

(Transcript: Hattiesburg's Story)

(Opens with Craig Wiseman's "Ballad of Hattiesburg" that slowly fades in the background. A photo of the Hattiesburg mural in the public library is displayed)

Every citizen of a town has a yarn to spin, every building in a town has a plot behind it. Before the towns, even the trees and geographic features had their own tales and legends. Although we can't tell them all today, we'll look at some of our city's stories. Of course, before there was a city, there were the Choctaw.

(A photo of the Twin Forks area)

Legend has it that tornadoes will not strike at the confluence of two rivers. Hence, the Choctaw lived here. It is said that their settlement, referred to as "Twin Forks" stretched north for 12 miles along the west bank of the Leaf River.

(A photo of arrowheads)

Although no village remains have been found, the settlement was documented by travelers and traders, and the abundance of arrowheads in our area prove that they were here.

(Photos of Twin Forks from different angle)

The Twin Forks, where the Bouie River joins The Leaf River, is located just upstream from the Bouie River Bridge on Highway 42. The township of Twin Forks was settled on the Leaf River near a new rail line in 1881. Gordonville was where the east Hardy Street bridge, formerly called the River Avenue bridge, is now. This rail camp, also called Gordonsville and Gordons Station, was probably named for the land owner and would have been in an area between the two bridges. This was also the location of Kings Ferry. Join me now as we hopscotch across the city and visit some of the sites of Hattiesburg's history.

(A photo of the old post office)

The Italian Renaissance-style U.S. Courthouse at 200 West Pine Street was originally built in 1911 as the post office. It is listed on the national register of landmark buildings and currently serves as the offices for the drug court and DREAM of Hattiesburg. DREAM stands for Drugfree Resources for Education and Alternatives in Mississippi. The HAHS placed the marker there on September 24, 1974 to mark the site where William

(Photos of William Hardy)

Harris Hardy, while surveying for the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad, sat beneath the trees to

eat his lunch. As the boy with him took the horses down to the cool, clear stream below, better known today as Gordon's Creek, Hardy realized that one day, someone would need to build a railroad from the ports of the Mississippi Gulf Coast north towards Jackson. He envisioned the crossing of the railroads and the city he would build there and name for his

(A photo of Hattie Lott)

second wife, Hattie Lott. Hattiesburg, Mississippi is still the only Hattiesburg in all the world.

(Photos of a bust of William Hardy)

Hardy purchased the land in 1882 and obtained the right to name and layout the city. In 1883, the first station house and depot were built. By December of that year, there was a post office, and in 1884, Hattiesburg was incorporated.

(Photos of a Lindsey 8-wheel wagon)

Timber was the main reason for the area's early growth. Giant logs were hauled from the forest on Lindsey 8-Wheel Wagons pulled by oxen, mules or horses. This one was made by the Hattiesburg 8-Wheel Wagon Company about 1910. The original design came from the Lindsey family of Laurel.

(A photo of a forrest)

Until 2005 and Hurricane Katrina, timber was still an \$11 billion per year industry in the Pine Belt.

(Photos showing forrest damage from tornadoes)

In 1908, a tornado struck nearby communities and destroyed the town of Purvis to our southwest. That storm brought down many huge trees for huge losses. The tornadoes of Katrina 98 years later did the same type of damage to a much larger area of south Mississippi.

(Photo of more recent timber harvest with a Lindsey 8-wheel wagon)

In the 1970's, the owners of Hard Luck Plantation used a Lindsey wagon and oxen to harvest timber on their land on Highway 49

(Photos showing the general location of the Hard Luck Planation)

north just past the Highway 59 overpass. The few trees that survived Katrina stand between the Northgate Inn and the new Pepsi Cola plant.

(A photo of downtown Hattiesburg in the late 1800's)

Like most small towns in the 1880's, Hattiesburg was built of wood. Like most wood-framed towns, tragic fires destroyed the down town.

(Photos of newer, stone buildings in downtown Hattiesburg)

This photo of Pine Street looking east from Main shows stone buildings that were required after the fire of 1893. Citizens Bank is on the left. This was a view seen from the corner of Pine and Main Streets looking east in 1898. The Hotel Hattiesburg is on the right in the distance. Parts of the Citizens Bank doorway still stand on Main Street in front of the Jessie Brown Forrest County Tax Services Building.

