
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

A ray of light has broken through the cloud of darkness that has hovered over Louisiana for almost a decade. The election of a new governor, the first ever from the piney woods region of the Florida parishes, has served as a source of regional pride just as his anticipated policies have offered hope of relief from the cycle of budget reductions to higher education that have forced us to devote ever increasing amounts of time to scrounging for paper clips, copy paper, and hoping the irreplaceable printer cartridges do not run out. Though immense funding challenges lie ahead, it is with renewed optimism that we in the Center have come to embrace our mission.

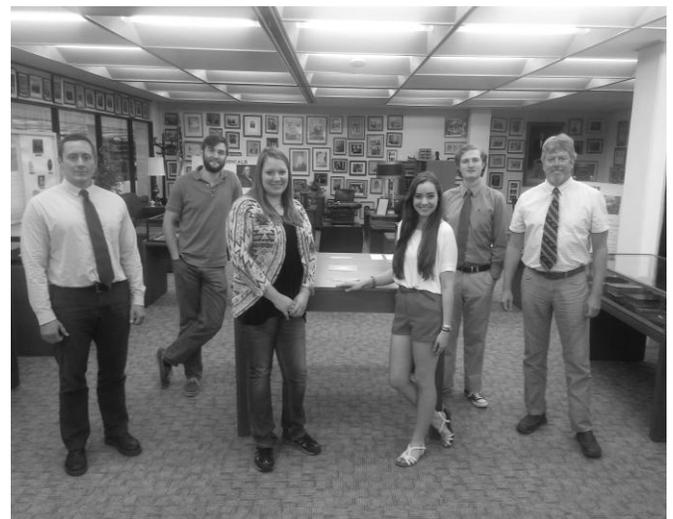
The past year has offered remarkable opportunities for us to reveal the dynamic stories that have characterized the history of southeast Louisiana. Center staff have participated in multiple regional and national television programs highlighting our storied pattern of development. A unique opportunity to host a large teachers symposium detailing the means to include the story of the West Florida Revolt, and other peculiarities of the region, into Louisiana history classes will dramatically increase exposure to our curious regional identity among K-12 students. A new exhibit and abundant new collections are also evident in the Center.

Center staff are also currently at work on a major new project to highlight the contributions of C. E. Cate and family to the development of Hammond and regional environs. The project will include a Center designed C. E. Cate room on the first floor of Sims Memorial Library replete with artifacts and information on the family's legendary past.

Revealing the history of southeast Louisiana can at times be burdensome. Those familiar with the tales of "Bloody Tangipahoa" and other episodes of regional lawlessness know that in our home area not all memories of the past are pleasant. A recent episode of our cable television series "The Florida Parish

Chronicles" is devoted to explaining a particularly grisly episode from the past. In this case, as in all our efforts, meticulous research is demanded of all our staff to insure that we present the past as accurately as possible in our capacity as stewards of regional memory.

Times may still be hard but in the Florida parishes and environs they are seldom boring. It is a privilege and an honor to grapple with the frequently complex intricacies of our past. We hope this volume of the Centerpiece will stimulate your interest in regional history and that you will join us in the effort of detailing from whence we came and of what we may expect from the future!



Center staff left to right: Dr. Keith Finley, Chase Tomlin, Megan Arledge, Faith Allen, Nicholas Heyd, and Dr. Samuel Hyde, Jr.

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

GSHA in Natchez

Since 2000, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has played an integral role in the development of the Gulf South Historical Association. Over the years, many things have changed in the organization, yet the Center's commitment to this important regional historical association remains the same. One highpoint of the annual conference is its destination in desirable locations such as Pensacola Beach, beautiful Mobile, or historic Galveston. The 2016 conference was held in Natchez, Mississippi which was celebrating its three-hundredth anniversary. By all accounts this thirty-third edition of the conference held on 1-3 October 2015 with special theme sessions on "Celebrating Mississippi and Beyond — Life and Society in the Gulf South" at the beautiful Natchez Grand Hotel proved a rousing success.

