
CENTERPIECE

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

Volume XXII
Spring 2017

From the Director

Just when it seems we have reached the crest of challenges confronting our quality of life, a year like 2016 arrives and reminds that life is ever a challenge. The continuing legislative cutbacks to higher education that place ever growing demands on our dwindling resources was augmented this year by mass demonstrations calling for enhanced police accountability, a bitterly divisive presidential campaign, and a deluge of epic proportions that produced massive flooding. The August 2016 flood alone proved devastating to large areas of our home region and has left many of our neighbors displaced to this day.

The people of southeastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi have always understood that a preferred quality of life comes with a price. Having survived the tumult of rebellion, destruction of war, ravages of countless hurricanes and other violent storms among other challenges, our citizens are not easily discouraged. The scenes of neighbors helping each other, rescue efforts performed by the Cajun Navy and our dedicated first responders, and the continuing rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the flood stand in sharp contrast to the defeatism and despair that might overcome less determined people amid such challenges.

Our shared history is a fundamental component of the resolve so evident in our regional character. The better we understand the varied aspects of our shared past the better we can appreciate who we are and the better we can confront the challenges of the future. Revealing and interpreting our past and preparing our region to accommodate the future precisely defines the mission of the Center.

In the past year Center staff have produced new scholarship that advances an innovative interpretational model for understanding conditions central to our troubled past, promoted the product of our research at internationally recognized conferences and diverse media outlets, and produced new exhibits designed to resolve historical ambiguities from times past among other projects. We likewise remain vigilant in defense

of threatened regional historical sites and continue to offer support and scholarly expertise to groups and individuals who share in our commitment to celebrate and understand our diverse culture and history.

An esteemed scholar of the South once advised that “history is not always what we remember.” The wisdom of that remark reminds us of the importance of our mission. For as long as we operate, the Center will abide by a commitment to maintain and promote awareness of the most accurate body of scholarship available on our focus region. Whether it be through published materials, film work, presentations/exhibits, or in processing collections for use by researchers; our mission remains self-evident. It is a splendid burden, we encourage you to join us in the effort!

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



Center staff left to right: Christian White, Sarah Pardue, Blake Constant, Dr. Keith Finley, Dr. Samuel Hyde, Jr., and Faith Allen.



Gulf South Historical Association in Mobile, Alabama

Each year the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies plays an active part in the Gulf South Historical Association (GSHA). Although our role in the organization has evolved, our interest in seeing the GSHA flourish remains unchanged. In 2016, the Center oversaw the election process for three vacant Board of Directors seats which were won by Whitney Snow representing Midwestern State University, Karen Cox representing North Carolina-Charlotte, and Dean Debolt representing the University of West Florida. We are also pleased to announce that Rebecca Tuuri was appointed to fill a vacant Board seat for the University of Southern Mississippi. As in the past, Samuel Hyde served as one of Southeastern Louisiana University's board members and the Center retained its position as the financial headquarters of the group. Long before the conference took place in October 2016, our staff was busy completing the thankless behind the scenes tasks that are so crucial for the successful operation of such an organization with the able assistance of Gulf South President Deanne Nuwer from the University of Southern Mississippi and with the eager aid of the 2016 conference chair person Donald De Vore from the University of South Alabama.

In March 2016, a call for papers for the Thirty-Fourth Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference was sent to organization members and to interested academics across the nation. Special theme sessions on the Gulf South in Peace and War were advertised for the event scheduled to take place in beautiful Mobile, Alabama on 13-15 October 2016. An overwhelming response to the call poured in as anticipation of the premier historical conference dedicated to the Gulf South and Caribbean Basin reached a peak, prompting an extension of the submission deadline in order to accommodate interested parties. A total of twenty-six sessions were ultimately organized. As usual the Center staff was well-represented at the event. Dr. Samuel Hyde chaired a session and presented a paper titled, "We are tottering on the brink of chaos! : Feuds, Factions, and Social Equilibrium in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1899-1935" and Center graduate research assistant Nicholas Heyd presented an excerpt from his MA Thesis titled: "A Long Struggle: The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, 1848-1954." Aside from participating in the exchange of ideas, participants at the conference enjoyed the fine amenities offered at The Admiral Hotel, a Mobile landmark since 1940,

which served as the conference headquarters. By all accounts, the event was a smashing success. From the wonderful location to the excellent awards banquet featuring Steven Trout's rousing discussion of "William March's Company K," the feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

Preparations are already underway for the 2017 conference to be held in Pensacola, Florida and hosted by the University of West Florida. Be on the lookout for additional information.



