
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 proverbial budget-cutting axe wielded by the governor and his allies in the legislature looms over higher education yet again, some would think that our ability to advance understanding and awareness of our dynamic region may be permanently compromised. It is true that we have been forced to curtail some services to the public, and to devote far more time and effort than hoped, in simply finding ways to continue to operate amid seemingly endless reductions of everything.

Yet just as we appear on the threshold of surrendering to despair, we are reminded of the critical nature of our work - no other institution is devoted exclusively to the study and promotion of Louisiana's Florida Parishes and immediate surrounding environs of south Louisiana and southwest Mississippi. Each week we uncover previously unrevealed treasures from our past whether it be through our own research or through new collections generously donated to the Center by patrons who share our vision of what we believe to be Louisiana's most exciting region.

Moreover, our efforts to reveal the dynamic story of our region to a wider audience continues to advance. Ever increasing numbers of regional and national media outlets cover our projects, utilize materials held in our collections, and consult with us on stories highlighting the curiosities of southeast Louisiana. Whether it be images supplied to national television programs such as "Swamp People," interviews with national media agencies such as CNN, international agencies like the BBC, or traveling exhibits sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the contributions supplied by the Center make our stories known to the world.



Center staff left to right: Faith Allen, Megan Arledge, Keith Finley, Sam Hyde, Nicholas Heyd, Chase Tomlin

This year we have lost dear friends, felt the sharp pain of sustained cutbacks, and become skilled in the use of "ersatz" to maintain operations. But we have also added some dramatic new collections, advanced understanding of some long unresolved and troubling chapters from our past, and greatly enhanced the body of evidence available to scholars, policy planners, and the general public necessary to make informed decisions to improve our quality of life. Every trial has been matched by triumph and our commitment to our mission has never been stronger.

All of these issues are discussed in this edition of the Centerpiece - we encourage you to join us as we celebrate ever-expanding awareness of our dynamic home region!

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr, Ph.D.
Leon Ford Endowed Chair
Director Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

GSHA Returns to Texas

In 2008, the Gulf South History and Humanities Conference was scheduled to host its annual conference at Galveston Beach. A few weeks before the event Hurricane Ike made landfall along the coast of Texas, devastating the Galveston Area. On previous occasions when hurricanes affected planned conference locations the organization had enough time to rally and relocate the event. This year the weather axe fell too close to the conference date. The GSHA could not be held. Naturally, everyone in the association wanted to see the conference return to Texas and to Galveston in particular. In 2014, Galveston played host to the 32nd Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference and unlike in 2008, the weather remained agreeable throughout the weekend.



Galveston's Tremont Hotel

Under the able guidance of GSHA president Dr. Jeffrey Owens, the historic Tremont Hotel in the Galveston historic district served as the headquarters for the event. Visitors to the posh hotel were met with a lobby known for its splendor and a series of well-outfitted conference rooms. The location could not have been more elegant for the Conference's return. Of course, conference attendees do not come just for the location--although the site's setting in the historic district and proximity to the beach made it ideal--they attended for the exchange of ideas that is the hallmark of the event. Attendees were certainly not disappointed. As always, the staff of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies was well represented. Center director Sam Hyde remained the association's treasurer and delivered a paper titled, "God Grant Us Rest from this Weariness: Civil War Violence and Its Legacies in Southeast Louisiana and Southwest Mississippi." Center assistant director Keith Finley commented on a session dealing with the Texas Gulf Coast in the 1920s-1930s.

If you attended the 2014 event, you already know that this is a conference you must factor in to your annual planning. If you have never been to it, we strongly urge you to give the event careful consideration. The discussions are always lively and the location enjoyable. Preparations are underway for the 2015 edition of the conference scheduled to be held for the first time in historic Natchez, Mississippi. Be on the lookout for additional information on this important regional history event. We hope to see you there!

Florida Parish Chronicles

The Florida Parish Chronicles has been a favorite on the Southeastern Channel ever since it first aired in 2004. Numerous awards and other accolades have been given to the program and the future remains just as bright. We are very proud of the long-term success of this project and look forward to bringing new episodes to the public.