From action at the casino to leisurely strolls along the Mississippi River boardwalk, the Conference location had all you needed within a short walking distance. It was the perfect place to park your car and enjoy a jaunt through historic Natchez, visit nearby antique dealers, or dine in fine area restaurants. As always, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies was well represented at the event. Center director Samuel C. Hyde, who was recently made a Fellow of the association, remains the group's Treasurer and serves on its board of directors. When not engaged in Association business, Hyde is immersed in the intellectual exchange and even presented a paper titled, "Whitecapping Along the Louisiana—Mississippi Border: Dichotomy in Confronting Backcountry Justice, 1880-1910" at one of the sessions. The Center's research assistants Nicholas Heyd and Chase Tomlin also attended the event and performed yeoman service for the association. If help was needed whether it be manning the registration table or setting up a PowerPoint presentation, Nick and Chase were on the scene. Even former Center employee Owen Hyman, who is wrapping up his doctoral dissertation at Mississippi State University, was on hand to chair a session on "Labor and Environment" and another on "Slavery and Law." Special thanks are extended to Association President James Cusick from the University of Florida and Executive Director Deanne Nuwer from the University of Southern Mississippi for their hard work in putting together the event. Although the effort put in behind the scenes of a conference like this often goes unnoticed by casual attendees, the quality of the experience that all enjoyed was due in no small part to James and Deanne's hard work.

Preparations are currently underway for the 2016 installment of the conference scheduled at the beautiful Admiral Hotel in Mobile, Alabama on 13-15 October. If

past experiences are any indication of future performances, the GSHA gathering in Mobile, which is hosted by the University of South Alabama, is certainly something that you will not want to miss.

A New Exhibit

Over the years the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has put together some remarkable museum-quality exhibitions, ranging from the legendary WWII exhibit to the interactive experience of our wetlands preservation display. Visitors to our exhibits are sure to find something they will remember. Our newest exhibit titled "History Revealed through Rare Books and Documents: The Emergence of Printing, Bookbinding, and the Challenges of War Time Publishing," is a more cerebral experience. Instead of being bombarded with wind and water as in our infamous "Hurricane Tunnel," attendees will be struck by the transformative role played by paper making and book binding in shaping western civilization. In an age before television and the internet, people received their information orally and in written form. Some of the most revolutionary ideas in all of human history first found circulation as books and pamphlets. Our exhibit celebrates the remarkable and often overlooked role played by the printing process in human history. It is definitely worth a visit.

The exhibition includes rare handwritten documents from the 1700s including early indentures, examples of early binding techniques, Civil War era newspapers, letters to presidents, and some 300-year-old books. Panels also display information on the early construction of books, the evolution of paper making technology and its role in the printing process.



Student Staff Examines Rare Book Exhibit. Pictured Left to Right: Student Worker Faith Allen, Research Assistant Megan Arledge, Research Assistant Nicholas Heyd.

“Occasionally we enjoy the opportunity of displaying some of the rarest documents and publications included in the Southeastern Archives,” Center Director Samuel Hyde explained. “In this exhibit, our own holdings have been augmented by the impressive collections of former English instructor Paul Crawford, retired appeals court Judge Jimmy Kuhn and select items from the Cate/ Graham family.”

As in all previous exhibits, the Center’s student staff was charged with the actual display and organization of the exhibit all performed under the watchful eye of director Hyde and assistant director Keith Finley. Graduate research assistant Nicholas Heyd served as the point person in the exhibit set up—he established the original design and he delegated responsibilities to his fellow graduate assistants Megan Arledge and Chase Tomlin. All staff members worked together to create the best possible display with the resources that were available. Special thanks are also extended to student worker Faith Allen who played a critical role in ensuring that the displays proved aesthetically pleasing. Praise for the exhibit has come from many places including retired History Professor Randy Sanders who claimed that the exhibit, “represented an outstanding achievement.”

