
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

The optimism accompanying the stabilization of state funding for higher education produced positive results this past year. As the dark clouds of budgetary uncertainty parted allowing for creative thought and long restrained dynamism, Center staff engaged in some exceptionally creative projects and thoughtful collections management over the course of 2018 and into early 2019.

The World War I centennial offered a rare opportunity to explore a world-altering event through the lens of how it impacted our home region. Our dedicated staff devoted more than nine months to the creation of an extraordinary exhibit that delighted a sustained flow of town and gown visitors many of whom shared their families' memorabilia and recollections for use in the project. Center staff also created a new episode of our series "The Florida Parish Chronicles" to detail the impact of the Great War in our region. Other Center efforts included a lecture series and the creation of multiple new archival collections dedicated to promoting understanding of the War.

In addition to continuing our annual projects such as the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association lecture series and our outreach to regional historical and civic groups through presentations, consulting, and the creation of archival collections, we also coordinated the Cefalu marker project designed to honor a critical early supporter of the university. We also took on the unexpected task of coordinating the Thirty-Sixth annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference.

A near unmatched infusion of new collections amid all our varied projects saw Center staffers devoting personal, off the clock, time to complete tasks all of which had looming and definitive deadlines. As

always, our dedicated staff not only rose to the challenge but again reminded that whatever task they are handed they will complete it efficiently, and better than you thought it could have been done. Nothing could be more rewarding than to report that their efforts resulted in the highest level of donor support for the Center in nearly twenty years!

Each of these issues is discussed in this edition of the Centerpiece. As we enter the sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) of our home parish Tangipahoa, the enthusiasm and excitement for what is yet to come is literally palpable in the Center. We encourage you to get on board and join us in the mission of revealing and celebrating the history and cultures of Louisiana's most peculiar and exciting region!

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



Center staff left to right: Graduate Assistant, Bailey Hall; Student Worker, Mikayla Martin; Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley; Center Director, Dr. Samuel C. Hyde; Graduate Assistant, Amelia Haag; and Graduate Assistant, Faith Allen



World War I Exhibit

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is committed to a variety of outreach efforts. Each year we strive to produce at least one quality exhibit open to the campus and local communities. Most recently, the Center focused on the vital impact of the strawberry industry in the region. In early 2018, we turned our attention to World War I to commemorate the centennial of that global conflagration. We had no idea when we started just how much of our time would be consumed by the exhibit for the better part of the year. Initially, the Center called on the local community for artifacts and memorabilia commemorating the war. At the time, Director Sam Hyde noted, "In our modern technology driven world, attention spans are short and memories are often fleeting, but World War I left legacies of profound significance to American development, and Louisiana was no exception. We intend this to be an all-inclusive project that highlights the varied contributions of Louisianans to the war effort. In addition to creating an exhibit focused on the war, the Center plans to begin collecting items for archival collections." As soon as the call for items went out on local media channels, the Center was inundated with phone calls from possible donors. The community rallied behind the exhibit and many individuals opted to establish collections in the names of their loved ones who served. The Center's exhibit even gained national attention and artifacts from as far away as California came into our possession. Among the items collected were uniforms, weapons, trench art, and personal correspondences from soldiers who served on the western front. Most of the items loaned and/or donated would eventually find their way into the exhibit.

As items started pouring in, the Center's talented graduate assistants Sarah Pardue-Bourgeois, Bailey Hall, Amelia Haag, Blake Constant, and Faith Allen, along with student worker Mikayla Martin and intern Jake Yount were tasked with turning Dr. Hyde's vision into a reality. Critical financial assistance was provided by Karen Fontenot of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and by Tom and Donna Gay Anderson. Without them, the finished product would have assumed a different and less impressive form. Artistic guidance was freely offered by Jeff Mickey from Southeastern's Art Department, while area photographer Phillip Colwart assisted with the large images that augment the recreated trenchwork that went up in the Center. The labor-intensive project became an all-consuming passion for our staff who worked tirelessly often to the detriment of their personal lives to see the project through to its completion.

