Internationally beloved pop culture icon Kermit the Frog on the banks of beautiful Deer Creek in Leland, Mississippi. Jim Henson, the creator of Kermit the Frog spent the majority of his years developing ideas regarding his love for nature on the banks of beautiful Deer Creek. Kermit the Frog and Jim Henson both were born in the Mississippi Delta.
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Dear Partners and Friends:

On behalf of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA), thank you for viewing our 2014-2016 Progress Report.

The MDNHA is a partnership between the people of the Mississippi Delta and the National Park Service that is managed by The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University. As of this report’s publication, the MDNHA is one of 49 Congressionally-designated National Heritage Areas across the United States. National Heritage Areas are natural, cultural, historic, and scenic landscapes that tell nationally important stories celebrating our shared heritage.

This report summarizes the MDNHA’s progress since its Management Plan was approved by the Secretary of the Interior in August 2014. When the MDNHA was designated by Congress in 2009, several years of region-wide planning and coalition building were invested in researching, writing, and finalizing the Management Plan. During that initial phase, a team of local, regional, and national leaders collaborated with the people of the Mississippi Delta to develop a blueprint that reflects collective cultural and economic development visions for the Mississippi Delta.

Since August 2014, our team has been busy fulfilling these visions. Working with Mississippi Delta residents, visitors, and supporters, the MDNHA Board and Directors and The Delta Center together have spearheaded various projects involving education, tourism, arts, humanities, historic preservation, and other creative disciplines. In this report, you will read about diverse ways that we are fulfilling the Management Plan including:

- **the MDNHA Passport to Your National Parks Program**, which features passport stations at museums, visitor centers, courthouses, and other sites in each of the MDNHA’s 18 counties;
- **the MDNHA Grants Program**, which has awarded over $345,000 in grants to cultural heritage development projects throughout the region;
- **GRAMMY Museum Mississippi’s “Top 40 Places to Visit in the Mississippi Delta” website**, a collaboration among the MDNHA, The Delta Center, the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association, and various county boards of supervisors that highlights 40 cultural heritage attractions across the region (several of which are illustrated in this report); and
- **the Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership**, a cultural heritage interpretation project that has engaged over 1,000 residents and visitors in honoring the lives of unsung Mississippi Delta church mothers in Alysia Burton Steele’s book, *Delta Jewels: In Search of My Grandmother’s Wisdom*.

Finally, I am pleased to share that the MDNHA and The Delta Center/Delta State University each received a **2016 National Park Service Centennial Award** for creating the Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership. We appreciate the contributions and support of our regional and national partners with this and other National Park Service Centennial endeavors.

To learn more, I invite you to visit our website: www.msdeltaheritage.com. Again, thank you for interest in and support of the MDNHA. Happy reading!

Best regards,

Rolando Herts, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area
MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear MDNHA Supporter,

On behalf of the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) Board of Directors, I am pleased to share its accomplishments in this report. As we review the past and look to the future, we recognize that MDNHA is at a pivotal point. The years of conceptualization, development, and planning have led to this juncture of implementation and execution of earlier determined goals and strategies.

In 2003, regional leaders recognized the benefits of having the Mississippi Delta declared a National Heritage Area. Work ensued, and in 2009, President Obama signed the official law creating the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. During 2013-14, a citizen-driven, 300-page Management Plan was completed. Throughout this long and intense process, the work of the Heritage Area enjoyed support from a range of Delta Partners and local citizens.

Today, in 2016-17, through the diligent efforts of the MDNHA Board of Directors, the Delta Center for Culture and Learning Staff, and local citizens, MDNHA has moved successfully into the implementation phase of this work. Some of the notable highlights for the 2016-17 year include:

- Development and adoption of Bylaws which serve as a road map to guide the business matters of MDNHA;
- Achieving 501c3 designation which will allow MDNHA to accept tax-exempt donations and grants from other organizations;
- Completion of the design and approval phase of the Highway Signage Project which will place signs in fourteen key entrances announcing the Mississippi Delta as one of the National Park Service’s National Heritage areas;
- A collaboration around Alysia Burton Steele’s book Delta Jewels: In Search of my Grandmothers’ Wisdom led to the Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership which has presented oral history programs and lectures throughout the state of Mississippi and the nation, including the Smithsonian and The White House;
- Establishment of the MDNHA Grants Program which has given over $345,000 in grants to 23 partners with matching funds of $642,516 for a total of $987,516 to support worthwhile projects which are consistent with the mission of MDNHA.

