

Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

HAHS MUSEUM
HATTIESBURG
CULTURAL CENTER
723 MAIN STREET
P O BOX 1573
HATTIESBURG MS
39403-1573
601 582-5460

In *Preserving Hattiesburg Area History for Fifty Years*

1970 the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society was organized to fill a void in the preservation of local history and heritage. It was the first historical society in the area and the second in the state. With no other historical societies nearby, the name Hattiesburg Area Historical Society (HAHS) was chosen. From its central location in Hattiesburg, the HAHS goal was to serve Forrest County and the people in surrounding counties without such organizations.

Among the HAHS's first activities were tours of older homes and buildings emphasizing their beauty, useful, and innovative ideas. Tour brochures with maps were published and signs marked a driving tour. A series of calendars began reproducing early history, and a permanent marker was dedicated near the spot Captain W. H. Hardy envisioned Hattie's...burg.



HAHS officers checking the charter (pictured above right), seated: John Alan Morris, attorney and Mrs. Cecil Klutts, VP, Joe Tatum, President; Mrs. Richard Tomsem, Secretary; A J Jones, Treasurer

In 1973 the HAHS adapted the shop in the worst condition in Hattiesburg's Saenger Center for use as a small museum. A second one room shop was made into a workroom, when no other organization agreed to "adopt" it. The HAHS, staffed by volunteers began scheduled hours supplemented by appointments, chance, and special occasions. Original exhibits were one of a kind combining related items of interest from various collections.

As the nation's Bicentennial Celebration began the HAHS participated in the parade from downtown to Kamper Park, and published a 44 page *History of Hattiesburg Coloring Book* featuring pictures drawn by local artists of various ages. Otis Robertson's 1898 *Facts about Hattiesburg* was also reprinted and made

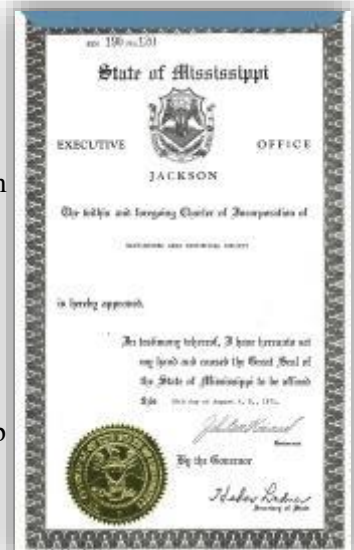
available for the public. Programs were given to various groups and, with a collection of mostly paper, the museum began to serve as a research source.

When the city's 1984 centennial approached, HAHS initiated a Heritage Project to collect information from our richest asset, the local people. The results became a prelude to *The History of Forrest County*, a book including stories detailing the variety and uniqueness of area citizens. The only requirement to submit a story was that someone in the story had, at some time, lived in the Forrest County area.

On March 4, 1996, the new Public Library opened on Hardy Street and the old building on Main Street was to be renovated as a Cultural Center. Three local organizations, the Hattiesburg Arts Council, the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society, and the Hattiesburg Downtown Association were to establish operations there.

Before work was completed on the Cultural Center, the Saenger roof began to leak. In 1998, the HAHS Museum was hastily moved to a temporary home behind the City Water Department at Kamper Park. All HAHS activities continued—including continuation of work on the book and its publication.

In 2000 the HAHS, with the help of USM's Dixie Darlings, began distributing pre-purchased copies of



HAHS Charter - 18 Aug 1971



Mary Daniels and Melissa Newcomber reviewing proofs of the HAHS coloring book



Marker commemorates founder

The Hattiesburg Area Historical Society's marker commemorating the founder of Hattiesburg is displayed by R. A. Esarey, president of the Society. This marker will be permanently placed near the site Capt. William Harris Hardy envisioned railroads between Meridian and New Orleans and between Jackson and the Gulf Coast and calculated here, where these railroads would cross, was a good place to build a city. Captain Hardy's great-great-niece Ann Aldridge, daughter of Dr. Katherine Smith Aldridge, will unveil the marker at a Founder's Day ceremony sponsored by the Society to be held at 3 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at the corner of Pine and Forrest Streets. The public is invited. (Photo by Charles Harris)



HAHS's float for the bicentennial parade sits at Kamper Park at the end of the parade.



Donations arrive at the Hattiesburg Area Historical Society's work room.



The Ott family sorting through years of photos to make their selections for the history book.



Jacq Jones and William McCain review the first copy of *The History of Forrest County* book before distribution.



To the left Phyllis Bailey explains the many types of baskets. She also gave a demonstration of weaving.



(Continued from page 1)

The History of Forrest County. As book sales and other society activities continued, the HAHS made the move to the Cultural Center. A ribbon cutting was held Friday, March 2, 2001. The three new occupants held an open house and public tours on the following Sunday.

The HAHS continues to cooperate with other groups for education, patriotism, historic preservation, and entertainment. Members have organized and conducted free tours to places of interest in the area and presented programs to showcase our area to newcomers and old timers.

In the past 20 years the HAHS has focused on its archives and greatly increased its permanent collection. Visitors from all 50 states have enjoyed the HAHS Museum and its many one-of-a-kind items relating to area history. Our **all volunteer** staff has worked diligently to organize these holdings and make them available to everyone. These volunteers have responded to emails and phone calls from all over the world, connected people from other countries with relatives they had never met, and provided answers to historical and genealogical questions.

To list all the HAHS volunteers who have helped promote Hattiesburg and preserve our history, would require writing another book. If you are reading this, you may be on the list. If you donated items or money: provided information: led a tour: gave a program; opened your home for visitors; helped sort, file, and display articles; or helped keep the museum open; you are one of these HAHS hero volunteers.

Fifty years ago the HAHS founders said that this needed to be done—that the area history needed to be told and preserved. The HAHS membership has worked to fill the void they saw then. Now on their behalf, today’s officers say, **“Thank you for your time and generosity.”**



Mississippi Departmentation of Archives and History presented HAHS a Resolution of Commendation for outstanding contributions to the preservation and interpretation of Mississippi history



The HAHS held a reception in the museum during The Victorian Candle Lighting. Southern Strings Dulcimers performed traditional Christmas music.





HAHS MUSEUM

Post Office Box 1573
Hattiesburg, MS
39403-1573

Museum Hours

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
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

Website:
www.hahsmuseum.org

Email:
hahsmuseum@mail.com



Officers

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Jean Herring, Phyllis Bailey,
Lee Terrio

HAHS had three of these signs constructed. They were placed on Highway 49S, Highway 49N and the train depot. The signs included military markings. This showed inclusion of Camp Shelby and the military who came to town.



In the late 90's MDOT and the city of Hattiesburg removed these signs without the knowledge of HAHS. The Society would have recovered the signs and as much of the brick as possible.



50th Anniversary

Open House

Join us at the

Hattiesburg Area Historical Society Museum

723 Main Street

Hattiesburg, MS

on

October 14, 2021

4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Just a few steps across Main Street will take you back in time as you visit the historic McLeod House

Be prepared to observe local COVID-19 guide lines