

# LETTERS FROM THE LIBRARY

NEWSLETTER OF THE STATE LAW LIBRARY OF MISSISSIPPI

*"There shall be ... a library ... known as the state library"*

An Act to provide for a State Library – General Laws, 1838

April 2018

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## State Library Hours

Monday – Friday  
8am – 5pm

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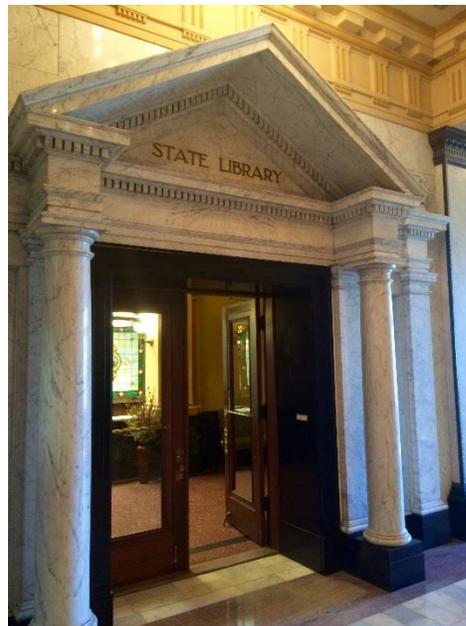
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## So which is it? The State Library or the State Law Library ...

Most everyone today refers to our Library as the State Law Library. Even our newsletter header above says “Newsletter of the State Law Library of Mississippi.” If we were created as the *State Library*, why and when did we begin referring to ourselves as the *State Law Library*?

The State of Mississippi began purchasing books in 1818 that included legal materials, dictionaries, the Bible, the Federalist Papers, and a host of other titles. For the next twenty years, this collection was maintained by the Secretary of State. The Legislature routinely called on the Secretary of State to find a suitable location to house this growing collection.



In 1838, the Legislature officially created a “library ... known as the State Library.” It was initially given an appropriation of \$3,000. The Library collection at that time included books on travel, medicine, biographies, church histories, and legal works. The State Library was located in the Old Capitol Building.

By 1848, the Legislature directed that twenty percent of the Library’s appropriation be used for the purchase of law books. The State Librarian was free to use the remaining eighty percent on non-law books.

In 1872, the Trustees of the State Library (Governor, Judges of the Supreme Court, and Attorney General), in consultation with State

Librarian I.N. Osborn, “determined that it ought to be made a complete law library, so that it would afford the means for a thorough investigation of every question which can arise.”

A search of old newspapers and Supreme Court opinions will yield results for both names, *State Library* and *State Law Library*. As early as 1883, the Clarion Ledger referred to us as the *State Law Library*. It used the *State Library* as recently as 2011. The Supreme Court has referred to us as the *State Library* in a case from 1872, and as the *State Law Library* in a case from 1951.

Another factor that added to this confusion was the establishment of the Mississippi Library Commission in 1926. The Library Commission was created to advise and train public librarians throughout the State. It still performs these duties today. In most all other states, the State Library performs the functions that our Library Commission does. Hence the reason that there are some who will refer to the Library Commission as the State Library and will refer to us as the State Law Library, though they’d be wrong.

Under current state law we remain as the State Library. In 1989, the Library ceased being a separate state agency. The Legislature placed it under the authority of the Supreme Court and declared that “there shall be a State Library which shall render law library services to the Supreme Court and other state courts, to state officials and to the general public.”

In conclusion, we retain the name of the State Library of Mississippi. However, we do recognize that most will refer to us as the State Law Library as we even do so ourselves.

## “How much is that Map worth?”

Recently, a tour group asked about the value of the *La Tourette Map of Mississippi* that we have on display in the Library.



First, some history of the map. The Legislature adopted a resolution in 1840 authorizing the Governor to purchase one hundred copies of *La Tourette's Map of the State of Mississippi*. The Governor was then directed to forward a copy of the Map to “the Secretary of each state and territory in the Union; one to the Probate Clerk’s Office of each county in this state; and one to each Department of this Government, and one to the Government of Texas.” John La Tourette completed his map and published it in 1839. The map contains the official return of the Census of January 1837.

We know at least three copies exist today at the following locations within the State of Mississippi: State Law Library; University of Mississippi Library; and the Mississippi Department of Archives & History.

How much is it worth?

Not having had the map appraised, the best way to venture a guess would be to compare it to a similar map. The closest comparison might be to the *Monumental Map of Alabama and West Florida* that John La Tourette published in 1837. A copy of the *Monumental Map of Alabama and West Florida* sold at an auction for \$35,000 on February 11, 2017. The auction was handled by the Neal Auction Company of New Orleans. In describing the auction, the Company stated that only four copies of that Map had been located.