As we extol the successes of MDNHA, we would be remiss if we did not recognize that the foundation of the MDNHA’s achievements stand on the shoulders of past leaders. We salute the ones who came before: Luther Brown, Executive Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning; Ken Murphree, appointed as the first Board Chair by Governor Barbour; John Hilpert, President of Delta State University and second board chair appointed by the Governor; Jerome Hafter, legal counsel; Chip Morgan and Frank Howell, representing Delta Council.

We are now in the third year of the ten-year management plan. We succeeded but much remains to be done. Engage with us in this exciting work, with your support, MDNHA will continue to thrive.

Regards,

Myrtis Tabb
Chair of the MDNHA Board of Directors
THE CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION CREATING THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
SPECIFIED 15 BOARD MEMBERS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:

Mississippi Valley State University: La Shon F. Brooks
Alcorn State University:
Delta Foundation: Spencer Nash (Vice Chair)
Smith Robertson Museum: Charlene Thomas
Governor’s Appointee: Dr. Myrtis Tabb (Chair)
Delta Council: Bill Allen
Mississippi Arts Commission: Malcolm White
Mississippi Department of Archives and History: Kane Ditto
Mississippi Humanities Council: Dr. Stuart Rockoff
Delta State University: Dr. Charles McAdams

District 1: Kim Terrell (Secretary/Treasurer)
District 2: Kappi Allen
District 3: Robert Moore
District 4: Paula Sykes
District 5: Meg Cooper
ABOUT MISSISSIPPI DELTA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) is the land where the Blues began, where Rock and Roll was created and where Gospel remains a vibrant art. It is an agricultural region where cotton was once king, and where precision-ag rules today. It is a place that saw the struggles of the Civil War and the cultural revolution of the Civil Rights Movement. It is the home of the Great Migration, and a land of rich culinary, religious, artistic and literary heritage.

The MDNHA is a partnership between the people of the Mississippi Delta and the National Park Service. It is one of 49 National Heritage Areas in the United States designated by Congress that tell nationally important stories, celebrating our nation’s diverse heritage through community-based partnerships and local collaboration.

The mission of the MDNHA is to foster preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Mississippi Delta’s heritage through collaboration and sustainable economic development. Toward fulfilling this mission, the MDNHA focuses on developing five interrelated cultural heritage themes:

(1) The Mississippi Delta and the Land It Embraces;

(2) The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound;

(3) Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights;

(4) Growing More Than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity; and

(5) The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Diverse Communities.

The MDNHA was designated by Congress in 2009. The MDNHA is managed by The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University and is governed by a 15-member board representing agencies and organizations defined in its Congressional legislation. The MDNHA includes 18 counties that contain land located in the alluvial floodplain of the Mississippi Delta: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, DeSoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington and Yazoo.
Located in Tunica, Mississippi, the Tunica River Park is an excellent place to seek knowledge concerning the history of the Mississippi Delta and America's greatest river. The River Park allows you to interact with the awe-inspiring beauty of the Mississippi River.
The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area is unique in that, unlike many other National Heritage Areas, Congress remained silent on the legislative purpose, mission and vision when it created the MDNHA. This unusual circumstance left a blank slate on which MDNHA and its partners could craft the heritage area’s vision and mission as the management planning process unfolded. The mission statement articulates how the local coordinating entity and other partners in the MDNHA intend to make their vision for the future a reality. The vision statement was also crafted with considerable involvement from the public and the partners, outlining the views of what the Delta should be in ten to fifteen years. Both these statements are crucial in the compilation of the Management Plan, and in formulating and achieving the goals of the MDNHA and its programs.
The Mission Statement

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area fosters preservation, perpetuation and celebration of the Delta’s heritage through a climate of collaboration and sustainable economic development. Through a comprehensive and continual system of engagement and education, the National Heritage Area leads an inclusive network of partners, institutions and residents in achieving a regional vision. We create opportunities to save our special places, maintain our vibrant traditions, enhance community and cultural pride, support economic and social transformation and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta’s important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. We focus on five themes: The River and the Land it Embraces; The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound; Moving Toward Freedom: Changing America’s Character in the Struggle for Rights; Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity; and The Delta Divide: Creating the Delta’s Communities.

