

2016

## Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Mitchell, Dennis J. (2016) "Introduction," *Journal of Mississippi History*. Vol. 78: No. 1, Article 2.

Available at: <https://aquila.usm.edu/jmh/vol78/iss1/2>

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# Introduction

*By Dennis J. Mitchell*

Nearing my completion of *A New History of Mississippi*, I was asked to serve as editor of *The Journal of Mississippi History (JMH)*. I accepted the invitation because in writing a history of the state, I relied heavily on the *Journal*, which contains a veritable gold mine of underutilized historical information and insight into the state's past. Ken McCarty, *JMH*'s longtime editor had retired, and an interim editor had resigned prior to his relocation out-of-state, which left the *Journal* behind in its publication schedule. Despite the best efforts of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) and the Mississippi Historical Society, the backlog of issues grew due to budget reductions, personnel changes, and expanded workloads associated with MDAH's role in the planning and construction of the Two Mississippi Museums (Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum). Our efforts to address the publishing delay languished until Katie Blount, director, MDAH and *JMH* editor-in-chief, employed William "Brother" Rogers as director of the newly-established Division of Programs and Communication and assigned him the responsibility of serving as *JMH* managing editor. Brother has marshaled the resources at MDAH and enlisted the services of talented volunteers to help publish a flood of issues to address the backlog. Supported by Elbert Hilliard, *JMH* editor-in-chief emeritus and longtime secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Historical Society, the MDAH staff and volunteers have assisted me in reviving the *Journal*.

I thank the authors of articles that have been published in recent *JMH* issues for their patience and support of the *Journal* and for allowing us time to bring their articles to press. Recently, members of the Mississippi Historical Society received a special *JMH* issue on the Civil War edited by the late Michael Ballard. Soon readers can anticipate more special issues that will be edited by Charles Bolton and John Marszalek, covering little-known Mississippi governors and President U. S. Grant's role in Mississippi history, respectively.

Brother Rogers presented the idea for the publication of several

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*JMH* “vintage” issues to the Mississippi Historical Society’s board of publications at the Society’s 2017 annual meeting. The board accepted this proposal, and we have begun with articles that I found especially useful in writing *A New History of Mississippi*. In selecting articles for the vintage issues, we decided to limit ourselves to using *Journal* articles published before the 1970s.

In this issue and the next two vintage issues, we have grouped our selections into issues covering early Mississippi, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Student volunteers from Millsaps College (Emma McRaney, Angel Williams, Connor Dunne, Gwyneth McDonough, Braxton Thomas, and Madison Brennan) transcribed the articles. Two volunteers – Julia Marks Young, the retired director of the MDAH Archives and Records Services Division, and Amanda Kaminer, an adjunct professor in the Department of History and Political Science at Mississippi College – painstakingly proofread each article for accuracy. Elbert Hilliard also did a final reading of the articles, noting minor changes that were needed to accommodate various provisions of *The Chicago Manual of Style*. In some instances, commas have been inserted as needed to separate independent clauses, and brackets have been used to indicate editorial changes. In a few instances, additional information has been included in incomplete footnote citations.

One danger of reprinting older articles is that some of the language used in the articles is not only outdated, but sometimes offensive, such as the use of the term “colored.” While the Mississippi Historical Society would never publish a new article with such language, we have reprinted these articles verbatim to reflect scholarship as it was presented at the time. Each article is a product of its time and place, but is included because it contains relevant information that I used to write *A New History of Mississippi*.

This first vintage issue revives four articles providing insight into the state’s history that was celebrated and commemorated during Mississippi’s bicentennial year, 2017. In his analysis of the state in 1817, W. B. Hamilton addressed the trends that were evident in shaping Mississippi history during the planter-dominated culture of the time. Hamilton laid the blame for the state’s future poverty at the feet of the planters and their extractive economic practices. Margaret DesChamps Moore chronicled the development of churches in early Mississippi and concluded that the future “buckle of the Bible Belt’s” churches claimed only twenty percent of the state’s population in 1817, leaving the reader to ponder how the state changed in later years. The third article is a rare *Journal of Mississippi History* publication of a primary source, a portion of John Hutchins’s journal. The son of

an early settler of the Natchez District, Hutchins provides the reader with wonderful insight in frontier Mississippi life from hunting tales to complicated master/slave relationships. In the final article, Dawson A. Phelps illustrated how one obscure English settler chose to leave his British-American culture to live among the Chickasaw.

I hope you enjoy reading about the early history of Mississippi in these articles that were first published more than half a century ago.

