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# CENTERPIECE

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

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Center staff left to right: Center Director, Dr. Samuel Hyde; Graduate Assistant, Ashley Tarleton; Student Worker, Lauren Guillory; Graduate Assistant, Abigail Simmons; Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley; Graduate Assistant, Brooklyn Sherrod

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## From the Director

A well-known textbook on Southern history from a bygone era began with the phrase, "Let us begin by discussing the weather." The words could not hold more true, even today, for the Florida Parishes and surrounding environs. Even as we finally seem to be making headway after years of insufficient funding, along with hopeful indicators that we are finally overcoming the worst restrictions of the Covid pandemic, we can count on the weather to turn our whole world on its ear.

The seemingly never-ending cycle of tropical storms, floods, ice storms, and other natural disasters that accompany life with increasing frequency in southeast Louisiana, was this year augmented by the ravages of Hurricane Ida. The Category Four storm set its sights on our home region and then slowly plodded across the center of the Florida Parishes, ravaging everything in its path. We literally had to cut our way out of our homes and begin the now familiar burden of searching for gasoline, ice, and drinking water, all the while praying for a restoration of electricity amid the heat and humidity of August. The Center remained in darkness for two weeks, but as the lights returned, we emerged stronger and more energized than ever.

As Center/Donor partnerships continue to expand, whole new categories of student research programs have emerged to compliment ones already in existence. A plethora of new collections and additions to existing holdings have arrived in unprecedented volumes. With pandemic restrictions finally loosening, our creative energies have been directed to a symposium illuminating critical aspects of Louisiana's culture and development that will educate students and history lovers for generations to come.

Our operations have been enhanced by new equipment, much of it provided by the generous donations of our supporters, that will take the services provided by the Center to new heights. Traditional projects such as the Gulf South History and Humanities Conference, the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association annual meeting, and our annual regional history/culture exhibits all continue with an enhanced level of professionalism resulting from equipment and support previously unavailable to us.

In short, rather than looking back at lean financial times, natural disasters, or the gloom occasioned by the pandemic - we are looking and moving forward, revitalized and with a new sense of purpose. Our vision of the cultural *mélange* that is our home region is ever expanding just as our mining of the historical record of this area's colorful past continues to delight and amaze us. When one looks at the pattern of development that has characterized, and continues to shape our destiny, one thing is certain - it is seldom, if ever, boring! We encourage you to join us in the excitement as we celebrate the gem of a place we call home.

**Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., Ph.D., Director**  
**Leon Ford Endowed Chair**  
**Professor of History**  
**Director, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies**  
**Southeastern Louisiana University**

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# Featured articles

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## Louisiana Symposium

Over the years the Center has enjoyed considerable success focusing attention on the Florida Parishes and its peculiar pattern of development. Multiple symposiums, exhibits, and book projects have advanced the effort. With interest in the region at a peak, Director Sam Hyde began planning a symposium for 2022 that eclipsed anything the Center had done before. Nearly three years of planning has resulted in a program that promises to provide ground breaking studies of social, political, environmental, and economic challenges common to the wider Gulf South that prove acute in Louisiana. The subjects included will not only illuminate, in unprecedented ways, some of the most critical problems confronting Louisiana and surrounding environs, but also some of the least revealed and most frequently misunderstood issues that have in the past, and still do, shape our regional identity.

Titled, “Louisiana in Continuity and Change: Challenges Past and Present Confronting the Bayou State,” our project will be unique in that it will focus on enduring challenges – ones that are seminal to understanding how the people of Louisiana behave and how they are perceived by others. We will examine challenges first evident in the colonial period, that assumed other forms at times, only to be revealed as central determinants in the present. Our purpose is to provide an enduring guide for how such trials emerged and how they were overcome or managed in the past to offer direction for how they may best be addressed in the future.

The problems of flood control, unequal treatment for African Americans and women, political corruption, endemic violence and partisan applications of justice, are not limited to Louisiana. Neither is the crisis of coastal erosion, the dilemma of special interests shaping legislation for their own benefit, or the corresponding drain of talent from the state to regions offering improved opportunities. As such, our project, while concentrating on the example of Louisiana, will provide understanding and offer guidance for confronting similar challenges in the wider South.

