

---

# Centerpiece

---

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

Volume XVII  
Winter 2010 / 2011

---

## From the Director

What an exciting year in the Center! In addition to assuming expanded job roles, learning that “make do” usually means “do without,” and working to perfect the art of being in two places at once, Center staff members enjoyed the opportunity of overcoming unprecedented challenges all amid the celebrations of the bicentennial of the event that most defines our regional identity. The year 2010 began in the midst of a state budget crisis that threatened the very survival of higher education and scholarly research in Louisiana. Resources were slashed, staff was reduced, and possibilities for our mission seemed diminished in the very year that we celebrated the bicentennial of the West Florida Revolt which heralded the onset of liberation from Spanish colonial rule in the America’s and gave our home region its name.

Undaunted, Center staffers adopted an “adapt and overcome” mentality that has undoubtedly resulted in our most successful year to date. In addition to being named the domicile for the bicentennial of the West Florida Revolt and its multi-faceted cross regional celebrations, and being recognized by both houses of the Louisiana Legislature for our efforts to promote understanding of Louisiana’s most curious region, we have enjoyed unprecedented national exposure through AP press releases, talk radio programs, and world wide web casts among other venues. We have also received national awards for our film efforts, generous donations from benefactors, and new sustained venues for promoting our message about southeastern Louisiana.

Challenge breeds innovation and dedication – two qualities abundantly evident among Center staff. This edition of the Centerpiece reveals the product of our efforts. Each of our existing programs continue, many have even been enhanced, and some new ones have been added. The Judge Leon Ford and the Congressman James H. Morrison lecture series continue and new editions of the Florida Parish Chronicles and the *Southeast Louisiana Review* are forthcoming. The scholarly Gulf South Historical



*From left to right: Research Assistants Owen Hyman, Cody Scallions, Cheryl Breaux, Assistant Director Keith Finley, Director Samuel Hyde*

Association and the town and gown Southeast Louisiana Historical Association both retain organizational headquarters in the Center and a new support effort in the form of the “Friends of the Center” is just emerging.

The most effective efforts are produced by those committed to an inspired purpose – revealing the long overlooked history and cultures of our home territory, the Gulf South’s most peculiar region, is both our mission and our inspiration in the Center. We hope that this edition of the Centerpiece will inspire you with our sense of purpose and encourage you to join us in the continuing mission to explore and reveal our region’s dynamic past.

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.  
Leon Ford Professor of History  
Director, Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

## Gulf South Historical Association

Every year Center Director Sam Hyde and his staff play an integral role in organizing and running the Gulf South Historical Association, taking care of all of the large and small details associated with putting together a smooth conference. 2010 proved no different as the Center began preparing the Twenty-Eighth Annual GSHA Conference in Gulfport, Mississippi even before the Twenty-Seventh meeting had taken place. With the University of Southern Mississippi serving as the host institution and Center friend and USM faculty member Dr. Deanne Nuwer as the conference chair, our staff performed essential support roles ensuring that this installment of the conference proved the best yet. From the fine food and conversation at the GSHA reception held at Salute Italian Restaurant to Dr. Karen Kingsley's evening presentation at the reception and awards banquet, guests at this year's gathering in Gulfport were not disappointed.

The 28th GSHA featured special theme sessions on "Culture Connections along the Gulf Coast," and as usual Center staffers participated in not only organizational matters, but also in the scholarly exchange. Center Director Sam Hyde once again served as the organization's Chief Executive Officer while also presenting a paper titled, "Expanding the Original Lone Star Republic: Judge Harry Toulmin vs. Rueben Kemper in Mississippi and Alabama, 1810." Two of our graduate research assistants also joined in the scholarly exchange. Graduate Research Assistant Owen Hyman delivered a paper titled, "Great Southern Lumber Company in Bogalusa, Louisiana, 1906-1935" and Graduate Research Assistant Andrew Barr presented, "Conflicts in Race and Resources: The Tidelands Oil Controversy in Louisiana, 1950-1965."

Plans for the 29th GSHA with special theme session on "Slavery, Secession, and the Civil War in the Gulf South" are continuing apace. This year the University of West Florida will host the event which will be held at the Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front Hotel. A special discount rate of \$139 per evening is available to conference participants. For additional information on this year's meeting, please contact conference coordinator, Dr. Jay Clune at [jclune@uwf.edu](mailto:jclune@uwf.edu). To book your reservations call 1-866-916-2999. Be sure to mention GCH to receive the special conference rate.

