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## **JACKSON'S HISTORIC QUEEN OF HEARTS SITE TO BE ADDED TO MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL**

Jackson, Mississippi (April 13, 2009) – Jackson became an important center for the blues in the early 1900s, when musicians from rural communities came to play for crowds on the capital city's streets and in its many venues. The Mississippi Blues Trail will mark another historic site during ceremonies at 2243 Martin Luther King Drive on Thursday, April 16, at 4 p.m. as Governor Haley Barbour, the Mississippi Development Authority's Tourism Heritage Trails Program, the Mississippi Blues Commission, and the Jackson Convention and Visitors Bureau, honor The Queen of Hearts.

"As the 'Birthplace of America's Music,' Mississippi is blessed with a legacy of talented blues musicians and places that helped nurture their distinctive artistry. I am pleased to recognize the contributions of the Queen of Hearts, a Jackson landmark, as one of the important stops along our Blues Trail," Governor Haley Barbour said.

The Queen of Hearts, a primary venue for down-home blues in Jackson, opened at this location in the 1970s. During the following decades, owner-operator Chellie B. Lewis presented the blues bands of King Edward, Sam Myers, Big Bad Smitty, and many others. The house behind the club at 905 Ann Banks Street was owned and occupied in the 1960s by blues singer-guitarist Johnnie Temple, who had been a popular recording artist in Chicago in the 1930s and '40s.

"We are excited to celebrate the Queen of Hearts, which is an iconic venue for the Blues, known internationally as 'the place' to hear some of Mississippi's best artists. This marker will enhance the visibility and value of the capital city Blues and draw visitors to this historic and dynamic site," said Wanda Collier-Wilson, president and CEO, Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Live blues continued to thrive in Jackson into the twenty-first century, thanks to clubs such as the Queen of Hearts, where owner Chellie B. Lewis booked musicians and cooked soul food every weekend for decades. A native of Bolton, Mississippi, Lewis opened the club as "Nina's Lounge" after taking over the lease from Mose Chinn, whose brother Clarence ran the popular New Club Desire in Canton. Lewis had previously operated a "whiskey house" with a jukebox in the nearby Maple Street Apartments and worked as a waiter at Percy Simpson's nightclub on Moonbeam Street, where he would sometimes play piano with Elmore James's band.

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Lewis also rented out rooms above the Queen of Hearts to musicians including Sam Myers and Big Bad Smitty, and recalled that the home of bluesman Johnnie Temple (1905-1968), located behind the club, was a popular hangout for Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson No. 2, and other musicians. The house was previously occupied by Temple's stepfather, guitarist Lucine "Slim" Duckett, who recorded in Jackson for the OKeh label in 1930. Tommy Johnson and Skip James were among other noted blues performers who stayed with the Duckett/Temple family at various houses in Jackson. After moving to Chicago in the 1930s Temple recorded extensively, scoring his biggest hit with the often-covered "Louise Louise Blues." He returned to Jackson in the late 1950s.

John "Big Bad Smitty" Smith, a native of Vicksburg, was the first featured musician at the Queen of Hearts and was followed by bands led by King Edward (Antoine), Cadillac George Harris, Tommy "T. C." Carter, Norman Clark, and Roosevelt Robinson, Jr. Others who performed or sat in at the Queen of Hearts included Sam Myers, McKinley Mitchell, King Edward's brother Nolan Struck, Prentiss Lewis, Charlie Jenkins, Johnny Littlejohn, Levon Lindsey, brothers "Lightnin'" and Little Charles Russell, Elmore James, Jr., Robert Robinson, Andrew "Bobo" Thomas, Tommy Lee Thompson, Bobby Rush, Z. Z. Hill, Little Milton, Dorothy Moore, Lee "Shot" Williams, Abdul Rasheed, Eddie Rasberry, Walter Lee "Big Daddy" Hood, J. T. Watkins, Roosevelt Robinson, Sr., George Jackson, Eddie Cotton, Jr., Sam Baker, Jr., Jesse Robinson, Bill Simpson, Louis "Gearshifter" Youngblood, Robert "Bull" Jackson, Greg "Fingers" Taylor, Willie (Dee) Dixon, Robert "The Duke" Tillman, Sweet Miss Coffy, Willie James Hatten, Billy "Soul" Bonds, Frank-O (Johnson), Tina Diamond, Dennis Fountain, Marvin Bradley, James Williams, Sugar Lou, and Debra K.

The Mississippi Blues Trail markers are funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by support from the Jackson 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 further information on the Mississippi Blues Trail, go to [www.msbluestrail.org](http://www.msbluestrail.org). For more information on the musicians and promoters honored by the Mississippi Blues Trail, or to submit information on blues artists, contact: Jim O'Neal, Mississippi Blues Trail Research Director (816-931-0383, [bluesoterica@aol.com](mailto:bluesoterica@aol.com)).

To reach the Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Blues Trail Program, contact Alex Thomas (601-359-3297, [athomas@mississippi.org](mailto:athomas@mississippi.org)) or Leigh Portwood (601-359-3061, [lportwood@mississippi.org](mailto:lportwood@mississippi.org)). And for complete visitor information about Mississippi go to [www.visitmississippi.org](http://www.visitmississippi.org).

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