
Centerpiece

Newsletter of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences
Southeastern Louisiana University

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From the Director

As the central Gulf Coast environs struggle to adjust to a vastly restructured existence in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the staff at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has correspondingly readjusted the focus of our efforts. In the immediate aftermath of the storms we concentrated on recording details of the disaster for use by future researchers while also attempting to highlight particularly threatened aspects of our environment and culture that were revealed by nature's wrath. Through primary researched publications, docu-drama films, a cable television show centered on regional history, and even an interactive exhibit designed to encourage interest among a new generation of regional residents, the Center staff conformed to our mission of preserving and promoting awareness of the culture and heritage of southeast Louisiana and environs.

In the coming year we will advance these efforts to the next level through studies designed to suggest specific measures we need to take, and policies we should enact, to encourage environmental and cultural sustainability. A new grant from the Environmental Protection Agency will facilitate our effort to suggest a means to preserve and restore the Manchac Swamp ecosystem. Forthcoming staff publications will offer insight into understanding the regional cultural proclivity for aggressive resolution of conflict and a new appreciation for the backroom dynamics of modern Louisiana politics among other issues. A new lecture series sponsored by the Leon Ford Family Foundation will offer cutting edge analysis of pressing issues presented by nationally renowned scholars.

While the Center continues to embrace new initiatives designed to promote and preserve the identity of our home region, we have far from neglected our traditional projects. In 2006, in cooperation with the Department of History and Political Science, we hosted the twentieth anniversary Deep Delta Civil War Symposium. We also sponsored the annual Southeast Louisiana Historical Association lecture series and continued to serve as national headquarters of the Gulf South Historical Association. We continue to compile



Seated from L to R: Victoria Mocsary, Lindsey Marshall, La Sha Thompson. Standing from L to R: Keith Finley, Matthew Doolittle, Sam Hyde.

interviews for our World War II oral history project which now includes the recollections of more than 120 veterans from all branches of the military. Our continued service both as university archives as well as the premier regional archival depository has attracted impressive new collections certain to advance interest in regional development.

Each of these issues and events are highlighted in this edition of the Centerpiece. As our region confronts new challenges and opportunities, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies remains at the forefront in offering scholarly analysis of issues while ever endeavoring to promote understanding of our history. We invite you to join us as we continue to discover the past and confront the challenges of the future.

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.
Leon Ford Professor of History
Director

Judge Leon Ford, III Lecture in History



Judge Leon Ford, III

The influence of Judge Leon Ford, III remains strong at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University, and the Hammond community. At the time of this writing, the Center staff is in the final stages of cataloguing the thousands of items that comprise the Judge Ford Leon Ford, III Collection. It promises to be the single most important collection regarding southeast Louisiana history at the Center or anywhere else for that matter. “Its size and diversity is remarkable,” Director Sam Hyde observed, “it is a treasure trove of information. Everything from legal documents, genealogical data, photographs, maps, oral histories, artifacts of all shapes and sizes are in the collection. The eclectic nature of the items soon to be available for public perusal reflects the Judge’s manifold interests.”

One of Judge Ford’s great passions was history. What better way to celebrate the man and his legacy than with the formation of a new lecture series to coincide with Southeastern’s month-long Fanfare extravaganza. The First Annual Judge Leon Ford III Lecture in History offered two opportunities for SLU students and the local community to hear one of the nation’s top scholars,

John B. Boles, address the provocative topic “Climate, Geography, and Southern History: The Influence of Non-Human Factors.” Boles, the William Pettus Hobby Professor of History at Rice University and editor of the *Journal of Southern History* did not disappoint.



Ford Lecturer John Boles, Ph.D.