## Accolades Continue for Center Film

The Center's much heralded film *American Crisis, American Shame* has been awarded a Remi Special Jury Award at the 43rd annual WorldFest International Film Festival in Houston. Southeastern Channel Station Manager and the film's co-executive producer Rick Settoon observed that receipt of a Remi award is an impressive honor for the

production. According to a WorldFest press release, our film was selected as the best video overall in the Ecology/Environment/Conservation division and named a finalist in the Grand Remi category (Best Film Overall). More than 4,400 videos were entered in the WorldFest competition, the third oldest film festival in North America.

The documentary – which premiered at Southeastern's Fanfare in 2009 – is the product of three years of research and writing by Samuel Hyde, Leon Ford Professor of History and director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, and Keith Finley, assistant director. Using scores of photographs housed in the center's collections, the film is part of a larger project that includes a traveling exhibit and lecture series, all funded by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant written by Hyde and Finley with the assistance of Biology Professor Nick Norton.



*Director Hyde and Asst. Dir. Finley, along with the film's editor Steve Zaffuto and executive producer Rick Settoon, both from the Southeastern Channel*

To date the film has won several other recognitions, including a Gold Medal at the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival, a Gold Award for editing in the national Aurora Awards competition, and an award from the Twin Rivers Film Festival.

"This is a very exciting win for us," said Hyde, "because it brings additional exposure to our message that the rapid loss of Louisiana's wetlands is a national emergency that ultimately will produce catastrophic results for the entire nation if not addressed immediately. The oil spill drives home the point of how fragile our wetlands truly are."

*American Crisis, American Shame* is scheduled to appear in several additional film festivals in 2011.

# West Florida Republic Bicentennial



*West Florida Flag raising—St. Tammany Parish*

Following the startlingly successful “Kick Off the Celebration” event in St. Francisville in September 2009, activities designed to promote understanding of our region’s curious pathway to union with the state and nation began in earnest. Designated as the domicile of the celebration by House Bill 188, lead author Rep. John Bel Edwards with support from other area legislators including Reps. Steve Pugh and Tom McVea, the Center became the epicenter of the celebration. The West



*Rep. Edwards*



*Rep. Pugh*



*Rep. McVea*

Florida Republic Bicentennial Commission, with Center director Sam Hyde as chairman, became the coordinating body for events.



*Bicentennial Commission*

Over the course of the past year more than 60 separate events have been hosted to explain the relevance of the Revolt to frequently awed and amazed audiences.



*Bicentennial Pastry*

“How could we not have heard of this before,” became the theme comment of the Celebration. In addition to scores of lectures and informational symposiums, the activities included erecting markers in every parish to highlight the dynamics of the Revolt, teacher’s workshops, an essay contest accessible to all regional



*Director Hyde converses with Philemon Thomas while West Florida rebels take a much needed break*

8th grade Louisiana history students, an art contest and travelling exhibits. Southeastern Theater professor Dr. James Winter produced a play entitled *Only in Louisiana: The Not Quite True Story of the West Florida Revolt* that left packed audiences howling with laughter and begging for more. Musical prodigy Brian Hanson created the “West Florida Republic Anthem” that was first performed by the Baton Rouge Symphony before a crowd more than 2,000 strong at Hemingbough Gardens in West Feliciana Parish. Associated Press news releases carried the story nationwide while Commission chairman Hyde was interviewed on talk radio programs from Colorado to Indiana.



*Scene from Only in Louisiana*

The efforts of the Bicentennial Commission have been wildly successful – few now ask “what was the West Florida Revolt” – but the mission is not yet complete. March 19, 2011 witnessed the Grand Finale Celebration of the bicentennial in St. Francisville, the capital of the Old Republic, replete with the dedication of the West Florida Republic Park adjacent to the West



*Springfield marker dedication*

Feliciana Parish Courthouse. Markers are yet to be dedicated in Tangipahoa, Washington, and East Feliciana parishes and the Commission remains hard at work on the final details of the West Florida Republic Trail which will serve as a new tourism incentive for the state as visitors are encouraged to tour the Florida parishes and explore the exciting details of the event that initiated a hemispheric freedom movement. In all bicentennial events Center staff have played a defining role – stay tuned for announcements of additional events as we continue to explore the dynamics of the West Florida Revolt.

