A photograph of a musician playing a harmonica in a room with a window and a coat rack. The musician is in the lower right, wearing a dark suit and a yellow wristband, holding a red harmonica. The room has a window with a white frame, a coat rack with a white jacket and a dark bag, and a wooden door with a light switch. The lighting is warm and natural, coming from the window.

LIVE FROM THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN MUSIC

A portrait of the Blues
as seen through the
eyes of those living it.

LIVE FROM THE BIRTHPLACE OF AMERICAN MUSIC

A portrait of the Blues as seen through the eyes of those living it.

PHOTO © Matthew Wood



Live from the Birthplace of the Blues was funded by The History Channel's *Save Our History* program. Its aim is to document the story of the Blues in the Mississippi Delta, the birthplace of this uniquely American art form. The project was administered by the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS. The students of the Lighthouse Arts & Heritage After-School Program, located at D.M. Smith Middle School, were the project's participants.

The students of the Lighthouse program, all 7th and 8th graders, learned background knowledge about the Blues and formative events in the Delta and the country during the early days of the Blues. They received oral history training, and then interviewed five local Blues musicians. Partial transcripts of these interviews are included in this booklet; the entire transcripts are available online at www.birthplaceoftheblues.com.

This booklet has multiple goals. First, it can be used to learn the history of the Blues and the culture from which it rose. The Blues influenced much of modern music (rock 'n' roll, R&B, jazz, and even rap), and as an important American contribution to the world, it is worth studying. The booklet is also a teacher's resource, as one lesson exploring the life of Son Thomas is in the pages that follow, and four additional lesson plans are available online. Finally, there is a section that details oral history training with youth, and it is our hope that this booklet will spur other groups and classrooms to discover the heritage of their hometowns, and preserve it before it is lost.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK
THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS
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The Mississippi Blues Commission

Delta State University
D.M. Smith Middle School
Luther Brown
Allison Melton
Lee Aylward
Jimmie Washington
Bobbie Dean
Bill Abel
"Cadillac" John Nolden
Pat Thomas
Butch Ruth
Monroe Jones
Roger Stolle
James "T-Model" Ford
Mary Margaret Miller
Jimmy "Duck" Holmes
Teretha Lewis
Kay Stricklin
Emily Weaver
Don Allan Mitchell
Shelley Collins
Matthew Wood
Leslie Griffin
Jenetta Waddell

Introduction to the Blues	4
Bill Abel and "Cadillac" John Nolden	6
Monroe Jones	8
Pat Thomas	9
Jimmy "Duck" Holmes	10
James "T-Model" Ford	11
How Blue Can You Get?	12
Oral History Training	13
Delta Blues Historical Intersections: A Meeting of Culture, Place, Events, and People A Series of Lesson Plans	14
Lesson Plan: James "Son" Thomas	15
Blues Glossary	17
Blues Landmarks	18

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ENJOY THE BOOKLET!

John Heggen
Director
Lighthouse Arts & Heritage
After-School Program
DSU Delta Center
for Culture and Learning
May, 2008

The Blues: This original American art form is defined by the Mississippi Blues Commission as "African American roots music and the culture that produced it." Most people think of the music when they think of Blues, but the cultural aspect is extremely important, and the music really can't be appreciated or understood without it. Blues isn't just "twelve bar" music, it's a world view, a way of life, an entire culture. To understand the Blues, one must also know about the River, the Land, Juke Joints, Civil Rights, Jim Crow, and the Great Migration.

The Blues (as a world view) is about paradoxical contradiction and the irresolvable conflict/co-dependence of opposites. The Blues is about hope and despair, leaving and being left, wronging and being wronged, lynching and loving, tragedy and triumph, Saturday night and Sunday morning. It's a way of taking trouble and making a song out of it, and helping to explain why the righteous suffer in the process, all in a completely vernacular and secular manner. The Blues makes a joyful noise out of lamentation and mourning. It is a way of making poetic and rhythmic sense out of life, and it grows directly out of the life of the Mississippi Delta.

THE BLUES

IT'S A WORLD VIEW, A WAY OF LIFE, AN ENTIRE CULTURE

In 1943, Langston Hughes watched Memphis Minnie perform at the 230 Club in Chicago. He wrote about the evening in *The Chicago Defender* on January 9, and in the process, defined the Blues:

MAKES THE CROWD
HOLLER OUT LOUD

But Memphis Minnie says nothing of the sort. Instead she grabs the microphone and yells, "Hey, now!" Then she hits a few deep chords at random, leans forward ever so slightly over her guitar, bows her head and begins to beat out a good old steady down-home rhythm on the strings—a rhythm so contagious that often it makes the crowd holler out loud.

Then Minnie smiles. Her gold teeth flash for a split second. Her ear-rings tremble. Her left hand with dark red nails moves up and down the strings of the guitar's neck. Her right hand with the dice ring on it picks out the tune, throbs out the rhythm, beats out the blues.

Then, through the smoke and racket of the noisy Chicago bar float Louisiana bayous, muddy old swamps, Mississippi dust and sun, cotton fields, lonesome roads, train whistles in the night, mosquitoes at dawn, and the Rural Free Delivery, that never brings the right letter. All these things cry through the strings on Memphis Minnie's electric guitar, amplified to machine proportions—a musical version of electric welders plus a rolling mill.

Big rough old Delta cities float in the smoke, too. Also border cities, Northern cities, Relief, W.P.A., Muscle Shoals, the jooks, "Has Anybody Seen My Pigmeat On The Line," "See-See Rider," St. Louis, Antoine Street, Willow Run, folks on the move who leave and don't care. The hand with the dice-ring picks out music like this. Music with so much in it folks remember that sometimes it makes them holler out loud...

—Langston Hughes, "Music at Year's End". *The Chicago Defender*, January 9, 1943.
Reprinted in *Oxford American Magazine*, Spring, 2003

The Blues are the true facts of life expressed in words and song, inspiration, feeling, and understanding.

—Willie Dixon

THE BLUES IS THE TRUTH

Listening to it, you sense the sticky mud and searing summer heat of the bottomland, the tenant shacks, and eerie specters at desolate crossroads. You feel the despair, joy, hate, fear, wanderlust, and heartbreak. To put it simply, the Delta blues is the truth. That's why it resonates so deeply across time and culture.

—Robert Peterson in *Charley Patton and his Mississippi Boweavil Blues*

American Entomologist, Fall 2007, 53(3): 142-144

THE BLUES IS THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA

Blues is both music and the culture that produced it. It is music about the truth of place. It captures the feel and the poetry of the place and re-presents it through rhythm and lyric and sliding "blue" notes.

Part of this place is physical. It is a place of the River, floods and droughts, cotton, mules, shanties and shacks, train whistles, endless fields, and crimson sunsets. It is hot all the time, sweaty, often excessively masculine or excessively feminine. It is sometimes violent but often joyous too. It is a place of soul satisfying food and sometimes hard drinking. It is a place of hard work and hard living, but also of the excitement of life and love.

Another part of this place is metaphysical. It is a place where no good deed goes unpunished, where it is impossible to get ahead no matter how hard one tries, where no lover can ever be trusted for long, where the deck is stacked against the player and the Devil is always ready to make a deal for one's soul if he hasn't already done so. At the same time, it is a place where travel means freedom and where a man or woman can make a living with a guitar or harmonica instead of picking cotton in the hot sun.

Finally, part of this place is sociological. It is a place where the Man controls the game, where power and wealth are controlled by the High Sheriff and the judge (if not the hangman), and Parchman Penitentiary is the residence of those who live long enough to end up there. It is a place of Jim Crow segregation, separate and unequal, and perpetual second class citizenship. At the same time, it is a place where a man can live by his wits, where clever rhymes and rhythms can lead to good times and happiness.

