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HERNANDO MUSICIANS TO RECEIVE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL MARKER

Jackson, Mississippi (May 22, 2009) –The Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division Heritage Trails Program, the Mississippi Blues Commission and the DeSoto County Tourism Association will dedicate the marker at 400 West Park Street in honor of Hernando musicians during ceremonies Wednesday, May 27 at 10:30 a.m.

Mississippi is well known as a destination for music lovers. Gov. Haley Barbour created the Mississippi Blues Trail to recognize the talents of the state's countless musicians in the Birthplace of America's Music. When completed more than 150 sites will offer an unforgettable journey into Blues history.

The Hernando area was the birthplace of an important group of musicians who helped establish Memphis as a major blues center in the 1920s. These include veteran medicine show performer Jim Jackson, whose song "Jim Jackson's Kansas City Blues" was a major hit in the late 1920s, Robert Wilkins, a bluesman turned preacher whose song "Prodigal Son" was covered by the Rolling Stones, and Dan Sane, who was the guitar-playing partner of Memphis blues pioneer Frank Stokes. Sane and Stokes recorded as the "Beale Street Sheiks," and one of their songs, "Beale Town Bound," is used as the title of this marker in acknowledgment of how these Hernando-born artists made their names as artists on Beale Street. Another early pioneer of Memphis blues was Gus Cannon, who is buried in north Hernando. Cannon recorded as "Banjo Joe" and as the leader of the jug band Cannon's Jug Stompers and was still musically active in the early '60s when his song "Walk Right In" was a hit for the folk group the Rooftop Singers.

Other artists from the Hernando area include Earl Bell, who claimed to have played with Robert Johnson in the 1930s and harmonica player George "Mojo" Buford, who played harmonica with Muddy Waters. The popular blues/rock group the North Mississippi Allstars—Luther and Cody Dickinson and Chris Chew—formed while they were attending Hernando High School. They recorded some of their albums including "Hernando," released in 2008, at the Zebra Ranch studio in nearby Coldwater, operated by Cody and Luther's father Jim Dickinson, a celebrated producer, session man, and recording artist.

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While markers are scattered statewide, the Mississippi Blues Trail is concentrated in the heart of the Delta. The Mississippi River carved the flatlands of northwest Mississippi through generations of floods. That left fertile ground for farming and the Blues. The trail starts at the first official marker in Holly Ridge, the resting place of the blues guitarist Charley Patton. The trail then winds its way to sites honoring B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Son House and more.

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).

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