A mock trench, battlefield diorama, and scores of war related items and artifacts were among some of the items included in the exhibit titled "The War That Did Not End All Wars: Louisiana and the Horror of World War I," which opened on September 26. The exhibit opening was

timed to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the launching of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the largest American military offensive in the nation's history that ultimately brought the German military to its knees. At the grand opening of the exhibit, Center Director Hyde commented, "the guns fell silent on the human slaughterhouse that was World War I in November 1918. Alternately known as the 'Great War' and the 'War to End All Wars,' World War I represented an unprecedented human tragedy that devastated Europe and gave rise to political and economic configurations that continue to challenge our world today." University officials, students, and members of the local community came out to support the Center and left with a deeper understanding of America's and Louisiana's role in the Great War. In the coming days, area school groups toured the exhibit and raved especially about the life-size trench line that helped transport visitors to the frontlines.

Special thanks go to Chris Jenkins, the Jenkins Lumber Company, and the Home Depot in Covington for making the trench portion of the display possible. The full exhibit remained intact until the second week of December 2018. At that point, some of those who contributed their items to the display needed them returned. Although all of our donors are prominently recognized at the start of the exhibit, we want to call special attention to Greg Boggs, who provided many of the weapons on display, Samantha Cavell, who loaned a large number of impressive items from her personal collections, and Ralph Shaw, who also opened his private collection for our use. Other significant donors included Cynthia Prevost, Michael Brothers, Anna Mobley, and Dale Brouillette.

Large portions of the exhibit will remain up throughout the spring 2019 semester. If you missed the first iteration of the exhibit, we urge you to come tour what remains. Our operating hours are M-Th 8-5 and Friday 8-12:30. In the coming months, the Center will segue to a new exhibit that commemorates the Sesquicentennial of Tangipahoa Parish. More information on that will be made available later this year.



Pictured (left to right): Graduate Assistant Faith Allen, Director Dr. Hyde, Assistant Director Dr. Finley, Graduate Assistant Bailey Hall, and Student Worker Mikayla Martin at the grand opening of our WWI exhibit.



Heitman Addresses the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

The Center proudly supports the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association, which anchors our town and gown approach to history. Each year at its annual spring meeting, the SELHA hosts a scrumptious dinner, serves libations, and features a brief lecture by prominent guest speakers such as Louisiana's former secretary of state Jay Dardenne and current governor John Bel Edwards. Some speakers are so popular with our membership that we bring them back for an additional conversation. In 2010 Danny Heitman, an author and award-winning columnist for *The Baton Rouge Advocate*, was the featured speaker and shared vignettes from his book, *A Summer of Birds: John James Audobon at Oakley House*. Heitman's lecture brought a number of new faces to our gathering and entertained all who attended. Based on the overwhelmingly positive response his first lecture received, Heitman was identified as a speaker we needed to invite back. In 2018 Heitman, much to the delight of our members, agreed to return.

Doors for the meeting opened at 6 pm at our usual haunt, the Hammond Regional Arts Center. At the commencement of the event, the capacity crowd was brought up to speed on the association's future plans by organization president and long time Center friend, Dr. Clark Forrest. Next came our featured guest Danny Heitman's remarks. His lecture, "Writing Local in a Global Culture," explored how south Louisiana has informed the essays and other writings he has produced for regional, national and international audiences. As in the past, Heitman's wit shined through as he reflected on the impact not just of region, but also of generation in shaping how one sees the world. "Much has changed since my journalism career began more than three decades ago," Heitman said. "The rise of the internet has done much to collapse boundaries and create a truly global village. In spite of that -- or perhaps because of it -- a writer's relationship with the region where he lives and works is more important than ever."