## **Ford Lecture on Preparedness**

The annual Judge Leon Ford IV Lecture on History and Politics remains one of the high points of the Fanfare season. Each year the series features a scholar or other

noted personage associated with one of the late Judge Ford’s many interests, including history, aviation, and all aspects of state and national government. In 2010, the Center and the Ford family proudly presented General Russel Honoré as lecturer. Southeast Louisiana residents, of course, are no strangers to the General. Most will remember him as the National Guard commander whose voice of reason and compassion in the midst of the turmoil following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans helped end the violence and looting. It was Honoré who not only helped to restore order in the city but whose assertive personality convinced many outside of the region that the Crescent City would eventually recover.



*General Russel Honoré*

Although best known to area residents for his help during the 2005 hurricane season, Gen. Honoré has served in a variety of command and staff positions, including overseas assignments in Korea and Germany. He has also served as deputy commanding general for the Army Infantry Center and School at Fort Benning, Ga., and assistant division commander for the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. The general’s awards and decorations include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit with four Oak Leaf Clusters, Bronze Star, the Global War on Terror Medal, the Kuwait Liberation Medal, and the Joint Meritorious Unit Award. A native of Lakeland, La., in Pointe Coupee Parish he was commissioned a second lieutenant of infantry and awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in vocational agriculture upon graduation from Southern University in Baton Rouge in 1971. No stranger to the Southeastern campus, Honoré served as our spring 2007 commencement speaker.

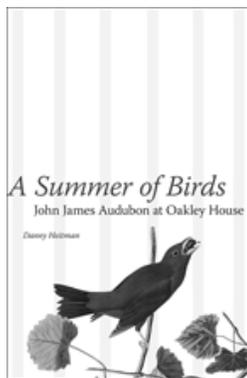
On the evening of 20 October, Honoré presented his speech “See First, Understand First, Act First: Leadership and Preparedness in the 21st Century” to a large crowd in the historic Columbia Theater. In an animated presentation complete with a power point presentation and self-deprecating humor, the General urged attendees to plan ahead before another disaster hits. Following his remarks, Honoré graciously answered questions from the crowd before autographing copies of his book, *Survival:*

*How Being Prepared Can Keep You and Your Family Safe*, for interested guests. Honoré remained to mingle with well-wishers at a reception sponsored by the Ford family.

Plans for the 2011 Ford Lecture are still being made. Look for information on it and for other Center events in the mail and online.

## SELHA's Summer of Birds

Each spring the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association gathers to conduct its business, learn a little local history, and to socialize. Often, the meeting includes a guest speaker. Previous presenters have been as diverse as the association's membership. This year we were fortunate to retain the services of award winning *Advocate* columnist Danny Heitman who recently published *A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House* with LSU Press.



Danny Heitman's Summer of Birds

As soon as the SELHA announced its speaker the Center was inundated with calls from the community asking for tickets. Many callers knew the author and his Ponchatoula family personally and wanted a chance to catch up on old memories. Others read his family values oriented news column in the *Advocate* and wanted a chance to meet him. Regardless of the reason for attendance, all present got the



A portion of the capacity crowd at this year's SELHA

chance to hear a fine presentation on the inspiring season Audubon spent as a personal tutor at Oakley House in West Feliciana Parish. During that summer, Audubon

found the inspiration to complete his magisterial and comprehensive pictorial record of American birds that ultimately made him famous. For the SELHA, the increased attendance also translated into an increase in membership as many who attended solely to hear Heitman also joined the organization, finding the camaraderie of the group appealing. Following the presentation, Heitman autographed books and visited with his many fans. Like all association events, this one also came complete with a meal and an open bar serviced by Center staffers.

The 2011 spring meeting of the SELHA will take place on 19 April 2011 at 6:00PM in the Hammond Regional Arts Center. You should have already received a letter from association president Clark Forrest about what promises to be an exciting gathering. At the event, Center assistant director Keith Finley will discuss his award winning book, *Delaying the Dream*, and as always, guests can expect the usual food, libations, and camaraderie. Association members are also urged to renew their membership in the association. Be on the look out for your renewal notice in the mail as well as for your copy of the *Southeast Louisiana Review* which will be arriving early this summer.

