

# Regional Americans

## Mississippi—The Featured State

*"It was a summer of Wistaria. The twilight was full of it and the smell of his father's cigar as they sat on the front gallery after supper until it would be time for Quentin to start, while in the deep shaggy lawn . . . the fireflies blew and drifted in soft random—the odor, the scent which five months later Mr. Compson's letter would carry up from Mississippi and over the long iron New England snow . . ."*

Absalom, Absalom

William Faulkner of Oxford, Miss. self-styled farmer, rum runner, postmaster, bookstore clerk, boiler room tender and Nobel Laureate was a third-generation Southerner. He grew up in Mississippi among people who had known and loved the old South, and who, in their hearts and their stories, kept the past alive. He wrote out of his personal experience and out of stories he'd heard. He lived close to the woods where he hunted as a boy. Almost all of his fiction was set in a specific section of the South, Yoknapatawpha, a mythical county which approximates Oxford, in Lafayette County. His characters, the Southerners, are images of modern man.

Featuring Mississippi in the Regional Americans section of the Festival afforded the Smithsonian the opportunity of presenting an area rich in folklore. The participants who are appearing at this Festival represent a challenging image of Mississippi, one true to the intensity of Faulkner's vision.

Here at the same time are Mississippi timber men and modern cattlemen; rural whittlers and urban catfish friers; African survival fife players and fiddlers of British origin.

The regional Americans area of the Festival has as its purpose the celebration of grass roots creativity. To date Ohio, Arkansas, Pennsylvania, Texas, Maryland and Kentucky have been featured. It is hoped that Festival-goers will realize from the Mississippi presenta-

tion more about the nature of traditional culture and a greater appreciation of the rich heritage of Mississippi.

Since December 1973 when Mississippi Governor Bill Waller and members of the Mississippi legislature accepted the Smithsonian's invitation to participate in the eighth consecutive Festival of American Folklife, experienced field researchers travelled 15,000 miles through 82 counties in the State. Their mission was to locate and identify traditional music, dance, craft skills, culinary arts and story-telling in the State. They sought individuals whose skills were transmitted by families and friends in the home communities, people who were not formally trained, but who have assimilated the culture of their families and neighbors since infancy.

The Mississippi presentation is organized around nine elements: Fiddlers' convention, crafts exhibit, demonstration and auction, concerts, food and agricultural folklore among workers in timber, cotton and cattle.

### Fiddling

One of the surprising results of the field survey was the illumination that there is a panoply of fiddling styles in Mississippi—a greater variety than any other state researched. Geographically, Mississippi is a "swing state." Musically, influences came not only from the South, but from places further west of the Great River. You can hear in the fiddle music the ragtime and jazz influence, Western Swing, Cajun, non-Cajun-French, blue grass, contemporary country and a great variety of Anglo-Scots-Irish. Festival fiddlers will be playing in numerous combinations, solo, double and triple. All of these forms will be heard at the Mississippi Fiddlers'

Convention, Saturday, July 6 at noon. A grand finale will be the Mississippi fiddlers playing a medley of old favorites. Fiddle workshops and fiddling for square dances will be part of the fun. The Third Annual Fiddler's contest open to the public and sponsored by Mississippi is scheduled for Saturday, July 6 at 2 p.m. Prizes up to \$1,000 will be awarded.

The field survey uncovered an extraordinary range of Black material. For example, until recently the tradition of folk wind instruments made of bamboo has been explored only minimally. Traditional musicians often refer to these as "quills." Some call them fifes and others call them flutes. Several performers will play fife with a drum band and solo as well.

### One String

Many people have heard about a tradition of "one-string" performers in Mississippi. It's seldom heard of outside of the State and such performances have never before been presented at a Festival. This year, an 18 year old performer will tell how, in his frustrated desire to become a guitarist, he learned to play the "one-string" by stretching a piece of baling wire across two nails driven into the side of a barn. The barn siding acted as a sounding board. This primitive instrument served the musician well. He's now a virtuoso not only on the one-string, but on the guitar as well.