This place is the Mississippi Delta. And the Delta Blues is about the truth of the place itself. The Blues weaves the various aspects of the place through its lyrics, using the poetry and the rhythms of the music to re-create the feel, taste, smell, sound, and touch of the Mississippi Delta. The Blues was born here, and it uses music to describe the landscape and the life of the place itself.

The blues is an art of ambiguity, an assertion of the irrepressibly human over all circumstances, whether created by others or by one's own human failing.

—Ralph Ellison, *Remembering Jimmy*, *Saturday Review* XLI, 1958.

"Cadillac" John Nolden (1927-) is a Bluesman from Sunflower County. In his early career he was primarily a vocalist in gospel groups, including the Four Nolden Brothers and the Four Stars. He began to play the Blues, and the harmonica, after his wife left him. He currently regularly plays and tours with Bill Abel, and the two released *Crazy About You* in 2000.

Bill Abel (1963-) was born and raised in Belzoni, MS, and learned to play the Blues from the local musicians he has known his entire life, including Paul "Wine" Jones. Bill has played extensively in the United States and Europe, and in addition to performing with "Cadillac" John, he has also performed with Honey Boy Edwards, T-Model Ford, Sam Carr, David Lee Durham, Monroe Jones, and Big George Brock.

"CADILLAC" JOHN NOLDEN AND BILL ABEL

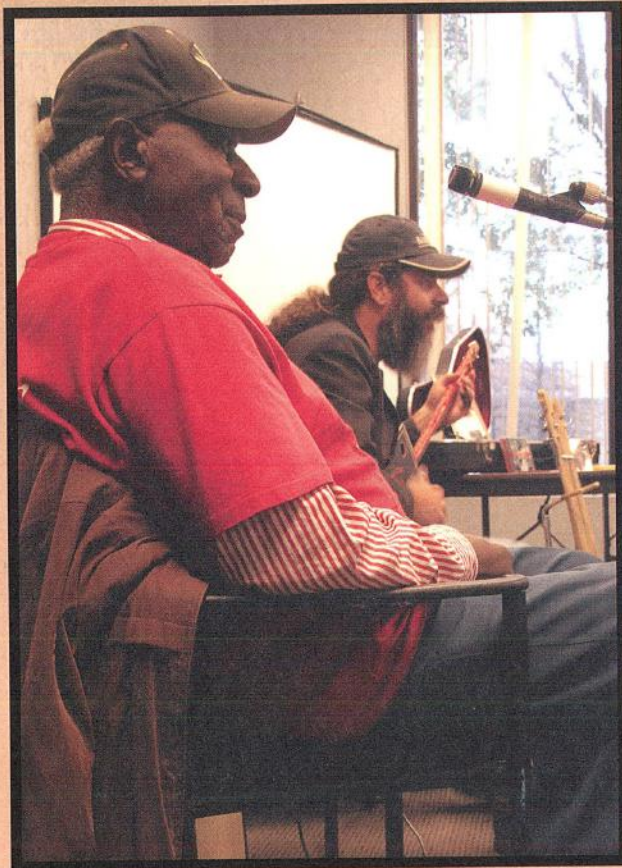


PHOTO © Allison Melton

THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM AN INTERVIEW ON
DECEMBER 12, 2007, AT DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY.

Bill Abel: John's music is from the sound of the 40's, mostly the 40's and 50's, and, which is called post-World War II Blues, after World War II. So, he had the privilege when he was young seeing the earliest Delta Blues guys, cause the Blues, the Delta Blues, is not that old, a hundred years old, when it really started. And John saw a lot of it when he was younger, and, he can answer any questions y'all have about the Blues.

Student: What is the difference between a single and the other notes?

Bill Abel: Well, say like on here, see (plays chord on guitar), B.B. King might play (plays single notes on guitar) and the older guys, cause they didn't have a whole band, they would, they'd put, like, bass in there (plays single notes and bass line on guitar). So it made, you know, more of a full sound.

Student: Mr. Bill, I would like to know how did you two meet?

Bill Abel: We met through another Blues guy that lives here named Monroe Jones. John needed a guitar player, and uh, most everybody plays new Blues and the older blues, the guys that play it only play it the way they play it and so Monroe knew I could play different ways so he put us together. So I went around his house, picked him up, and we've been having fun ever since.

Student: Mr. John, how long have you been play—how long have you two been playing together?

John Nolden: Bill, how long we been playing together?

Bill Abel: Eight years.

John Nolden: Okay, eight years.

Student: What was your childhood like?

John Nolden: Well, I come up kinda ... well, it was all right, but I had to work all the time, you know, something you ain't never seen. I used to plow on mules, and you know I couldn't go to school much so I didn't get no good learning, sure didn't. No, I had, got to try in that muddy water, lining up mules. ... One time after we go to the woods and hauled wood, cut trees down ... y'all might have heard (inaudible) tell something like that, but I know you don't know nothing 'bout that, but back in that time people would take a crosscut saw, two men, pulling,

and you cut your own winter wood. I was on a farm, and it didn't have this geared stuff like we got now, not out in the rural area. You had to take a hack saw or sledge hammer, go out and cut the wood, take away the mule, haul it back to the house. And, uh, you had your winter supply right there in your yard. That's kind of a rough way but it work.

...A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVEN'T HEARD THE REAL BLUES.

**CAUSE THERE'S NOT MANY GUYS
LEFT THAT, THAT HAVE THE TRUTH
IN THEM LIKE THAT WHEN THEY
SING IT.**

John Nolden: I was, used to, be around with B.B. King over in that area, over in Sunflower County. And, his name was Riley King, and we had gospel groups. He had the St. John's Gospel Singers, I had my four brothers, called the Four Nolden brothers. We broadcast WGRM, oh about, in the same times. He would come on, we would come on a little earlier than he would. He would come on, he had the St. John Gospel Singers, he would come on, about, well, one o'clock and they, we come around 9:00, 9:30, back then, but we broadcast. I had four brothers and he had ... I don't know who he had. I know he had the St. John Gospel Singers.

Student: What inspired you to play music?

John Nolden: I wouldn't have fooled with no Blues, but I got hurt one day. I had a, I should not go into this but I got to tell you. A lady I thought so much of, she went away and left, and I ain't got straight yet. That's a long time ago (laughs) and I don't think I'll never get it right ... well, the lady caught me good, you know. I just went off into it, sittin' there, you know. I couldn't stay out of it. Well, when you get worried—now, let's, let's make a long story short. Some way, you're gonna make a move one way or the other. Am I right? And so that's what got me really started, kept on doing it. I used to be a church man, used to be going to church every Sunday. But I'm gonna tell you something. I don't want to talk too much but you know, when you get hurt it don't help you to go to church with it. It be, you be hurting and don't care where you go. Folks say, "Oh, you'll be all right." I don't know. You don't get all right like that. It takes a little time ... a long time (laughs).

Student: In your opinion, what is the Blues?

John Nolden: Well, I think Blues means you don't got a word for it. You got someone you care about and they left you, them's the Blues in my mind, you know, cause you can't get at it hard enough. It's so hard to get out. The first thing you ... you go to sleep and it ain't gonna help you none cause you, all you're gonna do is lay there ... thinking a long time. You hurt, and uh, you want to see somebody you can't find, the Blues (laughs). I ain't got the good long talk too properly but you know but I'm telling you the way I feel. Expressions, that's the way I feel.