The Mission Statement Follows Through on These Three Areas:

To foster partnerships and educational opportunities that enhance, preserve and promote the heritage of the Mississippi Delta.

To ensure a balanced and sustainable approach to community and economic development and social transformation.

To create links between people and institutions that will promote activities that improve, protect and advance the understanding of the Delta.

Photo

The Holmes County Courthouse was designed by the Knoxville, Tennessee, firm of Walter Chamberlain & Co. Bishop Charles H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ, was arrested in Holmes County and jailed in the Courthouse. A historic marker recognizing Bishop Mason was erected on the courthouse grounds in 2015.
The people who call the Mississippi Delta “home” value the significant events and unique cultural traditions that influenced the development of America. Residents, communities, institutions, and cultural groups have collaborated to preserve special places connected to the Delta’s past, to honor and celebrate its diverse traditions and to document and share the history from settlement to migration, from the Civil War to Civil Rights. Residents are proud of their communities and their cultures and want to remain here to contribute to the Delta’s future. They understand the role of agriculture in their history and economy and celebrate the wellspring of creativity that birthed the internationally recognized Blues, a remarkable literary legacy and a spirit of determination. The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area includes revitalized communities, conservation of natural resources, new venues and events to tell the Delta’s story and increased visitation by heritage travelers and demonstrates progress toward sustainable economic growth.

**The Goals**

The following goals emerged from the process of developing the Management Plan and reflect the mission and vision statements, and legislative mandates. The goals are the basis for strategies and action steps that are presented in detail in the Management Plan’s strategy sections.

**Goal #1**

Perpetuate the unique culture of the Mississippi Delta through engagement of the people who live here to preserve, celebrate and share the places and stories of the region.

**Goal #2**

Save historic and natural resources by raising awareness of the threat of their loss, providing recognition for saving places and directing resources to training, education, and preservation.

**Goal #3**

Build a heritage-area wide network of partners by providing opportunities for engagement in a variety of activities.

**Goal #4**

Contribute to sustainable economic development through activities that will strengthen local and regional economies.
The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University and the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area received 2016 National Park Service Centennial Awards for creating the Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership.

The cultural heritage interpretation project has honored the lives of unsung Mississippi Delta church mothers featured in Alysia Burton Steele’s book, Delta Jewels: In Search of My Grandmother’s Wisdom. Delta State was the only higher education institution and the MDNHA was the only National Heritage Area to receive a NPS Centennial Award this year.

“The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and The Delta Center demonstrated exceptional leadership and creativity in organizing 15 community gatherings with Alysia Burton Steele and several of the Delta Jewels featured in the book,” said Chris Abbett, associate regional director of partnerships, interpretation and education at the National Park Service Southeast Regional Office. “The programs throughout Mississippi, as well as the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C., connected with and helped to create the next generation of visitors, supporters and advocates for the National Park Service.”

“We are honored to receive this esteemed recognition from the National Park Service for this important cultural heritage development project,” said Dr. Rolando Herts, director of The Delta Center and executive director of the MDNHA. “The fact that Delta State and the MDNHA are acknowledged together truly demonstrates the power of partnerships and collaboration when telling the Delta’s story.”