On 19 October 2006, the campus community had the opportunity to attend Boles’ morning lecture held in the Student Union Theater. Later, an evening lecture held in the Pottle Music Recital Hall, offered a more intimate venue for the historian. In attendance at the evening event were people from all walks of life and all age groups who in some way had been touched by Judge Ford. The Judge’s children, Leon Ford, IV and Helen Ford Dufreche attended both events and as always demonstrated the graciousness and good cheer that reminds everyone of their father. Following the evening lecture, Southeastern Louisiana University President, Dr. Randy Moffett, who introduced Boles, hosted a gala reception at the University Residence for those in attendance. The event culminated a memorable day of cutting-edge historical research, just as it served as a fitting tribute to a man who meant so much to the community—Judge Leon Ford, III.

The Center staff and the Ford Family Foundation are actively searching for the event’s next speaker. Be on the lookout for information regarding this exciting new lecture series.

Website Updated

Regular viewers of the Center's website are sure to have noticed some changes. A university-wide overhaul of all departmental sites necessitated the alterations. We hope that users find it just as navigable as the old. Hopefully many readers will find it even better. All of the old features remain the same thanks to the tireless efforts of veteran Center staffer Ms. Victoria Mocsary, who strove diligently to complete the transition in the face of luddite howls from Drs. Hyde and Finley. As of this writing, she is in the process of adding the finishing touches to the site. We would like to enlist your help to make the Center's webpage as up to date and as accurate as possible. If you find errors, dead links, or any other problems while navigating the page, please e-mail our web-specialist, Ms. Mocsary at: vmocsary@selu.edu.



Veteran student worker La Sha Thompson provides Center patrons service with a smile.

Each year correspondence from all over the world pours into our e-address. People from across the globe have become interested in the Center's holdings. Our staff does its best to answer all e-mail requests in a timely fashion. Please consult our website for information regarding our holdings and to learn more about the Center's exciting programs. A fee schedule detailing all of our services is also available online. For those without internet access, please feel free to call us at: 985-549-2151. We look forward to hearing from you.

Deep Delta Civil War Symposium Turns Twenty

Twenty years ago, a coalition of regional Civil War roundtables in cooperation with Southeastern Louisiana University began the Deep Delta Civil War Symposium. Although the organizers of the conference have changed, the quality of the event has remained of the highest caliber. It continues to attract large audiences to hear the nation's foremost Civil War authorities detail their latest research. For many Symposium veterans, the event is an annual rite of passage, a date set aside on the calendar for a sojourn to Hammond.

Naturally Sam Hyde, Roman Heleniak, and the rest of the Center staff, along with History Professor Harry Laver worked hard to make the Twentieth Anniversary celebration with the theme "The Decisive Factor" a special one. This year's roster of speakers included the Center's own Sam Hyde who delivered a speech titled, "A Threshold of Unobtainable Commitment: Factors Contributing to the Confederate Defeat." Joining Hyde were Patrick Hotard (Director of the Beauvoir Jefferson Davis Home) who spoke on "Beauvoir and the Affects of Hurricane Katrina"; Harry Laver (Southeastern Louisiana University) who delivered "A Great Force of Will: The Leadership of Ulysses S. Grant"; Stacy Allen (Shiloh National Military Park) who spoke on "Random Impressions Concerning Naval Supremacy, Sherman's Neckties, and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson vs. King George, III"; Stephen Davis (Blue and Gray Magazine) who spoke on "Promoted Beyond Ability: The Case of John Bell Hood"; and Charles Roland (University of Kentucky) who spoke on "From Elation to Despair on the Confederate Home Front."

As always, attendees were greeted with traditional southeast Louisiana hospitality that included two cocktail parties and a special ceremony honoring individuals who have played a prominent role in the development of the Deep Delta Civil War Symposium, including Charles Elliott, Roman Heleniak, Sam Hyde, Charles Nunez, and Jim Perrin.

We have enjoyed our affiliation with the Symposium and cherish the friendships we have made along the way. Thank you to all who have joined us in studying and debating the American Civil War.