The exhibit will be open through the summer and is available for viewing at The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies located on the third floor of the Sims Memorial Library on the Southeastern Louisiana University campus. The Center is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday. Call 985-549-2151 for information.



Upcoming Cate Family Exhibit

Traditionally Center exhibits open within the confines of our physical location. However, our forthcoming exhibit is of such great significance that a display in the rear of the Morrison Room is insufficient to convey the importance of the subject at hand. No one did more to develop the town of Hammond than Charles Emory Cate, who, along with his descendants, will be celebrated in the exhibit. A special room will be created on the first floor of the library to house the exhibit that will explore Cate’s importance in bringing people and businesses to the community and in leaving behind a legacy of service to the area. Special thanks are extended to Ms. Suzy Graham, a Cate descendent, and her husband John for making a treasure trove of information available. We look forward to working with them and with several entities on campus to create a fitting tribute to this remarkable man and prominent local family.



Artists rendering of the future Cate Exhibit.



Southeastern hosts teachers’ symposium on West Florida Republic

Readers of the Centerpiece no doubt remember the central role played by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies in promoting the Bicentennial Celebration of the West Florida Revolt. An essential component of our mission then was to continue to preserve and promote the history of the event and the Florida Parishes in general through scholarly conferences and other outreach programs. This mandate served as the genesis for a teacher’s symposium on the Southeastern campus. What better way to continue to raise awareness than to educate the next generation of educators? When we broached the idea with the head of Southeastern’s education department, Dr. Cynthia Elliott, we received overwhelming support. Dr. Elliott also urged us to partner with the Library of Congress Using Primary Sources Program and Southeastern’s Office of Non-Credit Programs—both of which provided invaluable assistance in helping to organize and promote the event. Although our focus remained the teacher candidates, we wanted to ensure that members of the general public were also invited to the event. As soon as the Center announced its intentions some of our most supportive benefactors immediately offered assistance including the West Florida Society, the East Feliciana Tourist Commission, and the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana. Numerous individuals such as Ann Reilly Jones, Audrey Facione, Mary Jo Salmon, and Ronald R. Thompson gave generous donations to make the event possible.

The event held on Friday 6 November 2015 from 9 a.m. to noon, at the KIVA in the Teacher’s Education Center, consisted of three main sessions designed to inform teachers how to incorporate the story of the West Florida Revolt into their Louisiana history and geography classes

in an exciting and fun manner. After a warm welcome from the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, Dr. Karen Fontenot, Center Director Sam Hyde offered a light-hearted examination of why the Florida Parishes of Louisiana deserved attention and should be viewed as distinctive from other regions of Louisiana. Next followed Center Assistant Director Keith Finley who specifically addressed how the history of the Florida Parishes could be integrated into the classroom utilizing the GLE and Common Core guideposts for each grade level. One of the things the Center prides itself on is adapting to change. Over the years we have had to adjust to budget cuts and staff reductions that have altered the way we function but have not compromised our mission. About five minutes into Dr. Finley's presentation, the power went out, plunging the large room into darkness save for a few emergency lights in the auditorium. After a brief period of confusion, Finley continued in the dark and the show went on as planned. Also included in the workshop was a presentation by professors Jim Winter and Chad Winters of the Southeastern theatre program, who created and directed a play on the Revolt and development of the Republic titled "Only in Louisiana: The Not-Quite-True Story of the West Florida Revolt" during the bicentennial celebration of the revolt. Winter, who also spoke in the dark save for a host of flashlights, offered suggestions on how the attendees could make learning fun and then called upon several actors in period costume to recreate one of the scenes from the play. As the actors performed, lighting was restored thus affording the attendees to the event a chance to screen the Center's award winning film: "Reluctant Americans: The West Florida Revolt, Completing the Louisiana Purchase."

Despite some unexpected inconveniences, the event went off without a hitch. Attendees left the program much better versed in the history and importance of the Florida Parishes and received an informational packet and a copy of "Reluctant Americans" for their participation in the workshop. Be on the lookout for additional symposiums designed to promote the history of the Florida Parishes in the near future.