## FPC Continues Run

Ask local residents what their favorite Southeastern Channel Program is and the chances are most of them will say "the Florida Parish Chronicles." Now in its seventh year of production, the popular program continues to attract a wide audience while also furthering the Center's efforts to increase awareness of southeast Louisiana's extraordinary history and culture. The most recent episode, "Who Killed the Kingfish" presented a unique and controversial look at the assassination of Louisiana's most famous politician, Huey P. Long, who was killed in 1935 in the halls of the State Capitol. Today tour guides point out the bullet holes in the Capitol building's marble walls, while they recount the accepted theory that medical doctor Carl Weiss shot Long – then a U.S. senator – as he exited a meeting. Weiss supposedly was angry that Long was trying to remove his father-in-law, Judge Benjamin Pavy, out of office as St. Landry Parish's 13th Judicial District Judge due to his opposition to Long.

In the episode filmed on location at the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, evidence is presented in an interview with Pavy's grandson, physician Donald Pavy, that attempts to debunk some commonly-held beliefs associated with the assassination. Pavy, who spent his lifetime researching the famous killing with eyewitness interviews, material evidence and medical diagrams, has written a new book, *Accident and Deception: The Shooting of Huey Long*. According to the creator, writer, and narrator of the program, Center Director Sam Hyde, the program reveals "Long's assassination may have been but the tip of the iceberg to a far more complex crime – one that involved not simply the murder of an innocent man, but conspiracy,

bribery, and extortion involving some of the highest ranking figures in the state.

Though everyone may not agree with the perspective presented, they are certain to be forced to consider if all they have believed about Huey Long and his death are the truth.”



*FPC Producer Josh Kapusinski and Center Director Hyde examine evidence provided by Donald Pary*

The episode airs regularly on the Southeastern Channel and features Center staffers in a dramatic recreation of Huey Long’s murder, along with still photographs taken from our extensive holdings on Louisiana history. Keep an eye open for this and other FPC episodes, including the soon-to-be released episode on the state’s famous and not so famous festivals.

As further evidence of the success of the program, the Louisiana Department of Tourism has selected the Long assassination and the Crimes and Criminals episodes to be continually shown at all state Visitor Centers. With hundreds of tourists and road weary travelers stopping at such facilities, we have an excellent opportunity to encourage interest in our region via our popular FPC television series.

## New Collection Highlights

Each year the Center receives a variety of new donations, while also taking in additions to our preexisting holdings. It is an honor to serve our community knowing that so many have entrusted their family’s history and in many cases their life’s work to us. Although available space in our climate controlled vault is at a premium, we will continue accepting donations until we no longer have room.

This past year Carl Cutrer established a collection that features ten scrap books chronicling race relations in Bogalusa. Long time Center supporter Anne Trappey deposited an assortment of material related to Kentwood High School from the 1960s. Clark Forrest added to his collection with a series of donations that further our holdings on local history and area forestry as did one of

this region’s leading historians, Donald Sharp. C. Howard Nichols continues to add to our holdings. Most recently he made a deposit to the Grace Memorial Episcopal Church Collection, consisting of the official records of one of Tangipahoa’s oldest churches.

We encourage our readers to consider establishing a collection so that their family history or their research interests will be preserved for others to enjoy. Feel free to contact the Center at 985-549-2151 for additional information.

## Center Benefactors

Several years ago Center assistant director Keith Finley visited with Hammond resident Helen Ricketts Hooks Rownd to facilitate the sale of her Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) wings in exchange for a monetary gift that she desired to be routed to Southeastern’s Development Foundation. Finley soon discovered that Ms. Rownd was an important piece of local history. Not only did she serve as a WASP during WWII, but she was a local school teacher, and even a flight instructor. In fact, Center benefactor Judge Leon Ford IV learned to fly with the assistance of Ms. Helen. Rownd began the process of donating some of her memorabilia to the Center in 2009. A collection in her name is now available for viewing. In 2010, Ms. Rownd graciously made a substantial donation to help sustain the Center’s operations during these difficult economic times. We wish to thank Ms. Rownd for her bequest and urge researchers to visit the Center and discover yet another link between Tangipahoa Parish and America’s efforts in World War II.



*Helen Rownd*



*Judge Leon Ford III*

The family of Judge Leon Ford III continues to play an active role in contributing both to Southeastern Louisiana University as well as to the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Always a staunch Center supporter, Leon Ford, IV once again made a series of impressive and badly needed contributions to the Center. We are forever indebted to his generosity and we cherish his friendship. He continues to ensure that the close ties with the Center originally forged by his father remain as strong as ever. Ford has also begun organizing a **Friends of the Center**

group dedicated to helping us maintain and in some cases even expand our operations despite the ever present threat of reduced state funding. The **Friends** have already established an endowment through the Development Foundation that will help provide funds to sustain the everyday activities of the Center and will be used at the discretion of the Director. Anyone with an interest in ensuring the continuation of the important programs we support are encouraged to join.

