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Historic Natchez Foundation
2016 Awards

- George and Ethel Kelly
Restoration Award**

**David Garner and Lee Glover
Choctaw**

**Natchez National Historical Park
Log Cabin**

**Mary Postlethwaite
History Award**

Jim Barnett
Watkins Street Cemetery

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Natchez Tricentennial

Special Merit Award

Marcia McCullough
Garden Lovers of Natchez
Downtown Hanging Baskets

Burnley Cook
Baker Grand Organ

Archives and History awards \$105,795
grant for Temple B’Nai Israel



Temple B’nai Israel dates to 1904 and is the city’s finest example of Beaux Arts Classicism. On the interior, a marble frontispiece defines the ark.

On December 2, 2016, the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History approved a \$105,795 grant to the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute for Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) for the restoration and rehabilitation of Temple B’nai Israel.

The Historic Natchez Foundation prepared the grant application with support from the ISJL and the temple membership, who both envision an expanded function for the temple as a cultural facility, accessible to all, with an elevator, museum exhibits, and special programming. Its location, 350-seat sanctuary and large basement reception and exhibit area will make it an ideal venue for conferences and special events seeking a unique historic setting.

Gerald Krouse, a member of the temple and the Historic Natchez Foundation, recently donated \$100,000. The temple membership and the ISJL are working hard to insure that Temple B’nai Israel will continue to play an important role in the city’s religious and cultural life and that the contributions of Jews to the history of Natchez will forever be honored.

HNF hires first curator of collections



Nicole Harris begins work January 3 as the foundation’s first full-time curator. A Louisiana native, she received her undergraduate degree in anthropology from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and her master’s degree in anthropology from the University of Southern Mississippi.

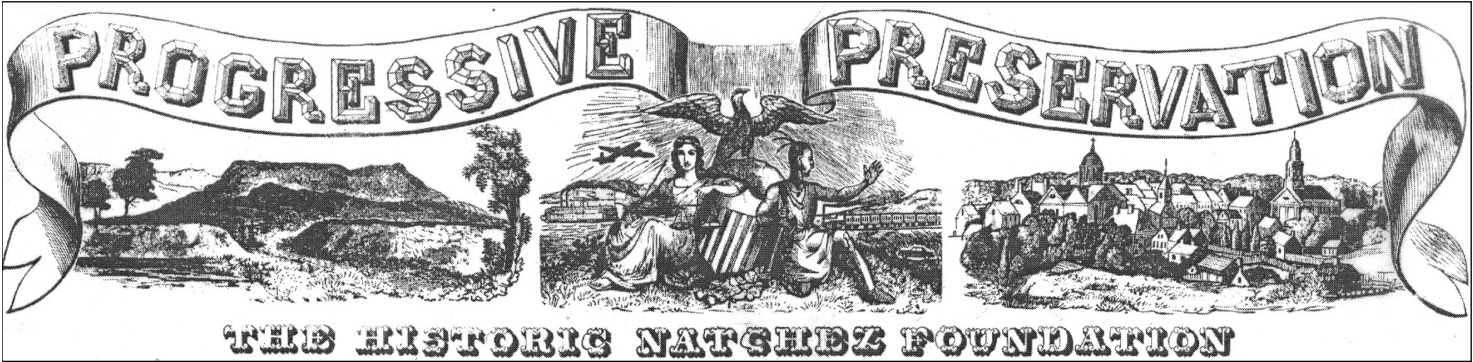
Nicole has taught at the university level and has experience in curating archaeological collections and in grant writing and management. She will also be the foundation’s contact with the archaeological community as HNF seeks to increase the number of university field schools. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Alabama have directed field schools in the Natchez area in the past five years. The Historic Natchez Foundation and the Natchez National Historical Park are now exploring the possibility of establishing a permanent field house in Natchez to support this effort.

From 2006 to 2013, Nicole worked for the Forensic Anthropology and Computer Enhancement Services Laboratory at Louisiana State University, where she worked on building the Louisiana Repository for Unidentified and Missing Persons Information Program database and collected DNA to assist in the identification of unidentified persons.

As the foundation’s first full-time curator, Nicole will have the challenge of cataloguing the foundation’s extensive collections using PastPerfect, the museum field’s leading software. She will first tackle the foundation’s growing research library which will familiarize her with the research material available to assist the public in Natchez history, genealogy, architecture, and decorative arts.

Nicole expresses excitement at the opportunity to work again in the history field and looks forward to working with the community to preserve and promote the historic and prehistoric resources of Natchez and Adams County.

Nicole is married to Lance Harris, who moved to Natchez to become Director of the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians in January 2015. The Harrises have two young children, Amelie, 6, and Roan, 2.



Volume I January 2017
HNF hosts annual meeting on January 19



The Historic Natchez Foundation will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, January 19, 2017, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Magnolia Bluffs Hotel, 645 South Canal Street.

