

# MISSISSIPPI HISTORY NEWSLETTER

**MDAH**  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
ARCHIVES & HISTORY

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### Mark Your Calendar

# Thank you! We still have more to come...

Spring 2022 was an exciting time at MDAH as we welcomed (finally!) large crowds back to the Two Mississippi Museums for a series of major events.

Moss Point native and author Eddie Glaude Jr. gave a magnificent talk as part of the Medgar Wylie Evers Lecture Series. President Bill Clinton and Governor Haley Barbour joined us several days later for our Celebration of Life for Governor and First Lady Winter. We then launched the extraordinary exhibit *The World of Marty Stuart*, and wrapped up with our inaugural Mississippi Makers Fest, which drew more than 3,000 people to Entergy Plaza in front of the museums.

If you missed these events, don't worry—we have more coming. Throughout the summer and fall, special programs will showcase *The World of Marty Stuart*, which runs through the end of 2022, and the newly opened Smithsonian traveling exhibit *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, which runs through September 25.

We have joined with our friends at the Mississippi Museum of Art this year to offer a series of events exploring the Great Migration through the lenses of art and history. We are thrilled to announce that Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson will give an address on the Great Migration on Thursday, September 8, as part of the Medgar Wiley Evers Lecture Series. Wilkerson is the author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*, a masterful and moving chronicle of the largest internal migration in American history.

Please know how much we appreciate our friends, visitors, donors, and patrons. We missed seeing you during COVID, and we loved welcoming you back in force this spring. See you again soon!



Katie Blount  
Director  
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Blount". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# President Bill Clinton and Governor Haley Barbour celebrate the lives of William and Elise Winter

On May 3, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History celebrated the lives of Governor William Winter and First Lady Elise Winter at the Two Mississippi Museums. During the ceremony, Spence Flatgard, MDAH board president, announced the completion of the initial funding goal of the William and Elise Winter Education Endowment, a \$5 million fund created to underwrite field trips for Mississippi's schoolchildren.

“The purpose of this endowment is to ensure that all Mississippi students have the opportunity to experience the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum,” said MDAH director Katie Blount. “We are grateful to the many supporters who gave to this effort, which was spearheaded by Governor and Mrs. Winter. We are especially grateful to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which stepped up first with a generous gift.

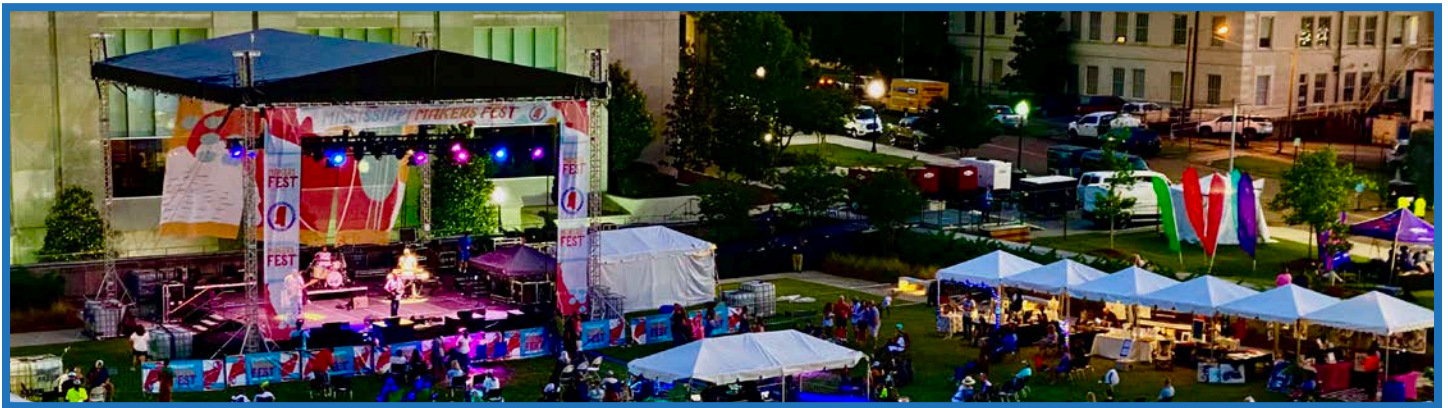
The William and Elise Winter Education Endowment was created through the Foundation for Mississippi History to memorialize Mississippi's former governor and first lady and their commitment to education and preservation.