(A photo of Dr. T. E. Ross, Sr's original office building)

Dr. T. E. Ross, Sr. had his office in this building with Dozier Drugstore. When he added a second floor in 1900, he opened the first hospital in the southern part of the state.

(A photo of the original Hattiesburg Hospital)

Dr. T. E Ross, Sr. originally built Hattiesburg Hospital as Ross Sanitarium at the end of Bay Street. Doors opened in October of 1903. Since it was built due to the increase of patronage by the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad employees at the original Ross Sanitarium on the Corner of Front and Short Streets, the name was changed to Gulf and Ship Island Hospital. For a brief time, it was known as Hattiesburg Hospital as you see in this 1913 photo. In 1918, it was Kings Daughters Hospital.

(A photo of the Hattiesburg police department)

Then, in 1921, it became Methodist Hospital. Now the Hattiesburg Police Department is located in the building. Methodist Hospital moved to Highway 98 and is now Wesley Medical Center. As you can tell, the name game is nothing new to Hattiesburg, and it is not a recent creation of the financial institutions.

(An older photo of downtown Hattiesburg)

Downtown Hattiesburg looking north from the Bay Street Presbyterian Church steeple in 1908 shows many buildings that are no longer here.

(Photos of Main Street)

Main Street looking north- many of buildings shown in this post card can still be identified today.

(A photo of the American Oil station)

This American Oil station was on the corner of Main and Batson Streets. The Oaks Restaurant, formerly Shelbys, now occupies this spot.

(Photos of the Barron Motor Company building)

Barron Motor Company was built on Main Street across the street from the Forrest County Court House. The YMCA and public library can be seen in the background. Barron Motor Company later became Sears and Roebuck. After Sears moved and the building got a facelift, it became the Paul B. Johnson, Jr. Chancery Court Building.

(Photos of the YMCA building and the William Colmer Federal building)

The YMCA Building was located just next door. Construction began in 1914, but was halted due to the lack of funds. When the U. S. Army opened a training site at Camp Shelby during World War I, the building was completed with National War Works Council funds in 1918. It was operated by the military and used exclusively for soldiers until 1919. The YMCA struggled until J. Maury Gandy was hired in 1925. For the next five decades, a Gandy would work full time for the YMCA. The quilt top in the HAHS Museum was made for Mrs. Gandy by families who participated in activities there. Now the William Colmer Federal Building occupies the site of the old "Y."

(Photos of the old Hattiesburg library)

Hattiesburg citizens have always valued reading. But in the early days, the library consisted of a room moved place to place. By 1927 a room was made available in City Hall. Public spirited citizens initiated the movement to secure a building. A bond issued for \$75,000 was approved by a 2 to 1 vote, but there was a disagreement on where to build. Some wanted the city to use land owned by the city behind City Hall. Others wanted a fine show place on Main Street. The electorate voted again 3 to 1 for a new building with a \$100,000 price tag. The library opened on May 22nd of 1930. In 1950, services were extended county-wide.

(A photo of the new Hattiesburg library)

In 1996, the new library was opened on Hardy Street. Because the community was so attached to the old library building and its Italian Renaissance style, the front steps were replicated inside the new building.

(A photo of the old Hattiesburg library)

The City of Hattiesburg restored this building to be used as a cultural center and house the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society offices and museum, The Hattiesburg Arts Council and The Historic Downtown Hattiesburg Association.

(A photo of the old Hattiesburg High building)

Main Street School, or the old high school, was originally built in 1911. In 1921, the present front with separate entrances for boys and girls was added. The building featured ornate metal ceilings and a third floor auditorium. In 2007, while undergoing renovation in a joint effort by USM and the Historic Downtown Association, two teenagers set fire to the building.

(A photo of the old Hattiesburg High building with first responders)

The oil-pined floors burned so hot that the steel girders that held the walls together and supported the floors melted, buckled and fell.

(An early photo of downtown Hattiesburg)

An early panoramic view shows Hattiesburg and the Hotel Hattiesburg from the Southern Railway Station. There was no taxi service, so trains were met by porters. Dr. Fred Tatum, a third generation Hattiesburg resident, said the porters would call-out in a sing-song manner: "H o t e l H a t t i e s b u r g - L e a f H o t e l . . . F o r r e s t - H o t e l" Hattiesburg's newest hotel.

