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# CENTERPIECE

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

Volume XXIII  
Spring 2018

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## From the Director

An interested observer once asked us if it was possible that we would one day have collected or commented on every aspect of regional history. We answered with a bemused "absolutely not." One of the great pleasures of working in the Center is the knowledge that we are located in a historically understudied region that enjoys what we believe is one of the most fascinating patterns of development found anywhere in the Gulf South.

The past year has been exceptionally busy with the arrival of large new collections that have kept the staff scrambling to stay ahead of the inflow of materials. The accelerated pace of donations reminds of just how much more about the region we need to learn just as multiple visits from the History Channel, Travel Channel and other national media outlets reveals that "our story" is commanding ever increasing interest nationally.

We have enjoyed an exceptionally productive year of research. Center staff have completed projects and publications that highlight the interrelationship between agricultural productivity and regional economic fortunes, detail methods for addressing chronic patterns of interpersonal violence, and address the continuing menace of coastal erosion among other issues. Our mission is both to reveal the past and address the challenges of the present. As such, it is a never ending process that we enthusiastically embrace.

Even greater research opportunities are forthcoming in the current year and, as always, there is a lot of room for others to join us in our mission. Whether it be the forthcoming "Centennial of World War I" project, our hosting

of the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference in October, or our enduring efforts to fill the gaps in the historical record of southeast Louisiana, there is always room for inclusion in our efforts. The recent accomplishments and the future projections for the Center are outlined in this edition of the Centerpiece.

We encourage you to support the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association, Gulf South Historical Association and/or engage in your own efforts to expand understanding of our complex historical and cultural development through the use of the Center's archival collections. In the study of southeast Louisiana, there is hardly a dull moment. We encourage you to visit the Center and find out exactly what that means!

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



Center staff left to right: Center Director, Dr. Samuel Hyde, Jr.; Graduate Assistant, Faith Allen; Student Worker, Christopher Jenkins; Graduate Assistant, Blake Constant; Student Worker, Emery Foster; Student Intern, Bailey Hall; Graduate Research Assistant, Sarah Pardue; Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley



## Gulf South Historical Association

Since 2003 the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies has supported the Gulf South Historical Association. This past year proved no different as Center staff members played active roles in helping make the Thirty-Fifth Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conferences in Pensacola Beach, Florida a resounding success. Despite a rather ominous forecast which predicted a Gulf Coast landfall for Hurricane Nate the weekend of the event, the conference's beautiful setting at the Pensacola Beach Hilton made the looming tropical disturbance seem a world away on Thursday when the Board of Directors met to discuss the association's future plans. At the meeting, Samuel Hyde was reelected to his seat on the Board alongside Center friend and Southeastern Louisiana University history professor Dr. Ronald Traylor. Hyde was tapped to again serve as the organization's treasurer.

Naturally, Center employees participated in the exchange of ideas typical of history conferences as Samuel Hyde presented a paper analyzing Spanish colonial policies and their legacy in Louisiana and Keith Finley delivered one detailing the 1966 congressional race in Louisiana's Sixth District. Both the director and assistant director also chaired sessions at the event. The association also presented the Coker Award for the best graduate student paper to Adam Carson for his essay "Mid-Century Moderates" and the Michael V.R. Thomason Book Award to Emily Clark for *A Luminous Brotherhood: Afro-Creole Spiritualism in Nineteenth Century New Orleans*.

As Friday's festivities that culminated with the association banquet came to an end, many turned a wary eye to weather forecasts which revealed an erratic trajectory for Hurricane Nate. Saturday morning dawned windy and overcast. Those still at the conference for the morning sessions nervously watched the skies and the sea which grew choppy by the minute. Adding to the tension, the local police department stopped by the conference to alert participants that there was a voluntary evacuation in place for all of Pensacola Beach as Hurricane Nate churned closer to the coast. Once the last session closed at 12:30, the remaining participants sped home. Mercifully Hurricane Nate delivered a glancing blow to the region and only negligibly impacted our friends

along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Despite the added weather drama, the 2017 GSHA conference was a rousing success.