We have focused on securing participants who are all experts in their respective fields. In addition to Governor John Bel Edwards, whose contribution to our program will include discussion of the historical balancing act demanded of the state’s chief executive, others will focus on core quality of life issues. Political Science professor and Department Head at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, Pearson Cross, focuses on how outside interest groups shape education in Louisiana. Multiple award-winning author and University of Leiden professor, Adam Fairclough, will offer an inspiring portrayal of the historical dilemma of political corruption in Louisiana.

Geography professor Craig Colton’s offers a no-nonsense analysis of past efforts at flood control and what they mean for the future. Three contributors will examine efforts to overcome inequality. Professor Marcus Cox, Associate Dean at historically black Xavier University will examine the historical effort within the black community to overcome racial restrictions. Award winning professor, Keith Finley, offers analysis of the dilemma confronting church leaders as they struggled to maintain traditions amid the need for reform. Professor Janet Allured will provide the most engaging appraisal of women’s struggle for equality in the Bayou State yet available, while also highlighting how much remains to be done.

Center director Sam Hyde’s contribution to the proposed book will focus on the sources of the historical truth that Louisiana leads the nation in per capita rates of homicide and what role the state’s unique non-unanimous jury verdict may have played in the corresponding rates of incarceration. Finally, nationally recognized political commentator Robert Mann will analyze the dilemma of whether to stay or seek a better life elsewhere, that confronts so many in Louisiana today and what the implications of the “brain drain” are for the state and region.

The symposium will be held in the final week of September 2022. Be on the lookout for additional information regarding this important event.



Pictured above: Baton Rouge Anti-Malaria Campaign, 1920.

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## Southeast Louisiana Historical Association meeting held, scholars honored

Recent years have witnessed difficulty in scheduling the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association meeting. In particular, the ever-changing COVID protocols and rapid rise of new variants of the contagion have left many of our members in a state of unease. As our usual April meeting date neared, the organization opted to postpone the event until the Delta Variant ran its course. Stakeholders were consulted regarding an early fall meeting on 21 October 2021, and unanimously agreed that the organization needed to host the event. By that point the newest variant was expected to be under control. With fingers cross, we anxiously awaited additional COVID news throughout the summer. Mercifully, the situation stabilized and we were able to host our annual meeting, albeit before a dramatically reduced COVID safe crowd at the Hammond Regional Arts Center in historic downtown Hammond. Famous area eatery Tope La catered the event to the delight of the participants.

Professor of History and Editor of *Louisiana History* at the University of Louisiana Lafayette Michael Martin served as speaker at the recent SELHA meeting. Martin's presentation highlighted his research as the inaugural Sanders Research Scholar, and it detailed the actions of the Louisiana congressional delegation during the 1960s and 1970s. It was especially gratifying to see several members of the Young Sanders board of directors in attendance.

University of Virginia Ph.D. candidate and new Sanders Research Scholar Jennifer Levin was also recognized at the event. We look forward to hearing all about Ms. Levin's research at our next meeting. Recent Southeastern M.A. recipient and current University of Mississippi Ph.D. candidate Colin Mathison, who was the inaugural Sanders Graduate Research Assistant, was likewise in attendance.

The Sanders Research Scholar and the Sanders Graduate Research Assistantship are jointly sponsored by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and the Young Sanders Center. The annual awards are presented each spring and the successful candidate provides a presentation detailing the product of their research at the annual SELHA meeting each fall.



Pictured above: Dr. Michael Martin of University of Louisiana Lafayette addresses attendees at the annual meeting of the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association on October 21, 2021.



Pictured above: From left are Hamilton Martin of the Young Sanders Center, Katherine Rose of the Southeastern Development Foundation, Jennifer Levin, Bee Martin Little and Fritz Martin of the Young Sanders Center, Samuel Hyde, and Michael Martin

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## Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies announces new Student Research Stipend

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, in partnership with the Edward Livingston Historical Association, recently announced the creation of a new award supporting student research on southeast Louisiana with an emphasis on Livingston Parish. The initial donation of \$12,000 from the ELHA will be awarded to a deserving Southeastern student conducting research highlighting the region on virtually any subject matter, said Samuel Hyde, Leon Ford Endowed Chair and director of the Center.