(A photo of Hotel Hattiesburg)

The Hotel Hattiesburg was located on Market Street between East Pine and East Front Streets. Railed travelers could see the hotel upon arrival to Hattiesburg and could disembark at the Hotel doors.

(A photo of Hotel Hattiesburg serving pieces)

These Hotel Hattiesburg serving pieces demonstrate the elegance, comfort and fine dining expected by patrons.

(Photos of porters standing at the Hotel Hattiesburg entrance)

Passenger cars stand at the lobby entrance of the Hotel Hattiesburg. Less rail traffic, the automobile, and modern motels lead to a decline in patronage. The Milner Hotel operated from the building for a time before the building was abandoned and fell into disrepair.

(A photo showing the original site of the Hotel Hattiesburg)

It was demolished in the 1960's. Local residents with emotional ties to the hotel purchased bricks, timbers, stair rails, marble and elevator cages for use in their own homes. A typical terracotta brick was about 2 1/2 times the size of a normal brick and provided good insulation.

(A photo of Southern Express Co. employees on the railroad loading dock)

Southern Express Co. employees sit on the platform at the station. Until renovations in 2006 removed the dock, this crack below them could still be seen.

(A photo of three men with a handcar)

The gentlemen seen here are on a New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad handcar. These, of course,

have been replaced by trucks with tires and train wheels.

(Photos of Hattiesburg City Hall)

Hattiesburg City Hall was built in 1922. The police department and city jail were housed there. In 1923, the Number 1 Fire Station moved into the building and remained there until August, 1979. It was then relocated to its present facility on Main Street. The police department was later relocated to the old Methodist Hospital at the end of Bay Street. The Front Street side of City Hall, which was originally the front of the building, has now been altered to accommodate an elevator.

(A photo of Hattiesburg's first police car with onlookers)

Hattiesburg's first police car was photographed with the police force at the side of City Hall on Forrest Street in 1933. The Saenger Theater and the Forrest Hotel Coffee Shop are in the background.

(Photos of the Forrest Hotel)

The Forrest Hotel was built in the early 1930's. It had a nice dining room where many organizations, including the Rotary Club, met. The coffee shop was quite popular. The sign on top of the building said "Forrest Hotel" in red neon lights. Entering Hattiesburg after dark, travelers were greeted by the lights coming through the pines as they reached the crests of surrounding hills. Many thought that the sign blinked but it only appeared to blink because of the light coming through the pines. The hotel closed in the late 1960's and the building is currently owned by a bank.

(Photos of the downtown post office)

This United States post office building was built to replace the one on the site of Hardy's vision. It served as the main office until the 40th Avenue office opened in the 1990's. Talk has often come up about closing or relocating the downtown office repeatedly in the past few decades. Each time, it has caused such public outcry that the office continues to operate from the current site.

(A photo of Major Henry A. Commiskey, Sr.)

On September 10, 2004, it was named in honor of Major Henry A. Commiskey, Sr., a medal of honor recipient. Most citizens believe there will not be another attempt to close the office.

(A photo of downtown Main Street in Hattiesburg's early days)

This is Main Street looking south in the early days.

(More recent photos of downtown Main Street)

This is an identical shot looking south in 1980. And this is what Main Street looks like today.

(A photo of the Southern Miss dome under construction)

Here you can see the start of the building of "The Dome" at USM.

(Early photos of the University of Southern Mississippi campus)

Of course, at that time, it was called "Mississippi Normal College." The proposed development of Mississippi Normal College is shown in this photograph. The war memorial building gate-house at "Mississippi State Teacher's College" (as it was called by that time) was proposed by President Joe Cook on November 11, 1920. Students, faculty and friends raised the money for its construction, and the cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1921. The building was demolished in the early 1960's after it was severely damaged by a truck.

An early view of Mississippi Southern College stadium looked like this. And, of course, in the early days at Mississippi Southern College, the men's dormitories were underneath the stadium seats. After the stadium was expanded and the USM science tower was built, an aerial view of the USM campus looked like this.

(Early photos of William Carey University)

Forrest County's first institution of higher learning, South Mississippi College and Hattiesburg Business College, was founded in 1906 by W. I. Thames. When fire destroyed the school in 1909, Methodist layman W. S. F. Tatum purchased the land and offered it to the Baptists for a christian school for girls.

The hospital shown here was one of the early buildings at Mississippi Woman's College. As a co-ed school, the name changed to William Carey College. In 2007, it became William Carey University.