## Library Hosts Editor of new *Mississippi Encyclopedia*

The Library hosted Ted Ownby, the editor of the new *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, on Tuesday, January 24, 2018. The following is reprinted from the Judiciary's Web site with the permission of its writer, Beverly Pettigrew Kraft.

"The Mississippi Encyclopedia is expected be available online later this year, senior editor Ted Ownby said during a discussion of the book on Tuesday, Jan. 23, at the State Law Library in Jackson.

The 1,451-page print edition that includes more than 1,600 entries by more than 650 scholars was published in 2017 by the University Press of Mississippi.

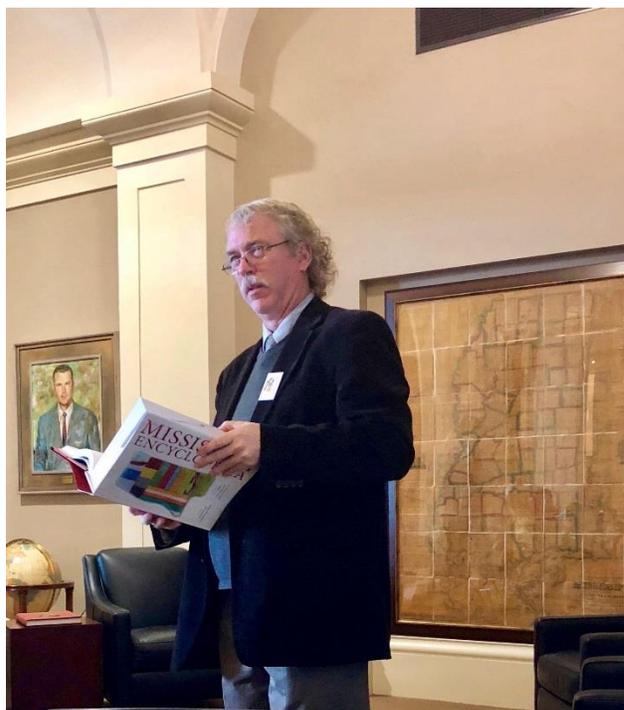
The goal in producing the encyclopedia was to be scholarly, authoritative and accessible, Ownby told the gathering. Putting the work online will take accessibility a step further, and it will allow updates and more topics to be added.

However, he lamented that some of the accidental discoveries one makes while leafing through printed pages may be lost in the online search. He and others who created The Mississippi Encyclopedia hope to find ways to keep the joy of browsing alive online.

"Part of the pleasure of this book is that you go to look up something and you find yourself 45 minutes later or an hour and a half later reading something more intriguing," Ownby said.

Ownby, of Oxford, is Professor of History and Southern Studies and Director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. The Center took on the project in 2003 at the suggestion of Seetha Srinivasan, then the director of the University Press of Mississippi. Ownby and Charles Reagan Wilson, former director of the Center, worked as senior editors with associate editors Ann J. Abadie, Odie Lindsey and James G. Thomas Jr.

The Mississippi Encyclopedia is the first encyclopedic treatment of the state in 110 years. Not since Dunbar Rowland's 1907 *History of Mississippi* has such a collective work been published.



Completing the new work took longer than expected. “It was a wonderful coincidence that the book came out in the state’s Bicentennial,” Ownby said. “That was not the original goal.”

It’s not intended as a celebration of Mississippi, a critique, or a defense of the state to its detractors. “It tries to show lots of experiences and points of view,” Ownby said. “We don’t necessarily treat powerful people as heroes....I kind of like it that entries on governors are the same length as entries on quilters.”

Two of the volume’s contributors, retired Supreme Court Justice James L. Robertson and former Mississippi College School of Law Dean Jim Rosenblatt, attended the book talk. Robertson, of Jackson, is known for his scholarly writing, but his topic for the Encyclopedia was something else that he holds dear: baseball. He authored the entry about Boston Red Sox first baseman George “Boomer” Scott. Both grew up in Greenville, but they never met until later in life. “I was just thrilled to do that,” Robertson said of his contribution to the Encyclopedia.

Rosenblatt wrote entries about Mississippi College School of Law and U.S. District Judge Henry T. Wingate. “It was an honor to contribute to this literary work that will be of lasting value and interest to Mississippians and beyond,” he said.

State Librarian Stephen Parks noted that the Law Library will observe its Bicentennial in a few days. Hosting Ownby for a book talk is among several special events.

The Law Library had its inception in a resolution of the Mississippi General Assembly of 1818. Gov. David Holmes, the state’s first governor, signed the handwritten document on Jan. 31, 1818, authorizing the Secretary of State to purchase a set of the acts of the United States Congress and a digest of the laws of the states of the Union. The Law Library was officially established by an act of the Mississippi Legislature in 1838.