Pictured: A photograph used to promote the Thirty-Fourth Gulf South History and Humanities Conference.



Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

The Southeast Louisiana Historical Association, a town and gown organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the histories of southeast Louisiana and south west Mississippi, strives to provide its members with a first-rate experience at an affordable price. Despite difficult economic times since 2008 in Louisiana, the Association has managed to keep its modest \$25 membership fee unchanged. For this low price, members get admission to the organization's annual meeting which includes a gourmet dinner and free cocktails along with a guest speaker who specializes in Florida Parish history, a copy of the Centerpiece newsletter, and a subscription to the *Southeast Louisiana Review*-- the association's scholarly journal that includes fiction and non-fiction work focusing on the rich and unique history of south Louisiana. In terms of name recognition it would be difficult to top our 2014 speaker Jay Dardenne, who currently serves as Commissioner of Administration or our 2015 speaker--then gubernatorial candidate and soon to be governor John Bel Edwards.

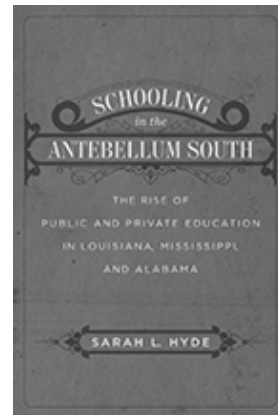
In 2016, the association returned to its roots with an emphasis on local history. Eric Johnson, head of the Sims Library at Southeastern Louisiana University and Kathy Tijerino, also with the Sims Library, agreed to provide a slide presentation from their recent publication “Images of America: Hammond.” The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is always happy to promote the work of local authors, especially when the Center’s holdings are used extensively in related publications. Day-after-day for several months in 2015-2016, Kathy and Eric descended on the Center to sift through the myriad of images related to the history of Hammond in our holdings. For the authors, the toughest job was picking a few dozen of the thousands of pictures on hand to fit the needs of the publisher. The quality of the final product speaks for itself. The book is available locally and on popular online vendors such as Amazon.

members. A lively question and answer session followed the formal presentation after which attendees had the opportunity to fraternize in a less formal manner with the presenters over cocktails.

Lively discussion and camaraderie typify the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association. In 2017 our guest speaker will be Sarah Hyde, whose book *Schooling in the Antebellum South*, analyzes educational development in the Gulf South before the Civil War, not only revealing a thriving private and public education system, but also offering insight into the worldview and aspirations of the people inhabiting the region. It promises to be the definitive work on the field for years to come. A membership renewal letter should be arriving in your mailbox or sent to you by e-mail in the near future. We strongly urge you to consider supporting this important organization. We hope to see you on April 6, 2017.



Pictured: Co-authors Catherine Tijerino and Eric Johnson review their book for final revisions.



Pictured: Sarah Hyde’s new book, *Schooling in the Antebellum South*.

As in the past, the organization held its meeting in the Levy Building—home of the Hammond Regional Arts Center—across the street from the historic Columbia Theater. The location is perfect for the group’s needs and all rental expenses for the facility help to fund area art programs. It’s a win-win scenario for the group. Once the speakers were chosen, the date selected, and the venue booked, our next call went to Marilyn’s Catering which has provided sumptuous, home cooked meals at the event for the past few years. The gathering drew a big crowd that was not disappointed by the exciting presentation on Hammond’s past. Tangipahoa native Jason Thompson was also present at the event to offer an update on his research on area Indian Mounds—a topic that always attracts the attention of our



Cate Family Exhibit

Our staff is trained to handle all requests for aid with great care, however, certain calls are sometimes out of necessity given priority. In early 2016, Southeastern President John Crain called the Center regarding an ambitious project to set up an exhibit to honor C.E. Cate and the Cate family’s role in promoting the growth of Hammond and Southeastern Louisiana University. He turned to our expertise in hopes that we could turn vision into reality. With a mission in hand, the Center staff jumped into the new assignment. Tasks were divvied up and research commenced. What was discovered was the Cate family’s commitment to

Hammond is visible throughout the community. From the beautiful Cate Square Park on North Oak Street to the Cate Teacher Education Center on Southeastern's campus, evidence of the family's commitment to Hammond is everywhere apparent. It is a legacy that includes the construction of the first African American school in the region and a myriad of other projects that do not directly bear the family name yet proved instrumental in the town's development. As the picture of the impressive legacy became clear, important decisions needed to be made regarding how to memorialize the Cate legacy with special emphasis on the man who started it all Charles Emery Cate.