PHOTO, OPPOSITE PAGE: Pictured (l to r): Dr. Charles McAdams, provost and vice president of academic affairs; Dr. Rolando Herts, director, The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area; William N. LaForge, president, Delta State University; Fonce’ Bates, acting superintendent, Vicksburg Military Park; and Dr. Myrtis Tabb, board chair, Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

RIGHT PHOTO: Over 300 Mississippi Delta residents and visitors attended the Delta Jewels Community Gathering at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Mound Bayou, MS, where 32 of the 54 Delta Jewels were in attendance.
The MDNHA launched its participation in the Passport to Your National Parks program in November 2014 with the goal of making passport stations available in each of the MDNHA’s 18 counties.

After touring the Museum of the Mississippi Delta, Dr. Herts spoke at the Greenwood Rotary Club. The presentation included an overview of the Delta Center’s role as MDNHA’s management entity, as well as the MDNHA’s goals and themes.

By the spring of 2015, this goal was accomplished.

The 15-member board includes representatives from Mississippi Valley State, Alcorn State and Delta State University, as well as the Delta Foundation, Smith Robertson Museum, Delta Council, Mississippi Arts Commission, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and Mississippi Humanities Council.

The MDNHA sponsored the initial placement of one passport station in each of the Delta’s 18 counties.

While in Alaska, Dr. Herts shared how the MDNHA has collaborated with the National Park Service and other Heritage Area representatives to conduct research that illuminates Mississippi’s status as a leading National Heritage Areas state.

Dr. Rolando Herts presents a Passport to Your National Parks passport station to the Greenwood Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Map of the 18-county Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

Dr. Rolando Herts was invited by Melia Christensen to present on behalf of the MDNHA at Leland Rotary.
November 18, 2015 | MDHNA and Delta Center Highlighted at the National Trust Conference in D.C.
Dr. Rolando Herts was invited to represent the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and The Delta Center for Culture and Learning in a panel discussion at the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s 2015 Past Forward Conference in Washington, D.C.

January 8, 2016 | MDHNA Launches New Grants Program
A series of regional workshops was held to educate and inform the people of the Mississippi Delta on how to apply for MDHNA grants. The workshops were held in Clarksdale, Itta Bena, Rolling Fork, Indianola, and Hernando.

July 18, 2016 | MDHNA Awards $160,000 in Regional Grants Awarded
Nearly $160,000 in grants were awarded to 11 cultural heritage development projects in the Mississippi Delta. The projects represented the diversity of the region’s rich cultural heritage including Native and African American history, music, art, storytelling, the Delta Chinese, and the Mississippi River.

MDHNA Presentations Given to Local Civic Organizations
The Delta Center presented at the Cleveland Exchange Club and various Rotary clubs throughout the region on behalf of the MDNHA.

Top Photo  Dr. Rolando Herts (center) with National Heritage Areas program representatives Heather Scotten (left) and Martha Raymond at the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s PastForward Conference in Washington, D.C.
Middle Photo  Dr. Myrtis Tabb, Chair of the Board of Directors, and Dr. Rolando Herts, Executive Director, (standing, center) with representatives from organizations awarded cultural heritage development grants from the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.
Bottom Photo  Dr. Rolando Herts (far left) with Delta Center staff members Patricia Webster (second from left) and Lee Aylward (far right) after a presentation at the Cleveland Exchange Club hosted by Dawn Carver (third from left).
Built atop a ceremonial Indian Mound, this 1896 home overlooks the surrounding Delta fields like a queen. Helen Johnstone Harris and the Reverend George Carrol Harris were the first owners of the house. Each spring, the Friends of Mont Helena present a drama that tells the tragic story of Helen and her first love, Henry Vick of Nitta Yuma. During the rest of the year, the home is open for tours by appointment.
There are some places in our nation whose influence on our history and the society we live in has been so pervasive – has become so much a part of who we are – that we don’t often think about or recognize their value. The Delta simply would not have the heritage it has if it were not for the river’s deposition of the vast alluvial plain, a plain pre-destined for cotton. The oldest stories of the river and the land include the physical formation of the Delta and its rich alluvial soils, Native American settlement, and early European exploration of the wilderness. A variety of resources help tell the stories of the river and the land through the formation of the Delta, early inhabitants and exploration exposing the transformation, agriculture, floods, and the natural world.
Delta Wild Outdoor Adventure Program Art Place Mississippi

ArtPlace Mississippi, Greenwood, Mississippi - Delta Wild: Connecting people to the Mississippi Delta’s natural habitat and resources. Here are photos from a cotton education project that Delta Wild did with youth in the community using a grant from MDNHA.

