floyd Sonnier
- Dau Giruard
- Philip Gould
- C. C. Lockwood
- Debbie Caffery Fleming
- John Geldersoha
- Gregg Girard

Film

- Robert Flaherty—Louisiana Story
- Tavernier—French film maker
- Resse Ages
- Mississippi Masala (Mira Near)
- King Vidor film—Hallelujah
- Faulkner—PBS
- Richard Wright—PBS
- Ernie Gains—PBS
- John Grisham
- Mystery Train
- CSSC
- Raintree County
- Eyes on the Prize
- All the King's Men
- Southern Comfort
- Anything I Catch: The Handfishing Story
- Pretty Baby
- J'ai été au bal—Cajun and Zydeco music
- Cajun Crossroads by Karen Snyder

Sites of the Delta

Expanding the American Economy

Agriculture:

- Sunny Side Place in Chicot County, AR (largest cotton farm in the South)
- Agriculture/Forestry Museum in Jackson, MS
- Cottonlandia in Greenwood, MS
- Cotton compress in Greenville, MS
- Acadia (sugar cane plantation built by Sam Houston in Thibodeau, LA)
- Robinwood, LA (old sawmill headquarters)
- Stuttgart Agricultural Museum

Fur Trade:

- Five Points, north of Edinburg, MS

River Economy:

- River people add to economy with boats/barges
- Greenville and Rosedale, MS

Seafood Industry:

- Seafood Museum at Biloxi
- Catfish Museum at Belzoni, MS
- Catfish capital of the world, Belzoni, MS

Business:

- Inns along Natchez Trace
- Before the end of segregation, there was always a "African-American street" where African-American enterprise existed. These districts were historic to music and black culture, as well as business
- Fannin Street in Shreveport, with Old Silver Dollar Club, LA
- The Block, and Blue Argyle Club, in Lafayette, LA
- Cotton Exchange in Memphis
- Farish Street in Jackson, MS

Heavy Industry:

- Memphis, TN was an industrial capitol; now distribution center

Petroleum:

- Petroleum industry (coastal/offshore story) in Morgan City, LA

Gaming Industry:

- Tunica vs. Philadelphia, MS

Sites of the Delta

Transforming the Environment

Geological Development:

- Scale is too large; museums are best venues
- Mud Island
- Pink Palace Museum
- Reelfoot Lake State Park
- New Madrid earthquake site
- Mississippi River Museum in Vicksburg, MS

Manipulating the Environment:

- Old River/Atchafalaya (original structure, auxiliary structure, power dam, locks)
- Bonnet Carre Spillway, Atchafalaya Morganza
- Vicksburg Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station

The River:

- River Museum in Arkansas City
- Levee Board History Museum in Greenville, MS
- Great River Road State Park in Rosedale, LA
- Cape Girardeau, MO (Natural history, river, Native Americans)
- Kaskaskia Cutoff, St. Genevieve, MO
- Mississippi River Museum in Vicksburg, MS
- Helena River Walk in Helena, AR

Parks:

- Big Oak Tree State Park (forest on 2000 acres)
- Delta National Forest near Vicksburg, MS
- Percy State Park south of Greenville, MS (cypress, alligators, swamps)
- White River
- Big Island, AR
- VCI Museum
- Crowley's Ridge State Park

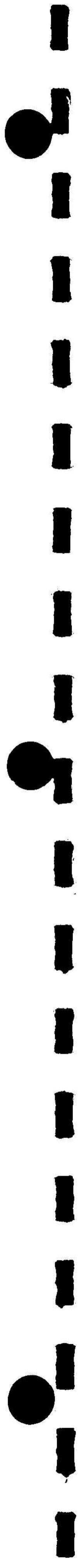
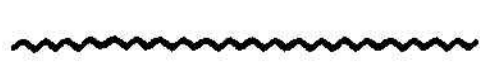
Hurricanes:

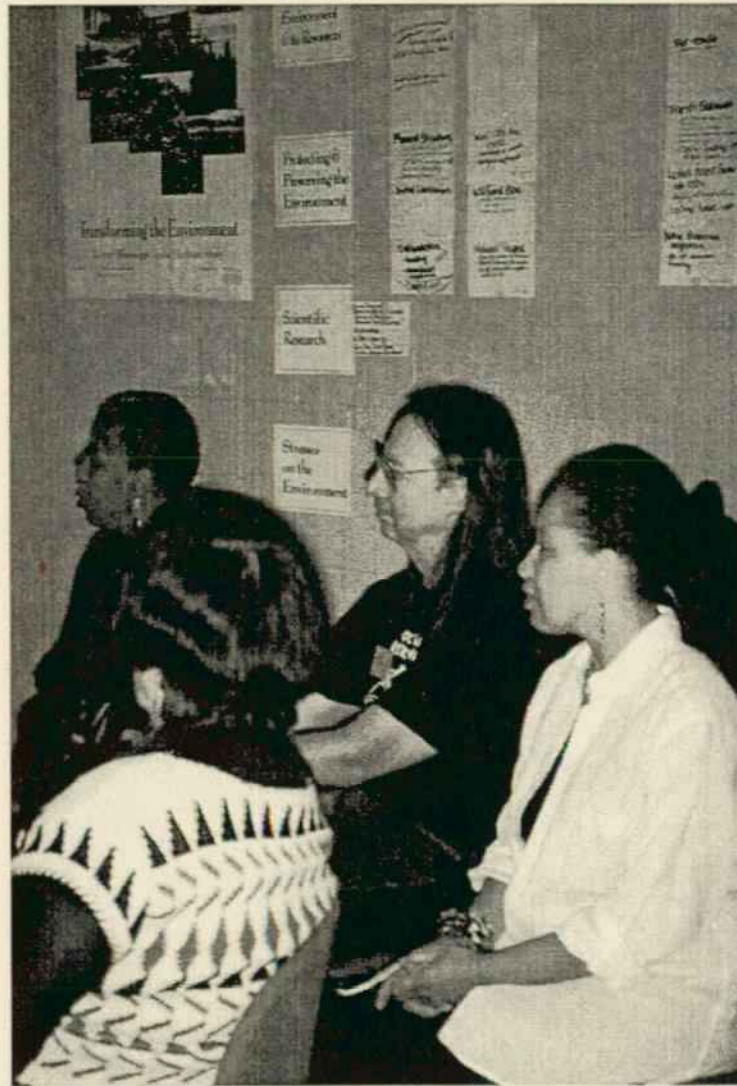
- New Orleans District Corps of Engineers
- Stennis Space Center
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Marsh Ecology:

- Walter Anderson Museum in Ocean Springs
- Lacassine NWR
- Lake Charles, Cameron—marsh ecology







Participants working at symposium

Biographies & Addresses

“Down here,
we know
who is blood kin to who.
We know who our
cousins are.
Family honor
is important.”

Biographies & Addresses

Participant Biographies

Charles S. Aiken

Charles S. Aiken is a professor of Geography at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. His primary areas of research and teaching are rural geography, geography of agriculture and geography of the American South. He has studied the Lower Mississippi Valley for more than 25 years. His published research has included settlement changes and micro-scale redistribution of the African-American population supported by the National Science Foundation. Other publications focus on the impact of the civil rights movement and the War on Poverty, the mechanization of cotton production, the changing geography of plantation agriculture and William Faulkner's conversion of geographical reality into fiction. His book, *The Cotton Plantation South Since 1865*, will be published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 1997.

Barry Jean Ancelet

Barry Jean Ancelet is a native Louisiana French-speaking Cajun. He graduated from the University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL) with a B.A. in French. He received a M.A. in Folklore from Indiana University and a doctorate in Etudes Creoles (anthropology and linguistics) from the Université de Provence (Aix-Marseille I). He has been on the faculty at USL since 1977, first as director of the Center for Acadian and Creole Folklore and later as a professor in the Department of Modern Languages, which he currently chairs.

Ancelet has published numerous articles and several books on various aspects of Louisiana's Cajun and Creole cultures, including *The Makers of Cajun Music* (University of Mississippi Press, 1984), *Cajun Country* (University Press of Mississippi, 1991), and *Cajun and Creole Folktales* (Garland Publishing, 1994), as well as two small monographs, *Capitaine, Voyage Ton Flag: The Cajun Country Mardi Gras* (USL Center for Louisiana Studies, 1989) and *Cajun Music: Origins and Development* (USL Center for Louisiana Studies, 1989). He also has served as a consultant and fieldworker for several documentary films on Cajun culture and music.