Charles Emery Cate, born January 16, 1831 in Belmont, New Hampshire moved to what would become the Hammond area shortly before the start of the American Civil War. The pioneering businessman quickly transformed the wooded area into a prosperous town. Among his many commercial enterprises include the Cate Sawmill (1861) that produced the lumber needed for the construction of multiple Hammond homes and businesses; the Cate Planing Mill (1861) that crafted finished boards used to further develop Hammond; the Cate Shoe factory (1861) that manufactured brogans for Confederate troops during the Civil War; the Cate Brickyard (1880s) that kilned bricks including two special types of Bricks: one with the name Cate and the other marked with a "C" within a diamond; and the Hammond Building and Loan Association (1906) that contributed to the funding and construction of nascent Hammond businesses. C. E. Cate also established the basic infrastructure of the town. He named numerous local streets after family members including Charles St. and Thomas St. Additionally, he planted trees along city streets contributing to their names including Pine St. and Oak St. Cate also devoted considerable time and service in the Hammond city administration. As information on Cate's achievements mounted so did a basic design structure for the exhibit.

The exhibit features five display cases highlighting Charles Emery Cate's influence on Hammond and environs. The themes include: Case 1) American Legacy which reveals the significant impact the Cate family had not only on Hammond, but the nation as a whole. Case 2) Presents the multifaceted ways C.E. Cate developed and expanded Hammond. Case 3) Civil War and Reconstruction: Reveals Cate's contributions during the Civil War and the rebuilding of Hammond amid the challenges of Reconstruction. Case 4) Grace Memorial Episcopal Church: Highlights the crucial role played by Mertie Ann Waterman Cate in the creation of one of the first religious establishments in Hammond. Case 5) Family Legacy which presents the enduring Cate family

legacy evident in Hammond and environs today.

As with any undertaking of this size, the entire Center staff chipped in including the Center's Director and Assistant Director, along with its Graduate Research Assistants and Student Worker to get the job done. Institutional assistance was provided by the University Architect Ken Howe and his department which put in countless hours fielding phone calls and drafting work orders to get the structure and lighting of the exhibit in place. University Art Department Chair Dale Newkirk provided his keen eye to assist in mounting the display blurbs and in setting the overall composition of the exhibit. Outside of the University local photographer Phillip Colwart did an excellent job enlarging several photos of Cate businesses that now adorn the exhibit's glass walls. Most important to the entire undertaking, however, were the efforts of Suzanne Graham, a direct descendant of C.E. Cate, for her unparalleled recollections of family lore and for generous donation of many items that became the foundation of our exhibit. Mrs. Suzy and her husband John could not have been more supportive of the project. To them we owe an enormous debt of gratitude, not just for the impressive items on display, but for their creation of an archival collection in the Cate name that includes family history dating back to the 1820s and one of a kind documents pertaining to the growth and development of the town of Hammond. Now more than ever, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is the place to go for those interested in the history of Hammond and the Florida Parishes. We urge our readers to explore the many research opportunities that await you in the Center and to stop in for a visit to our new exhibit found on the first floor of the Sims Memorial Library.



Pictured: A photograph of the exterior of the Cate Family Exhibit.



Featured in the exhibit: A photograph of the Cate Family Brickyard, which was built by Charles Emery Cate during the 1880 and 1890s.



Cate Exhibit Unveiling

For the better part of a year, the staff of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has worked to bring the Cate Family exhibit to life. On 27 January 2017 at 10:00AM on the first floor of the Sims Memorial Library, the exhibit was formally revealed with a VIP gathering and a short program. Southeastern Louisiana University's president John Crain offered poignant remarks on the importance of the Cate family to the university and the incredible honor it was to be officiating at the opening of the permanent exhibit in the library. Following Crain was the Center's director Samuel Hyde, who thanked the Center staff both current and former for their efforts on the project. A mini-reunion of sorts took place at the unveiling as several former graduate assistants, including project leaders, Megan Arledge and Nicholas Heyd, who returned to campus to look in on the finished product. Following Hyde was Professor Emeritus Howard Nichols who regaled the considerable crowd of family, well-wishers, and assorted dignitaries of the numerous contributions of C.E. Cate to the history of the region. Last, but most certainly not least was Mrs. Suzy Graham—the oldest surviving descendant of C.E. Cate who shared a touching tribute to her ancestors and the meaning they still held in her life. Although Mrs. Suzy never met C.E. Cate or his wife Mertie, she grew up hearing stories of their character and accomplishments and thus felt she personally knew them. For Mrs. Graham, the opening of the exhibit means that the legacy of C.E. and “Grandmother” Cate would live on in perpetuity. A short ribbon-cutting ceremony followed by the official opening of the exhibit rounded out a memorable opening day that culminated a year of

painstaking effort on the part of the Center.