President Bill Clinton, former Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, and former Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Reuben Anderson celebrated the lives of William and Elise Winter at the Two Mississippi Museums.

“The minute I met Bill Winter,” said Clinton, “I never had a scintilla of doubt that whatever happened in our friendship, whatever happened in his life, I was with one of the most authentic people I would ever know.”



## Program Highlights



The first Mississippi Makers Fest brought over 3,000 people to the Two Mississippi Museums. Next year's date is set for May 13, 2023.



Reena Evers-Everette and Princeton University professor Eddie S. Glaude participated in a Q&A following the Medgar Evers Lecture on April 28.



State legislators offer behind-the-scenes perspectives on the flag transition at the *History Is Lunch* program on March 2.

# Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition *The Negro Motorist Green Book* Opens at the Two Mississippi Museums

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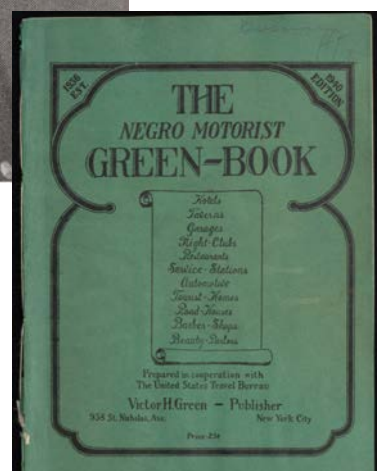
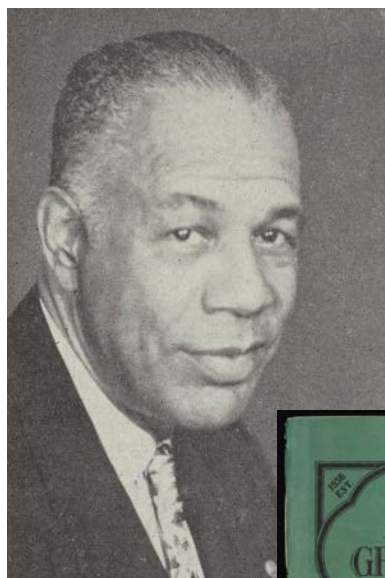
The Smithsonian traveling exhibition *The Negro Motorist Green Book* opened Saturday, July 2, at the Two Mississippi Museums. This exhibit offers an immersive look at the reality of travel for African Americans in segregated mid-century America and how the annual guide served as an indispensable resource for the nation's rising African American middle class.

“I am ecstatic to have this exhibition housed at the Two Mississippi Museums,” said Two Mississippi Museums director Pamela D.C. Junior. “During the Great Migration families moved across the US, and thus the necessity to travel and visit relatives was born. Postal worker Victor Green innovatively responded to this need with a roadmap of havens to eat, rest, and visit. This safety net was a key guide for people of color throughout the Jim Crow South and other parts of America.”

The exhibition includes artifacts ranging from business signs and postcards to historic footage, images, and firsthand accounts that convey not only the apprehension felt by African American travelers, but also the resilience, innovation, and elegance of people choosing to live a full American existence. Mississippi artifacts include items from the historic Riverside Hotel in Clarksdale, Hotel E.F. Young Jr. in Meridian, and many more locations listed in a Mississippi Green Book.

The exhibit will run through Sunday, September 25, in the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Exhibition Hall at the Two Mississippi Museums.

Museum ticket prices are \$15 for adults and \$8 for youth ages 4–22. Discounts are available for students, seniors, active duty military, veterans, and groups of ten or more. Admission for children under the age of three is free. Ticket price includes admission to the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Museum of Mississippi History, and all special exhibitions. Admission is free on Sundays.