“This is a shot in the arm to encourage student research on our home region, which is at the core of the Center’s mission,” he added.

The award is open to both undergraduate and graduate students at Southeastern, Hyde said. The renewable funds will be awarded in \$500 increments each semester to the successful candidate.

A number of students submitted applications for the award, which was ultimately won by Max Hopcraft, who is studying the integration of Southeastern Louisiana University with an emphasis on how the process impacted Livingston Parish.



Pictured above: David Wall, third from left, presents a check for \$12,000 to Senior Director of Development and Advancement Services Katherine Rose as start-up funding for the newly created Edward Livingston Historical Association Student Research Stipend to be managed by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Also pictured, from left, are Clark Forrest, ELHA president, along with ELHA board members Florence Crowder and Iris Stillely, and Sam Hyde and Keith Finley of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies.



Pictured above: Max Hopcraft, third from left, accepts the inaugural Edward Livingston Historical Association Research Stipend. Also pictured, from left, are Clark Forrest, ELHA president, along with ELHA board members Florence Crowder, Iris Stillely, and David Wall, and Sam Hyde of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies.

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## Gulf South History and Humanities Conference

Hurricanes and the Gulf South Conference are an unfortunate combination. When a conference along the coast is scheduled in the middle of Hurricane season there is sure to be trouble. 2021 proved no different. On 29 August 2021, Category Four Hurricane Ida barreled across south Louisiana, prompting widespread damage and disrupting communication systems. Southeastern Louisiana University was closed for an entire month, and many Center staffers were without power and internet service for several weeks. Since the Center is the headquarters of the GSHA and the 7 October start date of the conference loomed, Center Director Hyde pushed campus security for access to the campus, which was still shut down, in order to handle the avalanche of GSHA material in his mailbox. With tentative approval given, Hyde traveled to the campus during the closure, making his way to the Center despite very real concerns regarding safety that included a nerve-fraying close encounter with a “phantom menace” in the pitch dark stairway. With power finally restored, he, along with graduate assistant Abigail Simmons, ensured that the conference program was completed and that all attendees received updates that the conference would go on.

The twin blows of a hurricane and the ongoing COVID pandemic did not derail the Thirty-Ninth installment of the event scheduled for 7-9 October at the Natchez Grand Hotel in beautiful downtown Natchez, Mississippi. What a wonderful location! The Natchez Grand is situated directly across from the Mississippi River in the historic downtown district. On Thursday 7 October, Association President Douglas Bristol gavelled the Board of Directors meeting to order, thereby launching the 2021 conference. The Center’s own Sam Hyde was in attendance as was our Assistant Director Keith Finley, who won election to one of the open board seats earlier in the year and who agreed to serve as secretary of the association. The meeting highlighted the robust state of the organization, just as it reflected interest in potentially growing the organization to include consortium schools. The future looks bright.

Naturally, the Center was well represented in the intellectual exchange that followed. Director Sam Hyde presented his paper titled: “Port Hudson’s Brutal Legacy: General Orders No. 33 and the Transformation of the War in Southeast Louisiana and Southwest Mississippi, 1863-1865.” Assistant Director Keith Finley chaired and commented on a session titled “Race and Civil Rights: Struggles in the Gulf South.” We were also pleased to see former Center graduate assistant turned history professor at the University of Mississippi, Owen Hyman, who presented his paper “The New Redeemers: Anti-Communism and Agrarian Crisis in Mississippi after World War I.” Also joining the intellectual exchange was Southeastern History department chair William Robison, who delivered his paper labeled “The Sea Hawk Sinks Hitler: Historical Films and America’s Contribution to the Anglo-German Propaganda War, 1933-1945.”

Despite the difficult road leading up to the conference, the GSHA went off without a hitch and was widely lauded by attendees. Special thanks are in order for Douglas Bristol for his tireless efforts to put the conference together and to Deanne Stephens, the association’s executive director, for being a pillar of stability throughout the process.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the 2022 conference, scheduled for 13-15 October at the lovely Gulfport Beachfront Courtyard by Marriott. For reservations call 1-800-442-0887. Be sure to mention “Gulf South Historical” to receive the special room rate of \$149 per night. If you are interested in presenting a paper or otherwise participating in the conference, please send your proposal to conference chair Dr. Marsha Hamilton at [mhamilton@southalabama.edu](mailto:mhamilton@southalabama.edu). We hope to see all of you in Gulfport this October!



