

# Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

**HAHS MUSEUM**  
Hattiesburg Cultural Center  
723 Main Street  
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## DO YOU REMEMBER?

Loss, destruction, renovation, and new construction all stir the memories of long-time Hattiesburg residents. The last ten years seem to have brought daily changes—some due to catastrophic disasters such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 or the February 10, 2013, tornado; and others the result of revitalization efforts and community growth. No matter the reason, “do you remember...” questions always arise and often find their way to the HAHS. Some examples follow:

“Do you remember the statue of the lady in front of the YWCA on Hemphill Street?” asked one caller. Those of us who do can not answer questions about why she was there or what she represented. Homeowners who lived across the street did not know her importance. The most often seen photo of the YWCA shows a group of members standing in front of the statue. Unfortunately, they are taller than it, so the statue can’t be seen. Finally, while researching another topic, we found a Recreation Department progress report from 1957-1960. There, on the cover, was a photo of the YWCA with the statue visible. Later we discovered a Bob Waller photo of the 1947 YWCA directors standing behind the statue. The statue is no longer there, but the cornerstone remains on the wall at the Aultman, Tyner, & Ruffin office. It reads:

YWCA  
ERECTED 1927  
I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE  
AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT  
MORE ABUNDANTLY. JOHN X:10

Prior to the YWCA merger with the YMCA, the YW truly added abundant life to the Hattiesburg Community through programs and hosting events for over 70 organizations. Do we remember her? Yes. Why was she there? Who was she? We don’t know. If you do, give the HAHS a call and let us know.



As 46 year old Vann Hall was leveled to make way for new dorms at USM, former students remembered their days there. Do you remember that it was originally opened in 1967 as a men’s dorm housing football players? In later years the building would be put into service for women students. Do you remember Thad “Pie” Vann for whom it was named? Often considered the “Father of Southern Miss Football,” he became the head coach in 1949. In twenty years, Vann had only one losing season and compiled a 139-59-2 record during his tenure. He helped make Southern Miss football one of the best programs in the nation.

Choctaw legend said that tornados seldom would strike at the confluence of two rivers, so the Choctaw placed a village here. It stretched along the Leaf River from the fork of the Leaf and the Bouie to Lux. The February 2013 tornado proved that the important word in the legend is **SELDOM** As the storm traveled 21 miles through four counties, it went through the twin forks area and rearranged some historic sites.



Smokie Harrington Park was severely damaged and began a new set of “do you remember” questions. “Do you remember Smokie?” “Do you know about the stadium and its construction?” “Will it be rebuilt like it was?” “Do you remember what the W.P. stood for?” (To left: rubble from the outside wall; to right: portions of the grandstand roof ripped away.





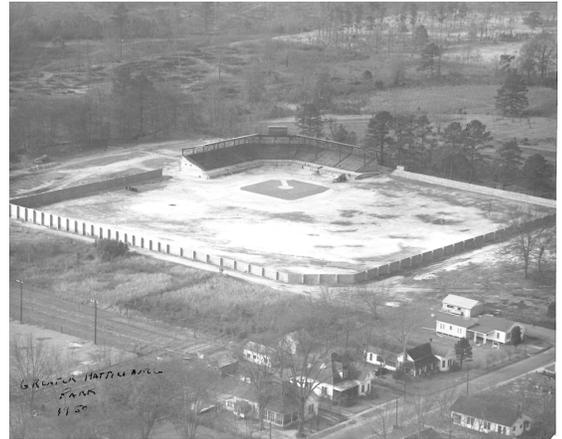
William Patrick Harrington, Sr., worked as a machinist at the Mississippi Central roundhouse on Bouie Street where he got the nickname "Smokie." He served as a city commissioner, helped start the zoo at Kamper Park, and made many improvements to the park itself. He was a small league baseball player in the area and became a prominent businessman in Hattiesburg running the only sporting goods store in town until the 1960's.

Long before the movie *Field of Dreams*, Smokie dreamed of having a permanent big league farm team in our city. He believed that if we built a stadium they would come. In 1948 with other interested men he organized the Greater Hattiesburg Association and began to sell stock at \$10 a share

to finance a major league size ballpark that could accommodate a variety of sports. The GHA raised \$50,000 in stock sales and construction began.

