
CENTERPIECE

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

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Spring 2025



Center staff left to right: Center Director, Dr. Samuel Hyde; Student Worker Courtney Bailey; Graduate Assistant Sophie Clement; Graduate Assistant Sharon Johnson; Graduate Assistant Lauren Guillory; Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley.

From the Director

One measure of success could be the time allotted for forward planning compared to the time spent "putting out fires." For many years Center staff have worked selflessly to organize collections, to make information increasingly accessible to researchers, and to make the story of the Florida parishes and environs a centerpiece of Louisiana history. Obstacles to our work included a limited published record detailing the region, severe budget restrictions, repeated debilitating hurricanes, and even a pandemic.

Nonetheless, the burdens of the past could not diminish our enthusiasm for our mission and the rewards of our sustained efforts are now bearing fruit. Our archival collections are better managed and more researcher friendly than they have ever been. Thanks to the generous support of benefactors, we now have state of the art equipment that allows us to meet the needs of researchers, media outlets, etc., in ways we only dreamed about a few years ago. And, most important, we are now witnessing the inclusion of the peculiar story that characterizes southeast Louisiana as an established component of K-12 education and popular thinking.

This year has witnessed the receipt of the product of our "Louisiana in Continuity and Change Symposium." *Bayou Dilemma* will serve as a legacy publication designed to impact policy planning and

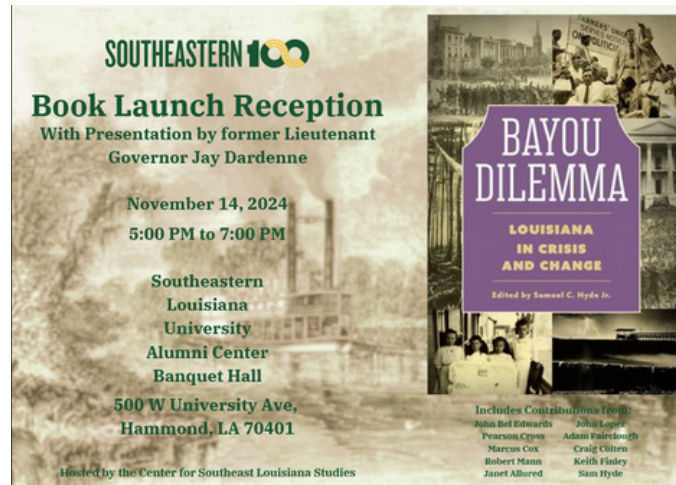
strategic thought concerning the Bayou State for generations to come. On the eve of the celebration of the 250th anniversary of our nation, we have joined the process of recasting popular thought to recognize the existence of the fourteenth colony and to interpret how that affects thinking about the American Revolution and the creation of the Constitution. We have also launched a new vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of cutting edge research highlighting our region in the form of the revived *Gulf South Historical Review*. Each of these issues is discussed in this edition of *The Centerpiece*.

It is a rewarding time to be affiliated with the Center. In a region long treated as a historical backwater, it is exhilarating to see the ever growing interest in our story and the increasing volumes of literature that reveal it. There remains so much more to be learned - we invite you to visit the Center and join us in this most enlightening quest

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

Featured Articles

Bayou Dilemma Reception and Launch



In 2022, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies hosted the “Louisiana in Continuity and Change” symposium which brought together an interdisciplinary assortment of scholars whose research engages aspects of the Louisiana experience. The two-day event held on the Southeastern Louisiana University campus featured a presentation by former Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards. The symposium attracted nearly one-thousand guests including regional high school students, college students, politicians, and members of the general-public.

After the event, Director Sam Hyde pivoted his attention to turning the symposium into a book. Throughout 2023-2024, he worked with the presenters to prepare their research for publication. In November 2024, these efforts came to fruition as *Bayou Dilemma: Louisiana in Crisis and Change* was published by the University Press of Mississippi as part of its acclaimed: America’s Third Coast series.

According to Hyde, “The book includes contributions from renowned scientists, historians, political scientists, geographers and journalists, including Robert Mann, Pearson Cross, and Adam Fairclough, among others. It offers an unprecedented compilation of studies examining the social, political, environmental, and economic hurdles pervasive to the Gulf South that prove acute in Louisiana.”