The latest installment, titled "Forgotten Louisianians: the Rise and Demise of Native Culture in Southeast Louisiana," premiered on the Southeastern Channel in early February 2014. As always, the fine folks at First Guaranty Bank helped to underwrite the program. We thank them for their support and interest in helping to preserve the history and culture of Louisiana's Florida Parishes.



Indian Projectile Point

The episode traces the origins of Native culture in the area, exploring migration patterns and factors that led to the demise or removal of each tribe. Cooking techniques, village construction, methods of warfare and Native American political structures are all detailed in the episode. The Acollapisa, Tangipahoa, Quinipisa, Mugalasha, Bayougoula, Chickasaw, Houma, Natchez and Choctaw are among the local tribes covered. According to Center director and program creator

Samuel C. Hyde, "This episode reveals previously overlooked or forgotten details about Native American life in the Florida Parishes, along with detailing the various phases of Indian culture in our region and what led to the demise of each."

Segments were shot in Livingston, Tangipahoa and St. Tammany parishes, and they include never-before-televised images of Indian mounds, burial sites, and Native American artifacts. Hyde delivers one report from an Indian mound near Roseland that is approximately 2,000 years old where he points out the disappearance of its twin mound due to natural erosion and human excavation. "In addition to providing a look at the curious aspects of regional Native American culture, the program also offers some sharp reminders of the fragility of historical sites and their preservation," Hyde said. "This episode is certain to both entertain and educate."

Among those interviewed for the program are Rebecca Saunders, curator of anthropology at the LSU Museum of Natural Science in Baton Rouge, regarding Indian mounds and early settlement patterns; and independent researcher and Native American specialist Jason Thompson, who has collected artifacts from Florida Parish tribes dating back 5,000 years. Thompson, who has researched 10 different Indian mounds in the Florida Parishes, displays a variety of arrowheads, spear points, and stones that were used as tools in drilling, cutting and cooking.

As this edition of the Centerpiece goes to press, the Center staff is busy compiling information and conducting film shoots for the next episode, which will surely capture the attention of the local community. In it, we will unravel the varying accounts and conflicting evidence surrounding the infamous homicide of Buzzy Breland, his wife Eliza, and fifteen-year-old daughter Alma. Avery Blount was later hanged for the crime yet doubt remained as to his guilt. For years, stories of the murder have circulated throughout the Florida Parishes. Although our program might not be able to say with certainty, "this is exactly what happened," we can definitely say that no account currently available is as thoroughly researched as this. We urge readers to be on the lookout for what promises to be a blockbuster episode of the Chronicles. You do not want to miss this one.

"Forgotten Louisianans" and other episodes of the Florida Parish Chronicles air regularly on the Southeastern Channel, which is available on Charter



Steve Zaffuto of the Southeastern Channel shoots an action sequence in the latest edition of the Florida Parish Chronicles as Dr. Sam Hyde monitors the shoot.

Cable. For the Southeastern Channel program schedule: visit: <http://www2.selu.edu/thesoutheasternchannel/>.



McCrea Documentary

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is always on the lookout for talented student workers. Over the years we have had the privilege of assembling what we consider to be the best combination of undergraduate and graduate student employees found anywhere on the Southeastern campus. In 2014, graduate student Scott Caro upheld the Center's long-standing history of filling its ranks with the best and the brightest the university has to offer. Caro, along with fellow graduate student Nicholas Brilleaux, joined forces in a public history class and decided to produce a documentary film that would examine the untold story of Louisiana's disastrous attempt at its own Woodstock rock festival. What started out as a class assignment soon morphed into something special as the collaborators worked tirelessly on a project that very quickly transcended the original strictures of the classroom task. The finished product, titled *McCrea 1971* (2014), presents the story of Louisiana's forgotten rock festival. Directed by Brilleaux and Caro the half-hour-long documentary features long-lost film footage, interviews with musicians and attendees, and original soundtrack by Louisiana-based artists.

To date the film has won numerous awards including a Suncoast Emmy, a Gold Telly Award, and a CBI National Student Award for Best Documentary. Making the film of even greater interest to readers is the fact that Center director Sam Hyde makes a cameo in the production as he recounts his boyhood recollections of the event. It is definitely something you do not want to miss. We look forward to seeing more from Scott

Caro and Nick Brilleaux in the future. To learn more about the film, see: www.mccrea1971.com.