**Pictured above: Dr. Douglas Bristol, outgoing GSHA president, passes the ceremonial gavel to Dr. Marsha Hamilton, incoming GSHA president, at the Natchez conference.**

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## Call for Candidates for the J.Y. Sanders Scholar in Residence and Young Sanders Center Scholar in Residence

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern in cooperation with the Young Sanders Center announced the availability of the J.Y. Sanders Research Scholar award. Created in 2019, and named for former Louisiana Governor J.Y. Sanders, the award is designed to encourage and facilitate research centered on Louisiana and the other states of the old Confederacy in conformance with the bequest of Mary Elizabeth Sanders. The award carries a \$5,000 stipend to be distributed in two installments beginning in August 2022 and extending through May 2023. The successful candidate may use the funds to offset travel, housing, or any research related expenses.

Submissions are accepted from scholars in virtually any field including history, literature, environmental studies, art, music, science, etc. The successful candidate will be expected to conduct primary source research, a portion of which must be conducted in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, which will ultimately result in a published study or like-minded project of scholarly merit. The successful candidate will also be expected to provide a presentation highlighting the work completed during their tenure as the Sanders Research Scholar at the annual meeting of the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association in Hammond, La. in April 2023.

To apply applicants should submit a brief abstract of their proposed project, no more than two pages in length, along with a cover letter and c.v., to Dr. Samuel Hyde, director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, at the following address: Southeastern Louisiana University, SLU Box 10730, Hammond, La., 70402. Award applications must be received by May 1, 2022.



Pictured on left: Jared Young Sanders, Sr.

In addition to the scholar award, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies also announces the availability of the Young Sanders Center Graduate Research Assistantship. Created in 2019, the assistantship is designed to encourage graduate student research into Congressman J.Y. Sanders' home region of southeast Louisiana and/or the wider Gulf South and to facilitate management of the Young Sanders Center materials to be housed in the archives of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies.

The renewable award includes full tuition for the fall, spring, and summer semesters at Southeastern beginning in August 2022, along with the normal graduate assistantship stipend and a \$1,500 enhancement stipend each semester, for an award package totaling more than \$13,000 annually. Submissions will be accepted from existing or entering graduate students in virtually any academic field including history, cultural studies, art, music, literature, environmental studies, science, etc.

During the period of the award, the successful candidate will work as a research assistant in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Candidates must also be conducting, or planning to conduct, research centered on southeast Louisiana or the wider Gulf South in anticipation of completing a master's thesis or publishable paper.

Candidate applications will be reviewed by an award committee consisting of the director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, a representative of the Young Sanders Center, and an independent scholar. Award applications must be submitted by May, 1, 2022.

Applicants should submit a brief abstract of their intended course of study or research project, along with a cover letter and c.v., to Dr. Samuel Hyde, director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, at the following address: Southeastern Louisiana University, SLU Box 10730, Hammond, La., 70402.

For more information on either award, contact Hyde at [shyde@southeastern.edu](mailto:shyde@southeastern.edu).

### Scholarship

In addition to conducting research for his own contribution to the forthcoming Louisiana Symposium, Center director Hyde has been busy with other projects. In the fall of 2022 the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press will publish Hyde's first historical novel. Co-written with his wife, Dr. Sarah Hyde, the book is a unique project that inserts fictional characters into factual events in order to make the peculiar history of the Florida Parishes more accessible to a wider audience. "The goal is to both educate and entertain," Hyde said. He has also completed a project highlighting early Louisiana constitutions that will be forthcoming in 2023.

In line with his core research on patterns of criminal behavior in the South, Hyde recently appeared in a New York Times story recognizing Louisiana's dubious distinction of leading the nation in per capita rates of homicide for 31 consecutive years.

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The product of Hyde's research has also been featured in two regional history docu-dramas produced by filmmaker Paul Catalanotto in addition to another film produced by the Livingston Parish Library System. His work has also been featured in multiple stories appearing in the Baton Rouge *Advocate*, New Orleans *Picayune*, and the St. Tammany *Farmer*.