Raymond Arsenault

Raymond Arsenault is a professor of History and director of the University Honors Program at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. He earned a B.A. from Princeton University and a M.A. and Ph.D. from Brandeis University.

Arsenault is a specialist in the history of the American South and environmental history. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including the *Wild Ass of the Ozarks* and *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream*. He is also co-editor of a book series on "Florida History and Culture" published by the University Press of Florida and is currently completing a book on the Montgomery bus boycott and the origins of the modern civil rights movement.

Marilou Awiakta

Marilou Awiakta is a Cherokee/Appalachian poet, storyteller, and essayist. Her third book, *Selu: Seeking the Corn-Mother's Wisdom*, applies Native American philosophy to contemporary issues such as the environment, government and unity in diversity. *Selu* was a Quality Paperback Book Club selection in 1994 and the audio tape of the book was nominated for a Grammy Award in 1996. A quote from *Selu* is engraved on the River Wall of the Bicentennial Capitol Mall in Nashville.

Awiakta is also the author of *Rising Fawn and the Fire Mystery*, a story of the Choctaw Removal in 1833. A founder of the Faraway Cherokee Association of Memphis, Awiakta presently serves on the boards of the National Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers and the Tennessee Humanities Council. A recipient of the Distinguished Tennessee Writer's Award, Awiakta is profiled in the new *Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the U.S.*

William Brescia

William Brescia is the development officer for the Research and University Graduate School at Indiana University. A member of the Mississippi band of Choctaw tribe, Brescia received his M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin—Madison. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology at Indiana University.

Brescia is particularly interested in mentoring and writes a column on funding for mentoring programs that appears regularly in *The Mentoring Connection*. He has authored or edited several dozen books and articles about Native American education, fund raising and instructional design.

Samuel O. Brookes

Samuel O. Brookes received a B.A. and M.A. degree in Anthropology from the University of Mississippi. He is currently the Heritage program manager for the National Forests in Mississippi. Earlier he served as archaeologist with Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Vicksburg Corps of Engineers.

Brookes has conducted fieldwork all over the state, focusing on the Tombigbee, Delta and Natchez Bluffs. He is active in and has served as president of the Mississippi Archaeological Association, the Mississippi Association of Professional Archaeologists and the Mississippi Heritage Trust. He collects rhythm and blues records and has judged several barbecue contests.

Anthony (Tony) Dunbar

Tony Dunbar is the author of three books about the Mississippi Delta. *Our Land Too* (Pantheon Books, 1969), winner of the Lillian Smith Book Award, is a study of living conditions in a plantation community. *Delta Time* (Pantheon Books, 1990) is an overview of delta life now and *Against the Grain* (University Press of Virginia, 1980), winner of the Louis Melcher Book Award, is an historical account of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Dunbar contributed to a documentary presentation about the

delta economy produced in 1994 by Louisiana Public Broadcasting and has spoken widely on civil rights and the South. He practices law in New Orleans.

Scinthya Edwards

Scinthya Edwards is executive director of the Delta Cultural Center, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. An artist herself, Edwards recently has developed an interpretational museum education outreach program that is arts-derived, multi-disciplinary and culturally plural.

In addition to directing a museum, conducting cultural studies and lecturing, Edwards is actively involved in the renovation and restoration of historic properties. She also serves on the Arkansas Historical Association Board, the Mississippi Conference on Arts Advisory Board, the Arkansas Department of Education State Curriculum Frameworks Committee and the National Endowment for the Arts—Site Evaluator.

Douglas K. Eiken

Douglas Eiken is the director of the Division of State Parks in the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. As director, he is responsible for 79 state parks and historic sites, a budget in excess of \$34 million, a staff in excess of 700, the State Historic Preservation program and outdoor recreation grants.

The former director of the Department of Parks and Recreation in North Dakota, Eiken also taught at the high school, college and university levels. He has served as the president of the National Association of State Park Directors, served on the advisory council of the National North Country Trails and coordinated a workshop at the World Congress on Parks and Protected Areas in Caracas in 1992.