## GSMA Returns to Louisiana

We are proud to announce that the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference with special theme sessions on "300 years along the lower Mississippi: Contact, Colonialism, and Development" scheduled for 4-6 October 2018 will take place at the Downtown Hilton in Baton Rouge which offers a river front view and easy access to historic sites and downtown amenities. A special conference rate of \$139 a night is available. Please join us in Baton Rouge and participate in this exciting conference! If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Center. This is a wonderful opportunity for our readers to attend this important gathering of scholars without having to travel out of state. Come out and support the organization and the state of Louisiana. The conference promises to include lots of Louisiana surprises that you will not want to miss.



Pictured: LaSalle at the mouth of the Mississippi, April 9, 1682, image featured as the promotional image for the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Gulf South Historical Association



## Southeast Louisiana Historical Association

The Southeast Louisiana Historical Association has a proud tradition of bringing quality speakers and providing good food at its annual spring meeting. In 2017 long-time SELHA member John Jordan offered to prepare pulled-pork sandwiches and coleslaw for

the event. With such an invitation on the table, it should come as little surprise that we jumped at the opportunity. Mr. Jordan did not disappoint, not only did he serve up delicious fare he even helped to serve the food. The organization is truly blessed to have such wonderful members as Mr. Jordan. Thank you John!

The highlight of the gathering which took place at our usual haunt in the Levy Building in downtown Hammond was Dr. Sarah Hyde, professor of history at River Parishes Community College. Dr. Hyde enlightened the audience with a discussion of her recently published book, *Schooling in the Antebellum South: The Rise of Public and Private Education in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama*. Her work offers a compelling look at the importance of education in the South before the Civil War. Far from a people who disdained formal education as is often depicted in existing literature, white southerners sought the best educational opportunities for their children wherever such could be found. According to Hyde, some championed access to decent public education whereas others brought well-trained tutors into their homes to teach their offspring. A lively question and answer session as well as an informal book signing followed.



**Pictured: Sarah Hyde, author of *Schooling in the Antebellum South: The Rise of Public and Private Education in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama*.**

The spring 2018 meeting is fast approaching. Danny Heitman, an author and award-winning columnist for *The Baton Rouge Advocate*, will be the featured speaker at the forthcoming spring meeting of the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association which is scheduled to take place on April 18. Heitman's lecture, "Writing Local in a Global Culture," will explore how south Louisiana has informed the essays and other writings he has produced for regional, national and international audiences. Doors for the meeting open at 6 p.m. at the Hammond Regional Arts Center with dinner served at 6:30, and the program beginning at 7. Heitman, a 1986 graduate of SLU, has written a

weekly *Advocate* column since 1991 that, for most of its run, has chronicled his life as a husband and father. His essays have also appeared in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and other national publications, and he's been featured on National Public Radio and the BBC. Heitman frequently writes about arts and culture for *WSJ* and *Humanities* magazine, and he's a regular columnist for Phi Kappa Phi's *Forum* magazine. Heitman's work has won numerous awards, including the Templeton Foundation's \$10,000 In Character Prize in 2007. He lives in Baton Rouge with his wife and two children.

Mark your calendars for April 18, 2018 at 6:00 PM for what promises to be an exciting event. By now you should have received an SELHA membership application and additional information on the spring gathering. This is one event you will not want to miss. Due to the popularity of our speaker seats are expected to fill fast. Please plan ahead.



**Pictured: Danny Heitman, award-winning columnist for *The Baton Rouge Advocate*, will be the keynote speaker at the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association Spring 2018 Meeting.**



## Charles Emery Cate Exhibit

As noted in last year's edition of the *Centerpiece*, in January 2017 the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies proudly unveiled an exhibit that commemorated the life of Charles Emery Cate and the contributions of the Cate family to the growth of Hammond. The meticulously researched exhibit reveals the development of the town derived in large part from the entrepreneurial efforts of CE Cate. Housed in a newly constructed glass-enclosed room on the first floor of the Sims Library, the exhibit features many artifacts and documents from the Center's impressive holdings covering Hammond

history. Thanks to generous support of Ms. Suzie Graham, C.E. Cate's great great granddaughter, and her husband John, a visually appealing and detail rich exhibit that is on permanent display and accessible every M-TH from 9-3 or by appointment outside of regular viewing hours was created. If you are on the Southeastern Louisiana University campus and have not already visited the exhibit, we urge you to stop in for a look.