(Early photos of Camp Shelby)

Camp Shelby is the nation's largest National Guard & Reserve training site. It was built by 4,500 civilians in 1917 at a cost of \$3.3 million. During World War I, 136,000 troops were housed there in tents. During World War II, Shelby was the site of a German POW camp, and over 100,000 United States troops were there on several occasions. Nearly every household in Hattiesburg had a soldier staying with them.

(Early photos of Hattiesburg's USO)

As troops overran Hattiesburg, the city needed a place for them to go. The USO opened on March 15, 1942 in response to that increasing number of military personnel stationed at Camp Shelby. It was given to the city for a community center after it closed in 1946 and is now The Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center named for Hattiesburg's first woman police officer after she was killed in the line of duty.

(Photo of an tent meeting)

Religion has always been an important part of Forrest County life. The first church was organized in 1818, 90 years before the county was even formed. At the county's 90th anniversary in 1998, there were 177 churches listed in the telephone directory. Tent meetings were common in the early 1900's and are still occasionally held in the areatoday.

(Early photo of First Baptist Church)

In 1901, it cost \$60,000 to build the First Baptist Church on Main and Bushman Streets. The ladies of the church posed with their children in 1914.

(Photo of Ida Polk holding a granddaughter)

Ida Polk, on the left, holds possibly her youngest of 12 children, Kathleen Polk McDuff.

(A more recent photo of First Baptist Church)

In 1953, the church moved to its Pine Street site.

(A photo of Town Square Park)

Town Square Park is now on the site of the old First Baptist Church.

(Photos of Bay Street Presbyterian Church)

Bay Street Presbyterian Church organized in 1906. It is the oldest congregation still meeting in its original building. It has remained an active church since the building was completed in 1907. The ladies used proceeds from ice cream suppers to pay for the roof, stain-glassed windows and lighting fixtures. In 1922 the ladies had a 661-pipe Moller organ installed. The organ, now valued at more than \$175,000, is the oldest operating organ in Hattiesburg.

(Photos of Main Street Methodist Church)

Main Street Methodist Church was built in 1907. The sanctuary retains most of its original appearance. The stain glass windows and much of the furnishings still in use are original.

(Photos of Main Street Baptist Church)

Main Street Baptist Church, originally named Columbia Street Baptist Church, marched into their new building on the corner of Main and 5th Streets on November 13, 1913 singing "Onward Christian Soldiers." In 1998, an agreement was made to sell the facility to Mount Carmel Baptist Church, and Main Street Baptist moved out to Highway 98 West... marching into a new building singing "Onward Christian Soldiers."

(Photos of Sacred Heart Catholic Church)

The first Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built in 1900 across the street from the present location. The school was built next to the church. The present brick church was built in 1927.

(Photos of Trinity Episcopal Church)

Trinity Episcopal Church, modeled after a Knights Templar church in London England, was under construction from late 1911 until December, 1912. When a 1973 fire destroyed the original parish house and threatened to blow out the stained glass behind the altar, Hattiesburg firemen were ordered to withdraw and let it burn. Members of other churches begged the firemen to return and insisted that they at least save the windows. The response of the firemen was to save the entire sanctuary.

(A photo of Pinehurst)

Like public buildings and churches, Hattiesburg's older homes demonstrate much variety and style. "Pinehurst" was completed in 1928 by W. O. Tatum, President of Tatum Lumber Company. It was built on the site which city founder, W. H. Hardy, selected for his home in the early 1900's when he resided in Hattiesburg with his third wife. A feeling of spaciousness begins at the front doors with two story white columns. The home is one of a few early homes still owned by descendants of the original owners. It is located on Pinehurst Street.

(A photo of the Faulk-Chain house)

The Faulkner-Chain house was built in 1929 on 6th Avenue. It is a Mediterranean villa style.

(A photo of the Epley McCloud Cotton Schwartz House)

The Epley McCloud Cotton Schwartz House (circa 1900) will probably change its name several times in the future. It demonstrates colonial revival style. The view through the oval beveled glass front door extends for 80 feet front the front of the house to the back sun room.

(A photo of the Rogers House)

The Rogers House was built in 1908. This house is an example of La. Acadian-Creole architecture. It is built of pine and features pine floors; it's located on Adeline Street.