## Center Research and Outreach

Center Director, Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. continued his usual torrid pace in terms of scholarship, speaking engagements, and other outreach initiatives. His research on the West Florida Revolt led to the publication of “Consolidating the Revolution: Factionalism and Finesse in the West Florida Revolt, 1810” in *Louisiana History*. His research was also featured in *Louisiana Life* and *Northshore Report* magazines. He presented papers at both the Louisiana Historical Association and the Gulf South Historical Association. Aside from his participation at scholarly conferences, Hyde continues to speak to groups large and small. This year Hyde gave eighty-five public presentations on a wide range of subjects including the West Florida Revolt and his most recent book, *A Wisconsin Yankee in Confederate Bayou Country*. Included among the presentations were the Regional Security Conference Marine Command Forces North, the St. Tammany Parish Council, and the Oscher Learning Institute. Hyde’s research was also recently featured in a Travel Channel episode and on Fox Channel 8 television in New Orleans, among other media outlets. He also was one of the featured speakers at the “Hemispheric Freedom Symposium” held at the Hilton Downtown Hotel in Baton Rouge Sept. 21-22. The symposium, sponsored by the Paul Hebert Law Center at LSU, was designed to highlight the significance of the West Florida Revolt and the domino effect of Latin American liberation from Spanish control that followed. Hyde even traveled north of the Mason Dixon Line to pay visits to Civil War Roundtable gatherings in Milwaukee and Chicago.

Assistant Director Keith Finley’s award winning work, *Delaying the Dream* was released in paperback this year. Finley has also authored a dozen encyclopedia entries on subjects as diverse as African American inventors and Louisiana Governors. He continues with the usual speaking engagements and scholarly activities and will appear at the LSU Symposium on AP Tureaud and Civil Rights in Louisiana, on April 12<sup>th</sup> in Baton Rouge.

## Morrison Lecture

The James H. Morrison Lecture in Politics and Government has brought some of the state’s most important political figures to the Southeastern Campus to address a topic of their choice. Previous speakers have

included Mary Landrieu, John Breaux, Jay Dardenne, and Mike Strain. The lecture enables national, state, and local leaders to explore critical and topical events pertaining to public policy. The lecture series remains one of the most popular at Southeastern. One can find evidence of “Mr. Jimmy’s” legacy everywhere on the Southeastern campus and across the region owing to his tireless efforts on behalf of Sixth Congressional District voters.



*Mr. Jimmy shakes hands with Mr. President, Lyndon Johnson*

An invitation for the 2011 Morrison lecture has been extended. Once we receive an affirmative reply we will let our readers know. If past experience is any guide, this year’s installment of this important lecture series will not disappoint.

## Southeast Louisiana Review

When we launched the *Southeast Louisiana Review* in 2008, we were pleased that the new journal’s supporting organization, the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association, unanimously endorsed the mission of the journal. We were likewise pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm shown for the journal by the larger general public. Not only was the journal well received, but we quickly realized that we would need larger runs of each volume in the future. From Texas to southwest Mississippi and many areas in between, readers have proven eager to learn more about Louisiana’s most curious region. The forthcoming third volume slated to be released this summer will offer readers even more insight into the peculiarities of southeastern Louisiana. Articles scheduled to appear cover topics ranging from the debate over Louisiana ownership of its tidelands oil to an entertaining analysis of the 1966 Democratic primary pitting long-time incumbent Congressman James H. Morrison against upstart Judge John Rarick.

---

# 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:

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  
Second Floor, Rayburn Room  
Linus A. Sims Memorial Library  
Hours: 8:00am-4:30pm Monday-Friday  
[www.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/RegionalStudies](http://www.selu.edu/Academics/Depts/RegionalStudies)

***Mission:***

***The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies preserves and promotes the history and the cultures of Louisiana's Florida Parishes, southwestern Mississippi, and surrounding areas through scholarly research, conferences, film productions, and publishing.***

---

Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies  
Southeastern Louisiana University  
SLU 10730  
Hammond, LA 70402

PRSR STD Non-Profit Org. U.S. POSTAGE PAID Hammond, LA Permit# 193
---