Following publication, Southeastern Louisiana University hosted a reception and book signing on November 14 at the Southeastern Alumni Visitor Center to celebrate the book’s launch.

The book contributors were honored at the reception, where Southeastern President William S. Wainwright presided, and former Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne provided a short presentation on the new book’s relevance and potential impact on future policy planning in Louisiana.

We would like to thank the proprietors of Bayou Booksellers in Hammond for making copies of the book available to attendees.

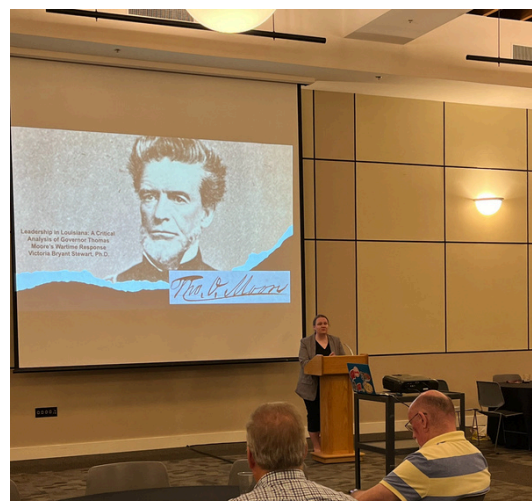


Pictured above, left to right: Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley; Dr. John Lopez; Dr. Adam Fairclough; Dr. Pearson Cross; Dr. Marcus Cox; former Louisiana governor, John Bel Edwards; and Center Director Dr. Samuel Hyde at the book launch reception.

SELHA to host spring meeting

For local history buffs, the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association's (SELHA) annual meeting serves as a time for rekindling old friendships and catching up on the latest research related to southeast Louisiana. In 2024, the SELHA hosted its spring meeting on 25 April 2024 at a new location—the historic Columbia Theater in downtown Hammond. Despite the change in venue, guests were greeted with a top-notch dining experience catered by Fine Thyme and an extensive offering of libations served up by the Center staff.

J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar Dr. Victoria Bryant Stewart, an archivist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, served as the keynote speaker. Her talk titled: "Leadership in Louisiana: A Critical Analysis of Governor Thomas Moore's Wartime Response" revealed the trials and tribulations of the Pelican State during the American Civil War. Also on the program was Young Sanders Graduate Research Assistant Ashley Tarleton, who presented her research on the Free People of Color community in Louisiana's Florida Parishes.



Pictured above: 2024 J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar, Dr. Victoria Bryant Stewart presenting at the 2024 SELHA spring meeting.

At this time, members are encouraged to renew their membership in the association. Be on the lookout for a renewal notice. Dues for 2025 are \$25 per person, which includes admission and dinner at the spring lecture, as well as the association's post-pandemic revived scholarly journal, the *Gulf South Historical Review*, and annual newsletter, *The Centerpiece*. Member spouses may attend the spring meeting at a discounted rate of \$10. Non-member participation is \$15 per person. Make checks payable to "Southeast Louisiana Historical Association."

This year's spring lecture on 16 April 2025 will feature the J.Y. Sanders Scholar Award winner, Michael Bunn, Director of Historic Blakeley State Park and author of: *The Fourteenth Colony: The Forgotten Story of the Gulf South During America's Revolutionary Era*.

The annual spring meeting will be held at the Alumni Center on Southeastern Louisiana University's campus on Wednesday, 16 April 2025, at 6pm. We are excited both about the speaker and the new location. Your attendance would be appreciated. For more information call (985)-549-2151 or e-mail selahistory@southeastern.edu.



Pictured above: 2025 J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar, Michael Bunn, Director of Historic Blakeley State Park.



