
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

To say the past year has been exciting would be a massive understatement. The 2019 Sesquicentennial of Tangipahoa Parish offered history enthusiasts an opportunity to enjoy an immersion into the past of our university's home parish from historical, cultural, artistic, and scientific perspectives. Just as we were getting comfortable pronouncing the word "sesquicentennial," even greater excitement arrived in the proposed merger between the Center and the Young Sanders Center. The multi-phased merger with the Young Sanders Center will facilitate advanced study of southeastern Louisiana consistent with the Center's mission, just as it will advance the intention of the bequeath of Ms. Mary Elizabeth Sanders, specifically to honor the memory and contributions of Louisiana Governor J. Y. Sanders and his son Congressman J. Y. Sanders.

The merger will infuse a new energy into the operations of the Center and the Young Sanders Center, with the ultimate beneficiary being those who study and celebrate our home region and the wider state of Louisiana. Research scholarships, graduate assistantships, and lecture series are but a part of the ambitious plans connected to the merger.

Amid all the excitement, none of our existing projects and programs have suffered, instead they have been enhanced. Our support for the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association and the Gulf South Historical Association remain unabated just as our continuing cycle of exhibits, film work, lecture series, and town-gown interactive projects become more diversified and ambitious.

Our dedicated staff continue to process the ever growing amount of archival materials deposited into our collections just as they demonstrate previously unrealized creative energies in project design and exhibition management. Inculcated with a passion for

the study of our home region and trained in career making skills, former members of our staff reveal the success that can come through time of service in the Center. Some of their accomplishments are related in this newsletter.

It is a blessing to be a part of an institution dedicated to uncovering the mysteries of what is arguably among the most distinctive regions of our nation. With so much to learn and so little time, we encourage you to participate in the effort. Whether by joining the SELHA, the GSHA, initiating your own research project on the region, or simply visiting the Center to interact with those dedicated to uncovering our history, the Center is the starting point. We look forward to assisting you along the way.

Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. Ph.D.
Leon Ford Endowed Chair
Professor of History
Director, Center for Southeast La. Studies
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Center staff left to right: Graduate Assistant, Amelia Haag; Center Assistant Director, Dr. Keith Finley; Student Worker, Amber Hughes; Center Director, Dr. Samuel C. Hyde; Graduate Assistant, Bailey Hall Sones; and Graduate Assistant, Abigail Simmons.

Sesquicentennial Exhibit

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies opened a new exhibit titled “From Blood to Berries: A History of Tangipahoa Parish” in conjunction with its support of the events celebrating the sesquicentennial of Tangipahoa Parish. Visitors may view the exhibit until the summer of 2020.

“We asked our graduate research assistants and student worker to come up with an idea to highlight collections in the Center and how they reveal the history of our university’s home parish,” said Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies Director Samuel Hyde. “They developed the concept, conducted the research, and constructed the exhibit on their own.”

The exhibit includes photographs, primary source documents, news reports, and three-dimensional artifacts, among other items found in the Center’s extensive holdings, detailing the history and cultures of the region. Included are vintage images and reports revealing the initial explorations of the territory, creation of the parish, and economic development of the area. Specified cases detailing development in each of the major communities in Tangipahoa Parish, Center assistant director Keith Finley explained, interface with segments dedicated to specific items of interest.

“We thought it would be fun to include a section highlighting festivals and major events occurring in Tangipahoa parish, as well as a section honoring famous figures who have made the parish their home,” said Graduate Research Assistant Amelia Haag.

“Southeastern’s role in the parish’s history does not go unnoticed in the exhibit,” Finley said.

“As we completed the exhibit we realized that we were just entering Southeastern’s homecoming week,” added Graduate Research Assistant Bailey Hall. “We included a segment that details the evolution of Roomie the Lion as Southeastern’s mascot. Visitors will be surprised to see how Roomie evolved from humble beginnings, to virtual cartoon, all the way to the polished cheerleading symbol he is today.”

Student worker Amber Hughes and Graduate Research Assistant Abigail Simmons completed the contingent of students who created the project.