David Evans

David Evans is a professor of Music at the University of Memphis and director of the Ph.D. program in Musicology (regional studies). He has studied blues and



folk music of the mid-South since the mid-1960s and is the author of *Tommy Johnson* (1971) and *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues* (1982).

Evans has produced many field and studio recordings of blues, gospel and folk music. Since the 1980s, he has toured many times as an accompanist and soloist in Europe and South America. Evans currently contributes a regular column to the magazine *Blues Revue* and is editor of a series of books on American music for the University Press of Mississippi. He performs in Memphis with the Last Chance Jug Band.

William Ferris

William Ferris is director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and professor of Anthropology for the University of Mississippi. A writer, filmmaker and photographer, Ferris is an authority on the culture of the American South. He has produced 15 documentary films set in the Mississippi Delta and is the author of over 100 articles and numerous books on Mississippi blues, storytelling, literature and folk art. Co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, he was recently listed as one of the nation's outstanding teachers by *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

Donna Fricker

Donna Fricker is senior architectural historian and National Register coordinator in the Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation. A member of that staff since 1979, Fricker has inspected, researched and evaluated hundreds of historic buildings.

Elizabeth Higginbotham

Elizabeth Higginbotham holds a B.A. from City College of the City University of New York and a doctorate in Sociology from Brandeis University. She is currently acting director of the Center for Research on Women and a professor at the University of Memphis. The Center focuses on conducting and disseminating research on southern women and women of color in the U.S.

Higginbotham's social science research has focused on how race, class and gender impact the lives of professional and managerial women in the South. She is working on a project, initially funded by the National Institute for Mental Health, that is a broad investigation of the differences in the educational experiences, work life, family life, well-being and mental health of 200 African-American and white professional and managerial women in the Memphis area.

John Horhn

Mississippi state senator, John Horhn, began serving his second term in January of 1996. He serves on eight senate committees, with a special focus on economic development. He was recently appointed chairman of the Senate Economic Development, Tourism and Parks Committee and the Senate Managerial Committee.

As a senator, Horhn has successfully sponsored legislation authorizing more than \$150 million in general obligation bonds. These bonds have supported venture capital and loan funds for small businesses, minorities, women and small farmers. The bonds also supported a minority surety bond program, a first-time home buyers loan program and an \$8 million grant program for historic and cultural properties in Mississippi.

Senator Horhn previously served in appointed positions in state government, including work as a state arts commission program director, state film commissioner, director of the Governor's Office of Federal/State Programs and state tourism director.

James W. Loewen

James W. Loewen taught at Tougaloo College for eight years and is now a professor of Sociology at the University of Vermont. He began studying race relations in the Mississippi Delta in 1967, with particular emphasis on Chinese-Americans. His first book was *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White* (Harvard Press, 1971). In 1985, Third World Newsreel used it as the basis of a documentary film, *Mississippi Triangle*.

In 1974, Pantheon Books published *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* by Loewen, Charles Sallis, et al. Written by students and faculty at Tougaloo and Millsaps Colleges, it was the first revisionist state history and won the Lillian Smith Award for Best Southern Nonfiction, 1975.

In 1995, the New Press published *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. It is now in a seventh printing and just won the American Book Award of the Before Columbus Foundation.

Russell (Rusty) Logan

Russell Logan is an historian in the Special Projects division of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. He graduated from Connecticut College with a B.A. in American History and received an M.A. in American Studies from New York University. Prior to his current position, Logan was founding editor of the *Little Rock Free Press*, an alternative weekly newspaper.

Robert Meade

Robert Meade recently completed his 42nd year of government service, most of it with the U.S. Geological Survey. Educated as a geologist (Ph.D., Stanford), he has worked mostly as a hydrologist and potamologist. His potamological researches have centered on the great rivers of South and North America, especially the Amazon, Orinoco and Mississippi.

Meade led a comprehensive multi-disciplinary project on contaminants in the Mississippi River, the results of which were published in 1995, in USGS Circular 1133. Since his official retirement in March 1996, Meade has continued with the USGS in emeritus status, working as a volunteer.

Juanita Moore

Juanita Moore is the executive director of the National Civil Rights Museum. With more than 20 years of experience in museums and the arts, she has been

curator, educator and administrator at various institutions.

Moore holds a B.A. and M.A. from North Carolina Central University. She serves on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History, and the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau. She is president of the African-American Museums Association.