## Legislature Awards MDAH \$8 Million for Projects at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, Historic Jefferson College



The Mississippi Legislature recently appropriated \$8 million to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) for facility improvements at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Historic Jefferson College. This support, coupled with privately raised funds, will allow MDAH to create world-class destinations in Natchez comparable to the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson.

Funds will be used at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians to renovate and expand the visitor's center, install new state-of-the-art exhibits, and upgrade the auditorium. A new pavilion will be built, offering a large and inviting space for school groups, summer camps, and community events.

"The story of the Natchez Indians is central to Mississippi history, and the 1970s-era museum facilities are in need of expansion to meet the growing number of visitors," said MDAH director Katie Blount. "We are grateful to the Mississippi Legislature for the generous appropriation, which will allow us to improve the visitor experience and interpretation at the site."

The Grand Village of the Natchez Indians is the last ceremonial mound center of the Natchez people in their ancestral homeland and considered the best historically documented mound site in North America. Popular programs and events draw tens of thousands of visitors to the site each year.

The department will work closely with the Muscogee Nation, the Tribal Nation most closely associated with the original Natchez people, and the Natchez community to develop new interpretation at the site.

"The Grand Village of the Natchez Indians is an incredibly important center not only to Mississippi but to the world," said Devin Heath, executive director for Visit Natchez, the destination marketing organization for Natchez, Mississippi.

"Little is known of the original inhabitants of this country and the ability to share the story of the Natchez Indians is vital. These funds provided by the Mississippi Legislature will allow MDAH and our community to more dynamically tell that story."

Historic Jefferson College in nearby Washington is the birthplace of Mississippi and will one day be a gateway for visitors traveling to Natchez, sharing the powerful stories of westward expansion, the birthplace of statehood, and the rise and fall of the cotton kingdom built on slavery. MDAH has operated the site since 1977 and plans to revitalize it by restoring the historic buildings and developing a new museum with modern interpretation.

"Historic Jefferson College was the intellectual center of the Natchez region during the early nineteenth century," said Blount. "We will establish the Natchez Center for American History at the site, interpreting the rich and fascinating history of the region and drawing visitors from across the nation and beyond."

MDAH will establish a preservation field school at Historic Jefferson College, in partnership with the National Park Service, Historic Natchez Foundation, Mississippi State University, Tulane University, and other area schools. The field school will offer hands-on training in preservation skills such as window restoration, brick repointing, and more.

"These skills are in great demand, and students with this training will be well positioned to fill the need," said Blount.

# The Unita Blackwell Property Added to the National Register of Historic Places



The Unita Blackwell Property, the home of the first African American woman in the state to be elected mayor, has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The United States Secretary of the Interior approved the listing upon the recommendation of the Mississippi National Register Review Board.

“I am ecstatic about this news,” said her son Jeremiah Blackwell Jr. “I am humbled that the family matriarch is being honored in this fashion.”

The Unita Blackwell Property consists of the Freedom House, the Ranch House, and the neighbor’s shotgun house.

The Freedom House was Blackwell’s primary residence and was used to host numerous civil rights meetings between

the years of 1964 and 1970. The Freedom House hosted many groups associated with the Civil Rights Movement such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The ranch house was added for its association with Blackwell’s productive life during her career as mayor with Mayersville and its use for political work sessions and meetings. The neighbor’s shotgun house was added for its architectural significance and association with the civil rights leader.

The Lighthouse | Black Girl Projects wrote the nomination for the Unita Blackwell property and will work to operate the site as a community center in the future.

“We are thrilled to have played a role in the first steps toward institutionalizing the legacy of the Honorable Unita Blackwell by having her former home named to the National Register,” said president and founder Natalie Collier. “The next steps for us is building a museum worthy of her name and her comrades.”

“Unita Blackwell was an amazing local leader and trailblazer,” said executive director Katie Blount. “Her story is one that everyone should know, and I am so glad her property is being preserved for future generations.”

## MDAH Announces the Opening of the Welty Family Papers

Series 45: The Welty Family Papers, a previously restricted series, is now open to the public.

