



A Place Called
Mississippi



A Place Called **Mississippi**



David G. Sansing, PhD

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A Note from the Author about History and You

Everyone is a part of history, including all of you who are taking this course and reading this textbook. History is the story of mankind, a record of human events from the origin of man to the present. And you are fortunate to be a Mississippian, because Mississippi is one of the most fascinating places in the world. People in Japan, Africa, and Europe know about Mississippi because of our great writers like William Faulkner, Richard Wright, Eudora Welty, and Margaret Walker, and other famous Mississippians like Elvis Presley and B. B. King.

General Ulysses S. Grant's siege of Vicksburg during the Civil War is considered one of the great campaigns in military history. Grant's personal correspondence, his memoirs, and other military documents and papers are located in the library at Mississippi State University in Starkville. Historians who continue to write about Grant's daring Vicksburg maneuver must come to Mississippi to consult Grant's private papers and visit the Vicksburg National Military Park.

On the day after the riot caused by James Meredith's enrollment at The University of Mississippi on October 1, 1962, newspapers across the country and all over the world headlined the admission of the first black student to Ole Miss. Meredith is now a devoted alumnus, and his personal papers and correspondence are located in the library at The University of Mississippi.

The fall of Vicksburg during the Civil War and the Meredith crisis during the civil rights movement were two crucial and defining moments in American history. They both happened here in Mississippi, and you will learn all about those historic events during this semester.

Mississippians who visit other parts of the country are often amused by the attention they receive. People seem somehow intrigued to find a real live Mississippian outside its natural habitat. It may be that there is just no other place quite like Mississippi. William Faulkner said, "To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi."

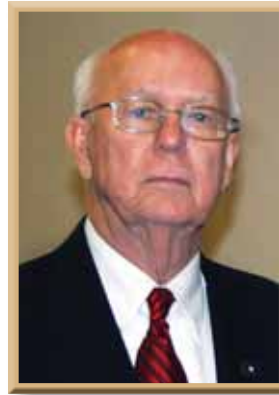


Some of you taking this course will make history, and your names will appear in books and newspapers. Some of you will become teachers who inspire thousands of students to reach for the stars, and in that way you will surely influence history.

Some student in a Mississippi high school reading this textbook today may become a major sports figure; a writer, artist or musician; an inventor or scientist; a city mayor or alderman; a county sheriff or supervisor; a state legislator; a U. S. congressman or senator. Perhaps a student studying Mississippi history today will become governor of Mississippi—or even president—tomorrow.

I hope you do not consider this class as just a dull and dry history course, because it is about you, where you came from, and how you got here. There is an old saying that the future belongs to those who prepare for it, and that nothing better prepares us for the future than an understanding of the past. You can become what you aspire to be. Study hard, and aim high in this course. I hope you enjoy reading this textbook as much as I enjoyed writing it for you.

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About the Author

David G. Sansing was born in Greenville, Mississippi, and earned a BA and MA from Mississippi College and a PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi. After teaching ten years at Perkinson Junior College, he was appointed professor of history at The

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Among his awards are the Martin Luther King Jr. Award, presented by Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Mississippi Historical Society's Dunbar Rowland Award; Richard Wright Literary Excellence Award; and the Mississippi College Order of the Golden Arrow. His books include *A History of the Mississippi Governor's Mansion*, with Carroll Waller; *Making Haste Slowly: The Troubled History of Higher Education in Mississippi*; *Natchez: An Illustrated History*, with Carolyn Smith and Sim Callon; *The University of Mississippi, A Sesquicentennial History*; and *Mississippi: Its People and Culture*, a textbook.

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Two of the pivotal events in American history took place in Mississippi almost 100 years apart: the fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863, represented by the Mississippi Memorial at Vicksburg National Military Park (far left), and the integration of Ole Miss by James Meredith in 1962 (left).



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Above: Beautiful fall colors in Itawamba County

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Above: Sardis Lake on the Little Tallahatchie River is one of Mississippi's six major reservoirs.