Pictured above: Center Director, Dr. Samuel Hyde; Hamilton Martin of the Young Sanders Center; 2024 Young Sanders Center Graduate Research Assistant Ashley Tarleton; 2025 Young Sanders Center Graduate Research Assistant Lauren Guillory; 2024 J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar Dr. Victoria Bryant Stewart; 2025 J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar Michael Bunn; Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley

Nicholas Cefalu Scholar Named

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is pleased to announce that incoming History M.A. candidate Tristin Gaspard has been named the 2024-2025 Nicholas Cefalu Graduate Research Scholar. Gaspard received his B.A. from Loyola University and plans to use the scholarship funds to advance his research into regional politics in the Long era.

The Nicholas Cefalu scholarship was created to honor the memory of the long time Louisiana state legislator, businessman, and philanthropist. It is funded by Dr. Ann Kay Cefalu Logarbo and the Cefalu family and is awarded each year to an outstanding graduate student conducting regional research consistent with the interests of Mr. Cefalu.



Above: Pictured, from left, are Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies Director Samuel Hyde; Dr. Ann Kay Cefalu Logarbo; Tristin Gaspard; Senior Director of Development Katherine Rose of the Southeastern Development Foundation; and Keith Finley, Assistant Director for the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies.

America 250 Celebration

In advance of the celebration of our 250th year as an independent nation, Congress authorized the creation of a commission in each state to study the particular role individual states played in the Revolution. Director Hyde was appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education to serve as the Board of Regents representative on the America 250 Commission. The Louisiana version of the Commission includes representatives appointed by the governor and lieutenant governor as well as the state museum, state archives, and a variety of cultural and historical organizations.

The Commission is already planning a "Kick Off the Celebration" event along with a variety of other programs and events designed to celebrate our nation's endurance. Keep an eye out for upcoming events highlighted in *The Centerpiece* and other outlets as we advance toward America's anniversary in 2026!

Center hosts rebirth of the *Gulf South Historical Review*



Pictured above: The cover of the upcoming edition of the *Gulf South Historical Review*.

At the recent 41st Gulf South History and Humanities Conference in Natchez, Miss., the GSHA board of directors accepted a proposal from Southeastern's Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies to host the revived regional studies journal *Gulf South Historical Review*.

Previously housed at the University of South Alabama, the first installment under the direction of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies will be published shortly. Articles covering such diverse topics as sugar tariffs, Free People of Color, and the Columbus family legacy in the Caribbean are planned, along with book reviews that examine some of the most recent scholarship on the Gulf South and Caribbean Basin.

Submissions are open to all topics and subject matter relevant to the focal region. Preference will be given to articles offering groundbreaking analysis of subjects rooted in primary source research. Proposed articles of approximately 25-35 pages, conforming the Chicago Manual of Style, should be submitted electronically as Word attachments.

Submissions and any questions should be directed to Dr. Samuel Hyde, managing editor, or associate editor, Dr. Keith Finley at selahistory@selu.edu.

Gulf South Historical Association

Over the years, the Gulf South Historical Association has been an important component of the Center's mission. Our commitment to it remains stronger than ever. The 2024 edition of the conference featured special theme sessions on: "Conflict, Cooperation, and Competition in the Gulf South" and took place in historic downtown Pensacola, Florida. The three-day event featured the annual board of directors meeting, a packed schedule of scholarly sessions, and an awards banquet. As always, Center staff members actively participated in the festivities. Center Director Sam Hyde served as commentator for a session titled: "Violence in the Gulf South Under Jim Crow" and Assistant Director Finley chaired a session titled "Politics of Race and Labor in the Gulf South." Recent Center Graduate Assistant Ashley Tarleton presented her research in an excerpt from her Master's thesis titled "An Ambiguous Estate in Life: Free People of Color in Louisiana's Rural Florida Parishes." At the GSHA's annual banquet, Tarleton's paper received the 2024 William S. Coker Award for the best graduate student paper. Naturally, we are proud that one of our own was recognized.



Pictured above: Dr. Brian Rucker awarding former Center Graduate Assistant Ashley Tarleton with the 2024 William S. Coker Award at the Pensacola conference.



Pictured above: Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel in the French Quarter, the headquarters for the Forty-third Gulf South History & Humanities Conference.

