
Centerpiece

Newsletter of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

College of Arts and Humanities

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Southeastern Louisiana University

From the Director

For the residents of southern Louisiana the past year will ever remain a memorable one. The ravages occasioned by the fury of hurricanes Katrina and Rita reminded us of the fragility of our regional environment placed as we are at the vanguard of absorbing the turbulent tropical weather from the Gulf of Mexico. Not only did the 2005 hurricanes bring death, destruction, power outages, and the other disruptions of life typically associated with such storms – this time they also brought mass numbers of refugees, unprecedented traffic, and housing congestion along with a dramatically restructured real estate market. The bitter lessons of the storms have been well learned and conditions in our home region may never be what they were prior to August again.

Life, nonetheless, goes on – operations at the Center along with Southeastern Louisiana University as a whole continue unabated. Indeed it could be argued that the challenges confronting post-hurricane Louisiana stimulated even more effort by the staff of the Center. Our scholarly research has reached greater heights including new manuscripts under contract for publication, articles in prestigious periodicals such as the *Journal of Southern History*, new docu-drama films under production, national television interviews, and our continuing regional history television program. Significantly, much of the current work centers on the implications of the recent natural disasters. Center-associated researchers are currently completing studies that will highlight the implications of the storm, especially concerning the greater Pontchartrain Basin and environs, offering analysis of the historical progression of the ecological degradation of the region. The exhibition area in the Center is currently being transformed into a recreation of the Manchac Swamp replete with sights and sounds that once characterized but may be forever lost to that fragile ecosystem.

Likewise, our traditional projects continue unabated. Hosting the Gulf South Historical Association conference in the immediate aftermath of a devastating storm is becoming routine. The Deep Delta Civil War Symposium, Southeast Louisiana Historical Association lecture series, James H. Morrison Lecture on Politics and Government, among other projects are not only thriving



Seated from L to R: LaSha Thompson, Dana McKinney, Elizabeth Sanders. Standing from L to R: Victoria Mocsary, Keith Finley, Lothar the Black Bear, Matthew Doolittle, Sam Hyde.

but will now be complimented by new and more vigorous projects of scholarly endeavor and public education. All such efforts and more are described in this edition of the *Centerpiece*.

The curious pattern that has characterized development in southeastern Louisiana has included political insurrection, brutal wars, violent family feuds, and economic chaos among other challenges. Through every crisis the residents of our area have not only endured, but they have become a little more adept at understanding the ramifications of behavior and the consequences of ignorance and inaction. As we contemplate the changed world the past months have offered us, we may enjoy not only the opportunity to reconsider the implications of the past but also to contribute substantively in the forging of a new regional identity. It is a challenge that nature demands of us, and one we dare not take lightly. We hope you will join us in our efforts to promote and preserve the fragile legacy of southeastern Louisiana.

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.

Southeast Louisiana History in England?

In the 2004-2005 edition of the Centerpiece, we announced that all of our calendar lists were now available on the Center's website. To say the response has been overwhelming would be an understatement. Everyday Graduate Research Assistant Dana McKinney responds to the e-mails that pour into the Center. "Most mornings there are half a dozen messages" McKinney observed, "sometimes there are more. And those e-mails are not just from the Florida parishes, but from all over." She adds, "there is not only a national but an international interest in southeast Louisiana history. I have answered e-mails from Minnesota, Alaska, even the United Kingdom. It is truly amazing how much attention our website has generated."



Graduate Research Assistant Dana McKinney at work answering your e-mails.

While some of the messages are ludicrous—we get our fair share of spam—most are either from serious scholars who settled on the Center's site while performing a keyword search and want more information, or from individuals requesting copies of an item listed on the website. Our staff does its best to grant patron requests for a nominal fee. Sometimes, however, we must deny photocopy requests of rare or fragile items. As always, preservation takes priority in the Center.

Imaging Specialist, Ms. Victoria Mocsary, regularly updates our site, posting new collections and announcements when available. Mocsary is especially proud of the website's reach for she is responsible for uploading practically all of the information on it. "The often tedious hours of work involved in web maintenance has its rewards," she observed. "I am glad to see that so many people are turning to the Center as the best source for local historical information."

