Note: From the Museum Director

Our "quiet" winter season has been a busy time this year at the Delta Blues Museum.

After a flurry of meetings in January and February to set up the final preparatory work, the Museum Board of Trustees, along with the Stovall family and representatives of D. Carroll Construction, officially broke ground for the Muddy Waters Addition on Tuesday, March 22. To be completed by the end of this year, the wing features a two-story building that will showcase the cabin from Stovall Farms where McKinley Morganfield a.k.a. Muddy Waters grew up. (It is currently on display in our galleries, but in a cramped space.) The Addition will also house new permanent exhibits. The wing is designed to complement the Museum's current home, Clarksdale's historic railroad freight depot, a Mississippi Landmark Property, and will double the size of our gallery space. Construction will be completed by the end of this year.

L to R: Kevin Clanton, David Carroll, Will Finn / D. Carroll Construction; Commissioner Buster Moton; Cathy Clark / City Clerk; Commissioner Edward Seals; Jim Herring, Johnny Lewis, Dr. Frank Marascalco, Yvonne Stanford / Delta Blues Museum Board; Howard Stovall; Shelley Ritter; Delta Blues Museum Director; Clarksdale Mayor Henry Espy; Curtis Boschert, City Attorney; Maggie Bjorgum, Belinda Stewart Architects; Brian Copeland, Mississippi Department of Transportation; Belinda Stewart, Belinda Stewart Architects

[Photo credit: Chuck Lamb / Lamb Photography]
It seems fitting that the official groundbreaking took place now. This month marks the 60th anniversary of rock 'n' roll as dated from March 5, 1951, when a group of Clarksdale musicians drove to Memphis to audition for Sam Phillips at his Memphis Recording Service (the studio that pre-dated Sun Records). Jackie Brenston & his Delta Cats, including Ike Turner, Willie Kizart, and Raymond Hill, recorded "Rocket 88." Issued by license to Chess records, the song hit #1 on the charts by June. Last year, when Ike Turner was honored by the Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival, we unveiled our new "Rocket 88" exhibit. If you haven't seen it yet, now's the right time to cruise on by!

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of Robert Johnson, the bluesman whose much-mythologized life, including the legend of the Crossroads, and singular music make him the most widely known Delta bluesman. David "Honeyboy" Edwards, who played with Johnson, will appear at the Museum on April 15-16 as part of the Juke Joint Festival, both speaking informally and performing (see "Events" below for the schedule). We are also working on some special features to highlight Johnson's Clarksdale connections—stay tuned!

2011 is also the 100th anniversary of Tennessee Williams's birth, which will be celebrated in Clarksdale at the 19th Annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival on October 14-15. Williams spent part of his childhood in Clarksdale, using the experience to create many of the characters and settings in his plays. Did you know a collection of five short plays is titled American Blues? Read more.
With all the anniversaries in the air, it seems only right that the Museum was visited by a school group from Myrtle Hall Elementary School. Many of you may—or may not—know that the Museum began in Myrtle Hall's Library Branch #4 with a small exhibit set up by the Carnegie Public Library staff. The Museum quickly outgrew that space and moved into the Carnegie Library at 114 Delta Avenue, where it continued to expand until we moved into our current building in 1999.

Speaking of roots, "Acoustic Africa: From Mali to Mississippi," will be presented on April 14 at 7 pm at The Pinnacle on the campus of Coahoma Community College. Habib Koite and Afel Bocoum, Malian guitarists and singers, will perform with a traditional African band. The links between Mali and the blues are historically strong ones that continue to develop today. This performance is free and open to the public.

Despite January being our relatively quiet time (usually), we hosted visitors from thirty-one states and eight countries! That geographically wide turnout fits with the press we continue to attract, from local to national coverage. The Delta Business Journal ran a cover feature story on the Museum (right), and another feature article on the increase in tourism in Clarksdale. Other articles on the Museum appeared in the Washington Informer and the Sacramento Press.

Can't wait for our real "busy" season! Juke Joint Festival, April 15-16, is the first of many festivals we're getting ready for in coming months (see "Events" below). Come visit us!

A special thanks to the Mississippi Arts Commission for helping fund this newsletter.

Shelley Ritter, Director

This newsletter is supported in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and, in part, from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.
"Follow Charlie Musselwhite" has gone "live" on our home page web site. The new section maps the life and musical times of the blues-harp master, from Possumneck, Mississippi to Memphis, from the South Side of Chicago to the Bay Area and worldwide fame. It joins the "Follow Muddy" and "Follow Son House" sections as part of our Explore and Learn series. Thanks to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

"Follow Son House" has its soundtrack. Eight classic Son House songs have been added to the web section's pages, including "Clarksdale Moan," "John the Revelator," and "Death Letter." Thanks to Bug Music for the rights clearance and the Rock River Foundation for support of the feature.

The latest addition to the Explore and Learn section of the Museum Web site, "Follow Charlie Musselwhite," is in-progress, thanks to the generous support of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. Previous Explore and Learn units have featured Muddy Waters and Son House. You can see "Follow Muddy" and "Follow Son House" here. We are also in process of getting permissions to add Son House music to "Follow Son House." Thanks to Bug Music.

April 7, Thursday 5-7 pm Exhibit opening/reception/book signing Mississippi: State of the Blues with Ken Murphy and Scott Barretta.