Nick Brilleaux and Scott Caro



Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

Each year, the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association strives to bring its members first-rate scholarship in the organization's journal *The Southeast Louisiana Review* as well as top-notch entertainment at its annual meeting. The latest edition of the *Review* will be addressed in a later article. As for the 2014 spring meeting, most members thought it would be difficult to match our 2013 speaker Lieutenant Governor Jay Dardenne. After considerable discussion, the association extended an invitation to Representative John Bel Edwards whose family had just been inducted into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame. Edwards graciously accepted the invitation—and as the announcements regarding the 17 April 2014 event started hitting the public the response was overwhelming. Few people who live in Louisiana's Seventy-Second District have not in some way been positively influenced by Edwards. A much larger than expected crowd was planned and excitement mounted for the meeting scheduled to be held at the Levy Building in historic downtown Hammond. On the day of the event, tragedy befell the Edwards family as its patriarch and long time Tangipahoa Parish Sheriff Frank M. Edwards succumbed after a long illness. John Edwards graciously called the Center in his time of grief and apologized that he would not be able to make it to the event. The association quickly mobilized to find a replacement just as it mourned the loss of an old friend. One of the first people to come to mind as a replacement was Jason Thompson, an expert on Louisiana Indians, a guest on the Florida Parish Chronicles, and a recent contributor to the *Southeast Louisiana Review*. It is not easy to convince someone to

be a keynote speaker at a dinner function that will be hosted just a few hours from the time one receives the call. But Mr. Thompson is not an ordinary person, and he graciously accepted the invitation.

As the crowd waited, it fell to the association's acting secretary and treasurer, Keith Finley, to announce to those gathered of the unfortunate circumstances that befell the featured guest for the evening. Attendees were informed that Edwards expressed his desire to honor his commitment to the organization. After informing the crowd about Edwards, Finley introduced the group's new speaker. Mr. Thompson went on to regale the enthusiastic crowd with stories of uncovering Indian artifacts throughout the Florida Parishes. Many of these tales included run-ins with snakes and angry relic hunters bent on destroying Louisiana's Indian heritage at gunpoint if necessary. Thompson turned out to be a hit and the evening proved most enjoyable.

As always, the event featured a cocktail reception both before and following the meeting and as usual, the association retained the services of the wildly popular Marilyn's Catering.

By now, you should have received information regarding our 2015 meeting. We are honored to announce that John Bel Edwards has rescheduled as he promised. He will speak at our meeting on 16 April 2015 in our usual location in the Hammond Regional Arts Center. Edwards' will address Louisiana's past, present, and future. John Bel currently serves as the state representative for Louisiana's recently redrawn 72nd Congressional District and is making a bid for the governorship. We are very excited about the event and hope to see all of you there in April!



Legislator John Bel Edwards

If you have let your membership in the association lapse, please send a \$25.00 check made payable to "Southeast Louisiana Historical Association" to SLU

#10730, Hammond, Louisiana 70402. Membership in the association includes free admission to the annual banquet, a copy of the group's journal—*The Southeast Louisiana Review*, as well as a copy of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!



Center Director Recognized

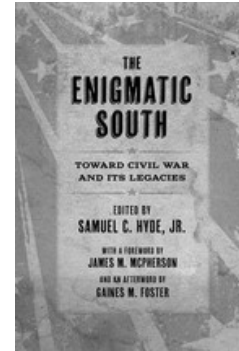
Center Director Sam Hyde is no stranger to accolades. Over the years, he has received numerous commendations for his work. Few prizes, however, prove as meaningful as those given by the people you work with everyday. In 2001, Hyde received the President's Award for Excellence in the Field of Research. At the university's annual fall convocation in August 2014, Dr. Hyde was again bestowed with the President's Award for Excellence in Research, the university's highest research honor for faculty and staff.



Southeastern President John Crain (Left) poses with the 2014 President's Award winners (from Left to Right) Connie Davis; Center Director Sam Hyde; Lorlinda Sealey; Dale Newkirk; and Debra Dolliver.