Promoting the history of the Florida parishes remains a central mission of the Center. Clearly our website is extending our reach to anyone with access to the internet. We are now sharing our unique history with the world.

John Rarick Collection Open To The Public



Congressman John R. Rarick

It is with great pleasure that we announce that the John Rarick Collection, which includes both personal and political papers along with photographs and scrapbooks, is now open and available to the public. Researchers are invited to visit the Center to peruse the collection first-hand or to examine the calendar list of this impressive donation on our website. Congressman Rarick helped the staff during the cataloguing phase and he continues to offer guidance regarding how we can best make his materials accessible. It is the ultimate testament of his character that the Congressman has made no attempt to rewrite history. The record of his career and indeed much of the history of the United States from the 1960s - 1980s is there—warts and all. This collection will certainly attract the attention of both local and national historians. Its possession by the Center further strengthens our standing as the preeminent archival repository in the region. Happy researching!

Judge Leon Ford, III Lectures in Southern History and Culture

In a continuing effort to promote the history and cultures of the Florida parishes, the Center is proud to announce its sponsorship, along with the Ford Foundation and the College of Arts and Humanities, of a new lecture series honoring the memory of our long-time benefactor Judge Leon Ford. "The Judge Leon Ford, III Lectures in History and Culture" will be an annual event held every October during Southeastern Louisiana University's month-long Fanfare extravaganza.

The first lecture in the series, scheduled for 19 October 2006, will be given by nationally-known historian John

Boles, William P. Hobby Professor of History at Rice University and the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Southern History*. We invite all of our supporters to attend the maiden lecture in this important series. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Another Hurricane: It must be time for the Gulf South Historical Association Conference



In recent memory, the annual meeting of the GSHA has coincided with the landfall of destructive hurricanes. Last year, Hurricane Ivan devastated the Florida panhandle rendering the intended convention site of Pensacola Beach unusable. Mobile, Alabama served as the fallback location. For 2005, the GSHA Board of Directors again planned on making Pensacola Beach the convention's destination. This time Hurricane Katrina laid waste to southeast Louisiana and the Mississippi Gulf Coast, the locations of several of the GSHA's consortium schools. In the immediate aftermath of the storm as the nightly news showed footage of unparalleled devastation, some considered pulling the plug on the event. As in the past, GSHA Executive Director, Sam Hyde calmed the apprehensive, offering a very logical explanation for why the show should continue—those of us from the affected areas needed a break from the harsh realities back home. What better place to find comfort than the white sand beaches of Florida?

Traveling along I-12 en route to the conference, Center staffers saw first hand the extent of the damage to our east as downed trees and debris littered the landscape. From there it was on to Pensacola Beach which itself bore the scars of its encounter with mother nature the previous year. The Hampton Inn that housed the Conference in 2003 had yet to reopen its doors more than a year after Hurricane Ivan had made landfall. For this, the Twenty-Fourth Gulf South Historical Association Annual Meeting, the Hilton Garden Inn served as the convention headquarters. As always, the Center made significant contributions to the scholarly exchange. Director Sam

Hyde delivered a paper entitled "Everyone's Grandfather was a Hero: Uses and Abuses in the Construct of Oral History," Assistant Director Keith Finley presented a work entitled: "Divine Sanction: The Use of Religion by Southern United States Senators in Defense of Segregation, 1938-1965," Scholar in Residence Roman Heleniak performed double duty by commenting on a session dealing with History Teaching and presenting his own research in a paper entitled: "The Palmetto People: A History of the Manchac Swamp," and Image Technician Victoria Mocsary delivered a paper entitled: "Two Churches in Hungarian Settlement: A Unique Community in Southeast Louisiana." Long-time Center Research Assistant Wayne Aymond, Jr. also joined the fray with a lecture titled "Answering the Call: Examining the Bonds in the Community-Soldier Relationship Evident through Researching the 16th Louisiana Infantry Regiment." Research Assistant Matthew Doolittle provided crucial behind-the-scenes logistical support, ensuring that all Conference participants had a pleasant experience.