## **New Exhibit: “Fruit Revolution: The Impact of Strawberry Farming on Southeast Louisiana”**

Each year the Center strives to provide the public with a new exhibit to increase awareness of local history and to stimulate research on the region. On November 13, 2017 the Center unveiled its newest exhibit titled, “Fruit Revolution: The Impact of Strawberry Farming on Southeast Louisiana” which explores how the small red fruit revitalized the area economy and helped to shape the cultural identity of the Florida Parishes. The Center's three graduate research assistants, Faith Allen, Sarah Pardue, and Blake Constant with assistance from undergraduate staff member Emery Foster and intern Bailey Hall, worked for nearly four months researching and constructing the exhibit, with limited direction from Center director Hyde and assistant director Finley who fielded fact based questions but left organizational and design decisions to the students.

The exhibit reveals that with the demise of cotton farming due to the arrival of the boll weevil, and eradication of area forests due to overharvesting, the region experienced a sharp economic decline that had a devastating impact on an already struggling part of Louisiana. The introduction of strawberries, which developed a unique flavor and texture due to the soil quality of the locale, rescued the area from its economic malaise and brought other new industries with it, such as box and crate plants and refrigeration companies. In a region cutover by the timber industry and possessing less than ideal soil for most cash crops, the simple strawberry pulled southeast Louisiana back from an economic cliff. It rejuvenated a struggling economy and gave hope for a brighter future. Today, the strawberry industry is still an economic force albeit a smaller one than during its heyday in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The

legacy of the little red fruit is everywhere. One glance at Southeastern Louisiana University's aptly named Strawberry Stadium and Ponchatoula's popular “Strawberry Festival” underscores the berry's important impact on the region.

The exhibit, located in the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies on the third floor of Sims Library, is open to the public from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8 a.m. until noon on Friday. It is scheduled to remain available for viewing in its current form until late fall 2018. For more information, contact the Center at 549-2151.



**Pictured from right to left: Faith Allen, Blake Constant, and Sarah Pardue. Allen, Constant, and Pardue, with the assistance from undergraduate staff member Emery Foster and intern Bailey Hall, worked for nearly four months researching and constructing the exhibit.**



## **Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies to Host Projects Commemorating World War I Centennial**

The guns fell silent on the human slaughterhouse that was World War I in November 1918. Alternately known as the “Great War” and the “War to End All Wars,” World War I represented an unprecedented human tragedy that devastated Europe and gave rise to political and economic configurations that continue to challenge our world. In today's technology driven world attention spans are short and memories often fleeting, but the Great War left legacies of profound significance to American development and Louisiana was no exception.

“World War I took mass human suffering to unparalleled depths,” said Center Director Samuel

Hyde. “In addition to indescribable butchery on the battlefield, genocide, innovation, pandemic, and racial and ethnic awareness were but a few of the products of the War,” he added. “We intend this to be an all inclusive project that highlights the varied contributions of Louisianans to the war effort. In addition to creating an exhibit focused on the War effort, the Center plans to begin collecting items for archival collections from families, businesses, or groups with connections to the soldiers and others who served in both the military and civilian capacities during the War,” Hyde said. The collections will be housed in the university archives for future use by researchers.

Center Asst. Director Keith Finley added “the Center already maintains some significant holdings related to the War effort. We are interested in expanding those holdings to include contributions from all segments of the community so that a proper appreciation of the complexities of the War will be evident in our holdings.” Finley noted that among the collections currently maintained by the Center are the Jahncke Shipyard Collection, famous for its World War I era shipbuilding, as well as multiple newspaper collections and photographic collections emphasizing regional life and culture during the War. “We would love to secure some uniforms, photographs, diaries and letters, or any other War era related items that people may have in their possession either to offer on loan to us, or to create a permanent collection,” he added.

The Center plans to begin collecting items immediately and encourages anyone, from any segment of the community, to contact the Center to discuss possible donation, or loan, of relevant items and artifacts. To reach the Center, or for more information, call 985-549-2151 during operating hours or contact by email [selahistory@selu.edu](mailto:selahistory@selu.edu).