The location of this year’s annual meeting recognizes the important role that Magnolia Bluffs Casino and Hotel plays in the annual success of the Great Mississippi River Balloon Race. Magnolia Bluffs is a \$10,000 sponsor and the major provider of pilot rooms.

Both the foundation and the Great Mississippi River Balloon Race committee wanted to show their appreciation for the company’s sponsorship and also give the Natchez community an opportunity to tour the renovated hotel.

Magnolia Bluffs Casino has totally redecorated the hotel in a cheerful mid-century modern theme, and several rooms will be open for self-guided tours from 5:30-7:00 p.m. HNF members and guests can enter the hotel from the front or rear entrances both of which are

handicap accessible.

Magnolia Bluffs Casino and Las Vegas architect Edward Vance also worked closely with the Historic Natchez Foundation on the design of the casino, which rejects the typical glitter of traditional casinos and complements the historic character of the Natchez riverfront.

The annual meeting will begin at 5:30 with a reception and cash bar that includes a tour of selected hotel rooms. The event will conclude with a short business meeting at 7:00 in the hotel banquet room to elect new board members, make a change in the foundation by-laws, and present annual awards for 2016.

The foundation also looks forward to introducing the Natchez community to Nicole Harris who begins work on January 3 as the foundation’s first fulltime curator in charge of the library, archives (including historic courthouse records), and a growing museum collection.

JOIN TODAY TO PRESERVE THE PAST FOR A BETTER TOMORROW
Membership expiration dates are printed above your address on every mail-out from the foundation. Each membership and donation is very important to us.

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The Historic Natchez Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.
Return this form with your donation to:
Historic Natchez Foundation, P. O. Box 1761, Natchez, MS 39121 601-442-2500 and hnf@natchez.org

Stabilization work begins at Melmont

Stabilization work is well underway at Melmont, the mansion on North Rankin Street built for the Shaw family in 1855. The City of Natchez and the Historic Natchez Foundation had both expressed concerns about the condition of the house during the past decade. In 2015, the Mississippi Heritage Trust named Melmont as one of Mississippi’s Ten Most Endangered Places.

In January 2016, a portion of the south wall collapsed and the City of Natchez put the owners on notice that efforts had to begin on its stabilization and restoration within a certain time period. The Historic Natchez Foundation hired a structural engineer, Ashton Avegno of New Orleans, to evaluate the condition of Melmont. He offered reassurance that it could still be preserved and restored.

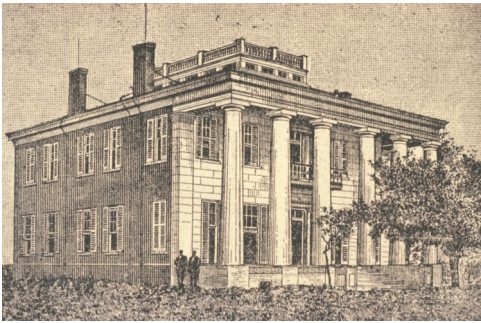
The stabilization work now underway is under the direction of the Oberlin family who owns the property. The project is being overseen by Joseph Stephens, the son of Frances Oberlin Stephens. Joe lived in

the house as a child before moving to Tennessee in grade school. Architect for the project is Robert Parker Adams and the contractor is J. A. Moss Construction, both of Jackson.



Stabilization work at Melmont is visible on the exterior and interior, where frame stud walls have now been built within the brick walls to support the house while the brick walls are repaired or rebuilt as necessary.

Missionary Baptists introduce plans for Natchez College



The General Missionary Baptist State Convention of Mississippi has announced exciting plans for the historic Natchez College site in the Woodlawn Historic District. The convention intends an approximate \$15 million development of the campus as a Baptist Heritage and Arts Center, modeled somewhat on The Gray Center, an Episcopal camp and conference center in Canton.

The Rev. Gerald Buckley, executive director of the convention’s Congress of Christian Education, describes the vision of the proposed center as coming home to Natchez, which had the state’s first African American Baptist congregation (Rose Hill Missionary Baptist) and the first African American Baptist seminary.

The General Missionary Baptist State Convention of Mississippi established Natchez College in 1884 and opened the school to five students in 1885. Its campus

occupied the antebellum mansion property known as Elmo (pictured left), built about 1856 for the Douglas Walworth family. Elmo served as the main college building until destroyed by fire between 1901 and 1904.

For most of its history, Natchez College functioned as a preparatory school and junior college. It played an important role in the education of African Americans in Mississippi and its graduates assumed positions of leadership in the Natchez community and far beyond.

The early success of Natchez College was due largely to Dr. S. H. C. Owen, who served 30 years as president from 1899 to 1929. Reared in Tennessee, Dr. Owen met his wife, Sarah Mazique of Natchez, when both were students at Roger Williams University in Nashville. Sarah Mazique Owen later served as Dean of Women at Natchez College.