Sun, Sand, and Scholarship

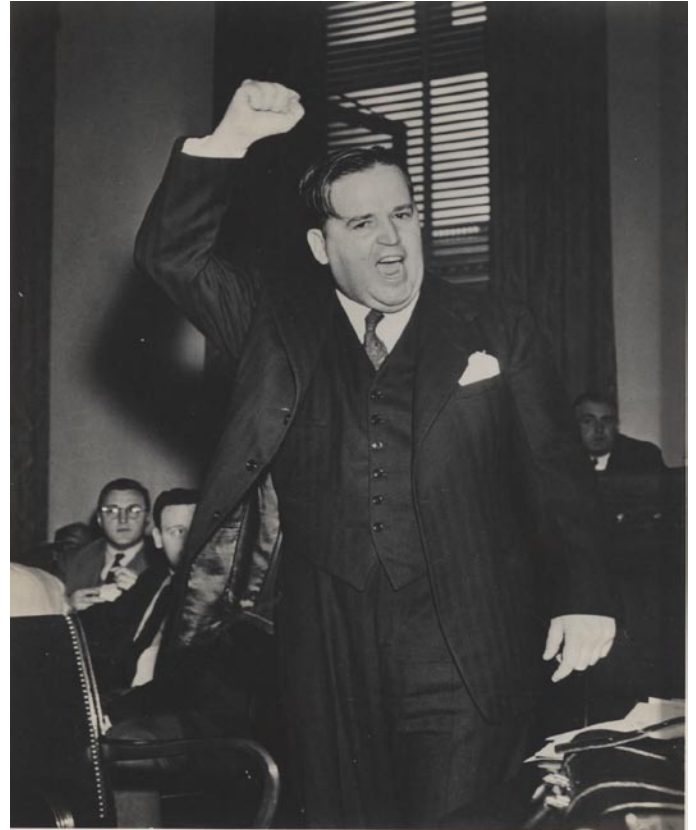
Preparations for the twenty-fifth Gulf South History and Humanities Conference began with some trepidation considering past conferences have taken place in the wake of powerful hurricanes such as Ivan and most recently Katrina. With the location and date established, conference organizers warily watched the Atlantic for signs of tropical disturbances. This year the Gulf coast was spared the ravages of mother nature. Hurricane season did not bring our region devastation, thus ensuring a rare occurrence—a smooth GSHA. Organization President Randall Broxton along with fellow Pensacola Junior College faculty Brian Rucker and Susan Morgan organized the conference held 5-7 October 2006 at the Hilton Garden Inn on the white sand shoreline of Pensacola Beach.

Inviting weather and outstanding scholarship all served to make this event a memorable one. As always, Center staff members played a pivotal role in both the organization's leadership committee and in the exchange of ideas. Center Director Sam Hyde, who also serves as the Executive Director of the GSHA, presented the recent Center Docudrama titled: "The Manchac Swamp: Man-Made Disaster in Search of Resolution." Hyde's session also included the Center's Scholar in Residence as well as the GSHA's Secretary Treasurer, Roman Heleniak, who along with SLU History Department Faculty member and Center friend Al Dranguet regaled the audience with the fruits of their research in a presentation titled: "Return of Hunting and Gathering in the Manchac Swamp." Center Graduate Research Assistant Matthew Doolittle once again provided invaluable assistance ensuring that all conference participants had an enjoyable stay. Doolittle also doubled as the event's official photographer, capturing for posterity the pageantry of the association's awards banquet.

Next year's conference to be held in Mobile, Alabama on 11-13 October 2007 promises to be equally enlightening. This year's theme is: "Sources and Places for Conducting Research on Gulf South History." The Riverview Plaza Hotel overlooking the Mobile River will serve as the conference headquarters. Those interested should check the Center's website for up-to-the-minute details on the 2007 gathering or contact conference organizers Carol Ellis and Michael Thomason, USA Archives, USA Springhill Avenue, Room 0722, Mobile AL 36688.