Many of you have already received the preliminary call for papers for this year's conference, scheduled for 5-7 October 2006 in Pensacola, with special theme sessions on "Hurricanes, Wars, Commerce & Opportunity Along the Gulf South". Please send proposals to: Dr. Randall Broxton, President, Gulf South Historical Association, Pensacola Junior College, 1000 College Blvd. PNS Bldg. 4, Pensacola, FL 32504

Phone: (850) 484-1099 Email: rbroxton@pjcc.edu

Check the Center's website for updates regarding the conference. We hope to see you in Pensacola!

New Scholarship

2005 marked another year of productive scholarship for the Center staff. While speaking across the state in support of *A Fierce and Fractious Frontier*, Sam Hyde still found time to research and write. In the November 2005 edition of the *Journal of Southern History*, Hyde published an article titled, "Plain Folk Reconsidered: Historiographical Ambiguity in Search of Definition" that promises to challenge conventional understanding of the plain folk, an often neglected demographic in southern history. Employing a detailed statistical analysis of census data, Hyde attempts to define the central characteristics of the plain folk, providing a clearer picture of a group usually depicted as an inchoate mob in most historical accounts. The work will correct many shortcomings in the existing historiography, especially the asymmetrical emphasis on the planter class and their bondsmen.

Hyde and Assistant Director Keith Finley have also been busy researching and writing an environmental history of the Manchac basin ecosystem as part of an EPA funded

grant. The manuscript and the film that will accompany it will soon be made available.

Always in search of new ways to promote regional history, Hyde, with the assistance of Mr. Fred Benton and Dr. Larry Crain, is currently working on editing and annotating the wartime reminiscences of Halbert E. Paine, a Colonel of the 4th Wisconsin Regiment and later a Brigadier General of Volunteers. Hyde notes that the publication of Paine's diary will shed new light on Union military operations in southeast Louisiana. "It promises to open a few eyes and will force many to reconsider their assumptions regarding the Civil War in this region," Hyde added.

Hyde's first book, *Pistols and Politics*, continues to sell briskly, a fact that has prompted LSU Press to commit to a third printing of the popular regional history book. The new edition will be available in the summer of 2006.

Hyde was filmed recently to appear on the nationally televised C-Span program, "Book Notes." The interview highlighted *Pistols and Politics* and centered on questions about the transformation of southeastern Louisiana from a dangerous backcountry to a region of rapid growth and development with emphasis on the changing patterns of violence that have characterized the South during the course of the past century. The segment will air nationwide in the spring.

Assistant Director Keith Finley received an advance contract from LSU Press to publish his book-length manuscript that focuses on the southern opposition to civil rights in the United States Senate.

Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

Each year the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association hosts a spring and a winter meeting for its membership. On 25 May 2005, former Southeastern graduate student and current Washington Parish public school teacher, Ms. Dera Talley provided SELHA members with a memorable dinner lecture. Her comments on the development of the Washington Parish Fair clearly moved many in the crowd who remembered their past, pleasant experiences at what the events' coordinators call America's "largest free fair." Complimenting Ms. Talley's remarks was a sumptuous spread that included abnormally large cuts of homemade roast beef prepared by SELHA President, Dr. Roman Heleniak.

For the Winter meeting on 14 December 2005, food, spirits, and frivolity once again prevailed as SELHA members visited with old friends and made new ones over

a hearty assortment of barbecued items compliments of Wilbert's of Covington.

Preparations are underway for the Association's spring meeting scheduled for 27 April 2006.

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies remains proud of its affiliation with the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association. We encourage those interested in joining the organization, or in renewing their membership, to contact SELHA President Dr. Roman Heleniak at (985) 549-2151.

James H. Morrison Lecture

The 2005 installment of the James H. Morrison Lecture on Politics and Government was postponed in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Plans are already underway to secure a speaker for 2006. The Morrison lecture honors the late James H. "Jimmy" Morrison, the Hammond native who represented Louisiana's Sixth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1943-1967. We will send you information on the date and speaker as soon as they become available.