At the 2024 GSHA banquet, outgoing association president Erin Stone passed the gavel of executive authority to the Center's own, Keith Finley, who will serve as the Association's president this year. The 2025 installment of the conference will take place in the historic French Quarter in New Orleans with the conference headquarters at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel located at 739 Canal Street, New Orleans, LA 70130. A block of rooms has been reserved for the Association. When calling to make your reservation, please mention that you are with the Gulf South Historical Association to receive the discounted conference rate of \$195 per evening. Please call 1-877-408-9661 to make your reservation by Thursday, September 18, 2025. All reservations must be made by this date. To reserve a room online, please follow <https://book.passkey.com/event/50934676/owner/10756/home>. Louisiana state employees, be sure to inquire about a limited number of state employee discounts for the event available on a first-come, first-served basis at <https://book.passkey.com/event/50934673/owner/10756/home>.

New Collection Highlights

Each year we are humbled by the outpouring of public support for our operations. Whether in the form of financial assistance or the donation of archival materials, the Center has a growing list of donors who sustain our operations and enhance our vision.

Ann Reiley Jones donated a treasure trove of Civil War Era letters while also generously endowing the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association. Her intrepid support is greatly appreciated. Many individuals augmented their preexisting Center collections, including Clark Forrest, C. Howard Nichols, Yvonne Lewis Day, and Rod Lincoln. Former Southeastern faculty member and Turtle Cove director, Bob Hastings donated several boxes of material associated with his tenure at the research outpost. Special thanks to Rob Moreau, the current director of Turtle Cove, for facilitating the donation. Tom Aicklen deposited materials associated with the LaCombe Heritage Center. Long-time Center friend Jeanne Stangle donated materials from the Camp Salmen Historical site in Slidell. Antoinette Harrell started a new collection dedicated to Reverend Arthur Tasker, the first Black mayor of Ponchatoula, and made additions to her pre-existing collection at the Center. Hazel Gaudet and Shirley Newsham donated materials from the Sons and Daughters of the Province and Republic of West Florida. St. Francis Episcopal Church in Denham Springs added to its collection of church records and sundry material from its history dating back as early as 1952.

As always, we are thankful for our donors and encourage our readers to consider establishing a collection in their name. For additional information on how to donate, please call: 985-549-2151 or email: selahistory@selu.edu.



Pictured above: Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley and Graduate Research Assistant Sophie Clement, with Bob Hastings and his recent donations to the newly created Robert Hastings Turtle Cove Collection.



Pictured above, clockwise from right: Eddie Ponds; Ponchatoula's Historian, Jim Perrin; Antoinette Harrell; and City of Ponchatoula Councilwoman Roslind Batiste

Staff Research/Activities

In the past year, Center Director Dr. Samuel Hyde has completed the edits for *Bayou Dilemma: Louisiana in Crisis and Change* which included two of his own articles - "Defining Louisiana Through the Lens of Challenge," and "As Louisiana as Crawfish Pie: Endemic Violence and the Nonunanimous Jury Verdict." He composed the chapter "A Florida Constitution in Louisiana: The West Florida Republic Constitution of 1810" for *Crafting Constitutions in Florida, 1810-1968*, a forthcoming book edited by Robert Cassanello from the University Press of Florida set to be released in March 2025. He also provided a Forward to the new edition of David Edmond's *Yankee Autumn in Acadiana* (University of Louisiana Press, 2024). He is currently at work on a project revealing Louisiana's curious connection to the American Revolution.

Dr. Hyde presented his research to the public at twenty-one venues from Boston to Pensacola over the past year. He continues his service as treasurer of the Gulf South Historical Association and was elected vice president of the Louisiana Historical Association.

In 2024, Center Assistant Director Dr. Keith Finley had his book *From Slavery to Segregation: Reckoning with White Supremacy in the American South* published by LSU Press. He also had a chapter titled "Defenders of Tradition, Champions of Reform: Louisiana's Faith Communities Confront Civil Rights Change" included in *Bayou Dilemma*.