Bill Abel: I wanted to say something, that John can, he can express the Blues in the truth in what he experienced in his life. And, and in a real way. It's real. I can't do that. I didn't experience that kind of life, and uh, the Delta Blues was born with that. It's the only Blues—it has the most truth in it out of all the Blues genres. The Delta Blues, Bluesmen, when they sang they sang from what was really ins—what they felt inside, what was, felt good or bad... In twenty years there won't be anybody that can do that that way, uh, with the music. So there's gonna be, could be thirty years. John could live to be a hundred and ten. But there's gonna be something that doesn't exist anymore, and there's people that really understand that and respect that, and uh, it's an educational process, educating people to that fact. And a lot of people haven't heard the real Blues, cause there's not many guys left that, that have the truth in them like that when they sing it. And uh, so this is a treasure here that we have with us in John, and that's why they want to get him over to Italy, to sing.

Student: Do you both love Blues and any other type of music?

John Nolden: But now, let me say one word. I just like all music; I like a whole lot. I like, uh, I'm gonna tell you something. I've got some favorite pictures I like too. Roy Rogers and all that and, what's that other's name? That guy looking like (he does an impression of a cowboy) ...

Bill Abel: John Wayne.

John Nolden: Yeah, he one too. ... I like, I just, I like all music. As long as he's playing and singing all right, I like him ... cowboy music, I like all that. I used to wear my radio out (laughs) listening. I just like it all ... there's a man, Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass boy—ooh I used to wear the radio out. There's another—Hank Williams that who he is. There's another one, wait a minute. Roy Acuff Smoky Mountain—Oh I like all that music. I just can't do it like that. I like it. I ain't got no special music I like. I'm just doing it my way, you know. But if I could, I like that other way, too.

Student: Did you make one of those guitars (Bill Abel has brought several homemade guitars) when you were young?

Bill Abel: No I didn't. I never ... I never, but yeah, the old guys used to play with 'em. And John saw guys do, do that, but they would just take the one string, and they would hammer two nails to the side of the house and stretch the string out tight and play it and it was called, it was called a diddley bow. And this is called a diddley bow cigar box analog. But I never saw anybody play a diddley bow but the guys that I knew, they said they played 'em when they were young.

Monroe Jones (1939-) is a guitarist from Cleveland, Mississippi. When he was 17 he moved to Chicago to play the Blues, and by the time he moved back to the Delta in 1971 he had played with Sonnyboy Williams, Rice Miller, B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, Freddie King, Buddy Guy, and Howlin' Wolf.

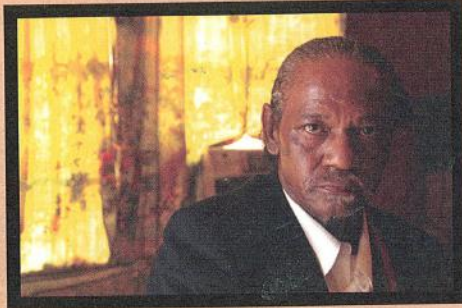


PHOTO © Matthew Wood

MONROE JONES

YOU UNDERSTAND THE BLUES A LITTLE BETTER HERE IN THE DELTA THEN YOU CAN ANYWHERE ELSE.

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE ON FEBRUARY 27, 2008, AT MONROE JONES' HOME.

Student: Where did you grow up?

Jones: Well, I went to school out in Shaw for a while, moved out of Shaw, Mississippi in 1956. I almost grew up in Chicago.

Student: What was it like?

Jones: Oh, Chicago was wonderful.

Student: What was your childhood like?

Jones: Well, you know you had to chop cotton and pick cotton to make it, you know, a rough upbringing.

Student: What was school like for you?

Jones: Well, I didn't get to go to school. It was all right, you know, I got to 7th grade.

Student: When did you first play the Blues?

Jones: I was 17 when I played.

Student: In your opinion, what is the Blues?

Jones: Blues is a true feeling. True meaning. It make you cry if you listen to it too good.

Student: Who taught you to play the Blues?

Jones: Watching guys, you know, Earl Hooker, B.B. King.

Student: When did you move to Chicago?

Jones: In '56.

Student: Why did you move to Chicago?

Jones: I wanted to play Blues. Boy told me he had a band, which he told me a lie, you know, and I went up there and he had no band. But I wound up working at a restaurant, and I worked there, made some pretty good money there, you know. I was by myself, you know, I lived with a friend of mine. They all passed now.

Student: How was Chicago different than Mississippi?

Jones: Well, Chicago was fast, so many people, you know. You walked down the street, people there were— Chicago was a big place, a beautiful place, a good place. If I—I had hip replacement in each one of my hips in '87, if I hadn't did that, if that didn't happen to me, I'd be up there now, but I have to walk with a stick, you know.

Student: Who are some of your influences?

Jones: Well, my main man, he died, Little Milton. I like his voice. I like it when B.B. King plays guitar. So I'll say B.B. King and Little Milton. And uh, Tyrone Davies, and ... Otis Redding, a lot of guys.

Student: Why do you play the Blues?

Jones: I love to sing the Blues.

Student: What are you trying to express when you play the Blues?

Jones: Oh, that's a feeling, words, you know.

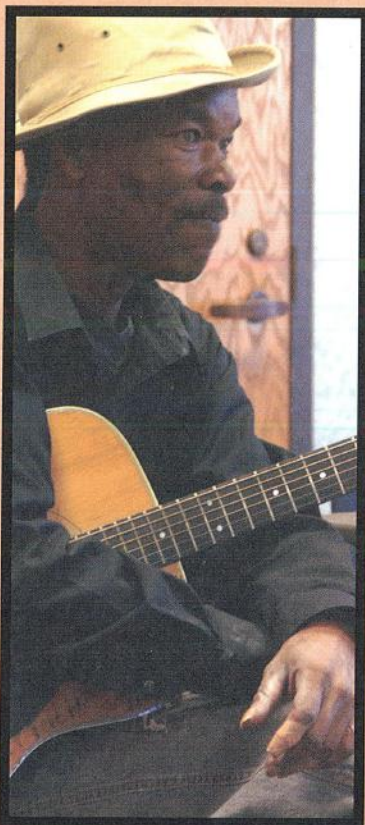
Student: In your opinion, do Blues players from the Delta have a different sound than from Blues players from other parts of Mississippi or other states?

Jones: Yeah. You understand the Blues a little better here in the Delta then you can anywhere else. They can't get, they ain't got it. They got it here in the Delta. That's why more Blues players come from the Delta.

PAT
PAT
PAT

Pat Thomas (1960-) is a Blues musician and folk artist. He was born in Yazoo City but has lived almost his entire life in Leland. His father is the Delta Bluesman James "Son" Thomas, who was internationally known for his music and his artwork. "Son" Thomas made skulls and out clay and human teeth, and Pat's artwork (and music) are clearly influenced by his father.

PAT THOMAS



THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE ON FEBRUARY 6, 2008, ON THE DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

Student: What was the first music you remember listening to?

Pat: The first song? The first song that he [Pat's father] really showed me was a country western song. It's called, after the war was over, I was coming home to you. Saw your face in the rainbow, it made me think of you. We'll build a home in the country, we'll have a baby or two. We'll name him after the rainbow because it reminds me of you. But it was a country western song he said he heard on the radio station, and he copied it off the radio and went home and played it.

Student: In your opinion, do Blues players from the Delta have a different sound to Blues players from other parts of Mississippi or other states?

Pat: Well, I think that the singing might be a little different, but I think all the Blues music is just about

the same, but I think the sound, the voice, and everything might be a little different, but I think everybody got their own particular way of music.