April 15-16 Juke Joint Festival New Museum Exhibit
Photographs from *Mississippi: State of the Blues* by Ken Murphy and Scott Barretta.

**Friday, April 15**
4 pm Conversations with David "Honeyboy" Edwards
5 pm Delta Blues Museum band performs on stage for the Care Station Fish Fry Fundraiser

**Saturday, April 16**
All day DBM tent on Delta Avenue
Music on DBM/ "Robert Johnson Stage" starts at 3 pm
3 pm DBM band
4 pm David "Honeyboy" Edwards
5 pm STAX Academy band
6 pm Ole Skool Review from Delta State University

**Sunday, April 17**
The Museum will be open noon-4.

For full schedule of all Juke Joint Festival events, [Read more](#)

May 5 Blues Music Awards, sponsored by the Blues Foundation, will be given out in Memphis. **Clarksdale’s own James “Super Chikan” Johnson** is nominated in the categories of Best Traditional Blues Male Artist (he won last year!) and B. B. King Entertainer of the Year. [Read more](#)

**June 4 noon - 10 pm 12th Annual Highway 61 Blues Festival**, Leland (one hour south of Clarksdale), will feature many local performers, including Eddie Cusic, Jimbo Mathus, and Cedric Burnside. The next day, June 5, the Holly Ridge Store hosts a blues jam featuring festival performers. [Read more](#)

**August 12-14 24th Annual Sunflower River Blues and Gospel Festival.** This year's edition will honor deceased, "hometown" contributors to Clarksdale's music heritage: musicians Michael James (who taught in the Museum's Arts and Education program), Wesley Jefferson, Foster "Tater" Wiley, Big Jack Johnson, club owner Sarah Moore, and vendor chairman James Alford. The Museum has just acquired "Dr. Mike's" guitar for its collection. [Read more](#)
On February 10, a Mississippi Blues Trail Marker was unveiled at the Grammy museum in Los Angeles, as part of this year's Grammy Awards. The marker honors Mississippi’s pivotal role in blues and its influence across the music industry. **Read more**

**R.I.P.**

The blues lost several legends in the past months. All lived long and productive lives, and were performing until their final days.

- **Eddie Kirkland**, 87, played with John Lee Hooker from 1949-1962, and then had a successful solo career. He kept up a relentless touring schedule, for which he was called "Gypsy of the Blues."

- **Big Jack Johnson**, 70, was the last of the Jelly Roll Kings (Frank Frost, Sam Carr). He was a popular club and festival entertainer known as "The Oil Man" for his day job delivering barrels.

- **Pinetop Joe Willie Perkins**, 97, the Delta boogie-woogie piano master, who played with Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Robert Nighthawk, and Earl Hooker, and who taught Ike Turner. His nickname came from his famous cover version of Clarence "Pinetop" Smith's "Pinetop Boogie Woogie."

**ARTS & EDUCATION PROGRAM NEWS**

**Scott Ainslie** offered a guitar workshop on February 12, guiding 15 attendees through the tunings and techniques of Robert Johnson. We recorded the first 30 minutes of this classroom session to be used as podcast for the DBM web site. The event was sponsored by the Rock River Foundation, and the podcast was made possible by the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.

*Guitarist Scott Ainslie teaching Robert Johnson in the Museum classroom.*
From Clarksdale to Kansas City, Vol. 1, the CD recorded by the Delta Museum Blues Band will be on sale at the Museum for Juke Joint Festival, April 16. It features musicians and instructors from the Museum classes along with guest appearances by Charlie Musselwhite, Bill Abel, and other local musicians. Thanks to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and the Mississippi Arts Commission for supporting this project.

**DBM GIFT SHOP NEWS**

**Mississippi: State of the Blues** The beautiful photographs by Ken Murphy and the insightful text by Scott Barretta show that the blues are rollin' on in and around Clarksdale. Signed copies are available for $60 here. [here](#).

**The World Don't Owe Me Nothing**

(Book) The legendary bluesman David "Honeyboy" Edwards tells the story of his long musical life and times in writing that captures his distinctive voice. Born in 1915, he describes the ups and downs of a classic Delta musician's career: playing with Robert Johnson and B.B. King, and doing hard time in prison. Called "an African-American On the Road," this autobiography is history, sociology, and musicology all at once, told in a storytelling voice that makes the man and his music come vividly alive.

**CDs**
*Mississippi Delta Bluesman (CD)* This recording delivers the string-snapping guitar and soulful vocals that define the classic, pre-war Delta blues. A re-issue of a 1979 vinyl LP first issued in 1979 by Moe Asch's Folkways label, it captures "Honeyboy" in a clean, porch-sittin' production. Comes with liner notes by the late blues writer Robert Palmer in a 26-page booklet.

*Born in the Honey (DVD/CD)* The Pinetop Perkins life story, told in interviews and performances. The master of Delta blues piano boogie-woogie has a lot to say, both in his insightful and humorous comments, and through his movin' music. Two-disc set contains a documentary DVD and a CD of music.

Order here.

Buy a Brick! Help Support the Museum and honor a family member, friend, or fellow blues enthusiast. Your donation of $50 buys a personalized brick to be place on the Museum walkway. Buy here

Gift Shop

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