Photos Billy Whittington taking the time to tell youth in the community about cotton farming through the years.
LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER FOUNDATION

Boyce Upholt’s research and writing on the Mississippi River was supported by a grant from the MDNHA. For more information, visit www.betweenthelevees.com.

PHOTOS Views of the Mississippi River as documented by Boyce Upholt.
The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

The land where the Blues began, where Rock and Roll was created and where Gospel remains a vibrant art.

Gateway to the Blues

Tunica County
Located on Blues Highway 61, the museum is the perfect place to begin your journey through the Mississippi Delta. Experience interactive exhibits, artwork and more - including a recording studio where you'll learn the basics of Blues music with a chance to record your very own Blues song. The Gateway is not only a museum, but also a visitor center and gift shop with official Tunica merchandise. So, before you trek through Blues country, get into a Blues-state-of-mind at the 2015 Mississippi Travel Attraction of the Year - the gateway to the Blues!
Music is another expression of the artistry that thrives in the Delta. The Blues was born here and rock-n-roll emerged from the Blues. Famous artists in many genres come from the region. In addition to hundreds of Bluesmen, Ike Turner influenced rock-n-roll, Conway Twitty and Charley Pride helped shape country music, and gospel thrives in churches across the Delta.

The Mississippi Delta's fertile ground gave birth to the Blues. The Delta is recognized internationally for its role in shaping American culture in the 20th century because it is the place where the African American musicians created the Blues. The Delta has been home to hundreds of famous Bluesmen and the jukes where they played. Music is in the lifeblood of the Delta. Rock 'n' roll was born there, emerging straight out of the Blues. Rhythm and Blues and jazz are also derived from the Blues, and gospel and country have strong roots in the Delta. A uniquely American musical form, Blues music has brought national and international recognition to the Delta and still thrives in the region today. The history and culture of the Blues can be seen in a wide variety of resources in the Delta and continues to be recognized worldwide.
Mississippi Valley State University has the only recording studio in the nation bearing the name of the late musician B.B. King. Panelists expounded upon the influence of Blues on the history of Jazz. Discussions included the struggle of ownership for African American music.

The MDNHA hosted the luncheon lecture which featured welcoming remarks from Dr. Rolando Herts followed by a lecture from Dr. Sade Turnipseed on the connections between Blues music and Mississippi Delta foodways. Authentic Delta cuisine selections listed in the MDNHA Management Plan were served, including barbecue, fried catfish, banana pudding, and sweet tea.

Photos: Blues artists and scholars including Lil Ray Neal, Bobby Rush, Otis Clay, James “Super Chikan” Johnson, Jessie Robinson, and Dr. Alphonso Sanders discussing historic and current topics during Mississippi Valley State University’s B.B. King Day.
The MDNHA collaborated with The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the International Delta Blues Project at Delta State University to present an “edu-taining” night of film and live music at GRAMMY Museum Mississippi in Cleveland. Film shorts created by students from Delta Hands for Hope of Shaw, Mississippi, and the Rosedale Freedom Project of Rosedale, Mississippi, were shown as part of a public screening of the award-winning documentary, “Take Me To the River.” The students attended after-school workshops learning film and oral history skills through a grant from the MDNHA.

Photos After viewing “Take Me To the River,” over 150 MDNHA community members enjoyed live performances from The Hi Rhythm section (featuring Charles and Leroy Hodges), Stax Music Academy Alumni Band, William Bell, Frayser Boy, Al Kapone, and GRAMMY winner Lawrence “Boo” Mitchell, owner of Royal Studios.
The Blues Brunch Panel Discussion with the Mississippi Blues Commission was held during the 2016 International Conference on the Blues at Delta State University.