Student: In your opinion, what is Blues?

Pat: Well, my father says there is lots of ways you can have the Blues. Okay, here's the Blues. He said, if you're working in the cotton field and ain't making not that much money back then, that's kinda like the Blues. But here's the way he said you got the Blues—if you broke, you got the Blues. He said if you're hungry, you got the Blues, and if you got a good woman and she quit you, you ain't got nothing but the Blues. So it's a lot of ways—like you can have a happy Blues, you can have a sad Blues, and then you can have a good, good Blues. So it's a lot of ways to have the Blues.

Student: How did you begin to play the Blues?

Pat: Well, my father, we'd be at home, and he'd tell me, 'you want to do a song with me?' and I say, 'I might as well, you know.' And so he'd say, 'You better get your guitar then and come on and play one cause I'm fitting to play me one.' And then he had bought a Gene Autry guitar kind of like this, (he indicates his guitar) and so I get the other guitar. Me and him both sitting at home, I'd have to watch him. He'd tell me to watch him and he'd play a song and I'd watch him and see what he'd do then and I'd just go try to do it. I might not catch it the same time but, you know, as time went on, I caught it, kinda.

Pat: Well, I learned—it was kinda like what he said. He didn't—he come up on kinda like the hard times. His uncle Joe used to charge him a dollar for playing his guitar. He'd get off work, he'd go pay him a dollar. He'd play it but he said if he hit it too hard he'd make him put it down. Time was hard back then and, he kind of come up on the, kind of like the slavery side, and, it was kind of like what I'm saying, he didn't want us to see the hard times, he wanted us to have a better life.

Student: What do you remember about your father's music?

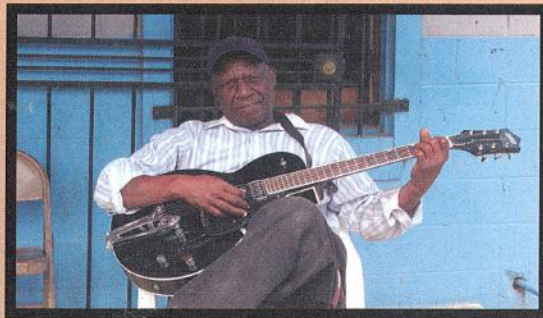
Pat: Well, mostly the way—he singing, like, because, one song he sung about, he said, 'You may be beautiful baby, but you sho gonna die someday. I need a little bit more of your loving, just before you pass away.' It's called the Bull Cow Blues. And, it's just a whole lot of different songs that he sung, that they thought, when they was working in the cotton fields, you know, to sing. Like, he'd tell you about the time standing at the crossroads, or, I'm gonna get up in the morning, believe I'll dust my broom. Well, he said if you're gonna sing a song like, 'I'm gonna get up in the morning, I believe I'll dust my broom,' well, that's signaling to the other guy that you're fitting to leave that plantation, cause the boss ain't treating you right. You fitting to go somewhere else to stay, you fitting to move out of there cause the money ain't right.

Student: What are you trying to express when you play the Blues?

Pat: Well, it's an emotion, feeling. I think—I tell everybody mostly that it makes me feel that I'm making my father out of his grave, because he knows this music and he hears it.

Jimmy "Duck" Holmes (1947-) Born a share cropper's son, Holmes operates The Blue Front Café in Bentonia. This is one of the last surviving small town juke joints in the Delta, and was recently placed on the Mississippi Blues Heritage Trail by the Mississippi Blues Commission. Holmes has recorded two CD's.

PHOTO © Jeff Konkol



JIMMY "DUCK" HOLMES AND THE BENTONIA BLUES

**THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM AN INTERVIEW ON
APRIL 2, 2008, AT DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY.**

Student: What was your childhood like?

Holmes: Oh, man. No TV, no radio, no inside plumbing, no air conditioning, no electric or gas stove, walked to school, no inside plumbing at school, no lunch room at school, no running water. When I was going to school you had to walk about, probably about 4 miles, carried my lunch and water that I would need all day. My school year was only probably about 5 or 6 months a year because I grew up on a farm, and the state allowed for farm kids to help plant the crop in the spring, and gather in the fall of the year. My school year didn't start until probably late October, early November. And this time of year [4/2/08] we would be ready to go half a day to get the crop planted. Probably 6 months at most we went to school.

The Bentonia style developed, apparently in isolation, on the edge of the Mississippi Delta between Jackson and Yazoo City. It is characterized by high melismatic [several notes sung in one syllable] singing and complex melodies, as well as by minor-keyed intricate guitar parts and often haunting lyrics with themes such as loneliness, death, and the supernatural.

http://www.nea.gov/honors/heritage/fellows/fellow.php?id=1993_10

Student: So how did you learn the Blues?

Holmes: Through a guy called Jack Owens. And I had no intention, they were playing, just sitting around playing.

Student: So, what is your opinion about Blues?

Holmes: Well, my opinion about Blues —listen to me real carefully. Blues is the only music—listen to me carefully now—Blues is the only music that was originated out of America. All other music migrated from other countries. Blues is American born music ... so my thing is, Blues is part of your heritage if you're from America. It's where it was born—you can't deny that. And for some reason, everybody think, well not everybody, a lot of people think that Blues is associated with hard times, but not really. People sing the Blues about the good times.

Student: Can you tell us about the Blues Front Café?

Holmes: The Blue Front Café? The Blue Front Café is the oldest, still running juke joint in the state of Mississippi and one of the oldest in America ... I've been running it for 38 years, before y'all—probably before your parents were born. It's been in my family for 60 years, I've been running it 38.

Student: Who are some of the Blues musicians you remember seeing perform at the Blue Front Café?

Holmes: I can tell you: Skip James, Henry Stuckey, Jack Owens, uh ... Muddy Waters, Jacob Stuckey, Connie West, a guy called Sonny Boy Williams, the list goes on. I was a little kid, there are probably some I forgot. A lot of them went on to be professionals, some are still by the riverside.

Student: How did you get your nickname?

Holmes: My momma—when I was a little kid I stayed bow-legged for 4 or 5 years, walking like a duck.

Student: Is it rewarding to play the Blues?

Holmes: Well, at one time, see, a guitar was pretty much your only musical entertainment that country people had. There were no juke boxes, there was no big bands, so a guy could pick cotton all the week, or all the month, and go buy him a ten dollar guitar from the nickel and dime store, and he could sit around and play at parties and sit his hat down and they would throw coins in the hat and that's how he got paid.

Student: Do you write your own songs?

Holmes: No, and I'll tell you the reason why. The guy that taught me, the guy I learned from, he was illiterate. You know what that means right? He couldn't read or write. So what they did, whatever they thought of, the words they thought of for a song, they had to have a photostatic memory to be able to rehearse it the next day. If they thought of it laying in bed at night they wouldn't have to get up and get a pencil and paper and jot it down, they'd have to remember. So that is what I try to do.

JAMES "T-MODEL" FORD

James "T-Model" Ford (1924-) was born in Forest, Mississippi, but now resides in Greenville. Although he did not begin playing until he was 58, he has released several albums and has toured the United States and Europe extensively. He counts Howlin' Wolf and Muddy Waters as some of his influences, and plays with similar energy.

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW TOOK PLACE ON APRIL 8, 2008, ON THE CAMPUS OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY.

Student: What is your full name?

Ford: James Lewis Carter Ford. That's my full name. My given name is T-Model Ford, the ladies man.

Student: What was your childhood like?

