



Contact: Sandy Bynum, Tourism Division  
[sbynum@mississippi.org](mailto:sbynum@mississippi.org)

601.359.3297

## **CHICKASAW COUNTY ADDS MARKER TO THE MISSISSIPPI BLUES TRAIL**

Jackson, Mississippi (October 14, 2009) – Mississippi Blues Trail marker number 89 will be unveiled in Houston in honor of Booker "Bukka" White, one of the most expressive vocalists, powerful slide guitarists, and remarkable lyricists in the blues.

The Mississippi Development Authority Tourism Division Heritage Trails Program, the Mississippi Blues Commission with support from the Chickasaw County Historical and Genealogical Society, Chickasaw County Board of Supervisors and the Houston Board of Alderman will hold dedication ceremonies Friday, October 16 at 10 a.m. in Joe Brigrance Park, Starkville Road, in Houston, Mississippi. In case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be held in the Civic Center in the park.

"I am pleased to recognize this region of Mississippi for the outstanding artists who perfected their styles in the blues and gospel music scene here," Governor Haley Barbour said. "Perhaps the most notable contribution is from Bukka White, whose unique playing style was admired by one of the most successful bluesmen today, his cousin B.B. King. Bukka's music will never be forgotten."

Born just south of Houston, White (c. 1904-1977) learned guitar from his father, John White, and spent most of his early years rambling around Mississippi and the Midwest, although he often returned to the Houston area. In 1930 he made his first recordings for the Victor label, cutting both blues and religious songs, and in 1937 he returned to the studio, recording his classic "Shake 'Em on Down." Shortly after its release White was sentenced to Parchman Penitentiary for a shooting incident, and while incarcerated was recorded by John Lomax of the Library of Congress. In 1940, White returned to the studio, recording 12 of his best known songs.

During WWII White settled in Memphis, where he performed with local artists including Frank Stokes in a defense plant. In the latter '40s White assisted his cousin B.B. King settle into the local music industry; King later explained that his distinctive guitar style stemmed from attempting-and failing to master-the bottleneck slide guitar style typified by White. In the early '60s White enjoyed a career revival after young blues enthusiasts interested in his older recordings tracked him down. He subsequently became a popular entertainer on the folk-blues circuit, and traveled as far as Mexico and Europe to perform.

The marker also acknowledges locally born artists including brothers Cleave and Clay Graham of the gospel group the Pilgrim Jubilees; Buena Vista native Otho Lee Gaines, who was the founder and bass singer of the influential vocal group the Delta Rhythm Boys; and blues vocalist Willie Buck. Also acknowledged is Houston radio station WCPC, which was founded in 1955.

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With over 80 markers 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.

The Mississippi Blues Trail markers are funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by support from 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](http://msbluestrail.org) and to find out what's happening year round in Mississippi the Birthplace of America's Music explore the official MDA Tourism site [visitmississippi.org](http://visitmississippi.org) or call Alex Thomas, program manager, 601-359-3297.

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