Introductions were made by Dr. Rolando Herts, Director of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the panel was moderated by Dr. William Ferris, former Director of the National Endowment for the Humanities and current Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History at the University of North Carolina as well as the senior associate director of UNC’s Center for the Study of the American South.

Panel members were musicians James “Super Chikan” Johnson and Bobby Rush, as well as Mississippi Blues Commission representatives Bob Arentson, Wanda Clark, Mary Margaret Miller, J. Kempf Poole, and Edgar E. Smith.
“Culture of the Blues” collage featuring Delta State University’s International Conference of the Blues, Mississippi Valley State University’s B.B King Day, and the “Take Me To the River” screening at GRAMMY Museum Mississippi.
Leflore County

Mississippi Freedom Trail markers commemorate people, places and events of the Civil Rights movement. While marker locations span the entire state of Mississippi, several key markers are located in the Mississippi Delta region, where the Civil Rights Movement was sparked with the murder of Emmett Till. Markers in the Mississippi Delta include the Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial Gardenin Ruleville, the Amzie Moore Home in Cleveland, the home of Dr. T.R.M. Howard in Mound Bayou, the Bryant's Store/Emmett Till marker in Money, and civil rights activist Unita Blackwell, former mayor of Mayersville and the first African American female mayor in the state of Mississippi.
As the era of Civil Rights dawned in this nation, the Delta was home to pivotal events both horrible and inspirational, including Emmett Till’s murder, Freedom Summer and the Poor People’s Campaign. Leaders and activists such as Amzie Moore, Fannie Lou Hamer, the Freedom Riders, and Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegates are among those who paved the way for changes that are still unfolding today.
"Moving Towards Freedom" collage featuring Delta State University’s Winning the Race conference and the Unita Blackwell Mississippi Freedom Trail Marker dedication ceremony attended by over 100 guests including U.S. Congressman Bennie Thompson; Mayor Linda Short of Mayersville, Mississippi; Dr. Rolando Herts, MDNHA Executive Director; and Dr. Leslie-Burl McLemore, Chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Trail Task Force.
MARCH 30, 2015 | MDNHA HOSTS WINNING THE RACE OPENING RECEPTION
The reception was sponsored by the MDNHA in partnership with The Delta Center for Culture and Learning and the Winning the Race conference at Delta State University. Robert G. Stanton, the first African American director of the National Park Service, and former senior advisor to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, was the featured guest.

OCTOBER 29, 2015 | LAUNCH OF THE DELTA JEWELS ORAL HISTORY PARTNERSHIP
Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, Mississippi, was the first organization to host an oral history program under this new partnership.

FEBRUARY 2016 | MDNHA BLACK HISTORY MONTH
The MDNHA presented Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership events at Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi; Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation in Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Alcorn State University in Norman, Mississippi.

SEPTEMBER 2, 2016 | UNITA BLACKWELL MARKER ADDED TO THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM TRAIL
The Blackwell marker is the 22nd marker installed in the state, and was supported in part by partnership development funds from the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area in conjunction with support from Visit Mississippi, the Town of Mayersville and Mississippi’s Lower Delta Partnership.

TOP PHOTO Vicksburg National Military Park Superintendent Bill Justice and MDNHA Executive Director Rolando Herts with Bob Stanton, the first African American director of the National Park Service under the Clinton Administration at Delta State University’s Winning the Race conference.

BOTTOM PHOTO Unita Blackwell marker ceremony celebration, Mayersville, Mississippi
Farmer's Grocery Restaurant is located on Highway 1 in Grace, Mississippi. The menu includes delicious Delta cuisine served in a casual atmosphere. A lunch buffet is available on weekdays, with breakfast, lunch, and dinner served everyday but Sunday, when only lunch is available.
The multitude of books, poems, plays and films that have emerged from the creative ranks of the Delta demonstrate how the region has reflected elements of—and has influenced—American society from the 19th century to today. Famous authors such as Tennessee Williams, William Alexander Percy, and Richard Wright are among the dozens of people who have lived in or written about the Delta.