Ford: I picked cotton, hoed cotton, chopped corn, pulled corn, I done some of everything. I had to do it, or get a whooping.

Student: What inspired you to play music?

Ford: Well, I was 58 before I picked up a guitar. My fourth wife bought me a guitar and an amplifier and then we separated. That's when I started to play guitar. I went in that evening and parked my truck. Went in there, by myself, didn't have no woman then, and I got my guitar, plugged it in the wall—my amp, plugged my guitar—first turned my amplifier on, and I didn't see nothing, and I'm thinking to myself this thing ain't on. So I turned another button, turned another button, and the light jumped on, and I said ah-ha. Then I got the amp to my guitar, opened the cage and the little cord in there, plugged it in the amp, and plugged it in my guitar—wasn't like this one (indicates the guitar he is holding). Sitting there by myself, I looked down on the side and plugged it in. There was a little switch on it and I switched it on—BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM—I said ah-ha. That's when I started playin—trying to play guitar. I knew Muddy Waters' sound, and Howlin' Wolf's sound, and that's what I started off trying. About a week I played, couldn't read, but kept on messing with it and I learned how to walk these strings down here. Then I—I don't really have a voice to sing—and I sang I wish I had my baby in my right arm. Then I knowed one of Howlin' Wolf's songs, and I started trying to play it. Going to the stairs, I'm gonna beg her for my clothes. Where I go, nobody knows.

Student: How did you learn to play the Blues?

Ford: Grabbed a guitar and went on to playing. Womens made me play anyhow.



PHOTO © Joseph A. Rosen

Student: Do you play other types of music besides the Blues?

Ford: Oh yeah but I can't stand 'em. I can play church songs. I was raised up in the church, but I married another girl and she got me out of the church. I got away from the church and I ain't been back yet. But I'm a nice man. And I'm safe. God's taking care of me. And I don't worry about nothing. There more days to life.

Student: What do you like about the Blues?

Ford: I didn't care nothing about 'em. I played 'em for the people. I never did have Blues. Blues makes you do bad things that you wouldn't do if you didn't have it. When you get too far in it, when you got a woman you're loving, that will make you taste the Blues.

Student: What are some of your favorite musicians?

Ford: Some of them sound like Muddy Waters. Some of them sound like Howlin' Wolf. Some of them sound like Jimmy Reed. Some of them sound like B.B. King, Little Milton.

Student: Do you write your own songs?

Ford: Nah. I sing em and make them over a little.

Student: How has Blues music changed during your life?

Ford: It's like an apple on the tree. It's hanging. That's how the Blues goes with me. I don't get lonesome, I don't get worried.

HOW BLUE CAN YOU GET?

By Don Allan Mitchell

The term African American is applied to people in the United States who are of African ancestry. Black people were first brought to this country in chains as slaves. They were stripped of their African homes, their African families, their African traditions, their African languages, and even their African clothes. Slave owners did not want their slaves to be proud of being Africans; they wanted the slaves to work like mules and to forget their African culture.

However, the ancestors of today's African American resisted the tragedy of slavery, and they survived. They also secretly kept many African customs. One of the most important traditions was African music making. They soon applied African music making customs to the songs their masters forced them to sing. They sang as they worked to make the hard labor a little easier. They also applied African musical styles to church songs, and soon the great African American tradition of singing spirituals was born.

After slavery was ended by the American Civil War, other types of Black music developed besides spirituals. By 1900, Black Americans were applying African musical styles and ideas not only to religious music but also to music about day-to-day life. As life was still hard for many African Americans, these songs were sung to escape their pain and to bring joy in the hard times.

**THESE SONGS
WERE SUNG TO
ESCAPE
THEIR PAIN
AND TO BRING JOY
IN THE HARD TIMES**

Even as Black Americans worked, songs were performed to set a tempo to the labor and relieve some of the burden of oftentimes back-breaking jobs like picking cotton, digging ditches, and cutting down trees. This music influenced and merged with other types of songs to bring hope to the weary. By 1910, many people called this music the Blues.

We have a century-old tradition of the Blues in Mississippi. Many people call our state the cradle of this music. I recently asked my college students what they have learned in my Blues class and how they would share this knowledge with younger students.

Tara, Catherine, Heather, and April were fascinated by the ties of The Blues to Hip Hop. Sometimes, Rap musicians like Kanye West in Gold Digger and Ludacris with Georgia will sample older Rhythm and Blues singers like Ray Charles. Sometimes, rappers like Nas will actually record with his father, Olu Dara, a blues and jazz man originally from Natchez, and together, they will both update the idea of singing the Blues. Then there are rappers like David Banner, who sing about a lot of the same places and hard times that are mentioned in blues songs. In Cadillac on 22s, when David Banner "pray[s] to God for those Mississippi streets," he's not only praying for us, but he's also praying for generations of African Americans that walked or drove those same dusty Mississippi roads, including musicians like B.B. King, John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Bessie Smith, Elmore James or as Howlin' Wolf sang:

*I got the blues this mornin'
I'm rollin' into Jackson town
I've been looking for my baby
Lawd, I don't think that girl can be found.*

*Long tall mama, she don't
pay me no mind
Yeah, long tall mama, she don't
pay me no mind
All she wanna do
Walk the Highway 49.*

Besides its ties to modern times, other students commented on the music and the messages of The Blues itself.

According to my students Bridgette, Jim and Andrew, what they found interesting was that a lot of Blues Musicians would make their own instruments, especially when they were younger. They'd make a simple one-string instrument out of cotton bale wire and an old board, or use an old bucket or sticks for drums. In other words, they were so passionate about their music, they could make a musical sound out of just about anything, kind of like beatboxing today.

This is not the only connection to other areas of African American culture on which my students commented. My students Dewonda, Kelsey, Cole, and Patrick talked about how The Blues were carried to a worldwide audience. These students stated, "Because life was so hard for a lot of African Americans in the Deep South, they left to find work and better living conditions in other parts of the country. They took the Mississippi Delta Blues to cities like Chicago and Detroit. It was there that their down home music from Mississippi was influenced by music from black communities across the U.S. It was also in these Northern cities that the Delta Blues which was primarily played on an acoustic, unplugged guitar came to be played on the electric guitar. Finally, my students also added, "Soon, in these cities with large populations and a good number of radio stations, white people from the other side of the city started to hear this Blues music. They liked what they heard, and they started buying records and imitating the black performers of The Blues. This imitation lead to the creation of Rock and Roll."

We know that Rock and Roll is popular worldwide. However, it is not the only music that was influenced by The Blues. As Lydia, Erica, and Carl put it, "The Blues has had a widespread popularity because its songs are about issues that everyone can understand, whether you are white or black, rich or poor. The Blues are songs about pain, death, love, loss, work, good times, hard times, and sad times."

We respond to the call of The Blues with how it makes our mind and our hearts feel. For instance, B.B. King must have been really sad when he sang,

*I've been downhearted
Ever since the day we met
Baby I've been downhearted
Ever since the day we met
I've been loving nothing but the blues
Baby, how blue can you get?*

However, I imagine he felt a lot better after singing this song. You don't have to "...love nothing but the blues," but there is a lot in The Blues to love.

Don Allan Mitchell is a professor of English at Delta State University, poet and blue lover.