We would also like to remind readers that Congressman Morrison's political papers and photographic collection are available for public examination at the Center. Interested researchers should visit our website or call us for additional information on this impressive holding.



Congressman James H. Morrison

EPA Grant Concludes

Two years ago the Center received a \$63,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to write a narrative and to produce a documentary film highlighting the long-term consequences of human habitation in the northern

and western Pontchartrain basin. The narrative is now completed and will soon be published. Copies of the book will be made available to all state legislators and to the general public. Look for an announcement concerning its release and purchase price in the mail. The docu-drama will also soon be released. We are currently contacting state television networks to secure the widest possible dissemination of the film. As with the book, keep an eye out for information concerning its release date and purchase price.



Graduate Research Assistant Matthew Doolittle and his woodland friends.

In conjunction with the EPA grant, the Center is putting the final touches on an exhibit designed to highlight the major forces behind the degradation of the Manchac ecosystem. Graduate Assistant Matthew Doolittle, who coordinated the procurement of many of the display centerpieces, is ebullient over some of the items. “We have assembled an assortment of our woodland friends from the Florida parishes,” he exclaimed. “Visitors to the exhibit will see muskrat, beaver, fox, nutria, bobwhite quail, and other surprises.” We aimed to attract the maximum public attention when we designed our various EPA projects. Unlike past exhibits, this one is geared primarily toward the junior set or a group we like to call “future policy makers”. Certainly adults will benefit from the display, but children especially will enjoy the dimly-lit swamp walk and the eerie sound chamber in which youngsters will be ensconced in total darkness while their ears are bombarded with swamp sounds. In short, the Center’s new exhibit promises to educate and to entertain both young and old. If you would like to arrange a special tour for school age children, please contact the Center at (985) 549-2151.

“Florida Parish Chronicles”

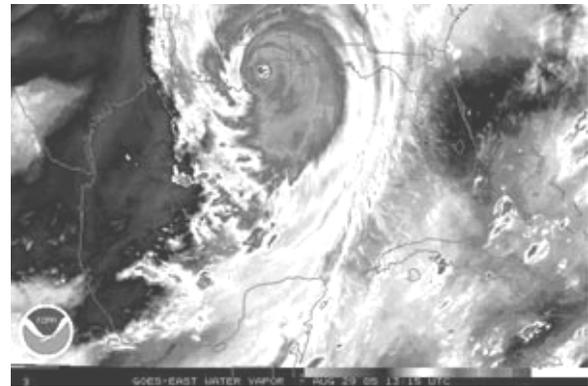
Last year we announced the commencement of a new project—the airing of a Center-created television show written and narrated by Dr. Sam Hyde. The brainchild of

SLU TV director Rick Settoon, the program has won three national awards. This year proved no different as Hyde continued his travels across the Florida parishes bringing the region’s colorful history to life on the small screen. Topics on recent episodes have included a two-part assessment of the Civil War and a powerful depiction of the civil rights struggle in southeast Louisiana. The latter program featured never-before-seen photographs and amateur film footage of the 1967 civil rights march from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge, organized by A.Z. Young. Following the airing of that episode, both the Center and the Southeastern Channel were swamped with calls from local residents offering praise for the well-rounded handling of the sensitive subject.

The “Florida Parish Chronicles” remains a popular program on the Southeastern Channel, ensuring that the Center’s reach extends beyond academics. What better way to spark interest in area history than to bring the compelling story of the Florida parishes into the living rooms of thousands?

Check your local listings for airtimes. New episodes are scheduled to appear every other month.

The Hurricane



Like everyone in southeast Louisiana and portions of the Gulf Coast, the Center staff warily eyed Hurricane Katrina as it slowly moved across the Gulf building strength. When it made landfall, we gathered with our family and friends to ride out the storm. Although inconvenienced owing to power outages and downed trees, our staff experienced relatively minor damage compared to those around us who lost everything. We spent the week Southeastern Louisiana University was closed assisting friends, family, and neighbors facing more dire circumstances. The Center itself suffered no damage and our climate controlled closed stacks room, with an auxiliary power source, kept the rare books and documents warehoused therein safe from water and mold.