### Delta Music

The Mississippi Delta will be well represented by 75-year old Sam Chatmon and by a range of his proteges: 18-year old Lonnie Pitchford and more senior types such as Son Thomas and Jesse Mays and Houston Statehouse.

### Crafts

Crafts materials represented in the exhibit in the Mississippi Hospitality tent are the quality examples of a typical variety. In addition a 'find of the Festival' are the tapestries of Mrs. Ethel Mohammed of Belzoni, Mississippi whose inspired needlework is epic in proportion. Crafts demonstrations will include basket-making, chair-making, pottery, carving, whittling, saddlery, harness, knife and net-making. Many of the crafts on exhibit will be auctioned to the public Sunday, July 7.

### Cotton-Cattle-Timber

Three theme exhibits will be the central focus for the special presentations by the state. The culture and traditions associated with cotton, cattle and timber are being presented in a variety of ways. A quarter-acre of cotton, under cultivation since mid-April by the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture is growing on the Festival grounds. Visitors are invited to the related exhibits of classing, grading, ginning, carding, spinning from plant to finished product. Everyone is invited to try his hand at one of the special spinning wheels constructed in the Smithsonian Machine Shop, located in the Mississippi area.

Several breeds of cattle are stabled on the mall, representing an industry of increasing cultural significance. A calf-cutting demonstration with quarter-horses, cattle shows and related crafts are part of the presentation.

The timber exhibit demonstrates precision felling of trees, team-work on a hand-powered cross-cut saw, and workshops on timberlore and tall tales conducted by folklorists.

The food of Mississippi is represented through open air catfish fries and bar-



becued chicken.

Mississippi's participation has been coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History under the direction of Elbert R. Hilliard and Byrle A. Kynerd. The Mississippi Agriculture and Industrial Board, Mississippi Authority for Educational Television, the State Department of Agriculture and Commerce, and the Mississippi Arts Commission assisted in the presentation which was endorsed by the Mississippi American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission.

*Tapestries of Mrs. Ethel Mohammed of Belzoni, Mississippi whose inspired needlework are epic in proportion on exhibit in the Hospitality Tent, Mississippi area, July 3 through 7.  
Photo by Richard Hulan.*





## Participants

### Musicians

John W. Arnold	<i>Singer</i>
Brenda Ashker	<i>Dancer</i>
Joseph Ashker	<i>Dancer</i>
Mrs. Joseph Ashker	<i>Dancer</i>
Joseph Ashker, Jr.	<i>Dancer</i>
Tommy Ashker	<i>Dancer</i>
Marion "Chunk" Bentley	<i>Caller</i>
Derrick Bunch	<i>Cane flute player</i>
Canton Spirituals	<i>Gospel singers</i>
Eddie Lee Jackson	
Roscoe Lucious	
Tensley Murphy	
Claude C. Nichols	
Morris Taylor	
Theodore Thompson	
Harvey Watkins	
Charles Yarn	
Sam Chatmon	<i>Blues guitarist</i>
Joe Cooper	<i>Drummer, blues band</i>
Albert G. Dahduh	<i>Musician</i>
George Dahduh	<i>Musician</i>
Dorris Dickerson	<i>Fiddler</i>
Duck Hill Billies	<i>String band</i>
S.C. Herbert	
Billy J. Marter	
R.E. Rainey	
George Timbs	
Clayton Tyler	
Billy Hansford	<i>Fiddler</i>
Donald M. Hickman	<i>Musician</i>
Johnnie E. Hickman	<i>Musician</i>
Verna Hollingsworth	<i>Fiddler</i>
Hubert Hunkapiller	<i>Fiddler</i>
Claude Kennedy	<i>Sixtown Band</i>
Eddie Knight	<i>Flute player</i>
Leake County String Band	<i>String band</i>
Roy C. Alford	
Sam Alford	
Barney Ellis	
Morgan Gilmer	
Howard B. Smith	
George McLeod	<i>M. C., Fiddlers' Convention</i>
Alvis Massengale	<i>Fiddler</i>
Jesse Mays	<i>Spiritual singer</i>
Bill Mitchell	<i>Fiddler</i>
Sylvester Moran	<i>Fiddler</i>
Old Time Pickin' Partners	<i>Blue grass</i>
Gene Bush	
Rufus Comans	
Raymond Huffmaster	
Andy Jones	