Weighing in on Controversy

One of the responsibilities that comes with our profession is frequent requests to speak on matters related to one's field of expertise. While this can sometimes take the form of speaking to a group of scholars, it often involves addressing non-academic audiences either on television or in print. Few issues are as divisive today as the questions surrounding all aspects of the Confederate experience. How should the Civil War be commemorated? Are we to remove all symbols of the past in an effort not to offend

anyone in the present or are we to adopt a more sensible approach in which the lessons of the past are not buried, but brought out into the open so that everyone can benefit from the exchange?

In the summer of 2015, Center Director Sam Hyde participated in a panel forum for Louisiana Public Broadcasting's monthly news and public affairs program, *Louisiana Public Square*. The program, "Symbol or Statement? History in Public Spaces," explored the issue of symbols such as the Confederate flag, monuments, and statues in public places. The topic always provokes controversy, but the program filmed in the aftermath of racially fueled violence in Charleston, South Carolina had an air of immediacy to it. As expected, Hyde fielded a variety of difficult questions adopting a moderate and historically sound perspective to the controversy. Throughout, Hyde urged the audience to conceptualize the War from the standpoint of the nineteenth century in which it took place not from the benefit of hindsight afforded by one's twenty-first century perspective.



Dr. Hyde gears up to go on camera.

Center Assistant Director Keith Finley was tapped by CNN reporter John Blake to address the controversy regarding efforts to impose new voter registration requirements that some claim will disenfranchise large numbers of poor voters. In an article published on CNN.com titled "Echoes of Selma: Is MLK's Greatest Victory Undone," Blake utilized Finley's civil rights knowledge to highlight the South's long history of discriminatory voting laws. Drawing on examples from his award winning book *Delaying the Dream*, Finley noted how laws that are outwardly "colorblind" often have unintended consequences and thus need to be considered not only from the vantage point of what appears on the face of it, but also with an eye toward unexpected consequences. "You do not want well-intentioned reform to become a source of discrimination," Finley noted.

The Center is not afraid to wade into controversy especially when hysteria and public pressure leads elected officials and the general public to adopt poorly thought out policies without regard to logic. When it comes to preserving and promoting the history and heritages of our

region, the best approach invariably is the one that is rooted in careful contemplation and a broad knowledge of all of the facts. Sometimes the truth is uncomfortable but at the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies we value our role as preservers of the past.



Southeastern Channel sheds light on the famous Breland murders

Since the inception of the “Florida Parish Chronicles,” the show’s host, Dr. Sam Hyde has fielded requests to cover the notorious and disturbing Breland murders which took place in the early twentieth century and are often regarded as one of the most diabolical crimes in Louisiana history. After much introspection and enormous research, Hyde decided that the time was right to tackle the controversy. “Amid the many tragedies that helped earn Tangipahoa Parish the epithet ‘Bloody,’ one episode stands out as particularly gruesome,” Hyde observed “The tragic Breland family murders contain all the elements necessary to make it a true horror story -- the ambush of an already grieving family on a quiet road, the murder of one man and two women, one a teenage mother, a baby left crying at the side of a ditch, along with a jail break and a hanging.”

The episode, which was underwritten by a generous contribution from our friends at First Guaranty Bank, describes a bizarre and violent series of events leading up to and following the tragic murder of J.O. “Buzzy” Breland (played by Assistant Director Keith Finley), his wife (played by former Graduate Assistant Sara Chauppette) and stepdaughter (played by Center Student Worker Faith Allen) in an ambush, referred to at the time as a “bushwhacking,” on a country road between Tickfaw and Genessee. Chief suspects at the time were prominent Livingston Parish patriarch Ben Kinchen (played by Graduate Assistant Brandon Duplantis), his brother Garfield Kinchen (played by Graduate Research Assistant Chase Tomlin) and friend Avery Blount (played by Graduate Research Assistant Nicholas Heyd), who at the time was a Tangipahoa Parish constable. Accounts state that fugitive Garfield Kinchen hid in the swamps of Livingston Parish for 18 months after the murders. Hyde adds, “the Breland murders have long remained a mystery in the area, and local residents still debate whether all of the varied victims of the tragedy ever received justice. Court records, newspaper accounts, and interviews with descendants of both victims and perpetrators were all employed in our effort to piece together the convoluted story.”