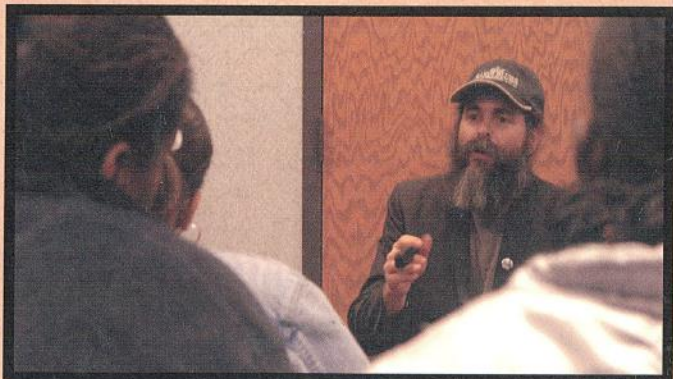


PHOTO © Allison Melton

INTRODUCING ORAL HISTORY PROJECT TO YOUTH

Collecting oral histories is a wonderful way to not only engage students in history, but to preserve the heritage of your community. When first introducing the project, it is important to first talk to your students about the nature of history. How is history recorded? From whose point of view is it taken? Who decides what stories are told, and how they are interpreted? Lead a discussion so that students can see that the written history has two important limitations. First, by focusing on major events, the lives of everyday people are often neglected. Second, history in its written form is recorded by the powerful, and the marginalized segments of society rarely get to tell their story.

Oral history is thus a way to capture the lives of everyday people, to see what it was like to live in a certain time and place. It is also a way to learn about the people who were shut out of the history books. Oral histories are stories, interviews, songs, myths—anything that has been passed down by word of mouth. To help your students make a connection, ask them if there are any stories in their families that are told year after year during the holidays. Oral history is something we are all familiar with, even if we don't always call it that name. Ask your students to describe the family story. Why do they think it gets told every year? What function does it serve? Has it changed over the years?

**THE LIVES
OF EVERYDAY
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ARE OFTEN NEGLECTED...**

**THE MARGINALIZED SEGMENTS
OF SOCIETY RARELY GET TO
TELL THEIR STORY.**

Once your students have a good understanding of what oral history is and why it is important, introduce your specific project. Give your students plenty of background information so that they are knowledgeable about the topic before any interviewing begins. Make sure your students know enough about the person who will be interviewed that they can write interview questions. Remind them, though, that the people who will read the transcripts might not know anything about the subject, so they should ask some questions to which they already know the answer. Indeed, the audience for the project should be kept in mind during the whole process. Always ask the interviewee his or her full name, date of birth, including the year, and where they were born. When writing questions, phrase them so they are open-ended and the interviewee cannot answer yes or no.

The interview should be recorded, either with a tape recorder or video camera. From the tape, transcripts can be made. At the interview, it is important to have a release form for the interviewees to sign. The form should make it clear how the interview will be used, especially if it will be published, and that the interviewee has given permission to be recorded. Bring two copies of the form, and give one to the interviewee for his or her records.

While students should go into the interview with questions written down, they should not feel obligated to follow them like a script. Rather, your students should feel free to allow the interview to flow, and to ask follow-up questions when a particularly rich subject is broached. During the interview, easy questions should be asked first, as to give the interviewee time to feel comfortable. Difficult or substantial questions should only come at the end, when rapport has been established. Instruct your students to encourage the interviewee to elaborate on his or her answers, especially if the answers lack specifics or are confusing to the student.

After the interview, be sure to send a thank-you note to the interviewee. If your project results in a paper or booklet, send a copy to each person you interviewed.

DELTA BLUES HISTORICAL INTERSECTIONS: A MEETING OF CULTURE, PLACE, EVENTS, AND PEOPLE

A SERIES OF LESSON PLANS WITH TEACHER RESOURCES

Leslie Griffin, Dean
Jenetta Waddell, Chair of Teacher Education
DSU College of Education

Featured Lessons:

- History and Geography Intersect to Cradle the Blues
- The Great Migration Intersects with Freedom (via Highway 61)
- James "Son" Thomas: How One Life Intersected with the Blues
- The Delta Blues Intersect with Other Musical Forms to Create New Genres
- Contemporary Culture and the Delta Blues: New Directions

Overview of the Unit

The broad theme of "intersections" was chosen as the binding thread for this unit because of its association with definitions that include the following: junction, crossroads, connection, and meeting place. From these definitions, we can see that an intersection can be material (a physical place) or figurative (a symbol). These lessons about the Delta Blues will provide both material and figurative ways of understanding the blues, which is considered by many to be a uniquely American music genre.

With the surging interest in the Delta Blues—locally, nationally, and internationally—it is appropriate that students understand the history of these blues, how they have impacted lives, and the qualities that render them of contemporary interest. Perhaps this interest is best reflected in the following quote credited to Como, Mississippi's Slick Ballinger in the May 2006 Atlantic Southeast magazine. As the article recounts, several years ago Ballinger, a "15-year-old country boy from Johnston County, North Carolina, flipped on an old movie and encountered destiny."

It was the first blues I ever heard . . . this movie Crossroads . . . about this old Blues man who used to know Robert Johnson. He's in a nursing home up in New York City and this white boy takes him down to Mississippi. But it wasn't the story that got me. It was the very first five minutes. It started with Robert Johnson walking up and down these crossroads with a gitar and there's a harmonica playing in the background, and Mississippi cotton fields all around, and that harmonica just chilled through my body and let me know that's what I wanted to do. It just flipped the switch. That's it for me." (p. 23)

And, so it goes. It is the authors' hope that these lessons will intrigue and possibly strike a chord with students, in effect "flipping the switch" that will lead them on an interesting journey through the historical terrain of the Delta Blues, and all it envelops.

The blues is but a window to black life in America. It chronicles history and captures the rich textures and hues of a complex people navigating creatively an ever-more complex society. The blues is the glue that holds Black America together. Rich or poor, young or old, educated or illiterate, from the north or south, all black people have the blues, had the blues, or will get the blues.

—Terry Smith, Oakland Business Review

SAMPLE LESSON:

JAMES "SON" THOMAS: HOW ONE LIFE INTERSECTED WITH THE DELTA BLUES



PHOTO © Sonya Kimbell/Delta Democrat Times

Overview

James "Son" Thomas (1926–1993) was a Mississippi Delta Bluesman and a folk artist. He was an outstanding guitar player, singer, and composer of Delta blues music. Thomas' folk art consisted of primitive representations of human skulls, human heads, and forest animals. Though never a rich man, James "Son" Thomas impacted Blues music and folk art in the Mississippi Delta and beyond. This lesson explores the influences that inspired his creative genius, the impact of which endures.

Curriculum Standards

This lesson fulfills the following standards outlined by the National Council for History Education:

US, 5–12 Standards: Era 9, Standard 4: The struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties

Historical Thinking, 5–12 Standards: Standard 1: Chronological Thinking, Indicator F; Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation, Indicators B, C, D, J; Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities, Indicators A, B, C, D

Learning Objectives

- To identify sources of inspiration for James "Son" Thomas' Delta Blues music and folk art
- To identify how these sources of inspiration for Delta Blues and folk art relate to people, place, and history
- To gain skill in the use of primary sources as research references

Teaching Resources

Ferris, W. (1982). *Local color: A sense of place in folk art*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Livingston, J., & Beadsley, J. (1982-83). *Black folk art in America: 1930–1980*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Thomas, J. S. (1998). *Beefsteak blues* [CD]. Germany: Evidence Music.