As with all Center initiatives we have come to rely on the talented assistance of our student staff who go above and beyond the call of duty on a regular basis. Their seemingly limitless capacity to complete the tasks

assigned to them has prompted some in the campus community to label our staff the hardest working graduate assistants on campus. We consider such praise a fair reflection of the talented people in our employ.



Pictured (left to right): Graduate Assistant Bailey Hall Sones, Student Worker Amber Hughes, and Graduate Assistant Abigail Simmons at the entrance of the Center’s sesquicentennial exhibit, which they played an integral part in helping curate.

Sesquicentennial Events

The previous edition of the Centerpiece hinted at the excitement that was building for the 2019 sesquicentennial celebration of the creation of Tangipahoa Parish. Most of the past year witnessed Center staffers playing a large role in planning and overseeing commemoration events across the parish. Southeastern’s Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies, Tangipahoa Parish Government, and the Tangipahoa Convention and Visitors Bureau worked together to coordinate the wide array of events across the region which offered something for everyone.

According to director Sam Hyde, “Founded amid the turmoil of Reconstruction in 1869, Tangipahoa is celebrating its sesquicentennial this year with a Broadway caliber play, parades, marker dedications, and a power packed day full of fun and education.” The excitement began with a hilarious new play by Southeastern Theater Professor Jim Winter titled “Strawberries, Guns, and Milk” that spoofed the history of Tangipahoa Parish. It premiered on 17 September at the Vonnie Borden Theater. An array of local dignitaries and regional scholars such, as Parish President Robby Miller, historian Antoinette Harrell, and Ponchatoula’s Downtown Development Coordinator Faith Allen, as well as members of Governor John Bel Edwards’ family were in attendance.

Jim Winter who composed the play observed “Strawberries, Guns and Milk” celebrates the wild and wonderful first 150 years of Tangipahoa Parish. The play centers around a traveling theatre troupe passing through this area just as it is becoming its own parish.” Readers may remember Winter’s production “Only in Louisiana” which offered a light-hearted romp through the events surrounding the West Florida Revolt to mark the bicentennial of the seminal event in our region’s history.



Written by Jim Winter and directed by Ben Norman *Strawberries, Guns, and Milk* engaged viewers with stories of Tangipahoa Parish’s history.

Although a variety of events took place throughout the year, the central celebration was slated for late September. On Saturday September 21, sesquicentennial activities kicked off in Amite with a marker and time capsule dedication at the parish government building at 8:30 a.m. A parade through the center of Amite followed. Finally, the celebration moved to the Florida Parishes Arena in Amite. According to Hyde, “the arena came alive with booths, photographic exhibits, and historical presentations on the history of the parish and its people. Family fun and children’s activities including train rides, truck pulls, dunking booth, K-9 demonstrations, and numerous games for the kids were also available.”



Pictured: Event attendees at the Florida Parishes Arena in Amite.

Historical tours of Amite departed from the arena throughout the afternoon, and multiple bands and DJs performed on the entertainment stage through the course of the event. Dr. Hyde kicked off a series of historical presentations that ran throughout the event and culminated with the showing of a documentary film on Tangipahoa produced by Paul Catalanotto.

Visitors to the event were admitted for free and enjoyed food and soft drinks, courtesy of the Tangipahoa Parish Convention and Visitors Bureau, Tangipahoa Parish Government, and the Tangipahoa Sheriff’s Office.

The jam-packed schedule of events went a long way toward raising awareness of the critical role played by Tangipahoa Parish in the state’s history. According to Dr. Hyde, “it was a privilege to work with so many officials and agencies in the parish who helped make the sesquicentennial celebration a smashing success!”



Southeast Louisiana Historical Association Annual Meeting

The Southeast Louisiana Historical Association remains an important component of the Center’s public outreach initiatives. The town and gown group enables all of those interested in our region’s peculiar history the chance to fraternize and exchange ideas. The most recent meeting took place during the exciting events associated with Tangipahoa Parish’s commemoration of its sesquicentennial. This year’s annual meeting occurred on April 17, 2019 at the Regional Arts Center in the Levy Building in downtown Hammond.