Nicholas Heyd and Chase Tomlin get into character for the Florida Parish Chronicles.

The program includes an interview with noted Livingston Parish historian Clark Forrest, a relative of Garfield Kinchen, at the New Zion Cemetery near the Little River community west of Tickfaw, site of a killing during a funeral which set the tragic events in motion. “In addition to offering details on an exciting and mysterious incident from our past, this episode also seeks to provide insight into the thinking of individuals who lived in our area and participated in the violence that consumed the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” Hyde said. “This episode will both entertain and educate just as it may also be a bit of a shock to many viewers.”



Sara Chauppette and Faith Allen in the limelight.

The episode titled “Murder Mystery: The Breland Killings and the Challenge of Justice in Southeast Louisiana” is currently on the Southeastern Channels regular television rotation. All of our readers are encouraged to catch the program. Please check your local listings for the dates and times in which to view this and other episodes of the Florida Parish Chronicles on the Southeastern Channel found on local Charter channel 199.



Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

The Southeast Louisiana Historical Association is known for many things, including an impressive academic journal *The Southeast Louisiana Review*, a robust membership representing a cross-section of the Florida Parish population, and an always lively spring meeting that often features noted scholars and local politicians. Each year, organization leaders strive to keep its members satisfied and searches for methods to broaden membership. In 2014, then state legislator John Bel Edwards was scheduled to speak but owing to the unfortunate death of his father Frank on the morning of the meeting, he respectfully asked to be released from his speaking obligation. Naturally, we quickly found a replacement and accepted Edwards' promise to reschedule. A lot changed over the course of the next year. Edwards was actively pursuing the Louisiana Governor's Mansion and he was polling surprisingly well in a field of well-known Republican challengers. Considering that his campaign was in full swing we did not expect that Edwards would be able to schedule a time convenient for us to have him speak to the association. We should have known that Edwards would honor his commitment. Rather than ask us to work around his plans, he told us to select a date and he would adjust his schedule to accommodate our needs. With 16 April selected, we eagerly began preparations for the gathering which would feature Representative Edwards.



Gubernatorial Candidate John Bel Edwards (middle) posing with Dr. Keith Finley (left) and Dr. Samuel Hyde, Jr. (right).

As in previous years, the Hammond Regional Arts Center, located in the Levy Building in downtown Hammond served as host to the event in which Edwards discussed his

family's recent induction into the Louisiana Political Hall of Fame and other topics related to the state of Louisiana. Before a standing room only crowd, Edwards addressed numerous subjects and even worked in a few campaign plugs.

As always, the festivities began with a meet and greet social, followed by a buffet dinner catered by Ms. Marilyn Harrison. Edwards not only delivered his remarks, he also answered all questions, and stayed to speak with whomever wanted an audience. There was no rushing to another engagement. Edwards, an Amite native, was clearly happy to be with the people he had represented for a number of years. Of course much has transpired since that April day when Edwards spoke. Several months later he was elected as the new governor of Louisiana! Today he occupies the Governor's Mansion and is charged with trying to right the state's economy which has been ravaged by neglect and poor planning. We wish him well.

The 2016 meeting is scheduled for 20 April and will feature a presentation by Eric Johnson and Catherine Tijerino who will showcase their recently published book on historic Hammond photographs. Jason Thompson, who will speak on his latest Native American discoveries in the Florida Parishes, and Howard Nichols who will have copies of his recent book on the history of Mandeville available for sale will also be there. A \$25 ticket to enter the event entitles the holder to attend the dinner meeting, as well as a one year membership in the SELHA, which includes receipt of the annual newsletter and journal. Members may purchase additional spouse tickets for \$10. A \$15 ticket allows an individual to attend the dinner meeting without joining the association.



