



Contact: Sandy Bynum, Tourism Division
sbynum@mississippi.org

601.359.3297

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI DOCUMENTING THE BLUES

Jackson, Mississippi (February 20, 2009) – Governor Haley Barbour announces The 62nd Mississippi Blues Trail marker, titled “Documenting the Blues,” acknowledges blues preservation and promotion efforts at the University of Mississippi, notably the magazine *Living Blues*. The dedication ceremony will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 27 on the lawn of the Barnard Observatory--the home of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture--on the University of Mississippi Campus.

The dedication is one of many events related to the Blues Today Symposium, happening in Oxford Thursday and Friday that address the broad topic of "documenting the blues." These events include a special blues-themed show of Thacker Mountain Radio at the Lyric Theater on Thursday at 6pm, and panels on folklore work and record labels on Friday, with a keynote speech by Dr. David Evans. On Friday night gospel/soul legend, Mavis Staples will perform at the Gertrude Castellow Ford Center.

Living Blues was the first American magazine dedicated exclusively to the blues, and was founded in 1970 by seven young enthusiasts in Chicago. It soon became a journal of record for the African-American blues tradition, specializing in lengthy, first person narratives of living blues artists and chronicling local blues activity around the country, including Mississippi. Cofounders Amy van Singel and Jim O’Neal became owners and publishers of the magazine in 1971, and operated it until its transfer to the University of Mississippi’s Center for the Study of the Southern Culture in 1983.

The Center’s director at the time was blues scholar Dr. William R. Ferris, who had been a contributor to *Living Blues*. Ferris was also instrumental in the establishment in 1983 of the University’s Blues Archive and arranged for his friend B. B. King to contribute his large record collection to the archive, which is housed at the J. D. Williams Library. Other major components of the Archive are the *Living Blues* Collection, the Trumpet Records Collection, and the Sheldon Harris Collection. The University of Mississippi is the producer the Mississippi Public Broadcasting radio show Highway 61. The University began hosting the Blues Today Symposium in 2003.

The Mississippi Blues Trail markers are funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by support from the Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau and Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, Delta State University and the Mississippi Development Authority.

For more information, visit the Mississippi Blues Trail on the web at msbluestrail.org or the official MDA Tourism site visitmississippi.org. To contact the Mississippi Blues Trail office in Jackson, contact Alex Thomas (601-359-3297, athomas@mississippi.org) or Leigh Portwood (601-359-3061, lportwood@mississippi.org).