The 2019 meeting will be held on Wednesday, 17 April 2019. The meeting will commence at 6:00 pm with spirits and conversation. Dinner will be served prior to the start of our 6:30 pm program. During the meeting, Dr. Rob Moreau will discuss the development of Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station and the environmental threats confronted by the Manchac basin ecosystem. In addition, Dr. Sam Hyde will offer his reflections on the Sesquicentennial of Tangipahoa Parish. By now, readers of the *Centerpiece* should have received an invitation to the 2019 meeting as well as a call to renew their membership in the association. We are also putting together the latest edition of the *Southeast Louisiana Review* following a brief hiatus necessitated by continued budget constrictions. If

you or someone you know has written anything about the Florida parishes, we strongly encourage you to consider submitting it for possible publication in this important regional journal. Works of both fiction and non-fiction are accepted. Please send all submissions to our email address: selahistory@selu.edu.



Pictured above: Danny Heitman, author and award-winning columnist for *The Baton Rouge Advocate*, presenting at the 2018 SELHA meeting.



Cefalu Marker

Staff members of the Center are taught to expect the unexpected while employed with us. At any point, a member of the press or an administrator of the university will call and expect prompt assistance. In such instances no job is considered too big or too small for our staff; everyone is expected to chip in and give their all. Recently, the university President's office contacted us about plans to place a historical marker on campus at the site of the former Cefalu Coliseum that would honor the work of Nicholas Cefalu the building's namesake. As with all such assignments, our goal was to produce accurate results fast. Center staff quickly went to work researching Cefalu's many achievements and then condensing it so that it could fit on the marker.

As the spring of 2018 began, we submitted our final proposal to President John Crain. On Tuesday, April 17, Southeastern officially unveiled the marker. At the unveiling, the history of the coliseum and Mr. Cefalu were discussed. Originally dedicated in January of 1956 as the Southeastern Louisiana College Agriculture Coliseum, the building was re-dedicated in April of 1973 in honor of Louisiana State Representative Nicholas Cefalu. A life-long resident of Amite, Representative Cefalu was a businessman, civic leader, and farmer known for his philanthropy. He served a total of 16 years in the Louisiana Legislature and was an avid supporter of education and regional economic development. His dedication to

Southeastern made him instrumental in securing appropriations for the construction or renovation of many of the university's buildings and facilities including the coliseum, D Vickers Humanities Building, the Teacher Education Center and Strawberry Stadium. The important role Mr. Cefalu played in shaping the current configuration of the campus is difficult to exaggerate. It was an honor for the Center staffers who attended the unveiling to meet Mr. Cefalu's family and loved ones.



Pictured (left to right): On hand for the unveiling were, Southeastern President John L. Crain, Dr. Edward Walkwitz, Dr. Ann Kay Logarbo, Brian Logarbo, Nicole Cefalu, Dr. Vincent Cefalu, Pat Cefalu, Kaden Larussa, Dr. Joe Cefalu, Ursula Cefalu Sherman, Dr. Charles Cefalu, Dr. Nick Cefalu, Paulette Cefalu-Walkwitz, Michael Cefalu, Connie Cefalu, Dr. Francis Cefalu, Christi Cefalu, and Landon Lawrence.

Faculty and Students in Gulf South History and Humanities Conference

The Center has been a key supporter of the Gulf South History and Humanities Conference for nearly two decades. Every year our staff helps plan the event and ensure that items such as the call for papers reach their intended destination. Our director Dr. Hyde serves the organization as treasurer, board member, and, this year, as its conference chair. Center friend and Southeastern History Department faculty member Ronald Traylor led the organization as president.

Over the years, the conference has faced many challenges usually associated with tropical storms and hurricanes. This year, conference coordinators who originally scheduled the event in Florida had to quickly improvise as faculty turnover at one of the consortium schools necessitated a change of location and in leadership. It was at this point that Dr. Traylor assumed the presidency and Dr. Hyde became the conference coordinator. After much deliberation, it was decided that Baton Rouge, Louisiana would be the ideal location for Thirty-Sixth Annual Conference scheduled on October 4-6.