Director Sam Hyde who serves on Louisiana’s Historical Records Advisory Board returned to the Center facing an avalanche of phone calls from beleaguered state officials representing the hardest hit locations asking for assistance

or, more specifically, a place to stockpile storm-compromised records. The need for help was immediate. Center staffers began preparations for taking in the documents of other archival repositories. On-site inspections of the affected areas revealed a painful reality—many of the records were either irreparably damaged or critically weakened. The decision regarding what to do next became an easy one. Rather than risk bringing active mold cultures into our facility and endangering our existing collections, the decision was made to sustain the integrity of our facility. Donors to the Center entrust their collections to us with the understanding that these materials will be safeguarded from harm.

Not all was bleak in the months following the hurricane. Tragedies often produce learning opportunities. With despondency and despair so prevalent in the storm's aftermath, educators in Louisiana began looking for ways to help their students put Hurricane Katrina in perspective. History Department Chairman William Robison and Teaching American History Grant Coordinator Anne Trappey organized a workshop for primary and secondary educators highlighting disasters in the state's past. Almost two hundred area teachers gathered to hear historians, geographers, and others illustrate that the state of Louisiana is no stranger to misfortune. Naturally, the Center played its part in the workshop. Director Hyde shared his research on yellow fever, Assistant Director Finley lectured on cholera and the Spanish Influenza, and Scholar in Residence Roman Heliak regaled the audience with his long-term, ongoing research on Pass Manchac.

Participants in the seminar were grateful for the experience, and more than a few of them expressed their intention of using the information conveyed by the presenters to help their students regain their usually buoyant optimism regarding the future. For those of you not in attendance, the Southeastern Channel has promised to air the lectures on the station. The Center will continue to support initiatives that employ history to inform and even comfort those in the present.

New Collection Highlights

In 2005, we received a number of impressive collections that only increase our already strong holdings on Florida parishes' history. The family of Judge Leon Ford, III continued adding to their father's collection, bringing us a variety of Korean War and railroad artifacts, in addition to a spectacular assortment of railroad and lumber company tokens. Long-time Center friend and collaborator L.E. Wallace donated an array of DVDs containing film footage from local parades, fairs, and other items related to Tangipahoa history. Another frequent donor, Donald Sharp, added to his preexisting collection of materials chronicling the early colonial history of Louisiana. Baton Rouge Attorney Fred Benton deposited a comprehensive

transcription of Union General Halbert Paine's Civil War reminiscences recounting his experiences campaigning in southeast Louisiana. Marion K. Chandler added to our vast genealogical resources with the donation of several items regarding Copiah County, Mississippi. The family of former Navy Captain John L. Hutchinson, a Natalbany native, donated his World War II diary that recounts his day-to-day observations while engaged in combat in the Pacific Theater. It is a powerful addition to our growing WWII-related holdings. Florida parish veterans from WWII and all of our nation's wars are encouraged to consider donating their diaries, pictures, and artifacts to the Center so that future generations of Louisianans can have access to them. If you are interested in having a Collection established in your name, please contact us.

Various departments on campus have also increased our archival holdings pertaining to Southeastern Louisiana University. The office of Dr. Randy Moffett donated an assortment of material from former university President G. Warren Smith. Dr. Bea Baldwin's office deposited several items regarding SLU's accreditation renewal.

Deep Delta Civil War Symposium

Every second weekend in June a collection of Southeastern students, professional scholars, Civil War buffs, and other members of the interested public descend on the War Memorial Student Union Theater for the Annual Deep Delta Civil War Symposium. As always, the Center played a pivotal role in subsidizing and coordinating the event. Both Sam Hyde and Roman Heliak served on the coordinating committee that selected the speakers and organized the event, while GA Wayne Aymond, Jr. performed yeoman service organizing the student staff and ensuring that shuttle service and airport runs went off on schedule.