Creativity is found in many Delta endeavors, including the arts, food, business and religion. From Marshall Bouldin’s portraits to Sammy Britt’s landscapes to the Tutwiler quilters and a host of pottery guilds, the work of artists colors the Delta and reaches well beyond it. Local restaurants remain an important fabric of communities. From folk traditions with ties to Africa and the Caribbean, to Jewish, Catholic and Protestant denominations, expressions of faith contribute to the Delta’s creative cultural mosaic.
“Wellspring of Creativity” collage featuring B.B. King Museum and Interpretive Center, Indianola, Mississippi; Mississippi River Blues 1927 Flood Blues Trail Marker, Scott, Mississippi; Indianola Pecan House; Peter’s Pottery, Mound Bayou, Mississippi; The Senator’s Place restaurant, Cleveland, Mississippi; Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership gatherings, Clarksdale and Itta Bena, Mississippi.
To recognize their commitment to promoting educational and cultural quality of life in the Mississippi Delta region, GRAMMY Museum Mississippi and the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA) partnered to develop a new website showcasing the Top 40 Places to Visit in the Mississippi Delta. The MDNHA worked with the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association and various county boards of supervisors to develop a diverse list of popular and lesser known Mississippi Delta attractions. The website is available at http://msdeltatop40.com.
JULY 11, 2015 | GATHERING OF THE DELTA JEWELS, MOUND BAYOU, MISSISSIPPI
The Delta Center for Culture and Learning, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area and Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church of Mound Bayou collaborated to host this special event in conjunction with Mound Bayou’s 128th Founders Day celebration. The “Gathering of the Delta Jewels” attracted over 30 Delta Jewels church mothers and over 300 attendees from throughout the state and the nation.

MDNHA MANAGES THE PASSPORT TO YOUR NATIONAL PARKS PROGRAM
The program features passport stations in each of the region’s 18 counties. The Delta Center serves as the program headquarters, welcoming passport collectors traveling the region and directing them to passport locations throughout the MDNHA.

OCTOBER 22, 2015 | THE MDNHA MANAGES THE DELTA JEWELS ORAL HISTORY PARTNERSHIP
The MDNHA and The Delta Center partnered with various regional organizations to host a series of Delta Jewels Community Gatherings in Clarksdale, Charleston, Indianola, Yazoo City, Ruleville, and Mound Bayou.

TOP PHOTO Alysia Burton Steele, center, with Delta Jewels church mothers at a Delta Jewels Community Gathering in Yazoo City.
MIDDLE PHOTO Beth and Stan, travelers from Vidalia, Georgia, getting MDNHA passport stamps at The Delta Center.
BOTTOM PHOTO The cover of “Delta Jewels: In Search of My Grandmother’s Wisdom,”
**OCTOBER 2015 | MDNHA, DELTA CENTER ANNOUNCE DELTA JEWELS ORAL HISTORY PARTNERSHIP**

Through the new partnership, oral history interpretation events were held at Mississippi Valley State University, Jackson State University, Delta State University, Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation in Vicksburg, Alcorn State University, University of Southern Mississippi, St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church in Cleveland, Holmes Community College in Grenada and Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center in Jackson.

**JANUARY 26, 2016 | NATIONAL PARK TRAVELERS CLUB MEMBERS VISIT THE DELTA CENTER**

The Delta Center staff members greeted [National Park Travelers Club members with MDNHA National Park Service Centennial passport t-shirts](#).

**MARCH 13, 2016 | PARTNERSHIP IN DC**

Commemorating Women’s History Month and the National Park Service Centennial, the [Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership](#) recognized [Annyce Campbell](#) for her strength and commitment at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Campbell also toured The White House during her visit.

**APRIL 2016 | THE DELTA CENTER**

The Delta Center hosted a group of [Swedish music tourists](#), introducing them to the rich cultural heritage of the MDNHA.

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**TOP PHOTO**  The Delta Center staff members recently greeted National Park Travelers Club members with MDNHA National Park Service Centennial passport t-shirts.

**MIDDLE PHOTO**  Annyce Campbell of Mound Bayou, whose portrait graces the cover of “Delta Jewels: In Search of My Grandmother’s Wisdom,” enjoyed a visit to The White House during the Delta Jewels presentation at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum.