Assistant director Keith Finley received a contract from LSU Press for his forthcoming book, *From Slavery to Segregation: Continuity and Change in the White South's Defense of its Racial Institutions*.

Graduate Research Assistant and Young Sanders Scholar, Colin Mathison, completed his M.A. Thesis titled "A Tale of Two Republics: West Florida, Texas, and the American Quest for Continental Dominance." Mathison is currently continuing his research as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Mississippi.

## New Collection Highlights

Each year the Center receives numerous financial and material donations from area residents. Although the pandemic has interfered with most aspects of life, our loyal supporters remain steadfast in their devotion to the Center and its mission. Ann Reilly Jones has generously endowed the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association, ensuring its fiscal solvency for years to come. Organizations such as the Livingston Parish Historical Association along with the family of Nicholas Cefalu have created sustainable scholarship funds to encourage Southeastern undergraduate students to study the history and politics of our state and region. Both these awards augment the impressive donations made by the Young Sanders Center to award funds for faculty and graduate students. When it comes to studying this region, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is increasingly the best option for students and scholars alike.

Aside from financial donations, the Center has received an array of impressive new collections highlighting this region. Long-time Center friend and scholar Antoinette Harrell and Richardson Funeral Home family members visited and made new donations to both the Antoinette Harrell & Richardson Funeral Home Collections. Both collections bolster the Center's holdings and ensure that our collections reflect the diversity of the community we serve. Thank you, Antoinette, for facilitating these important additions.

Several regular donors, including Clark Forrest, Vicki Knight, C. Howard Nichols, and Sue Nichols either added to their existing collections or deposited materials in other collections. Center friend Ann Trappey facilitated our receipt of the God's Storehouse Collection, which features WWII uniforms and medals. The Reimers-Schneider Family donated materials associated with the family's lumber yard in Natalbany, including photos, maps, and news clippings.

Area cinematographer Paul Catalanotto deposited a variety of video footage from Hammond-area social events. Other donations included an array of John F. Kennedy material from Edward Kinchen, additions to the Enid Simms Collection facilitated by Howard Nichols, additions to the Daunton Gibbs Collection courtesy of Vickie Knight, a series of Mardi Gras sketches by Larry Youngblood, a variety of SLU sports films from the Alumni Association, an Earl Long quilt from Tom Sullivan, Noblet family history items from Sylvia Smith, miniature flags of Louisiana from Ben Taylor, Bill Evans material from Michael Brothers, material related to Pensacola, Florida from Brian Rucker, and the papers of Judge Burgess Sharp.



**Pictured above: Antoinette Harrell, second from left, adds material to her personal collection at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Also pictured, from left, Alex Richardson, CEO, Richardson Funeral Home, and Earl Richardson and Dr. Valerie Richardson, owners, Richardson Funeral Home.**

There is no better time than the present to donate the irreplaceable items of a historical nature you have in your possession. Every day your treasured heirlooms are exposed to environmental conditions such as fluctuations in heat and humidity. Why wait another moment? Call the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at 985-549-2151 and set up a collection in your name.



**Pictured above: Student worker Lauren Guillory archiving a new addition to the Hammond Round Table Club Collection.**

## In Closing

Since the onset of the COVID pandemic in the spring of 2020, the Center has remained in operation save for a brief two week university forced closure to "flatten the curve." Although the curve never flattened and new variants of the illness seemed to emerge every week, we were open and ready to serve our patrons. Over the last two years, we have followed every protocol to ensure the safety of our guests, including the use of masks and regular cleaning of community surfaces. We are happy to announce that the university, and therefore the Center, has lifted all mask requirements.

Should circumstances change, we will need to revisit this policy, but at least for now, we are delighted to embrace this return to some semblance of normalcy.

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# CENTER FOR SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA STUDIES

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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:

**Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., Director**  
**Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies**  
**SLU 10730**  
**Hammond, LA 70402**  
**(985) 549-2151/ Fax (985) 549-2306**

*Centerpiece is written by  
Dr. Keith M. Finley and edited by Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.*

Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies  
Third Floor, Morrison Room

Linus A. Sims Memorial Library  
Hours: 8:00am - 5:00pm Monday - Thursday  
8:00am-12:00pm Friday

[http://www.southeastern.edu/acad\\_research/programs/csls](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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