Jessie Mosley, LDH

Jessie Mosely earned her B.S. degree from Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, TX. She completed further studies at Emporia Teachers College in Emporia, KS. She has been awarded honorary degrees from Jarvis Christian College and Tougaloo College.

Mosely is co-founder of the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center. With the aid of the Sunburst Bank of Jackson, MS, she obtained the Alamo Theatre, a prime Farish Street landmark, for restoration. She is the author of *The Negro in Mississippi History*.

Mosely is a founding member of the Farish Street District Neighborhood Foundation and of the Negro in Mississippi Historical Society. She is a member of the National Trust, an appointee of the governor to the Mississippi Council for the Humanities and the state convener for the National Council of Negro Women.

Her many awards include the National Education Association, the Religious Heritage Foundation, the University of Mississippi Distinguished Mississippi African-Americans Award. She was recently recognized by Governor Kirk Fordice and his wife at their Conference on the Power of One Woman. Mosely is designated by the Jackson Chamber of Commerce and Tougaloo College as one of the state's "living legends." She was a torchbearer for the 1996 U.S. Olympics.

She is a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

Kenneth P'Pool

Kenneth P'Pool is director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. He also serves as Mississippi's deputy state historic officer.

policy. His *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy* was a co-winner of the American Historical Association's John H. Dunning Prize for 1992. Usner teaches courses on American Indians, the early South and the West. He also leads adult study tours to south Louisiana.

P'Pool is chairman of the Natchez National Historical Park Advisory Commission. He has long been active in the National Conference of Historic Preservation Officers. He is a recent recipient of the Jefferson Davis Medal for his research and writings on southern architecture.

A native of Nashville, P'Pool received his B.A. in Biology from David Lipscomb College and his M.A. in Historic Preservation from Middle Tennessee State University.

Michael Sartisky

Michael Sartisky received a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and a M.A. and Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he studied American Literature. He later taught English at the University of New Orleans.

Sartisky has been president and executive director of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH) since 1983. During this period, the LEH has awarded more than 1,150 grants totaling in excess of \$8 million to organizations and institutions which foster the humanities in Louisiana. In 1986, the LEH won a National Award of Merit for the overall quality of its program and won national NEH grants in 1984, 1986, 1988, 1994 and 1995. In 1985, 1987, 1989, 1990 and 1991, the LEH won national Exemplary Project Awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Sartisky currently serves on the Louisiana Folklife Commission and the Planning Committee of the \$540 million Louisiana Educational Quality Trust Fund. He has been the editor of the quarterly magazine, *Louisiana Cultural Vistas* since 1990. His interviews with major writers have been included in collections published by Oxford University Press and the University Press of Mississippi.

Roger Thomas Saucier

Roger Saucier's professional career of nearly 40 years in applied research and consulting has focused on understanding the origin, evolution, geomorphic processes, landforms, deposits and natural landscapes of

the Lower Mississippi Valley. He has applied that knowledge to such diverse issues and fields as foundation engineering, water resources development, waste management, seismic risk assessment, boundary litigation, archaeological surveys and cultural resources management.

He received B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University. He began his career as a research geographer with the Geotechnical Laboratory of the U.S. Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station in Vicksburg, MS. Later, he was a research program manager in the Environmental Laboratory of the same organization. Since retirement in 1994, he has been active in geomorphological consulting and lecturing in the Mississippi Valley area.

Many of Saucier's more than 100 publications deal with aspects of the Quaternary geologic history and processes of both the Mississippi alluvial valley and deltaic plain. He has authored three major syntheses of Mississippi Valley landforms, processes and chronology.

Norman Sellers

Norman Sellers is the West Tennessee Area director of Heritage and Community Tourism Development which serves 21 counties in Tennessee. He currently serves on the Lower Mississippi Civil War Task Force, the Mississippi River Corridor, the Land Between the Lakes Study Group, the Tennessee Wars Commission West Tennessee Advisory Committee and has been instrumental in the design of Tennessee's heritage trails, as well as working to establish Tennessee's first blues heritage museum. He attended Murray University and is a graduate of the John Hancock Institute.