When reporters need information, background or an interview on southeast Louisiana, Sam Hyde's name frequently pops up on their list of contacts. Over the years, Hyde has earned a reputation as a prominent source for his volumes of knowledge about the region, gained through various research projects on the South and especially the Florida Parishes. The Associated Press, *New York Times*, History Channel, Discovery Channel, and A&E Network are among the many media entities that have worked with Hyde on stories that cover his wide range of research, which has stimulated interest in the region. "I have always been impressed by the avalanche of new projects he regularly undertakes," said Department of History colleague and Center assistant director Keith Finley. "With Sam, the pace never seems to slacken."

The author of seven professionally refereed books, Hyde is frequently asked to comment on the culture of the region. This is based largely on one of his earliest works stemming from his doctoral dissertation research, *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810-1899*.



The latest from Sam Hyde

Hyde's latest book, *The Enigmatic South: Toward Civil War and Its Legacies*, was released in the fall 2014. He has also branched out into video to further his expression of historical research. He received an Emmy Award nomination and other awards for his environmental video "American Crisis, American Shame: The National Consequences of Coastal Erosion." His conservation documentary, "The Manchac Swamp: Manmade Disaster in Search of Resolution," aired statewide on the Louisiana Public Broadcasting Network and helped increase funding for conservation efforts led by the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. In addition, he has contributed as researcher, writer and narrator to the production of 16 episodes of the popular program *The Florida Parishes Chronicles*, produced by the Southeastern Channel.

Congratulations Dr. Hyde on your achievement. We all look forward to you winning this award a few more times before you retire!



New Exhibit

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is planning a new exhibit, which will feature rare books from the personal collections of Southeastern Louisiana University faculty. Included in the display will be several items over 500 years old, which will help us tell the story of the printing industry, evolutions in paper production, and the importance of the mass produced publications in spreading literacy. The books of former English faculty member Paul Crawford and Judge Jimmy Kuhn will form the core of the exhibit. We

anticipate the grand opening of the exhibit to be sometime near the end of the spring semester 2015.



In Memory of Leon Ford IV

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has been blessed with many champions over the years. Our mission of preserving the history and legacy of this region inspires many like-minded individuals to offer their assistance. Over the years wonderful people such as Leon Ford III, Helen Dufreche, and Helen Ricketts Rownd have generously made donations at critical stages in the Center's evolution that have enabled us to continue fulfilling our mission despite the ever-present threat of budget reductions. In the last few years, our operating budget has been reduced to a bare minimum—often all that exists is money to pay our staff...practically nothing remains in our anemic budget, save for a few dollars that will enable us to buy either one box of copy paper or one ink cartridge for our printer. This is not one box or cartridge a week or month...it is one a year! If we happen to need funds for both a box of paper and an ink cartridge at the same time—we are out of luck. Fortunately, the Center found a friend who stood with us in our darkest hour.



Leon Ford, IV

Leon Ford, IV has always been there for the Center. With unbridled enthusiasm and infectious laughter, he has walked with us as we navigated the brave new world of meager state funding for higher education that has been all too prevalent in recent years. Although we have been seriously wounded in the process, Leon always made sure the wounds inflicted did not become mortal. Leon would not think twice to crusade on the Center's behalf. If a visit to the university administration was needed, Leon would be the first in line pounding on the door to ensure that our voice was heard in the university's budget creation process. In

short, he was exactly the kind of friend an institution such as ours needs. Words fail to adequately convey just what Leon has meant to the Center over the years, but one thing is certain—without him we would not be where we currently are.

Beyond his devotion to the Center, Leon was a wonderful human being. Everyone who came across his path was struck by his warm and generous personality. To Leon, there was no such thing as an enemy...only friends he had yet to make. The true measure of a man is not the way he conducts himself among his peers, it is the way he handles himself in the presence of those who are not his equals. When Leon visited the Center, he did not rush in to see the director. He took his time to chat with every person on the staff—every single one. Often Leon would give gift cards to the student staff as a sign of gratitude for all of the work that they performed. Of course, he did not need to do this, but in his mind it was only right...and so he did it. Time after time members of the staff would be the beneficiary of small and sometimes large acts of kindness from Leon. In exchange, he expected nothing. But Leon was no ordinary man. He was someone who feared no one when engaged in defending what he considered right. He was someone who retained a fascination with the things that inspired him as a boy, railroad and space travel—interests he once shared with his deceased father and dear Center friend Judge Leon Ford, III. It is with heavy hearts that we received the news that our friend had died unexpectedly at the age of 53, leaving behind his wife Donna and so many unfinished plans. If we learned anything from Leon, it was that perseverance in the face of adversity is the best recipe for success. Leon would certainly not want us to scale back our initiatives but to continue plugging away at the things we worked together to build. So continue on we must knowing that even in death Leon still walks by our side.