Owing to the close proximity of the event, we were fortunate to have the assistance of all of our graduate student staff who serviced the registration desk and served as troubleshooters throughout the Conference. Their hard work and good cheer often go unnoticed. This newsletter serves as official recognition of them. We appreciate everything you do! As always, Center staff members both past and present participated in the exchange of ideas. Our former student worker Jonathan Ricau, a recent Southeastern History M.A., received the 2018 William H. Coker Award for the best student paper and presented his findings in a session titled: "Revolution and Economic Development in the Early National Period." Dr. Samuel Hyde received the Thomason Award for the best new book on Gulf South History at the Conference and presented "America's Most Violent Rural Region: Feuding, Race Riots, and Ethnic Cleansing in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1896-1935." Chase Tomlin, a former Center graduate assistant and LSU Ph.D. candidate delivered his paper, "Truly in a Sorry Plight: Soldiering, Service, and Sacrifice in the Mexican American War." Center assistant director Keith Finley presented "Integration Comes to Southeastern Louisiana College." Our former photo-lab technician Victoria Mocsary and former graduate research assistant Cody Scallions also presented at the conference.

Historical conferences are always a good opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new ones. This year was especially fulfilling considering the sheer volume of attendees at the event who had direct ties to the Center. We look forward to seeing everyone again at the Thirty-Seventh Annual GSHA conference with special theme sessions on transportation and tourism in the Gulf South scheduled for October 17-19, 2019, at the Pensacola Grand Hotel, Downtown Pensacola, Florida.

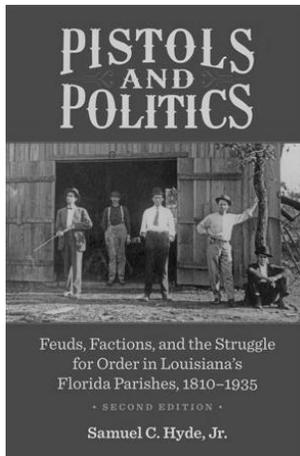


Pictured: Louisiana State University Professor Dr. Gaines Foster delivering the keynote address at the awards banquet of the 36th Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference.



Scholarship

Employees at the Center over the last few years are certain to recall the hours spent by the often shoeless director as he prowled before a chalkboard in our conference area trying to pull together the disparate threads of Florida parish history at the start of the twentieth century. Most observers have concluded that the spread of modernity and the intrusion of the outside world into the region marked the end of the violence and lawlessness that once plagued the area. Dr. Hyde initially pursued this angle when charged with producing an updated version of his seminal work *Pistols and Politics*. Instead, he discovered just the opposite. Rather than bring order, the intrusion of modernity had no impact on regional violence. The immediate question was why? According to the press release, “The updated and expanded edition includes four new chapters that deftly bring the analysis forward to account for the continuation of violence and mayhem in the region in the early twentieth century.” “The new volume includes original analysis detailing why such conditions prevailed and why the regional population tolerated such levels of brutality. It closes with an epilogue that contrasts the peculiar pattern of development the region endured to the rest of the state and nation and offers an insightful formulation for a possible pathway to future stability.”



Pictured above: Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.’s second edition of *Pistols and Politics: Feuds, Factions, and the Struggle for Order in Louisiana’s Florida Parishes, 1810-1935*.

Hyde’s book, which was released in the summer of 2018, has already garnered significant attention. Since the book’s publication, Hyde has maintained an ambitious speaking schedule that sees him traveling throughout the region to promote his scholarship. The book was featured in a *Washington Post* op-ed piece and referenced in numerous other state and national media outlets. Hyde has been honored by the Gulf South Historical Association with the Michael V. R. Thomason Award as the best book on the

history of the Gulf South region published in 2018 for *Pistols and Politics*. “Hyde’s exhaustively researched study of Louisiana’s Florida Parishes and its innovative use of game theory revolutionizes our understanding of southern violence and provides critical insight into possible solutions for the tradition of lawlessness that continues to plague the region,” said Douglas Bristol, a member of the award committee from the University of Southern Mississippi. Hyde was honored and presented with a cash prize during the 36th Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference in Baton Rouge.