As always, the event began with cocktails and scrumptious pulled-pork sandwiches provided by association member John Jordan. Thanks John! We might need to call on you again. Once the guests gathered at their tables, the evening’s program commenced with association president Clark Forrest serving as emcee.

Center director Samuel Hyde and Turtle Cove director Robert Moreau headlined the event which focused on continuity and change over Tangipahoa Parish’s history. Hyde lightened the mood with a Tangipahoa trivia contest that came complete with drum-rolls provided by Center graduate assistants and a mange-ridden geriatric cat as a prize. Long-time Center friend and SELHA member Vic Couvillon was the “lucky” winner. After the contest, Hyde informed guests of some of the exciting events planned throughout the parish to commemorate Tangipahoa’s 150th anniversary. Hyde also held a book signing for those seeking an

autographed copy of the new edition of *Pistols and Politics*.

Moreau followed with an engaging discussion of current projects underway at Turtle Cove, while highlighting continuing, and newly emerging challenges to the Manchac Swamp ecosystem in the twenty-first century. A lively question and answer session followed as guests availed themselves of the opportunity to ask the scientist for objective answers to their questions regarding climate change and the environmental impact of elevated carbon dioxide levels.

Once the speakers concluded, the bar reopened and attendees had the chance to discuss the evening's lectures or engage in more light-hearted banter. An informal canvas of attendees indicates that this was one of the more memorable meetings in the association's long history.

Membership in the Southeast Louisiana Historical Association costs \$25 and entitles one to attend the group's annual meeting and dinner, a copy of the annual newsletter 'The Centerpiece,' and the SELHA's scholarly journal *The Southeast Louisiana Review*.

Plans for the 2020 meeting are being finalized. Be on the lookout for additional information as it becomes available.

For additional information on tickets or the SELHA, contact the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies at 549-2151 or email selahistory@southeastern.edu.



Pictured above: Dr. Samuel C. Hyde, Jr. leading guests in Tangipahoa Trivia at the 2019 SELHA meeting.

Gulf South History and Humanities Conference

Each year we renew our pledge to support the Gulf South Historical Association which hosts the premier conference focusing on the Gulf South and Caribbean Basin. 2019 proved no different as Center staffers worked tirelessly in support of the Thirty-Seventh Annual GSHA Conference hosted by our friends at the University of West Florida.

This year marked the return of the conference to Pensacola, Florida. At first, some association members grumbled that the conference hotel was in the downtown district rather than on the beachfront, but such grouching was quickly muted by the fine accommodations and excellent service experienced at the historic Pensacola Grand Hotel which served as the site for the gathering. Every aspect of the event from the board of directors meeting to the banquet were handled with class. Conference coordinator Dr. Erin Stone is to be commended for her fine efforts in putting it all together.

In 2019 the Center resumed its role as operational headquarters of the GSHA after a four year hiatus. Dr. Deanne Stephens, at the University of Southern Mississippi, retains her position as Executive Director of the GSHA and as always Center staff members perform an array of critical behind the scenes functions such as website updates, conference mailings, and compiling registration packets. Center director Samuel Hyde remains both the organization's treasurer as well as one of Southeastern Louisiana University's board members serving along with Center friend Dr. Ron Traylor.

The 2020 edition of the conference will be held in Alexandria, Louisiana on 1-3 October 2020 at the historic Hotel Bentley. If past experiences are any indicator of future successes, the 38th annual meeting headed by incoming GSHA President Dr. Jeffrey Owens is sure to be memorable.

Paper and panel proposals should be sent via email by 15 August 2020 to the program chair, Dr. Jeffrey Owens, at jowe@tjc.edu. Please put "2020 Gulf South Paper" in the email subject line. Or, send a hardcopy to Dr. Jeffrey Owens, 115 Jenkins Hall, Tyler Junior College, P. O. Box 9020, Tyler, TX 75711. For hotel reservations, please call 318-442-2226.