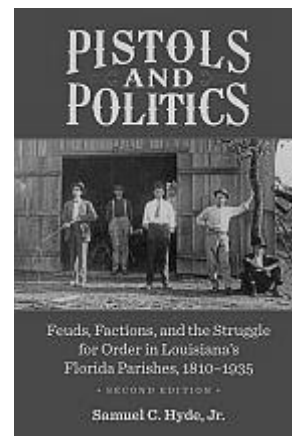


Pictured: WWI Photograph from Eula Morris Collection



## Center Staff Accomplishments

As expected, Center Director Samuel Hyde continued his unceasing speaking and writing efforts in the 2017 calendar year. Aside from finding the time to deliver dozens of presentations before audiences both large and small and penning op-ed pieces for the *Washington Post* and other outlets, Hyde also had his article “Bitter Legacy: Spanish Colonial Policies and the Tradition of Extra-Legal Violence in Louisiana’s Florida Parishes,” published in the fall 2017 issue of *European and Civil Law Forum* produced at Tulane University. The article skillfully links Spanish jurisprudence to the chronic instability which continues to plague regions of southeastern Louisiana into the modern era. Hyde also appeared on several History and Travel Channel programs, including the popular “Dead Files,” and aided the Livingston Parish Office of Tourism in compiling a new documentary film for display in branch offices. Dr. Hyde, however, devoted most of 2017 to making final revisions for an expanded version of *Pistols and Politics* that carries the narrative told in the original volume into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Hyde’s work promises to revolutionize our understanding of southeast Louisiana and its peculiar development that led to unparalleled levels of violence. Far from changing with the onset of modernity, Hyde uncovers that the Florida Parishes remained mired in lawlessness more typical of frontier communities. *Pistols and Politics* is scheduled to be released this June. This is one publication you will want to add to your must read list. It would also make a perfect gift for the historian on your shopping list!



Pictured: Dr. Hyde’s expanded version of *Pistols and Politics*

Assistant Director Keith Finley also remained busy. In 2017 he was appointed to serve on the board of directors of the Louisiana Historical Association and completed work on a chapter for an edited compilation called *Profiles in Power* that explores the impact of personality in shaping the American presidency. The edition will include Finley's article "Like a Jackass in a Hailstorm: Lyndon Johnson, Vietnam, and the Upending of the American Century" and is slated for release later this year. Finley's award winning book, *Delaying the Dream* has been released in audio format and is currently available on Amazon's Audible service. Finally, Finley received the College of Arts and Humanities Excellence in Research Award for 2017.



## Commitment to Coastal Restoration

Over a decade ago the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies offered assistance in the ongoing effort to save Louisiana's fast eroding coastline. Through the production of two award winning documentary films and a booklet all of which examined the environmental degradation of the Manchac Basin ecosystem and the Louisiana coast, we sought to raise awareness of the problems facing our state while also hoping to enlist as many stakeholders as possible in the search for a solution. Our approach was never to blame a specific group for the state's travails. Instead we sought to educate the public regarding what took place and urge immediate and continued action to alter the course of events that if left unchecked will doom much of south Louisiana below Interstate 12 to submersion.

While working on these productions the Center developed an array of lasting friendships. One such relationship was with the proprietors of Turtle Cove, Southeastern Louisiana University's nationally recognized research station devoted to studying and rehabilitating the Manchac ecosystem. When Turtle Cove director Robert Moreau contacted us about assisting in the creation of several exhibits for the research center we promptly accepted the invitation. Two of our graduate research assistants Chase Tomlin and Alex White served as the lead researchers in the collaboration that ultimately featured many items from the Center's holdings. Photographs proved especially coveted for the dual exhibits. Our impressive photographic collections from this area

offer vivid reminder of how the region once appeared and how human habitation altered the landscape. Many of these photos, as well as other items such as Indian artifacts and logging tools, can be found in the exhibits that are permanently on display at both the Turtle Cove Research Center and just outside of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies on the third floor of Sims library. The unveiling of the exhibit coincided with Turtle Cove's annual fundraiser that is essential to the operation of the facility in an age of anemic state funding. The Center's popular black bear mount even made an appearance at the festivities. We urge readers to pay a visit to the exhibit simply titled "Manchac Turtle Cove Artifacts Exhibit: An artifact, document, and photograph-based examination of the impacts of European intrusion, warfare, logging, and modern life on the environment of the Pass Manchac region." The Sims library exhibit can be viewed any time the library is open.