James H. Morrison Lecture in Politics and Government

Ever since the donation of the James H. Morrison Collection to the then Center for Regional Studies, it has remained one of the most popular and most impressive collections in the Center's holdings. One can find evidence of "Mr. Jimmy's" legacy everywhere on the Southeastern campus and across the region, owing to his tireless efforts on behalf of voters in the Sixth Congressional District.



A Young Jimmy Morrison urging reform

Center staff and university administrators are currently at work searching for a suitable speaker for the annual Morrison Lecture Series which remains one of the University's most popular and prestigious events. As soon as a speaker and a date are established, we will mail an announcement and update our website. Be on the lookout for additional information.

Florida Parish Chronicles

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies continues its commitment to disseminating information on the history and cultures of the Florida parishes to as wide an audience as possible. Sam Hyde's popular

television program the “Florida Parish Chronicles” continues to air on the Southeastern Channel, Charter cable number 18. A recent episode of the program titled, “Storms: Louisiana in Nature’s Wrath,” struck a resonant chord with local viewers, still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, as well as television industry figures. The episode explored Louisiana’s deadly relationship with devastating tropical storms. Much to Hyde’s surprise, the episode was nominated for a Sun Coast Emmy Award from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences!

Nominees found themselves the subject of an intense local media blitz as they prepared to attend the gala event in Miami, Florida. Southeastern Channel Manager Rick Settoon, who remains a staunch supporter of the program, also attended the ceremony as his station received numerous nominations. Hyde remarked regarding the festivities that he was “impressed with the magnitude of the event. Until I arrived in town, I really did not realize how significant just being nominated was. It has been a humbling experience.” Although Hyde returned without Emmy hardware, he learned much from the experience and promised a return visit in the not too distant future.

Hyde has already begun work on new episodes. Check your local listings for the dates and times of new programs.

EPA Extravaganza: A Film, A Manuscript, and An Additional Mission

When Center Director Sam Hyde and Assistant Director Keith Finley received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2003, they recognized the inherent significance of the project. It offered the scholars the opportunity to fulfill the Center’s mission, while also helping to achieve an invaluable objective—safeguarding Louisiana’s coastal marshes from further degradation at the hands of man. Countless hours were spent researching, writing, and filming the twin projects that comprised the larger grant effort. As historians, Hyde and Finley focused first and foremost on creating a written narrative, on sifting through the evidence to find the pivotal episodes or gradual processes in recorded history that have altered the Manchac ecosystem.

As a rough draft emerged, Hyde turned to writing the script for the film while revisions on the manuscript continued. Film shoots included scores of local

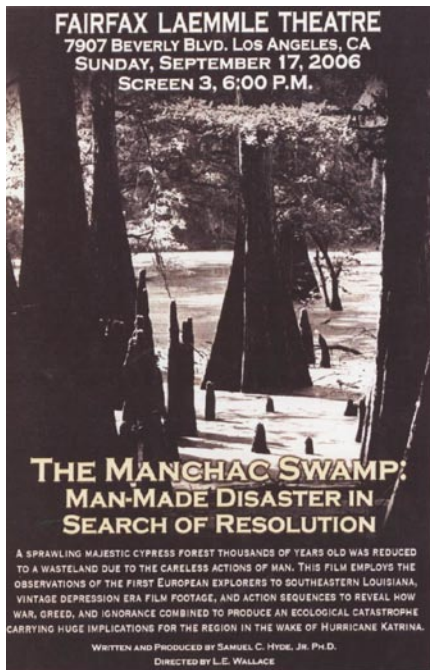
actors, including the Center’s own, Graduate Assistant Dana McKinney, who stretched the limits of her acting ability by portraying a Native American. When the film titled, “The Manchac Swamp: Man-made Disaster in Search of Resolution” was ready for public viewing, the Center staff anxiously awaited its premier at the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association’s spring meeting. Over one-hundred and fifty people jammed the Levy building in downtown Hammond for the event. Spectators found the somber message of the docudrama moving and requested information concerning what they could do to help.