Dr. S. H. C. Owen

A 1910 national study of African American schools noted that Natchez College was well managed but was perhaps too focused on an academic curriculum that included even the study of Latin and Greek.

HNF received major bequests in 2016

HNF received two major bequests in 2016 from the wills of Ruth Adele Lovitt and Edna Raphael. The foundation was one of several charities who benefitted from the generosity of the two Natchez natives. HNF received \$32,609 from the Lovitt Estate and \$25,000 from the estate of Raphael, who also bequeathed to HNF the family property at 505-507 State Street.



Mary Britton Conner photographed the State Street Raphael property about 1900.

The success of graduates during Dr. Owen’s tenure proved the value of his curriculum. Three of his own four sons became medical doctors; the fourth, a dentist. His wife’s nephews, Douglas and Edward Mazique, also graduated from Natchez College and became esteemed physicians in Chicago and Washington, D. C.

One of the school’s best known students was Anne Moody who wrote *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, still on the required reading list of many colleges and universities.

Natchez College closed in 1989 and the Historic Natchez Foundation listed the college in the National Register in 1995. HNF first met with the Rev. Buckley about three years ago and strongly supports the project, which will have a tremendous economic impact on Natchez and serve as the catalyst for a major revitalization of the historic Woodlawn neighborhood.



The 1930 Women’s Auxiliary Building at Natchez College as it appears today.

Donations increase archival and museum collections

HNF part-time employee Patricia Catchings and volunteer Bill Lee spent many hours in 2016 cataloguing collections donated to the foundation.

One of the largest and most significant collections donated to the foundation is the William E. Stewart Collection, which has involved a series of donations over a decade. The collection encompasses multiple generations of a Natchez family, whose patriarch, Andrew Marshalk, is today recognized as the Father of Mississippi Printing.

Andrew Marshalk’s daughter Susannah married Robert Stewart, a



Robert & Susannah Stewart

Pennsylvania cabinetmaker and furniture retailer who expanded into undertaking. He served on the Natchez Board of Selectmen and also held the office of city sexton for decades. The job of the sexton was similar to today’s coroner. For decades, Robert Stewart meticulously recorded all deaths within the city limits and included information invaluable to genealogists and scholars. He recorded the age of the

deceased, the attending physician (if any), the cause of death, and the place of burial.

Subsequent generations of the Stewart family were involved in downtown retail establishments and in the insurance business. Every generation of the Stewart family was also actively engaged in almost every facet of civic life of the Natchez community.

The William E. Stewart Collection includes the largest archive of Civil War photographs of Natchez, as well as hundreds of photographs taken by multiple generations of the family. The quality of the photographs made by Livingston and William Percy Stewart in the late 19th century rival the quality of the city’s best professional photographers.



Henry Gurney photograph of barracks and soldiers within Fort McPherson

William E. Stewart, known as Bill, was a “hoarder” (in the best sense of the word) of Natchez history and Betty, his wife, has been the careful curator of Bill’s

hoard.

The Stewart Collection also encompasses invitations and programs of events dating throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as posters and political cards.

Bill Stewart has proved to be the major photographer of mid-20th century Natchez events. He photographed Civil Rights marches, store openings, and disasters of every kind. He also photographed a Ku Klux Klan rally at Liberty Park from the safety of his car.

The donated items includes museum objects, including a beautifully decorated 19th-century fireman’s horn delivered by Betty Stewart at the end of 2016. HNF looks forward to sharing the Stewart Collection with the Natchez community.



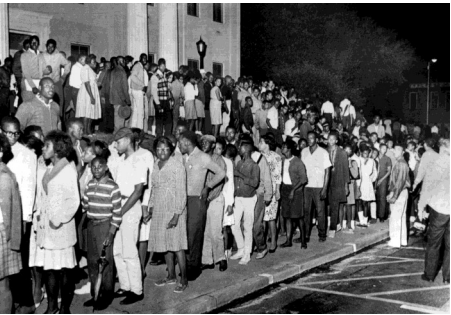
Bill Stewart Pilot, World War II



HNF receives Civil Rights grant from National Park Service Program



1965 Civil Rights marchers on Franklin St. (above) and the courthouse (below).



HNF recently received notification that it received a grant of \$50,000 to research and preserve the Civil Rights history of Natchez and Adams County. HNF’s project was one of two Mississippi projects to receive funding from the \$7.75 million grant fund. The other project will restore the Tallahatchie County courthouse, where the trial of Emmett Till’s accused murderers was held.

HNF’s project will survey buildings and sites that played a role in the Civil Rights Movement in Natchez and Adams County and will prepare a National Register nomination that includes these important resources. HNF also hopes to create a Civil Rights Trail with interpretive markers, map, and guidebook. The project is supported also by the city, county, Community Alliance, and Natchez National Historical Park.

Civil Rights scholars today credit Natchez with organizing Mississippi’s most successful movement.



The Klan marches on Main St. and the National Guard patrols St. Catherine St.