**Pictured: Turtle Cove Research Center in Manchac, Louisiana**



**Pictured: Manchac Turtle Cove Artifacts Exhibit at Turtle Cove Research Center in Manchac, Louisiana**



## Articles Needed

Are you actively engaged in researching and writing about the Florida Parishes and/or surrounding environs of southeast Louisiana? Would you like to be published? The *Southeast Louisiana Review*, a professionally vetted journal produced by the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at Southeastern Louisiana University, seeks articles for consideration of publication in forthcoming editions. Proposed articles should highlight or advance understanding of persons, issues, or events relevant to the historical/cultural development of regions in or immediately adjoining the lower Mississippi River valley including the Florida Parishes, River Parishes of the West Bank, New Orleans, and immediate surrounding regions of southwestern Mississippi.

Articles should be submitted electronically to editors Samuel Hyde [shyde@selu.edu](mailto:shyde@selu.edu) or Keith Finley [keith.finley@selu.edu](mailto:keith.finley@selu.edu). For additional information contact the Center at [selahistory@selu.edu](mailto:selahistory@selu.edu).



## New Collections

Center staffers pride themselves on treating all donors, no matter the size of their collection, as a valued member of the Center family. And why not? Each collection represents another step toward increasing our understanding of regional history and culture. This year we were blessed with an array of donations. Of particular interest is a collection of photographs, news reels, and records dealing with former Louisiana Governor Jimmie Davis that came to us by way of Hattie Felton of the Historic Arkansas Museum. New Collections of local historical interest continue to pour in including one from Guyula “Guy” Kinchen Domin detailing Livingston Parish history and another from Eugenia Vaughn who donated a number of scrapbooks from the UDC Chapter #2448 out of Covington—the St. Tammany Greys. Mildred Worrell and Violet Stilday donated a new collection regarding the history of Clinton, Louisiana. We also have some exciting new donations expected in the next few weeks. Of special interest is the Dr. Kingsley Blaine Garrison and Della

Mae Woolridge-Garrison Collection that offers a rich collection of photographs of the Ponchatoula Color school, as well as church photographs of baptisms. The collection consists of records and images of African-Americans who lived in the community. Center friends who already have collections with us continued to donate, including C. Howard Nichols, Clark Forrest, Irene Morris and Michael Kurtz who delivered to us what he promised was the last of his materials associated with the JFK assassination.

Others made financial contributions to the Center with the understanding that preserving and promoting the history and cultures of the Florida Parishes is a worthy cause. As the state legislature looks to balance the budget often at the expense of higher education, it is nice to know we can rely on our friends and benefactors to make much needed and appreciated donations so that we can purchase the supplies we need to fulfill our mandate. Special thanks are due to Ann Reilly Jones whose generous donation will go a long way toward enabling the Center to maintain its current operations.



**Pictured: Dr. Hyde inspecting portions of Dr. Garrison’s donation of the Kingsley Blaine Garrison and Della Mae Woolridge-Garrison Collection.**

There is no better time than the present to donate the irreplaceable items of a historical nature you have in your possession. Everyday your treasured heirlooms are exposed to environmental conditions such as fluctuations in heat and humidity. Why wait another moment? Call today.

If you are interested in donating a collection, please contact the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at 985-549-2151.

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# Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

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The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies is always pleased to receive letters, printed materials, and photographs, which help document the history and the cultures of our region. We can, if necessary, copy photographs and manuscripts for historical research and return the originals to their owners. For more information about contributing materials or about the Center, please contact:

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*Centerpiece is written by Dr. Keith M. Finley and edited by Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr.*

Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies  
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Hours: 8:00am-5:00pm Monday-Thursday  
8:00am- 12:30 Friday  
[http://www.southeastern.edu/acad\\_research/programs/csls](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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