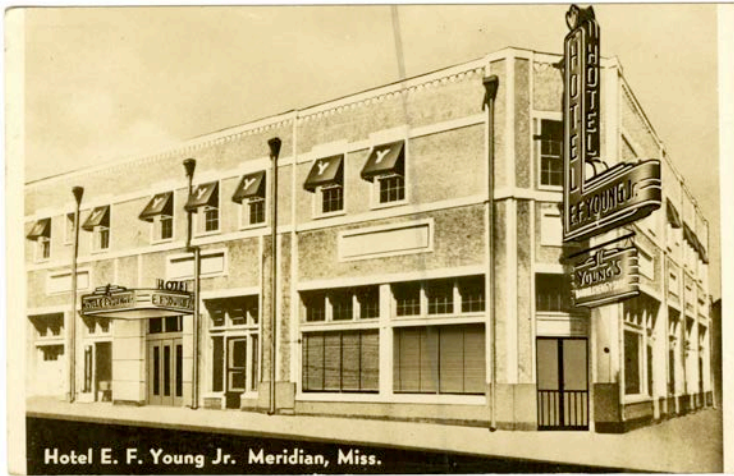
“The letters in this series begin with the courtship letters of my grandparents,” said Welty’s niece Mary Alice White. “Also included are personal papers of the family, Eudora’s correspondence with family members, and papers and letters from my father, uncles, and other family members. Because these letters were not technically the property of Eudora—they belong to the letter writer—I think Eudora wanted them sealed to respect the privacy of those still living.”

The Eudora Welty Collection, Series 45: Welty Family Papers was restricted to the public, in accordance with Welty’s will, for twenty years after her death.

“This rich gathering of family correspondence swells what was already a most remarkable resource,” said Welty scholar and affiliate professor at the College of Charleston Harriet Pollack. “In these new materials, we grow close to Welty’s parents, her siblings and their families, her grandmother and great grandmother and their children. Through their intimate and everyday interactions with one another, we also come to know so much more about the woman and the writer Eudora Welty. Astonishingly, a very private woman has unpredictably made generations of personal history available to those touched by her art, inviting us to better understand and to more fully engage the elusive woman behind it.”



Image courtesy Eudora Welty, LLC



### From *The Negro Motorist Green Book*

In 1946, Eugene Fred (E.F.) Young Jr. opened the E.F. Young Jr. Hotel in downtown Meridian with a barber shop, beauty shop, and shoe shine parlor in the lobby. The Young Hotel was listed in the Green Book and other travel guides as a safe place for African Americans to stay. Visit *The Negro Motorist Green Book* exhibit at the Two Mississippi Museums July 2-September 25.

### From the Collection

This child's shirt was embroidered with American symbolism by Grace Clemens Copeland for first grader Beth Cole to commemorate the American Revolution Bicentennial. American pride swelled as the nation readied to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1976.



### From *The World of Marty Stuart*

As a child growing up in Philadelphia Marty Stuart absorbed the musical influences around him. Marty often lingered outside the Busy Bee Cafe, Philadelphia's first Black-owned business, to hear soul musician Virgil Ivy Griffin play. Griffin was also Marty's favorite teacher in school. Visit *The World of Marty Stuart* exhibit at the Two Mississippi Museums through December 31.

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Katie Blount, director

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Isabel Wilkerson

## Mark Your Calendar

### **Medgar Wiley Evers Lecture**

**Thursday, September 8, 6 p.m.**

Isabel Wilkerson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Humanities Medal, is the author of the critically acclaimed *New York Times* bestsellers *The Warmth of Other Suns* and *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. She will speak at Galloway Memorial United Methodist Church.

### ***The Negro Motorist Green Book***

**July 2–September 25**

This new exhibit at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson offers an immersive look at the reality of travel for African Americans in segregated mid-century America and how the annual guide served as an indispensable resource for the nation's rising African American middle class.

### ***The World of Marty Stuart***

**May 7–December 31**

This new exhibit at the Two Mississippi Museums in Jackson explores Marty Stuart's life and his legacy of collecting country music stories, photographs, instruments, costumes, and more.