The massive structure was made of concrete and steel and covered 15 acres. It could seat 2,360 in the grandstand and another 400 in box seats. The walls were twelve blocks high and in some places, due to the terrain, even higher. At center field it stood 440 feet away—farther than most major league fields even today. Each block was hand made on the site. Both baselines stretched 340 feet. Lights would be added in 1955.

It was a Herculean effort, and the price by completion was estimated at \$125,000. That included over \$35,000 in donated materials and labor. At night high school kids and adults (including Smokie's wife, Eleanor and sons) helped with the building. Electricians and construction workers accepted stock for payment. Construction was a community effort.



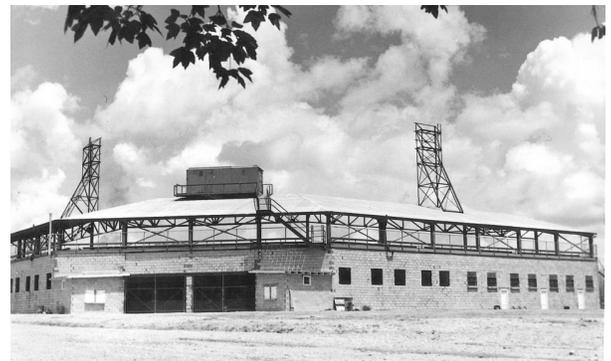
Meanwhile, Smokie worked to obtain a minor league franchise. In 1949 he and GHA president Sam Miller got an agreement from the St. Louis Cardinals to move their Southeastern League Class A team here when the park was finished. Unfortunately, the league folded before the stadium was completed in 1950. So who would come?

Over 2400 baseball fans turned out as the Birmingham Black Barons defeated the Memphis Red Sox (both of the Negro American League) in the opening game. Another near capacity crowd on Oct. 15, 1950, watched the Major League Southern All-Stars barnstorming team beat a picked Hattiesburg team.

In the 1950s the New York Yankees sent some farm teams here for spring training. The Chicago Cubs came in 1952 to play the local Southern Stars, but the game was rained out costing the GHA much needed revenue. Eventually, the city purchased the park and turned it over to the public schools.

Through the years Greater Hattiesburg Park has been used for football, wrestling, band practice, political speeches, and parking cars. It hosted some high profile USM and William Carey baseball games. In 1980, *Don't Look Back*, a movie about Satchel Paige was filmed there. In 1981 it was renamed W. P. "Smokie" Harrington Park. The playing field was named for long-time HHS coach Jimmy Pierce in 2001. But what happens now? Will the park just become a memory?

The park **will** be rebuilt. After the repairs at the Buddy Watkins Gym are completed, work will begin on the baseball park. The stadium and wall will be repaired. With history in mind, the plan is to keep the parts of the original wall that can be saved and replace the missing pieces with new blocks. Although they will not be hand-made on site, they will preserve this landmark and give citizens even more "do you remember..." answers the future.



## GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

May 15, 2013 – November 15, 2013

- Various pictures and memorabilia – Estate of Earline Roseberry
- Collection of Hattiesburg High School “Hi Flashes” – Lyn Phillips
- 1949 USM Annual, “The Southerner” – Barbara Johnston
- USMC Aluminum 9 inch dining plate; First Baptist Church (Main & Buschman Sts) letters; Steel letters for church sign in wooden box – Ursula Jones
- Book: “A History of The First Presbyterian Church” 2013 (Hattiesburg) – Bill & Mary Wicht
- Framed picture of S. H. Blair and framed picture of Brian Blair – Kay Behm
- Booklett: “May Day Festival,” May 1, 1929, MS Woman’s College; Program of Dept of Music, MS Woman’s College – Tom Phillips III
- Girl Scout items from Troop 20 and World War II items – Nancy McMillan
- Western Union Telephone Co. main line sounder (in memory of Robert Hilton Cullefer) and a Wesley Medical Center covered dish – Charles Cullefer
- Metal Ice Tongs used by his grandfather – Jay Hester
- Portable Field Easel – Lewis Myrick
- Plaque: MS Sports Hall of Fame showing Nollie C. Felts, Sr.; Scrapbook – Nollie Felts, Jr.
- Four famed pieces from the Brian Blair collection – Marilyn Blake
- Bookletts: “Appraisal Report for Malone Properties, Inc. 1978; “The Hattiesburg-Forrest Co. Market Area Report” 1983 – David Halliwell
- Booklets: “Review Club – 100 Year Anniversary” and “Review Club Membership List 1913-2013” – Jeanne G. Hunt
- Postcard of Speed’s Restaurant – Tom Phillips III
- Poster: Jersey Cow Day and tickets; Turner House Museum room inventory; Book, *One Fine Day* by James Turner; Book: *A Hanging in Perry Co – the James Copeland Story* by Pat Morrison; Oral Histories of Mrs. Lamar Henington and Dr. T. E. Ross, Jr.; Framed picture of the M. D. King Home 1904 (burned down), 8 copies of “Historic Hattiesburg-The History & Architecture of Hattiesburg’s First Neighborhoods; Booklett, Bay Street Presbyterian Church 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1906-2006” history; Book: *The Faith That Compelled Us* by Frances Thornton Smith; Book: *Historical Hattiesburg* by George R. Watson, Sr. 1974; Booklett: Inaugural Ceremonies of Gov.-elect Paul B. Johnson – Jan. 16, 1940; various telephone books and HAHS calendars; and other various items – Harry Ward

## Recent Monetary Contributions

May 1, 2013 – November 15, 2013

### MEMORIALS

Willis Terry  
Meldon Hurlbert  
Elma McWilliams  
James P. Bolton  
L. A. Rogers  
“Doc” Harrington

### DONORS

Dorothy Terry  
A J Jones  
Paula Harvey  
Norvell Robertston NSDAR  
Ursula Jones  
Laurie Crowson

**HAHS MUSEUM**  
**Post Office Box 1573**  
**Hattiesburg, MS**  
**39403-1573**



**MUSEUM HOURS**  
**Mon., Tues., Thurs.**  
**2:00 - 4:30 p.m.**  
**Or by Appointment**  
**Call 601-582-5460**

Located in the  
**Hattiesburg Cultural**  
**Center**  
**723 Main Street**  
**Downtown**  
**Hattiesburg, MS**

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## **OFFICERS**

**President**  
**Paula Harvey**

**Vice President**  
**Ursula Jones**

**Secretary**  
**Laurie Crowson**

**Treasurer**  
**Barbara Curry**

**Historian/Parliamentarian**  
**Tom Phillips III**

## **HAHS ANNUAL MEETING**

Hattiesburg Area Historical Society will hold its annual meeting February 24, 2014, at 5:30 p.m. in the HAHS Museum. Members, prospective members, and friends are invited to attend. A nominating committee will be selected. If you are interested in serving as an officer or board member of the HAHS please call 601-582-5460 and let us know or leave a message. There will be a brief business meeting and refreshments.

## **HELP!!**

The HAHS Museum continues to have requests for information that can be found in city directories. Unfortunately, our collection does not include many of the directories prior to 1950. We are in desperate need of them. If you have Hattiesburg City Directories from 1905 through 1950 that is collecting dust at your house would be delighted to keep them and their dust here. Call us for scheduling a pickup at 601-582-5460.

**THANK YOU FOR BEING A MEMBER OF HAHS. WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT.** Please check your mailing label to see the year paid. If you do not have a 2014 or an "L" (for life member) your dues are due.

## **MUSEUM HAPPENINGS**

The HAHS Museum continues to host individuals and groups and respond to numerous requests for assistance. Recently, History professor Dr. Deanne Nuwar's class toured the museum. Two of her students are currently serving as interns at the museum. One of their projects has been to inventory and catalog all of the trophies that have been donated.

Dr. Nuwar and students including Kevin Grubbs and Stephanie Seals are shown with HAHS volunteer Tom Phillips (seen at right).

Ginger Sigler Chappell, dropped by the museum to view the painting of the bird dog and snipe painted by her grandmother, Aussie Hanely Sigler (Mrs. C. M. Sigler) who was a fine art teacher at State Teacher's College in the early 1920's. The painting hung in Mrs. Sigler's home until her death when it was given to her son, Bill Sigler, who donated it to the HAHS Museum prior to his death.