The exhibit is open to the public Monday-Thursday from 9:00am-3:00 pm, and on Friday from 9:00-12:00.

People interested in viewing the exhibit outside of regular hours or who wish to examine some of the Center's archival holding on the Cate Family are urged to contact us at 985-549-2151.



Pictured from left to right: Library Director Eric Johnson, President Crain, Samuel Hyde, director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies; Karen Fontenot, dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences; Trey Reymond, Suzanne Graham, Cate's Great-Great Granddaughter; Great-Great-Great-Great Grandchildren Lee Reymond and Emery Cate Reymond; John Graham, Stan Dameron; Ken Howe, director of Facility Planning; Tasha Dameron, Jeff Dameron, Cate Reymond, Professor Emeritus of History Howard Nichols, and former Southeastern President Randy Moffett.



Helen Rownd



It is with great sadness that we note the passing of Ms. Helen Ricketts Rownd, a long-time Center friend and an enduring link to the region's past. Helen passed away on Monday, October 3, 2016, in Hammond, LA, at the age of 95. During her life, Helen dedicated herself to the service of others. In WWII, she was a member of the Women Air Force Service Pilots known as "WASP". Due to her dedication to her country, she was awarded

the Congressional Gold Medal on March 10, 2010 by the 111th Congress. In addition to her service, Helen also dedicated her life to educating the local youth at Hammond High School for twenty-five years.

Eight years prior to her passing, an unusual sequence of events unfolded in the Center. Long-time Center friend Howard Nichols noted that a woman in his neighborhood had a remarkable history and that someone needed to conduct an oral history with her. Center Assistant Director Keith Finley promptly called Ms. Rownd and asked about coming over for a visit. Before a date was set, Rownd let Finley know that she needed his assistance in facilitating a trade. It turns out Ms. Rownd was in the process of selling her World War II WASP Wings to a museum acquisitions officer with the Air Force and needed someone to help in the exchange. Finley agreed. He picked up the Wings from Ms. Rownd who was confined to a wheel chair and placed it in the mail to the collector who in turn sent a check for the purchase of the wings made out to Southeastern Louisiana University at Ms. Rownd's request. Over the course of the next few weeks, Finley visited with Ms. Rownd, went through her WWII memorabilia and other items related to her life. She in turn donated selected material to the University before leaving a substantial financial contribution to the Center that continues to draw interest to this day. With the passing of Ms. Rownd the Center lost a good friend and Hammond lost an important part of its history. She will be missed.



Hyde Revises *Pistols and Politics*

As the Center staff turned its attention to the Cate exhibit throughout 2016, the Center's director performed double duty, serving as the point man on all questions pertaining to the display while also busily working on the long anticipated update of his seminal work *Pistols and Politics* which will carry the bloody history of the Florida Parishes into the twentieth century. Initially, Hyde assumed that his research would explain how the intrusion of modernity would bring an end to the lawlessness that had reigned in the region in the nineteenth century. Much to his surprise, the peculiar pattern of violence that had long marked the sub-region did not abate as the century rolled on. In fact, the violence that had marred the region for generations persists to the present day. Intrigued, Hyde next sought to explain why these seemingly senseless acts of vengeance continued. Throughout 2016, Hyde staked out a position at a conference table in the rear of

the Morrison Room and poured over microfilm, while keeping a running tally of violent crimes on an old fashioned chalkboard. He even turned to those outside of the historical community for answers. Thanks to a tip from his son Clay, Hyde discovered "game theory"—a concept long embraced by economists. Rather than reveal the secrets of Hyde's new work, readers of this newsletter are urged to pick up the new edition when it becomes available through LSU Press in the spring of 2018. With the addition of lots of new information and with the inclusion of a shocking new analysis of the Florida Parishes' persistent pattern of lawlessness, it is definitely something to be added to one's must read list.



Pictured: Dr. Hyde working diligently on his update of his seminal work *Pistols and Politics*.