Avil Linton	
Bernie Linton	
Pep Steppers	<i>String band</i>
James Alford	
Hoyt Ming	
Mrs. Hoyt Ming	
Hoyt Ming, Jr.	
Lonnie Lee Pitchford	<i>Guitarist</i>
Mike Ross	<i>Fiddler</i>
Spiritual Ensemble	<i>Gospel singers</i>
Daniel Littleton	
Myrtle Middleton	
Andrew Oliver	
Bonita Rainey	
Christine Rainey	
Leonard Rainey	
Houston Stackhouse	<i>Guitarist</i>
Everett Joe Townsend	<i>Spiritual singer</i>
Robert Wall	<i>Fiddler</i>

### Crafts

Willie L. Barton	<i>Wood carver</i>
Robert Wayne Billie	<i>Beader</i>
Michael Black	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
Thomas L. Burchfield	<i>Blacksmith</i>
Wendell Callaway	<i>Sawyer</i>
Alena Cerinich	<i>Cook</i>
Howard Connor	<i>Potter</i>
Bura Conway	<i>Ox team logger</i>
James B. Cook	<i>Timber spokesman</i>
Cool Breeze	<i>Wood carver</i>
Susan Denson	<i>Basket maker</i>
John Matting Ellis	<i>Broom maker</i>
A. B. Eubanks	<i>Ox driver, whip maker</i>
Mark Freeman	<i>Cattleman</i>
Esbie Gibson	<i>Basket maker</i>
Jacobina Sekul Gilich	<i>Cook</i>
James Glover	<i>Knife maker</i>
Gotford Hennig	<i>Maritime blacksmith</i>
John Hewes	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
Eddie Hill	<i>Sawyer</i>
Edwina Hobson	<i>Cotton spinner</i>
William Knight	<i>Assistant auctioneer</i>
V. Joseph Langlinais	<i>Net maker</i>
Joseph Langlinais, Jr.	<i>Net maker</i>
W. G. Lovorn	<i>Chair maker</i>
James Lucas	<i>Whittler</i>
Duly Martin	<i>Ox driver</i>
Hamp Martin	<i>Chair maker</i>
Herman R. Massey	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
Eugena Mohlenrich	<i>Cotton spinner</i>



Ethel Mohamed	<i>Needleworker</i>
Fred Moore	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
L. Willie Nabors	<i>Basket maker</i>
Bert Parnell	<i>Ox yoke maker</i>
Lollis Pierce	<i>Chair maker</i>
J. D. Rankin	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
Andrew Robertson	<i>Cotton grader</i>
Liston Shows	<i>Auctioneer</i>
Laymon Shumake	<i>Blowgun maker</i>
Mrs. Alan Skelton	<i>Quilter</i>
B. F. Smith	<i>Gin operator</i>
Jack Smith	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>

George Spears	<i>Cotton farmer</i>
James Therrell	<i>Timber spokesman</i>
James Thomas	<i>Clay sculptor</i>
T. H. Thomas	<i>Timber spokesman</i>
Bowmar Virden	<i>Cattle spokesman</i>
Richard Wesley	<i>Gin operator</i>
Dezzie White	<i>Corn shuck weaver</i>
John White	<i>Oak basket maker</i>
Joe V. Wilson	<i>Leather worker</i>
Mrs. Joe V. Wilson	<i>Leather worker</i>
Frankie Lee Wright	<i>Oak basket maker</i>