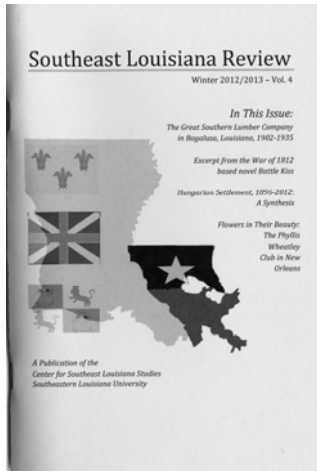
Southeast Louisiana Review

The newest issue of the *Southeast Louisiana Review* has been released featuring studies on antebellum education in the Florida Parishes, the working lives of the Washington Parish African American community members from 1920-1940, and the presence of Native Americans in this region. This issue is one that we are especially proud to produce as it exhibits the high caliber of scholarship currently taking place in the study of Florida Parish history.

The *Review*, a cultural and historically oriented publication of the Southeast Louisiana Historical

Association in conjunction with the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies also contains a short story by novelist Dayne Sherman.

"This particular issue celebrates specific aspects of the rich cultural diversity that characterizes our region," said Center director and the Review's managing editor Samuel C. Hyde Jr.



The Southeast Louisiana Review

In an article titled "Antebellum Education in Louisiana's Florida Parishes," Sarah Hyde, assistant professor at River Parishes Community College, counters a long-held contention that formal education in the South received little emphasis in the pre-Civil War era. Her research reveals that in the antebellum Florida Parishes, the education of children was a foremost consideration for parents and policy makers, whether it was home-based or in more traditional school settings.

In the article, "Prosperity and Peril in the Piney Woods: An Analysis of Washington Parish's African American Community, 1920-1940," historian Reginald Span notes that black residents of the region did not enjoy opportunities for an education – even into the 20th century. Even so, Span's research in Washington Parish indicates black residents learned to advance themselves both socially and economically. While relying on census data and other primary sources, the study suggests that, with the exception of voting, black residents advanced their condition in every sense.

Also in the publication, teacher and amateur archaeologist, Jason Glenn Thompson presents a hands-on explanation of the Florida Parishes' first inhabitation by various tribes of Native Americans that lived in the area for thousands of years. Thompson documents the sites he personally visited and includes maps and photographs of his findings.

The *Review* also includes the short story "Witness: A Louisiana Short Story" by Sherman, placed in the author's imaginary Louisiana locale, Baxter Parish. Sherman is a reference librarian at Southeastern and has recently published his second novel, "Zion."

Members of the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association receive a copy of the journal as part of their membership. If you are interested in receiving a copy of this or any previous editions of the *Review*, they are available for purchase at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies for \$10.00.



New Collection Highlights

Despite an ever-growing concern for the limits of archival storage space, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies continues to bring in new and exciting collections, just as it adds to pre-existing ones. One of the reasons that donors continue to deposit their items with us is their knowledge that their collections will be treated with the utmost care. Unlike at some repositories, all of our donors are treated the same—if you donate to the Center your contribution will be given the greatest care currently available and you will be able to rest assured knowing that your collection will continue being safeguarded against the ravages of time. This year several previous donors have added to their collections, including Ms. Irene Morris, the families of John Rarick and Jimmy Morrison, and C. Howard Nichols. New additions have also been made to our Antoinette Harrell and Grace Memorial Church Collections. The Center recently received the papers of former Southeastern Louisiana University President J. Larry Crain and the Gewalt Collection, which features the records of the Lake Superior Piling Company. We are excited about the ongoing donation of long-time *Hammond Daily Star* editor Lil Mirando. We have been gradually securing a massive assortment of material from her reporting and from the *Daily Star* archive in general. This collection promises to offer the most comprehensive picture of modern Tangipahoa Parish available anywhere. Its contents run the gamut from sports, to culture, to politics, to local interest.

If you have items relevant to the mission of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, we urge you to give us call at 985-549-2151 and set up an appointment to meet with the director to discuss a possible donation.

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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