Websites:

<http://www.cascadeblues.org/History/JamesSonThomas.htm>

<http://www.cargofolkart.com/Artist%20Pages/ThomasSF.htm>

<http://www.gasperitgo.com/SonFordThomas.htm>

http://www.msbluestrail.org/blues_trail/

Vocabulary

Using a dictionary, Internet resources, encyclopedias, and the suggested readings, students should define the following terms in the context of the era and places identified within the lesson:

- Blues
- Bluesman
- Folk art
- Mississippi Delta
- One-strand broom
- Share cropper

Introduction

In order to give students an awareness of Thomas' culture and life experiences, the teacher may choose from among these activities:

Display photographs of James "Son" Thomas' folk art (see Teaching Resources)

Play a selection of his Blues music (see Teaching Resources)

Read aloud the following James "Son" Thomas quotes:

"I was a young'un, pickin' cotton, and on Saturdays in the evenin' I'd build me a one-strand, up against the house, and I'd listen to my uncle play, and I'd play, too. Didn't have no money for a guitar. Once in awhile, I'd borrow somebody's guitar, but mostly, I played that one-strand when I was young. . . . I only played on Saturday, in the evenin'. Too tired during the week. Always somethin' to do during the week. You just want to sleep after pickin' cotton all day."

"This is all done by head, not by no book or no picture. I have never went to no school to do it. No teacher has ever taught me nothing about it. My Uncle Joe was the first person that showed me. . . . I'd sit up by the fireplace at night and make things until I got sleepy. I got where I could make mules, and rabbits, and squirrels, and things like that, and from that I went to making birds. . . . I made a great big skeleton head and I had corn in his mouth for teeth."

Learning Experiences

Develop research packets with guiding questions for small groups of students (visit our website at www.birthplaceoftheblues.com/lessonPlans.htm for more examples). These may be developed by providing each group with packets containing the same materials or by providing varied materials. Provide guiding questions to identify sources of inspiration for Thomas' art and music and how these relate to Thomas' life experiences.

Guiding Questions: The works created by James "Son" Thomas reveal much about the life and the culture of which he was a part. Use questions such as the following to guide student research:

- What is important to him? (What objects and themes are represented most frequently in his music and art?)
- What materials/media are represented in his folk art?
- How did his Blues music tell the story of his life?
- How does he view the world around him?
- What emotions are depicted in his music and folk art?
- How are the experiences of everyday life reflected in the Blues and the folk art produced by Thomas?

Have a representative from each group share answers to the guiding questions. The teacher leads the class in this discussion.

Develop a T-chart (visit our website at www.birthplaceoftheblues.com/lessonPlans.htm for more examples) that compares and contrasts the sources of influence on Thomas' Blues music and folk art.

Using the T-chart responses, responses to the guiding questions, and information from the discussion, students will be reassigned to groups to prepare dramatizations depicting the following eras of Thomas' life:

- Childhood and Youth
- Early Adulthood
- Mid- and Later Adulthood

Provide students with additional resources for dramatization, such as clay and various art materials, recordings of Thomas's music, materials for props and costumes. Time allowance for preparation of dramatization will vary according to the age of the students and the level of involvement required.

Culmination

Have students present drama.

Use the rubric to evaluate the drama (visit our website at www.birthplaceoftheblues.com/lessonPlans.com for more examples). Discuss and provide feedback.

Have students draw generalizations to be added to the unit graphic organizer.

Follow-up Activities

Have students compose a piece of writing that characterizes James "Son" Thomas. This may take the form of a bio-poem, a poem that describes someone's life, or a character sketch. Use items such as the following to write a bio-poem about Son "Ford" Thomas:

- Line 1: Person's first name
- Line 2: Four traits of the person
- Line 3: Related to _____ (ex., son of, father of, grandson of)
- Line 4: Cares deeply about _____
- Line 5: Who feels _____
- Line 6: Who needs _____
- Line 7: Who gives _____
- Line 8: Who fears _____
- Line 9: Who would like to see _____
- Line 10: Resident of _____

Research lives and influences of other Blues notables, look for themes across their lives, and give examples of each.

Cultural Art Exhibit – In conjunction with this lesson, have students assemble exhibits of folk art representative of the culture associated with the Delta Blues. Use the school halls or some other areas for an exhibition.

Have students complete a web search of the life of James "Son" Thomas, his music, and his folk art (see Teaching Resources).

B.B. KING TALKS ABOUT STUDYING THE BLUES

[B.B. King] says that to a great extent, the history of Black Americans is reflected in the blues. And not just the hurt, pain and misery, but also the love and triumphs. "More than anything else, it is important to study history, to know history," he says. "To be a Black person and sing the blues, you are Black twice. I've heard it said, 'If we don't know from whence we came, we don't know how to go where we are trying to go.'

—Lynn Norment, *Ebony*, 2/1/1992

BLUES GLOSSARY

AAB Form – A format typical in the Blues, the first line is sung, the second line repeats the first, and the third answers the first two or bridges to the next verse. For example, in "Crossroad Blues," Robert Johnson sings:

*I went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees
I went to the crossroads, fell down on my knees
Asked the Lord above, have mercy now, save
poor Bob if you please*

Blues – African-American roots music and the culture that produced it. Influences include spirituals, work songs, and field hollers. African influence can be seen by the use of call and response patterns. Blues later influenced jazz, rock and roll, and hip-hop.

The Blues Highway – U.S. Highway 61, which runs from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. A major north/south road before Interstate 55 was built, many Blues musicians traveled out of the Delta on this highway, taking their music with them to Memphis, and then later to the northern industrial cities.

Chicago Blues – Developed in the late 1940's and early 1950's, this style of the Blues is amplified Delta Blues with added instruments, including horns, drums, and harmonicas. One change from earlier styles was that guitarists could pick (play individual note rather than chords) because they no longer need to create a full sound as they had a band backing them. Mississippians who traveled to Chicago during the Great Migration and became famous playing the Chicago Blues include Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Willie Dixon, and Jimmy Reed.

Delta Blues – one of the earliest forms of Blues music, the genre is known for the use of slide guitar, often solo performances, and sometimes eerie tones. Noted musicians include Robert Johnson, Charley Patton, and Son House.

Diddley Bow – a one-stringed instrument with African origins, a diddley bow is made by stretching a piece of wire or broom strand between two nails or screws on a board or even the side of a house. It is played by plucking the string while sliding a piece of glass or metal on it. The development of slide guitar, a common feature of the Blues, is traced to the diddley bow.

The Great Flood of 1927 – on April 21, 1927 the Mississippi River broke through the levee at Mounds Landing with a force greater than Niagara Falls. Water inundated the Delta, eventually covering an area the size of Connecticut, with towns as far as 60 miles away from the main channel of the river under 10 feet of water. Over 700,000 people were displaced, and in some areas African-Americans were confined to levee camps and forced to work on relief efforts. One result of the Flood was that the Great Migration, which had slowed down, began again in earnest.

The Great Migration – the movement of millions of African-Americans from the South to the North, mainly between 1910 and 1940. People left for better job prospects in industrial northern cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh, but also to escape the Jim Crow South.

Juke (or Jook) Joint – an establishment featuring Blues, dancing, food, and drinks. Juke joints arose as places where African-Americans could relax and socialize after work, and were often simply private houses. The word juke is thought to be derived from the Gullah word juk, which means infamous and disorderly.

Mississippi Delta – an alluvial plain in the northwest section of Mississippi between the Yazoo and Mississippi Rivers. According to David Cohn, "the Mississippi Delta begins in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel in Memphis and ends on Catfish Row in Vicksburg."

Oral History – A form of history that relies on testimony, myths, stories and song to transmit information through the generations, rather than written word.

Sharecropping – A system that developed in the South after Reconstruction, in which laborers would work on land owned by others, and at the end of the season the landowner would pay the laborer a share of the crop. Between being forced to buy supplies at the plantation's commissary and being given an unfair price on their crop at the end of the season, most sharecroppers were trapped in debt. The system dissolved in the mid-twentieth century as advances in technology drastically reduced the amount of labor needed to produce a crop.