Action Sequence taken from Manchac Swamp Film

Throughout, we hoped that our EPA project would inform the general public concerning human threats to the ecosystem. Feedback from the premier proved that we had succeeded in sparking interest at least with this small sample group. After its premier, the docudrama aired on LPB affiliates in Baton Rouge and New Orleans and now is regularly shown on the Southeastern Channel. Daily phone calls come to the Center from citizens throughout the area expressing gratitude for the production and interest in being a part of the solution. Evidence is mounting that the project is making a difference. Film critics also found the production worthy of recognition. The New York International Film Festival nominated the production for an award in the documentary category. As a result, Director Sam Hyde found himself in Hollywood California to attend the festivities. He received much favorable feedback from the industry moguls in attendance as well as some constructive criticism that will surely make the Center’s next cinematic excursion even better. Check your local listings for the film’s next showing.

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As always the Center strives to produce a quality product at a low cost—the results of our EPA project speak for themselves. Grant officials encouraged Hyde and the Center to submit a proposal for additional funding. We are happy to announce that additional revenue for further research is forthcoming. We look forward to sharing information with you regarding this exciting new project as it develops!

Many hours of research and filming lay ahead, but the long-term goal of environmental conservation is well worth the effort. We promise to keep the Center's friends abreast of our progress. Until then, get involved, contact your elected officials, and make a difference.

SELHA Hosts Manchac Film Premier

Southeast Louisiana Historical Association functions always promise good food, good times, and more often than not, good scholarship. As the Spring 2006 meeting approached, the organization's leadership debated potential speakers. Graduate students and faculty members conducting research in regional history were all considered. A short list of names slowly took shape and a date—27 April—was selected. At the same time preparations were being made, the Center's EPA funded film neared completion. It would be ready in time for a showing at the SELHA gathering. Organization President, Roman Heleniak promptly shifted the evening's focus and embraced the notion of premiering the film titled, "The Manchac Swamp: Man-made Disaster in Search of Resolution" at the spring meeting. As a new plan emerged, it became necessary to make the event's festivities less formal to ensure that adequate chairs were available for the larger than normal crowd expected. Organization members were honored that the important film would have its first public showing at their event. And the crowd was not disappointed—the production highlighted the causal chain that precipitated the ravaging of the Manchac Swamp, an area that many of our members have cherished since childhood. The History Honor Society, Phi Alpha Theta, also inducted its new members at the event. It proved a fitting venue for welcoming new scholars into the fold. Plans for a summer 2007 meeting in which a new direction for the organization will be announced are underway.

At the end of 2006, the manuscript titled, "One of the Prettiest Spots I have Seen: Politics, Industry and the Destruction of the Manchac Swamp Ecosystem" was finally ready for production. The handsome volume traces the environmental transformation of a great national treasure from prehistoric times to the present to reveal how war, greed, and ignorance combined to produce ecological catastrophe carrying huge implications for the region in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Far from merely historical commentary, authors Hyde and Finley caution that political insensitivity, sustained by public indifference, threatens an even sadder denouement in the absence of immediate intervention. The manuscript will be disseminated to state politicians, local schools, and be made available to the general public.



Assistant Director Keith Finley guides SLU Lab School Students through the Center's EPA exhibit inspired by the grant.

New Collection Highlights

In 2006, we received a number of impressive collections that only increased our already strong holdings on Florida parishes' history. The family of Judge Leon Ford, III added to their father's collection, bringing us a variety of railroad lanterns antique toys, and Indian handicrafts. Former Congressman John Rarick also bolstered his collection by depositing material related to his recent receipt of the Key to the City of Baton Rouge and the decree declaring him Honorary Mayor-President of the state's capitol city. Long-time Center friend and collaborator L.E. Wallace donated an array of DVDs containing film footage from local parades, fairs, and other items related to Tangipahoa history. Another frequent donor, Donald Sharp, greatly added to his preexisting collection of materials chronicling the early history of Louisiana. In it are rare colonial land grants, surveyors plats, an assortment of seals, and numerous items regarding this region's colonial past. The Sharp Collection will quickly become one of the Center's most important as it fills a void in our holdings related to the colonial period. Check our website for additional information on this ever-growing collection.