Marjorie Morrison



Anyone who has attended a local function hosted by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has crossed paths with the inimitable Marjorie Morrison. For decades she has been a tireless crusader for the arts and humanities in the Hammond area. With her customary style, grace, and

gentle manner, Mrs. Marjorie was ever the southern lady. Gracious to a fault and remarkably generous, Mrs. Morrison represented a link to Hammond's past, just as she offered vibrant hope for our state's future—a future she believed should include the robust political presence of the Democratic Party to which her late husband Congressman James H. Morrison had belonged. For years, Ms. Marjorie has talked about donating her personal papers to the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies yet always pulled back despite our protestations because she did not believe they were of interest to anyone. Such was Morrison's humility. Although she had been involved in civic and educational groups for decades and had crossed paths with countless state and national figures she always remained firmly rooted in where she was from and refused to revel in her many accomplishments. Always impeccably dressed and as Professor Howard Nichols reminded everyone at her funeral services always in high heeled shoes, Ms. Marjorie was one of a kind. It is with profound sadness that we mark her recent death at the age of 99. Her special charm and grace will be missed by all.



Spreading the Word



In the past year, Dr. Hyde has appeared on numerous television productions, which have reached a wide range of audiences. The Louisiana Public Broadcasting aired its show "Public Square" featuring Dr. Hyde, and two episodes of Catholic Life Network series employed his knowledge in highlighting the British period in West Florida. His appearance on the History Channel's hit show, Ax Men episode "Shelby Gets Schooled" continues to educate people on the history of South Louisiana. Additionally, WBRZ Channel 2 in Baton Rouge invited him on their "Tune In" and "Sunday Journal" program. Dr. Hyde remains active in the historical community and constantly appears on various networks all in an effort to bring attention to Louisiana's Florida Parishes.

New Collection Highlights

Each year the Center receives numerous new collections—every one of which is treated with the same level of attention and respect. It is little wonder that so many people when making their donations remark that they had visited other locations only to settle on us as the final home for their cherished items. Unlike some institutions, we value all of our collections from whomever the source and regardless of the size of one's checkbook. In 2015, a number of particularly fascinating items came our way. A final donation from the estate of former Southeastern Louisiana University President J. Larry Crain, who unfortunately died in 2014, rounded out our preexisting collection in his name which covers the tumultuous years of his SLU leadership. Another deceased friend of the Center Ms. Irene Morris's extensive collection that has been arriving in spurts for several years is finally completed and available for public perusal. Ms. Suzanne Graham donated two impressive indentures from the 1600s which shed light on those from America's colonial world who occupied a status between those enslaved and those who were free. Peter Collins donated a remarkable assortment of Indian artifacts from a variety of southeast Louisiana locations, including Folsom and Weldon Lake. The collection consists of over 5,000 items such as arrow heads and pottery shards. For those interested in Native American history and culture it is definitely something to explore. Long time Center friend, Vicky Knight has added dozens of World War II oral histories from Bogalusa area natives to the archives. The recordings represent a fine addition to our already robust oral history holdings. In addition, Howard Nichols continues to bring in archival material related to the historic Grace Memorial Church in Hammond and Roy Blackwood, the director of the Columbia Theater, donated two New Deal era paintings that capture the spirit of America during this time of economic crisis. If you are interested in seeing these or any one of our collections, there is no better time than the present to stop in for a visit.



Vicky Knight donates numerous oral histories of World War II veterans.

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
Third Floor, Morrison Room
Linus A. Sims Memorial Library
Hours: 8:00am-5:00pm Monday-Thursday
8:00am- 12:30 Friday
http://www.southeastern.edu/acad_research/programs/csls

Mission:

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

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SLU 10730
Hammond, LA 70402

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