**BOTTOM PHOTO**  New exhibit displays at Rolling Fork Visitors Center and Museum supported by a MDNHA grant.
The Delta Center for Culture and Learning’s experiential learning program introduces diverse groups of visitors to the vibrant, living cultural heritage of the 18-county MDNHA. Members of the “Rock Your Blues” tour group from Sweden are welcomed and embraced by members of the congregation, a true illustration of the warm hospitality that many travelers have experienced in the Mississippi Delta.
The Delta is also a place of communities. In the 19th century, the self-contained industries and large labor forces of plantations formed the basis for community. After the Civil War ended, several ethnic groups were recruited to the region as sharecroppers to replace black laborers or simply came seeking opportunity. Italian, Jewish, Chinese and Lebanese immigrants added elements of their cultures to the Delta’s mix. The built environment in Delta communities ranges from vernacular to high style, providing a window into many aspects of the region’s complex history.
JULY 21, 2015 | NEH WORKSHOPS CREATE DELTA AMBASSADORS

NEH workshop has created a national network of over 500 educational and cultural ambassadors for the MDNHA. K-12 educators spend a week being immersed in the MDNHA’s culture and history. Prominent immigrant landmarks that the NEH summer scholars visit in the MDNHA are the site of the Chinese Mission School in Cleveland, Mississippi, and the Chinese Cemetery and Hebrew Union Temple in Greenville, Mississippi.

PHOTOS In total, 72 K-12 teachers from across the nation took part in this summer’s “Most Southern Place on Earth” workshops.
A “Delta’s Diverse Communities” collage featuring the Chinese Cemetery and Live Oak African American Cemetery in Greenville, Mississippi; the Delta Jewels Oral History Partnership; the Martin & Sue King Railroad Museum in Cleveland, Mississippi; and Hebrew Union Temple in Greenville, Mississippi.
PHOTOS A "Delta's Diverse Communities" collage featuring some attractions included on the Top 40 Places to Visit in the Mississippi Delta website.
Photos: A “Delta’s Diverse Communities” collage featuring NEH “Most Southern Place on Earth” workshop landmarks including Hebrew Union Temple and the 1927 Flood Museum in Greenville, Mississippi, and the Martin & Sue King Railroad Museum in Cleveland, Mississippi.
DECEMBER 8, 2016 | A TRIBUTE TO JERRY HAFTER, MDNHA BOARD ATTORNEY

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area pays special tribute to Jerome C. “Jerry” Hafter. Jerry served faithfully as MDNHA board attorney from 2012 until he passed away in September 2016.

Jerry practiced law for more than 40 years in Mississippi. In addition to his legal career, he was committed to his responsibilities as a citizen of his community, state and nation. In 2015, he received The Mississippi Bar's Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his many accomplishments.

Jerry attended public schools in Greenville, Mississippi, and graduated as Valedictorian of his class in 1963. He received his B. A. Degree, summa cum laude, from Rice University in 1967 and attended Oxford University in England, from 1967-1968, as a Marshall Scholar. He received his J. D. Degree from Yale Law School in 1972.

Jerry is survived by his wife, Jocille Hafter, and his son, Bryan Hafter.

PHOTO Jocille Hafter (second from left) accepts a plaque from the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area in honor of her husband Jerry Hafter's contributions to the MDNHA. She is pictured here with Dr. Rolando Herts, MDNHA executive director and MDNHA board chair Dr. Myrtis Tabb and vice chair Spencer Nash.
SPECIAL CREDITS AND THANKS
Bobby D. Steele, Jr., Photography
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Shannon Bowden, Researcher
Keith Johnson, Graduate Assistant, The Delta Center

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University is the management entity for the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area. The staff of The Delta Center are:

Dr. Rolando Herts, Director, rherts@deltastate.edu

Lee Aylward, Program Associate for Education and Community Outreach, laylward@deltastate.edu

Shelia Winters, Program Associate for Projects, swinters@deltastate.edu

www.msdeltaheritage.com

www.deltacenterdsu.com

(662) 846-4311