Ms. Betty Battalora donated an assortment of Civil War Era newspapers many of which, such as an 1863 copy of the *Daily Citizen*, are exceedingly rare. Nancy Sharon Collins deposited an impressive assortment of engraving plates produced by the Dameron-Pierson Company in New Orleans. Patrons interested in examining the metal plates must call the Center in advance to arrange an appointment.

Various departments and organizations on campus have increased our archival holdings pertaining to Southeastern Louisiana University. Phi Kappa Phi donated several items and retired history professor and long-time Center friend, C. Howard Nichols donated the speech he delivered at the Fiftieth Anniversary Banquet of the Southeastern Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi.

All readers are encouraged to consider donating their diaries, pictures, and artifacts to the Center so that future generations of Louisianans can have access to our region's past. World War II vets are further reminded that the Center is still conducting oral history interviews for all servicemen involved in either the Atlantic or Pacific Theater of operation. If you

have not already sat with one of our interviewers, consider scheduling an appointment today.

New Scholarship

As always Center staffers remained on the cutting edge of historical research. Center Director Samuel Hyde reached the pinnacle of academic advancement by achieving the rank of full Professor, an achievement rooted in a lifetime of scholarly excellence. To further his research interests, Hyde continued his usual array of professional activities. He delivered a lecture titled, "Feuding is Our Means of Societal Regulation: Violence and Democracy in the Southeast Louisiana Piney Woods, 1877-1900" at the Southern Historical Association's (SHA) annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia. The SHA remains one of the nation's preeminent regional historical associations. An extended version of Hyde's research will soon be published in *Louisiana History*. In addition, Hyde delivered his usual assortment of lectures to audiences both large and small across the Florida parishes, while finding time to participate in the LHA and the GSHA.

Hyde is also at work editing the wartime diaries and post-war memoirs of Halbert Eleazer Paine. Paine was commissioned Colonel of the 4th Wisconsin Regiment on 2 July 1861 and was quickly promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers. On 13 March 1863 Paine was promoted to Brevet Major General for displaying conspicuous gallantry during the battle of Port Hudson. Paine's reflections on his active service in southeast Louisiana during the Civil War presents scholars with fresh insight into the federal occupation of New Orleans and the surrounding area. Hyde explores both the unvarnished reflections Paine noted in his diary often still enraged with passion from an altercation with a fellow officer and the far more tempered assessment of events he put forward in his official memoirs many years after the conflict. Upon completion of the project, Hyde plans to submit it to an academic press for publication. Civil War buffs and regional history enthusiasts are certain to find this new volume rewarding.

Hyde, along with Assistant Director Keith Finley, completed work on an environmental history of the northern and western Pontchartrain Basin titled, "*One of the Prettiest Spots I have Seen:*" *Politics, Industry, and the Destruction of the Manchac Swamp Ecosystem*. The conclusions revealed in this study suggest that the social, cultural, and economic factors that transformed the basin throughout the region's history, and thus should be considered, inextricably linked with any future plan to recover the ecosystem.

Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is always pleased to receive letters, printed materials, and photographs which help document the history and the cultures of our region. We can, if necessary, copy photographs and manuscripts for historical research and return the originals to their owners. For more information about contributing materials or about the Center, please contact:

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www.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/RegionalStudies

Mission:
The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies preserves and promotes the history and the cultures of Louisiana's Florida Parishes, southwestern Mississippi, and surrounding areas through scholarly research, conferences, film productions, and publishing.

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