The nineteenth installment of the Symposium featured the intriguing theme: "War on the Periphery: Commandos, Spies, Sailors, and the Human Cost of War." The speakers and their topics were: Dr. Gary Joiner, *Private William Henry King: No Pardons to Ask or Apologies to Make*; Mr. Kendall Gott, *Break in the Line: The Fort Henry-Fort Donelson Campaign*; Dr. Timothy Smith, *This Great Battlefield of Shiloh: History, Memory, and the Establishment of a Civil War National Military Park*; Dr. James Hollandsworth, *Mann's Foray: A Grierson-Type Raid that Failed*; Dr. William Feis, *Union Intelligence at War*; Dr. Brian Wills, *The Confederacy's Greatest Cavalryman: Nathan Bedford Forrest*; Dr. William Still, *Confederate Naval Operations*; Dr. Jerry Thompson, *General Henry H. Sibley's 1861-1862 New Mexico Campaign*; Terry Winschel, *To Assuage the Grief: The Gettysburg Saga of Isaac and Mary Stamps*.

This year's Symposium scheduled for 9-10 June 2006 features the theme "The Decisive Factor." It will be no ordinary event as this marks the twentieth anniversary of

this important historical gathering. Make your reservations early—you will be glad that you did. Additional information, including room rates and conference schedule, should be arriving in your mailbox soon. Updates will be posted on our website as soon as they become available.

A Sad Departure – An Exciting Reunion

Center Secretary Shawn Martin Stewart was enjoying a wonderful period in her personal life. She had just gotten married to her long-time beau and then she gave birth to a beautiful baby girl named Emma. Soon little Emma's health deteriorated and a horrible staph infection pushed the baby to the brink of death. At one point Emma's doctors gave her a 50/50 chance of survival. The Southeastern community rallied, offering its prayers, donating its leave time so Shawn could remain with her child, and offering monetary assistance to the young couple. Showing signs of her mother's tenacity, Emma began improving, prompting some to call her a "miracle baby." As of the writing of this newsletter, we are happy to report that the baby and her mother are doing well. Unfortunately for the Center, Shawn decided to resign from her position to devote her full attention to maintaining the health of her child. Her presence and good cheer will be missed.

Without a secretary, the Center turned to one of its graduate assistants, Jessica Pisciotta, to assume Shawn's responsibilities. She served as the acting secretary for a period, but sadly we lost her as well; this time to another department on campus.



Former Secretary – Lois Wagner

Without a Secretary, the Center found itself in a difficult situation. Lamenting a long and arduous search for a replacement, the Director placed a call to Lois Wagner, the Center's secretary for the twenty-two years before Shawn. Convincing Lois to give up her carefree life in retirement proved no small undertaking, as Mrs. Wagner had a busy schedule seeing both of her daughters getting married and

the arrival of her first grandchild. In the end, nonetheless, Lois agreed to step out of retirement to return for a limited period as our secretary. Lois entered her old position and soon fell back into the groove. At the same time, she regaled the Center's newer employees with often embarrassing stories about its older ones. Student worker LaSha Thompson observed regarding Lois, "she provided us all with a sense of stability and continuity. She was truly present at the creation." She had worked for the late Dr. Joy Jackson, the Center's first Director, and then assisted the current Director Sam Hyde when he assumed the office and dramatically expanded the scope of the department's operations. The Christmas holiday brought Lois' departure.

We are thrilled to announce our new secretary, Elizabeth Sanders. Mrs. Sanders brings a wealth of experience as a legal secretary and as an employee of the Louisiana State Board of Ethics. She is a Florida parishes native and currently resides in southwest Mississippi. If you drop by the Center, be sure to give her a warm welcome.



Student Worker LaSha Thompson enjoyed the opportunity to learn from Lois Wagner

Abbreviated Fee Schedule

Photocopies - \$0.20 per copy

Transcriptions - \$10.00 per hour

Tape Duplication - \$10.00

Darkroom Photograph Reproductions -

5 x 7 - \$8.00

8 x 10 - \$12.00

Scanned Images - \$5.00 per scan; cost of CD not included

Research Fee - \$25.00 for the first hour, \$10.00 for each additional hour. Requests for this service should be submitted via e-mail or in some other written form.

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies reserves the right to deny copy requests if reproduction will in any way compromise items in our collections.

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

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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Southeastern Louisiana University
SLU 10730
Hammond, LA 70402

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