(An early photo of West Pine Street)

An early view of West Pine Street looking east from 5th Avenue shows why the street is as wide as it is. A trolley ran down the middle.

(A photo of the Toomer-McKenzie House)

The Toomer-McKenzie House was built in 1913 on West Pine Street.

(A photo of Turner House)

Turner House, a landmark house, was built from 1890 through 1910 by John S. Turner, a pioneer Hattiesburg merchant, for his son, James S. Turner. The Turner Store is seen in the early Main Street photos. It stood where the Kress Building is now on the corner of Main and Front Streets. This Bay Street home is noted for its Edwardian and Adams interior, a feature which is quite rare in this part of the country.

The small working steam train on display at the HAHS Museum belonged to the grandson of the builder. It is said that he laid the track under the house and rode on top of it.

(A photo of the Ross House)

This 2 1/2 story colonial revival Ross House is located across the street on Bay Street. It was built in 1903 for Dr. T. E. Ross, Sr. and his family. It features gable roof dormers and an encircling veranda. Dr. T. E. Ross, Jr. and Dr. T. E. Ross III grew up here and practiced medicine in Hattiesburg. Today, it is the home of Dr. Kate Assemie.

(Photos of the Rush House)

This Queen Anne style home was built in the 1880's for the Rush family. It features intricate mill work and outstanding stained and beveled glass windows. The Rush house is located on Laurel Avenue, and the glass in the towers is curved.

(Photos of Lindhurst)

Lindhurst, a landmark house, built from 1890 - 1900, is a Victorian design and is built of cypress, hard pine and poplar. It was built for George A. Komp, Sr. 20 small columns support and accentuate the wrap-around porch. Inside are unique cast iron mantles, and the original radiators still help provide heat. This home is located on short Bay Street and is the home of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Bailey.

(A photo of Great Oaks)

Great Oaks" was built by the Connor family in 1906. This neo-classical style home has wall and ceiling decorations that were hand-painted by a French artist. The Sarphie family, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the builder resided there. It was owned by the Charles Howell family for about 30 years and is currently the home of Marla Mathis.

(A photo of Polk House)

In 1907, Abner Polk built this neo-classical house at 730 River Ave. for his expanding family. It replaced his smaller home which was moved to another position on his property. This house, from time to time, has been home to 4 generations of Abner's and Ida's family and is still owned by his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

(Photos of the first Christmas lighting in downtown Hattiesburg)

In 1976, residents of the downtown area decided to wish everyone a Merry Christmas by lining the streets with thousands of candles. This annual event, now sponsored by The Hattiesburg Historical Neighborhood, is one of the noteworthy events of the South. The Polk home was one of the participants for the first 25 years.

(Photos of the Dunn-Deas House)

Captain Mike M. Dunn built this home in 1892. Captain Dunn used the door on the back left side of the gallery for an entrance to his office where he paid workers from Newman Lumber Company. In this 1970's photo, the house looked much like it did for its first 80 years in which it was owned by the Dunn and Deas families. Inside, the home features curly pine woodwork.

Like many of the older homes, the "Done-Days" home has gone through renovations, inside and out, and has gone through numerous owners since 1973. In the 1980's, it looked like this. In the 1990's, Tim Cooley purchased the house after being hired to restore it. David Broome bought this house in 2005 to make it his home and Dunn House Bed and Breakfast.

(A photo of short Bay Street in the 1904 flood)

The Dunn Home on short Bay stands high and dry in the November 10, 1904 flood. To the left is the first Abner Polk home. The bridge is the River Avenue Bridge over Gordon's Creek. Just past the Dunn and Polk homes, River Ave turns about 50 degrees to the left and continues to the Leaf River.

Today, that part of River Avenue is named "East Hardy Street" for if it went straight through the Dunn House and the Dole Center downtown, it would meet Hardy Street at Memorial Park where Pine Street, Front Street and Hardy Street intersect. Only the 2 blocks of the original River Avenue, starting at the Dunn and Polk homes and continuing to the train station, bear that original River Avenue name today.

(A photo of the "Hub Sign" in downtown Hattiesburg. The "Ballad of Hattiesburg" fades into the background)

As Hattiesburg continues to restore old buildings for new uses, and build new structures for old purposes, our citizens can be proud of our past and look forward to living in an evolving city that seeks to be modern and progressive, yet maintain its cozy, small-town atmosphere.

(Video credits)