Staff Keeps Producing

Despite working on a new edition of *Pistols and Politics* and being involved in the day-to-day decision making of the Cate Exhibit, Center Director Samuel Hyde continued to share his interest in the Florida Parishes to as wide of an audience as possible. For example, in the Summer of 2016 the film *Free State of Jones* was released prompting extensive speculation regarding its accuracy. When questions arose, people turned to the Center and especially to Dr. Samuel Hyde. Hyde appeared on a series of radio programs across Southwest Mississippi and in an AP Press Release explaining that the film was influenced more by the Hollywood-New York mindset and not by the historical record. The movie tells the story of former Confederate soldier purportedly turned Union sympathizer, Newton Knight, who led a band of followers, crossed the color line to marry a former slave, and spawned a community of like-minded individuals in Jones County, located in southeast Mississippi. "According to some, Knight heroically defied the Confederacy sustaining the cause of the Union in Mississippi, one of the most rebellious states, before courageously crossing the color line to marry a former

slave,” said Hyde. “Thanks to a sympathetic New Orleans newspaperman and a 1935 biography written by Knight’s son, he was seen as a modern day Robin Hood, delivering the poor from oppression and facing down evil.” Hyde notes that more recent scholarly research on Knight suggests that he was a deserter, murderer, horse thief and bigamist. “He maintained simultaneous relationships with a white woman and a black woman, and there is compelling evidence that he fathered children with a daughter of his black wife from a previous marriage,” Hyde said, before adding that there is little evidence to dispute that Knight most likely would have resisted the Union with the same vigor if they sought to press him into service or seize his crops. “Whatever position you take on Newton Knight, if you want to know the true man and the Jones County story, study the historical record,” Hyde said. “In this case, don’t look for it in this film from Hollywood.”

Hyde also provided more than 20 professional presentations including one at the “Louisiana in the Spanish World Conference” at Tulane University Law Center. The conference highlighted the legacy of Spanish legal traditions for current jurisprudence in Louisiana. Hyde presented a paper titled “A Dark Legacy of Spanish Governance: Legal precedents and Equilibrium in Louisiana’s Florida Parishes.”

Center Assistant Director Keith Finley was tapped by a team of historians from Europe headed by Martaan Zwiers to compose a chapter on former U.S. President Lyndon Johnson for a forthcoming book on the influence of presidential personality in shaping the political process. Two recent Center graduate students have found themselves continuing their studies in Ph.D. programs. Summer 2016 graduate Chase Tomlin landed an assistantship at Louisiana State University where he will continue his research on the Mexican War and December 2016 graduate Nicholas Heyd is actively applying to Ph.D. programs with the goal of starting school in August. We wish them both the best of luck.



New Collections

Each year the Center receives numerous new collections which reflect the continued relevance of our mission at Southeastern Louisiana University and our continued role as the preeminent voice of Florida Parishes History. A donation to the Center is more than a simple property transaction; it is a commitment on our part to preserve and make available to the public the material entrusted to our care. We treat each donation as a precious gift

that will assist us and posterity in trying to understand the people of this region. As in the past, local historian Howard Nichols continued to add to his collection, while Clark Forrest and the estate of Mrs. Irene Morris added to their preexisting collections. In addition, we have also received new donations of rare books from Paul Crawford, additions to the SLU Collection from Lori Smith, and a copy of a patent for a fertilizing machine from Melinda Yantis. Mrs. Suzanne Cate Graham’s donation of maps, letters, diaries, and other items associated with the Cate family’s role in developing Hammond is of special interest to scholars. (Please see additional Cate articles in this Newsletter.) In addition to our new Cate Exhibit, our rare book exhibit, “History Revealed through Rare Books and Documents: The Emergence of Printing, Bookbinding, and the Challenges of War Time Publishing,” is still open for public viewing. Prominent genealogist Antoinette Harrell and a group of like minded women visited the Center in February to add to our extensive collection of records regarding the local Black population. Her cousin, Karren Royal, the Executive director of the GU272 Descendants Association, added her own genealogical research to the Harrell Collection. Bernice Alexander Bennett established a new collection of complimentary African American historical research. Their contributions, with the help of Stephanie Martin-Quiett, was derived through thorough investigation and DNA analysis dating back to the mid 1860’s. Their research has added valuable insight into one of our area’s most vibrant local communities.



Pictured: (From left) Dr Samuel Hyde Jr., Stephanie Martin-Quiett, Dr. Keith Finley, Karen Harper Royal, Bernice Alexander Bennett and Antoinette Harrell

If you are interested in donating a collection, please contact the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at 985-549-2151.

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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Hours: 8:00am-5:00pm Monday-Thursday
8:00am- 12:30 Friday
http://www.southeastern.edu/acad_research/programs/csls

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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