Pictured: Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. accepting the 2018 Michael V. R. Thomason Award for his new edition of *Pistols and Politics* at the 36th Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference.



Florida Parish Chronicles

The little-known impact of World War I on the Florida Parishes was explored in a new episode of the Southeastern Channel’s award-winning history series The Florida Parish Chronicles. “Southeast Louisiana and the Horror of World War I” debuted on the channel at 8 pm. on Saturday, November 3, in conjunction with the grand-opening of our new exhibit which highlighted the horrors of the conflict with a mock trench, battlefield diorama and a number of war-related items and artifacts, including letters home from local soldiers.

The episode was written by show host Samuel Hyde, Southeastern’s Leon Ford Endowed Chair, history professor, and director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. “Alternately known as the Great War and the War to End All Wars at the time, in many senses World War I ushered in the era of modern industrial warfare,” Hyde said. “Yet the implications of the transforming event are far less visible than the attention-grabbing details of World War II. Everyone is familiar with the major events of World War II.”

Hyde opined that the two main reasons for the limited attention focused on World War I in America are the close proximity in time of the Great Depression and outbreak of World War II and the incredible suffering the soldiers endured during the Great War. "Service in World War I was a horrifying experience," Hyde said. "Not only were the soldiers subjected to unprecedented slaughter and misery in the trenches, but in the end it solved few of the problems that challenged the world before its outbreak, and it created conditions that led to the next great conflict."

The episode reflects extensive research by Hyde and the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies staff, along with additional visual research by Steve Zaffuto, Southeastern Channel operations manager, who directed, shot, edited and created animations for the program.

The show includes period footage of war era film, along with scores of images from the front lines and on the home front. Action sequences using Southeastern graduate students and faculty, along with their family members were also included. The program also spotlights an interview with Southeastern history professor Samantha Cavell, a World War I expert and descendant of Australian soldiers who fought in the famed ANZACS division during World War I.



Pictured (left to right): Summer Intern Jake Yount, Assistant Director Dr. Finley, Grace Finley, Sophie Hyde, Graduate Assistant Amelia Haag, Graduate Assistant Faith Allen, Sammie Hyde, and Sociology Professor Gerald McNeil during the shooting of the recent chronicles episode.



A Fond Farewell

Over the years, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has been blessed with an array of talented graduate assistants and student workers. Since the wave of state budget cuts aimed at higher education started in 2008, the Center has increasingly relied on our student staff to maintain normal operations. Without them, we would have had to dramatically reduce our services on campus and in the community. Many students have served us well, but few have served as long or given us as much as Faith Allen. On May 19, 2014, Faith was hired as an undergraduate student worker. At the time of her hiring,

Center director Sam Hyde emailed assistant director Keith Finley the following about Ms. Allen: "she is clearly intelligent, flexible in schedule and eager - so good I hired her on the spot rather than let someone else get her." Hyde's comments perfectly capture our experience with this remarkable young woman. Although obviously impressed from the start, we could never have imagined then how essential she would be to our future operations. After completing her BA, she pursued an MA in psychology at Southeastern Louisiana University and continued on as our graduate research assistant.

In May 2019, Faith will complete her degree program and unfortunately end her tenure with us. Over the years, she has been a pillar of stability and continuity. Faith has been involved in all phases of the Center's operations from exhibit production to organizing the Gulf South Conference and everything in between. Researchers in the Center over the past five years will no doubt remember being greeted by the gregarious and helpful Ms. Allen. Anyone receiving a letter or even an email from us during this time was almost certainly touched by Faith as well. With sadness, we now watch Faith train our new graduate students to assume the many roles she once played for us. As this final process unfolds, it is more apparent than ever just how much Faith has contributed to the Center family. We will certainly miss you Faith and look forward to hearing about your many future accomplishments!