Call for Candidates for the Edward Livingston Historical Association Student Research Scholarship

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, in partnership with the Edward Livingston Historical Association, recently announced the creation of a new award supporting student research on southeast Louisiana with an emphasis on Livingston Parish. The initial donation of \$12,000 from the ELHA will be awarded to a deserving Southeastern student conducting research highlighting the region on virtually any subject matter, said Samuel Hyde, Leon Ford Endowed Chair and director of the Center. "This is a shot in the arm to encourage student research on our home region, which is at the core of the Center's mission," he added. The award is open to both undergraduate and graduate students at Southeastern, Hyde said. The renewable funds will be awarded in \$500 increments each semester to the successful candidate. To apply for the award, interested students should submit a statement clarifying the subject of their research, along with a cover letter to Hyde via email at samuel.hyde@southeastern.edu by the submission deadline of March 1, 2025. For more information on the award, contact Hyde via email or call the Center at 985-549-2151 during normal operating hours.

Call for Candidates for the 2025 Nicholas Cefalu Graduate Research Assistantship

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern announces the annual competition for the Nicholas Cefalu Graduate Research Assistantship. The assistantship is designed to encourage graduate student research into long term Louisiana legislator and businessman Nicholas Cefalu's home region of southeast Louisiana and/or surrounding regions of the state and Gulf South.

The renewable award includes full tuition for fall, spring, and summer semesters at Southeastern beginning in August 2025, along with a full graduate student stipend and a \$1500 enhancement, for a total stipend package of \$13,000 annually. Submissions will be accepted from existing or entering graduate students in virtually any academic field including the following: history, cultural studies, art, music, literature, environmental studies, science, etc. During the period of the award, the successful candidate will work as a research assistant in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Candidates must also be conducting, or planning to conduct, research centered on southeast Louisiana or the wider Gulf South with an emphasis on topics reflecting the professional interests of Mr. Cefalu, such as regional business development, agricultural interests, particularly strawberry and dairy farming, education, philanthropy, and regional politics and culture. The product of the research should be directed toward the completion of a master's thesis or publishable paper.

Call for Candidates for the Young Sanders Graduate Research Assistantship

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern Louisiana University announces the creation of the Young Sanders Center Graduate Research Assistantship. The assistantship is designed to encourage graduate student research into Congressman J. Y. Sanders' home region of southeast Louisiana and/or the wider Gulf South, and to facilitate management of the Young Sanders Center materials to be housed in the archives of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies.

The renewable award includes full tuition for the fall, spring, and summer semesters at Southeastern Louisiana University beginning in August 2025, along with a full graduate student stipend and a \$1500 enhancement, for a total stipend package of \$13,000 annually to be provided in three installments. Submissions will be accepted from existing or entering graduate students in virtually any academic field including: history, cultural studies, art, music, literature, environmental studies, science, etc. During the period of the award, the successful candidate will work as a research assistant in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Candidates must also be conducting, or planning to conduct, research centered on southeast Louisiana or the wider Gulf South in anticipation of completing a master's thesis or publishable paper.

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

Call for Candidates for the J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar Award

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern Louisiana University in cooperation with the Young Sanders Center announces the annual competition for the J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar award. The award is designed to encourage and facilitate research centered on Louisiana and the other states of the old Confederacy in conformance with the bequeath of Ms. Mary Elizabeth Sanders.

The award carries a \$5,000.00 stipend to be distributed in two installments beginning in August 2025 and extending through May 2026. Submissions will be accepted from scholars in virtually any field including history, literature, environmental studies, art, music, science, etc. The successful candidate will be expected to conduct primary source research, a portion of which must be conducted in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, that will ultimately result in a published study or like-minded project of scholarly merit. The successful candidate will also be expected to provide a presentation highlighting the work completed during their tenure as the Sanders Research Scholar at the annual meeting of the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association in April.

To apply for either assistantship or the Sanders Scholar award, applicants should submit a brief abstract of their proposed project, no more than two pages in length, along with a cover letter and c.v., to Dr. Samuel Hyde, director of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, to the email address below.

Applications for the J. Y. Sanders Research Scholar Award must be received annually by March 15 to be considered for the award.

Applications for the Young Sanders Graduate Research Assistantship must be received annually by March 15 to be considered for the award.

Applications for the Cefalu Graduate Research Assistantship must be received annually by May 1 to be considered for the award.

For more information, contact shyde@southeastern.edu.

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 - 12:00pm Friday

https://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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