Pictured: University of West Florida's Dr. Erin Stone passing the ceremonial gavel to Dr. Jeffery Owens of Tyler Junior College as coordinator for the 38th Annual Gulf South History and Humanities Conference.

New Manchac Documentary

In last year's "Centerpiece" we noted the important collaboration between the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies and the Turtle Cove Research Station. Over the last few years the Center has provided Turtle Cove research assistance for exhibits, including the Manchac/Turtle Cove artifacts exhibit which greets Center patrons as they make their way to our main entrance.

To advance its education efforts, Turtle Cove partnered with the Southeastern Channel to produce the nineteen minute documentary film: "Troubled Waters: Turtle Cove and the Manchac Swamp Ecosystem" which debuted this past summer. Center director Sam Hyde, along with longtime Center friend Professor Al Dranguet, figure prominently in the film by providing crucial contextual information to the project which follows the swamp's history from the colonial period to the present.

The program spotlights artifacts recovered from Pass Manchac that have been assembled both in the exhibit outside of the Center and at the Turtle Cove Research Center. Many of the items on display at these location came from the Center's holdings. For those interested in any of the subjects addressed in the film such as Native American history and the timber industry, the Center is sure to have paper, photographic, and archaeological evidence to further your studies.

Our readers are urged to view the documentary now available on [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and to stop by the Center for additional information.



Pictured: Dr. Robert Moreau, Director of Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station and instructor at Southeastern Louisiana University.

Young Sanders Center Partners with the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies

We are always on the lookout for opportunities to broaden the reach of the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies. Recently Center Director Dr. Samuel Hyde was approached by the Young-Sanders Center headquartered in Franklin, Louisiana regarding a possible merger/collaboration between our respective agencies. Our interest was piqued since the mission of the Young-Sanders Center Foundation which focuses on the preservation and promotion of the history and heritage of Louisiana and the American South, dovetails nicely with the Center's mission to preserve and promote the history and cultures of southeast Louisiana. As with any such undertaking, several rounds of negotiation were needed before an actual agreement between the Center, the Sanders Center, and the University could emerge.

After months of discussion, a vision was adopted and a contract signed. We will share with our readers and long-time supporters all of the exciting news of our collaboration as our multi-faceted plans become more concrete. The merger will take place over the course of several years during which time the Sanders Center will gradually decouple from its current location and relocate its base of operations, including its archival collections, to the Center. The Center will work with the Sanders Center in a variety of initiatives designed to promote interest in state and regional history. During the first

phase of the merger, a J.Y. Sanders Research Scholar and a Young-Sanders graduate assistant will be selected via national searches.

The J.Y. Sanders Research Scholar award carries a \$10,000 stipend and is open to those in virtually any field including history, literature, environmental studies, art, music, science, etc. 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 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. 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.

The Young Sanders Graduate Research 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 2020, along with a \$13,000.00 stipend 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 Gulf South.

Phase I is just the tip of the iceberg yet it is critical as it marks an important infusion of badly needed capital to ensure the Center is able to purchase the archival materials needed as we transition to the next phase of the merger. Many new and exciting programs are under discussion and a treasure trove of research materials related to the War Between the States will eventually be deposited in our vault. It has been a privilege to work on this meaningful collaboration effort that will benefit all the entities involved. Special thanks are in order for members of the Board of Directors of the Young-Sanders Center, specifically Mrs. "Fritzi" Martin, Mr. Hamilton Martin, Ms. Bee Martin Little, and Mr. Martin "Chip" Perilloux, who worked tirelessly to see the

merger completed. Thanks are also due to the Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Dr. Karen Fontenot, and to Wendy Lauderdale and Katherine Rose of the Southeastern Development Foundation who donated considerable time and effort to facilitate the completion of the merger. This exciting announcement would not be possible without their efforts. We thank you! The Center-Sanders union will enhance existing resources and make available more archival sources to advance the study of our broadened focal region.



Center Staff Then and Now

Over the years the Center has employed a number of first-rate student workers and graduate assistants who take the lessons and skills they learn in our employ and go on to accomplish great things.