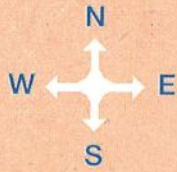
BLUES LANDMARKS

- 1 Dockery Farms – Birthplace of the Blues? (Dockery)
- 2 Po' Monkey's Lounge – last of the rural jook houses (Merigold)
- 3 Delta Blues Museum (Clarksdale)
- 4 Riverside Hotel – Where Bessie Smith died (Clarksdale)
- 5 Muddy Water's homesite (near Clarksdale)
- 6 Peavine Railroad (Boyle)
- 7 Old Highways 10 and 61 (Leland)
- 8 Highway 61 Blues Museum (Leland)
- 9 Blues murals (Leland)
- 10 Delta State University – home of the McConnell collection of Bluesmen's life masks
- 11 Rosedale – inspiration to Bluesman like Robert Johnson
- 12 Honeyboy Edwards Birthplace (Shaw)
- 13 Charley Patton's grave and Willie Foster's grave (Holly Ridge)
- 14 Nelson Street – historic Black business district (Greenville)
- 15 W.C. Handy (Cleveland)
- 16 Chrisman Street Jook (Cleveland)
- 17 1927 Flood levee break site (Scott)
- 18 River Blues (Great River Road State Park)
- 19 Baptist Town historic district (Greenwood)
- 20 *"Where the Southern Crosses the Dog"* – lyrics of the first Blues song (Moorhead)
- 21 B. B. King Museum and historic markers (Indianola)
- 22 Club Ebony – historic Blues night club (Indianola)
- 23 Ground Zero Blues Club – modern home of the Blues (Clarksdale)
- 24 Reds' Lounge – historic urban juke (Clarksdale)
- 25 Tutwiler Train Station – where W. C. Handy first heard the Blues (Tutwiler)
- 26 Sonny Boy Williamson II grave site (Tutwiler)
- 27 Robert Johnson grave site (Money Road, north of Greenwood)
- 28 WGRM radio (Greenwood)
- 29 Elk's Lodge (Greenwood)
- 30 Berclair Plantation – birthplace of B. B. King (Berclair)
- 31 Birthplace of Jimmy Reed (Dunleith)
- 32 Blue Front Cafe (Bentonla)
- 33 Pinetop Perkins (Belzoni)
- 34 Mississippi John Hurt (Valley)
- 35 Robert Nighthawk (Friar's Point)
- 36 *"Livin' at Lula"* (Lula)
- 37 James Cotton (Tunica)
- 38 Highway 61 (Tunica)
- 39 Son House (Tunica)
- 40 Hopson Planting Company (Hopson)
- 41 Hubert Sumlin (Greenwood)

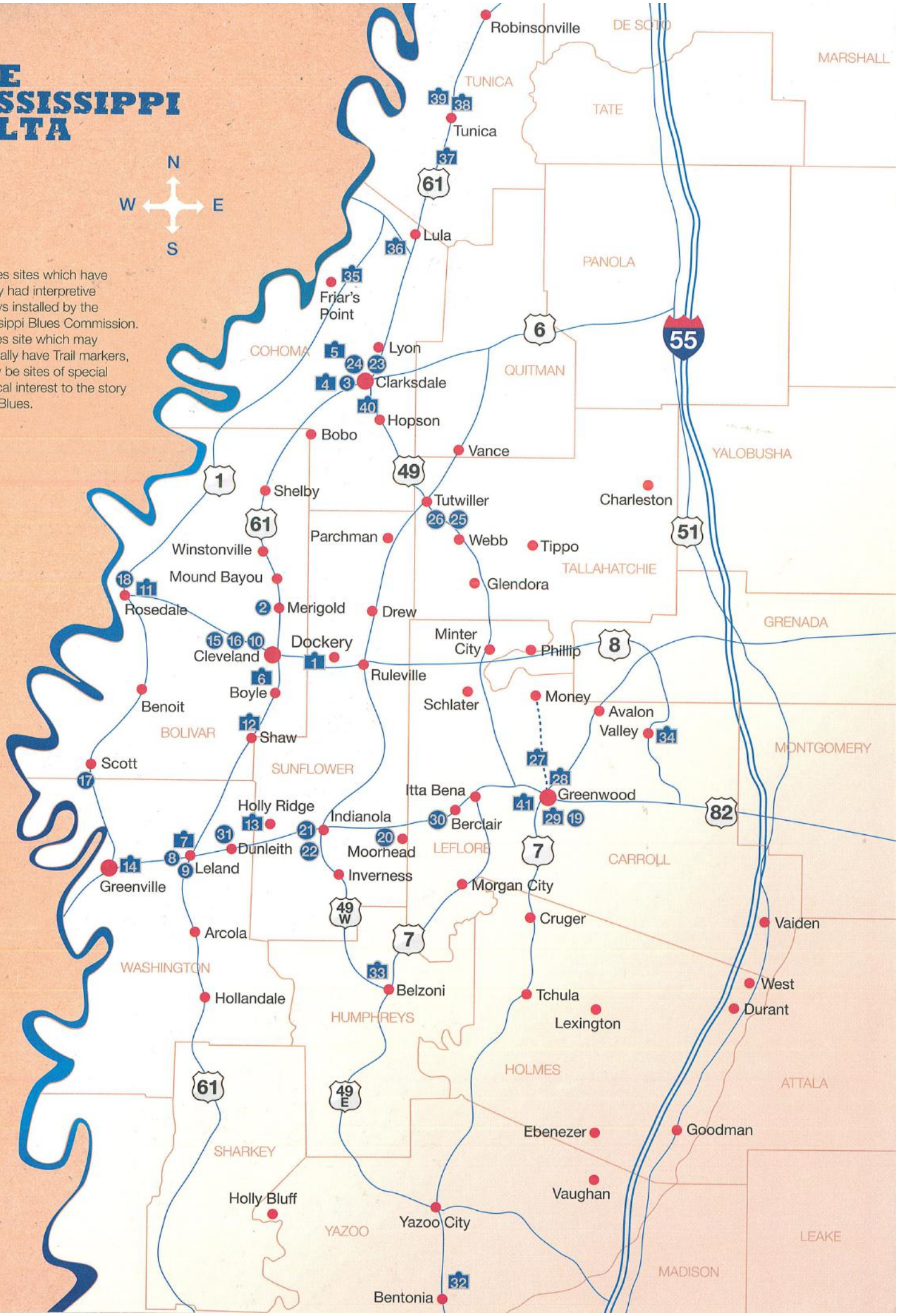


The **Mississippi Blues Heritage Trail** is a collection of informative displays that commemorate the people and culture of the Blues. These displays are placed around the entire state, but are most concentrated in the Delta. Detailed information about the Trail is available at the website of The Mississippi Blues Commission www.msbluestrail.org. This site includes the text that appears at each stop on the trail. Visit it for complete information about each location, including precise directions on how to reach the site.

THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA



- denotes sites which have already had interpretive displays installed by the Mississippi Blues Commission.
- denotes site which may eventually have Trail markers, or may be sites of special historical interest to the story of the Blues.





**The Delta Center for
Culture & Learning**
DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY

The Delta Center for Culture and Learning is an interdisciplinary program within Delta State University. Its mission is to promote the broad understanding of the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta and its significance to the rest of the world. Its activities include classes, field trips and heritage tours, oral history projects, historic preservation efforts, and service learning and community outreach programs.

Text and concept by John Heggen and Luther Brown.
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