Daniel Usner

Daniel Usner is a professor of History at Cornell University. He grew up in New Orleans and received his Ph.D. from Duke University. He has published works on American Indian-Colonial relations in the Lower Mississippi Valley and on early U.S.-Native American

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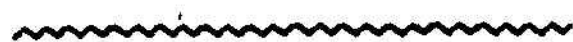
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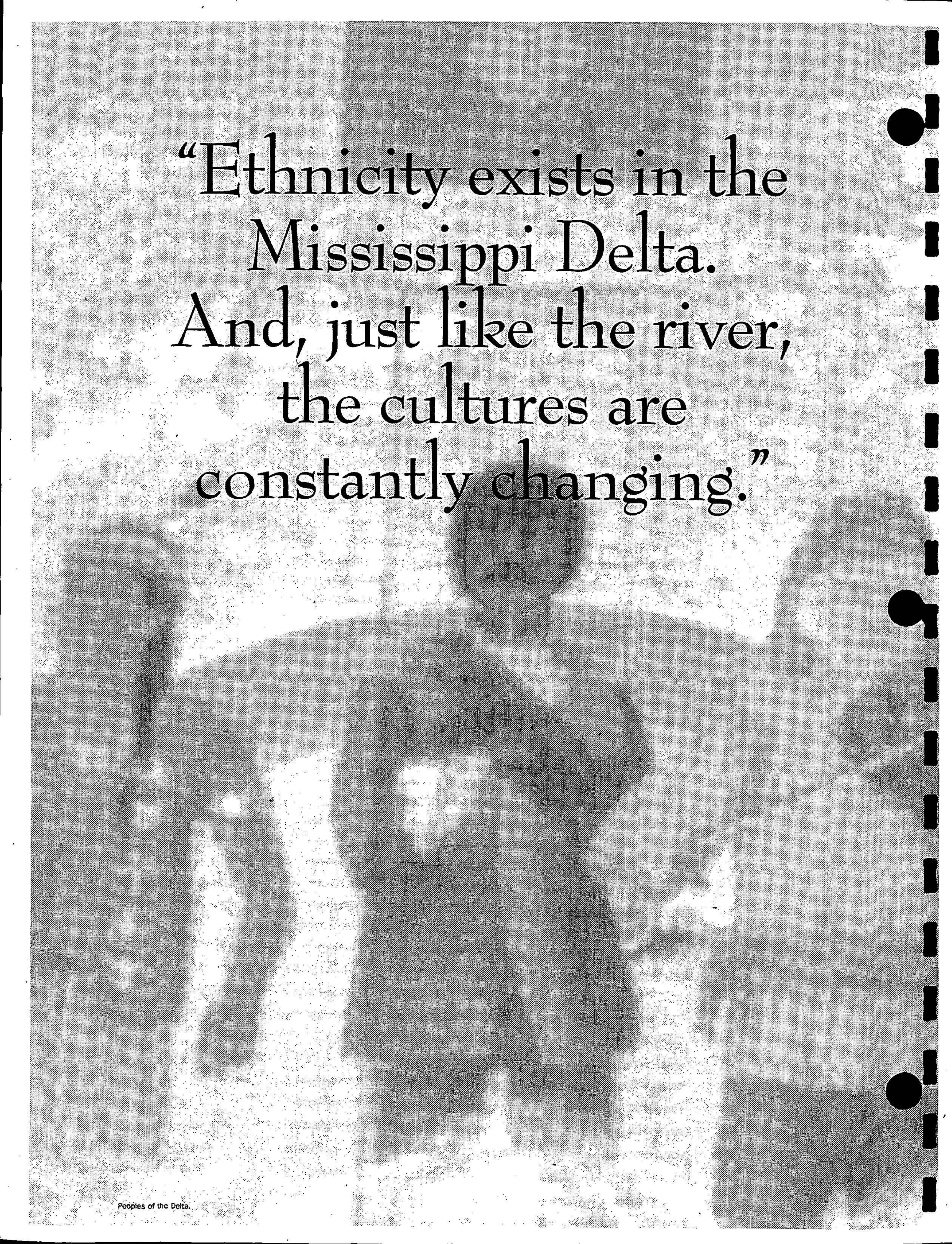
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*Peoples of the Delta*

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“Ethnicity exists in the  
Mississippi Delta.  
And, just like the river,  
the cultures are  
constantly changing.”

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