Former Center graduate assistant Owen Hyman has accepted a position as an assistant professor of African American Studies at the University of Mississippi after completing his PhD at Mississippi State. Owen has won numerous awards including the Ronald Rainger Prize for the best early career work on the history of the earth and environmental studies and the 2019 C. Vann Woodward award for the best dissertation in southern history defended in 2018.



Pictured above: Owen Hyman receiving the 2018 Ronald Rainger Prize.

Former graduate assistant Cody Scallions utilized his experiences at the Center to secure a variety of jobs in the museum field. Today, he serves as the Museum Curator for the City of Carrollton. Other former student staffers, including Jonathan Ricau, who recently won the Coker Award given by the GSHA for the best student paper and is currently enrolled in law school, Chase Tomlin, who received the T. Harry Williams Fellowship to complete his PhD studies at LSU, Lindsey Marshall

(Tonks), who serves as assistant principal at The Academy of the Holy Cross in the Washington, DC area, and Andrew Barr, who accepted a position at the law firm of Hammonds, Sills, Adkins, and Guice, have also achieved success.



Pictured above: Former graduate assistant, Andrew Barr.

Last year we noted the graduation of long-time Center student worker and graduate assistant Faith Allen. Unlike many who struggle to find employment upon graduation, Faith parlayed her experiences at the Center to secure appointment as the director of the Downtown Ponchatoula Revitalization Program. Faith played a key role in assisting in many Sesquicentennial celebrations.



Pictured above: Faith Allen, Executive Director of the Downtown Ponchatoula Revitalization Program

Dr. Sam Hyde continues his active publication and speaking activities. From presenting, chairing, and commenting at historical conferences to speaking to historical groups across the state to working on a historical novel with his wife Dr. Sarah Hyde, the director remains deeply committed to the preservation of our region's history. Center assistant director Keith Finley serves on the board of directors of the Louisiana Historical Association and has an article on the 1966 Congressional race in Louisiana's Sixth District published in the current edition of *Louisiana History*.



New Collection Highlights

The Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies continues to accept donations that highlight the diverse history and cultures of southeast Louisiana and southwest Mississippi. Each year witnesses the arrival of new collections that broaden our understanding of the region. 2019 proved no different.

Of special interest is the donation made by long-time Plaquemines Parish native Rod Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln began depositing in the Center the first wave of his material which focuses primarily on the history of Plaquemines Parish. By the time he is finished, the Center for Southeast Louisiana Studies will become the preeminent repository for all things related to the parish. Books, maps, newspapers, magazines, photographs, and a myriad of other items are included in the collection. We are proud to augment our Plaquemines Parish holdings and we are honored that Mr. Lincoln selected our repository to house his collection.

Coinciding with the accession of Mr. Lincoln's collection was a generous donation facilitated by Camille Strachan on behalf of the Bradish Johnson Company earmarked specifically to ensure that the Center possessed all of the preservation tools needed to safeguard Mr. Lincoln's collection. A "thank you" is in order for all who made the exchange possible. Ms. Ann Riley Jones likewise continued her annual support of Center operations with a generous financial donation. Without such support we could not fulfill our mission. Thank you Ann!

James Hobson Morrison donated a number of political cartoons to include in the James H. Morrison Collection, just as Tom Anderson, Clark Forrest, and Anne Trappey added to their existing collections. Long-time Center friend, Donna Gay Anderson has begun depositing materials associated with the history of Southeastern and her tenure as the director of the Columbia Theater in a new collection honoring her mother, Southeastern's first theater professor Vonnie Borden. Ron Nethercutt added to the Center's already impressive archival holdings on jazz legend Bill Evans and Joseph Carter began donating his extensive genealogical research. Various departments on campus have augmented their preexisting collections including the Athletics Department which recently deposited scrapbooks covering the years 1989-1998 and the Student Government Association and Phi Kappa Phi which donated organizational records.

If you are interested in making a donation please feel free to contact us at 985-549-2151.

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:

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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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