Pictured: Graduate Assistant, Faith Allen



Tangipahoa Parish Sesquicentennial

Most readers remember the critical role played by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies during the Bicentennial Celebration of the West Florida Revolt. At that time, the Center served as the clearing house for information as various agencies sought guidance as they put together events marking the anniversary. We offered assistance when asked but permitted local entities to develop their events in their own way. What resulted was a truly memorable commemorative event. As we closed

the Bicentennial celebration, Center staff noted that another big anniversary was looming.

2019 Marks the Sesquicentennial of Tangipahoa Parish. Created in 1869 out of St. Helena, St. Tammany, Livingston, and Washington parishes, Tangipahoa takes its name from the river that flows through it as well as from the Native American tribal group that once held sway in the area. Born in the tumultuous Reconstruction Era, Tangipahoa has a rich and vibrant history that will be celebrated throughout the year.

A sesquicentennial commission is in place headed by the Tangipahoa Parish Tourist Commission and backed by an array of local entities such as the Parish President's Office and, of course, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. The Tangipahoa Parish Library system is likewise actively involved and is scheduled to host a slate of events including some featuring Center friend and nationally recognized expert in regional history, Antoinette Harrell. Southeastern Louisiana University theater professor Jim Winter has been tasked to produce a satirical look at the historic event. Readers may remember that Professor Winter created the comedic play loosely based on the West Florida Revolt titled "Only in Louisiana" which premiered during the bicentennial festivities. Although still in its planning stages, the sesquicentennial performance promises to be equally memorable and, rumor has it, will include some very special cameo appearances. Expect periodic updates as plans become finalized.

Sesquicentennial events are still actively being planned. For the most up to date information, please visit the Tangipahoa Parish Tourist Commission website at: <https://tangipahoa.org/150>



New Collection Highlights

Over the years, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has benefited from generous donations from our supporters. Without them, we would be unable to secure the materials we need to preserve and promote the history of this region. Their support means the difference between regularly opening new exhibits and keeping the same one up for years. Even accessioning new collections would be impossible without critical financial assistance to augment the limited funding we are provided by the university. This past year the Center received a generous donation to its development foundation account from Tom and Donna Gay Anderson. The Andersons also donated a treasure trove of items from their personal files that highlight the family's extensive involvement in area politics including items related to Tom's stint as Hammond mayor. We are eternally grateful for the thoughtful donations of the Andersons.



Pictured: Tom Anderson, former mayor of Hammond, LA and recent donor to the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

Others also stepped up and provided critical financial support as we continue to recover from the ravages of nearly a decade worth of budget reductions. Ann Reilly Jones offered generous assistance as she has in the past. Former Southeastern Louisiana University student and professor Belford Carver likewise graciously sent a monetary donation. It is heartening to see that in times of trouble the Center can count on such generous patrons who believe in our mission and who are dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of our region.

A number of our donors added to their preexisting collections over the past year, including Center friends C. Howard Nichols and Clark Forrest. Antoinette Harrell added to her already impressive collection with additional materials related to the African American experience in the region.

Victoria Mocsary donated oral history interviews associated with her ongoing research on the Hungarian Settlement. Vicky Knight generously donated dozens of oral history recordings that focused on World War II. Irene Morris, the SLU Music Department, Cathy Tijerino, Irene Bennett, Dale Brouillette, Scott Illing, Joan Davis, Morris Schneider, Susan Thomas, Ann Trappey, Scott Biggers, Linda Donaldson, Michael Brothers, and Thomas Thompson likewise donated material in the past year. Thank you everyone.

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.

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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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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