Known officially as the State Library, the Law Library is a specialized public library which provides legal research materials to the judiciary, state agencies, lawyers, students and the general public. Its mission is to collect, preserve, and make available to the public the foundation of Mississippi law. The 265,000-volume collection includes state and federal legal sources including court decisions and rules, codes, regulations, law reviews and government documents as well as texts that explain law for laymen.

The Law Library is located in the Gartin Justice Building at 450 High Street, along with the Mississippi Supreme Court and the Mississippi Court of Appeals. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.”

## New Collection Taking Shape

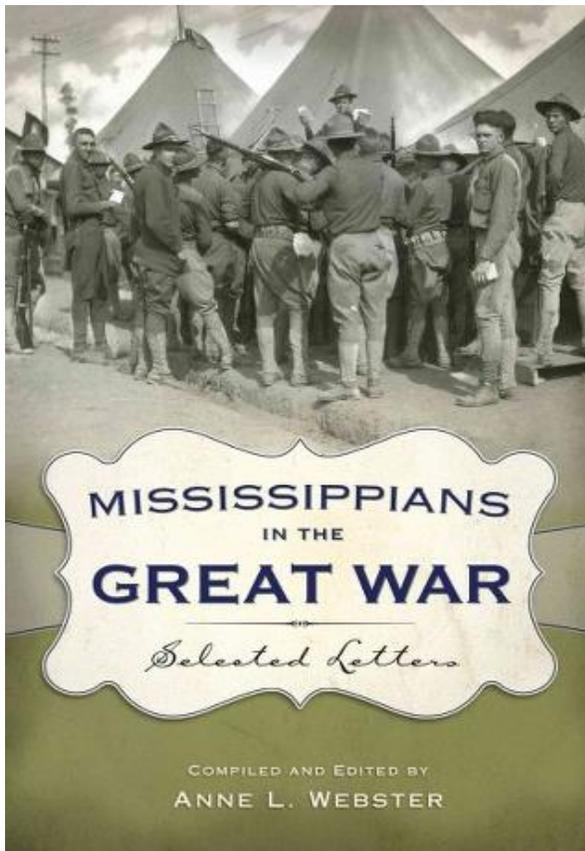
Thanks to generous donations of these books, the Library is beginning to organize a collection related to the history of various Mississippi counties and communities. These books are oftentimes quite rare as those responsible for compiling and publishing them publish only a set number of copies. We welcome all types of donations and make note of our donors in our library catalog.

Below is a list of the titles within this collection:

- Choctaw County Chronicles: A History of Choctaw County, Mississippi, 1830-1973
- Pike County Mississippi, 1798-1876

- History of Rosedale, Mississippi 1876-1976
- Raymond: A History ... 1821-1876
- Rosalie and Radishes: A History of Long Beach, Mississippi
- History of Bolivar County, Mississippi: Its Creation, Pioneer Days and Progress in the Heart of the Mississippi Delta
- A History of Tate County
- Jackson: A Special Kind of Place
- The Natchez Trace: Indian Trail to Parkway
- The Mississippi Gulf Coast: Portrait of a People
- Yazoo: Its Legends and Legacies
- Clarksdale & Coahoma County: A History
- Legends and Lore of the Mississippi Golden Coast

## Upcoming Event: “Mississippians in the Great War,” Friday, June 22



November 11, 2018, will mark one hundred years since the end of World War I, the Great War. The United States joined the conflict in 1917, sending more than two million soldiers into battle. Over 40,000 Mississippians were called into duty as the Selective Service System began. Yet not much is known or taught about the role Mississippi men and women played in the Great War.

Anne Webster, retired director of reference services at the Mississippi Department of Archives & History, will be with us on **Friday, June 22**, to discuss her book *Mississippians in the Great War: Selected Letters*. Webster’s presentation will be in the Library, beginning at 10:00 am. Everyone is invited to attend and hear Webster as she describes “the experiences of green, young Mississippians as they endured training camp, voyaged across the Atlantic to France, and participated in horrific battles leaving some scarred for life.” Webster’s work also “includes correspondence from nurses and YMCA workers who describe drills, uniforms, parades, and celebrations.”

Coffee and cookies will be provided.

# Visitors to the Library

We've had a busy start to 2018 with visitors to the Library. Below is just a sample.



*Left:* Thomas Fulton, Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Kentucky. Chief Judge Fulton is standing by the portrait of former Mississippi Supreme Court Judge Vernon Broom. Fulton clerked for Judge Broom in 1980.



*Left:* Students from Mississippi College's pre-law program with their advisor, Tricia Nelson.



*Left:* Yves Bolduc and Claire Drouin from Montreal, Quebec. Yves and Claire were traveling the Natchez Trace and stopped in Jackson to tour the Capitol, Supreme Court, and State Law Library.



*Left:* Students from the University of California-Irvine School of Law who spent their spring break in Jackson with the Mississippi Center for Justice.