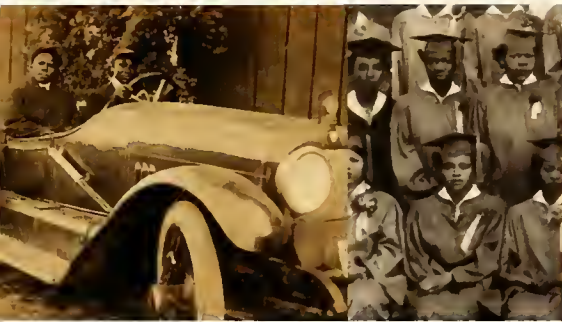


DELTA PHOTO ROAD SHOW

DISCOVERING THE UNKNOWN PHOTOS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA



The Delta Center for Culture & Learning and the DSU Archives Department are grateful to the History Channel for funding this Save Our History project. Bolivar County residents who submitted photographs for the project include David Walt, Milburn Crowe, Will and Nancy Tierce, Mrs. W. Frank Woods, Clay Rayner, Inez Stacy Sherwood, Jianking Zheng, Cameron Dakin, Alan LaMasutus, Laura Fleeman, Tameka Rachelle Ellis, and Jack Fletcher. D.M. Smith Middle School students who conducted oral history interviews and created the gallery exhibit for this project include Tierra Brown, Teresa Coleman, Candace Edwards, Danyal Jackson, Kanyal Jackson, Tiasha Jones, Alicia McGee, Eric McKnight, Tayhana McKnight, Ventina Miller, Aimee Miller, Kyra Moore, Bianca Nolden, Gabriel Nolden, Denise Proctor, LaToya Smiley, Robert Stewart, Franklin Townsend, and Iesha Upshaw.



A SAVE OUR HISTORY PROJECT

The Mississippi Delta has a rich heritage composed of diverse stories. Fortunately, there is still photographic evidence of many of these stories, but unfortunately, many of these photographs have never been made public. In an attempt to preserve and publicize historic photos from the Delta, the “Delta Photo Roadshow” was held on April 2, 2005. The event was organized by The Delta State University Delta Center for Culture and Learning, as part of the Lighthouse Arts & Heritage Program presented through the Cleveland D. M. Smith Middle School. Modeled after the popular PBS program Antiques Roadshow, the project paired the students with professional documentary photographers and scholars who helped them discover stories related to the photographs. The most compelling images were scanned into digital format and matched with oral history interviews that the Lighthouse students conducted onsite with the owners of the original photographs. In all, 12 participants submitted more than 1000 photographs, over 200 of which were preserved digitally. They range in subjects from turn-of-the-century logging operations to

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DISCOVERING THE UNKNOWN PHOTOS OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA



1930s fishing drives to sharecropping cotton. A fraction of these photographs have been included in this exhibit, telling several heritage stories about the land and people of the Mississippi Delta.

After these images were collected, the D.M. Smith students, under the guidance of Lighthouse art instructor Catherine Koehler, spent several weeks colorizing photocopies of them with colored pencils and watercolors. The colorized images were then cut out and placed in collages according to seven different themes: Education, Recreation, Portraits, the Delta as Frontier, Transportation, Industry and Agriculture, and Delta Life. An exhibit of this artwork was presented at the Charles Capps, Jr. Archive and Museum in May of 2005.

This project was funded by a grant of \$10,000 from The History Channel to The Delta Center for Culture & Learning, in collaboration with the Capps Archives. As an initiative of the Delta Center, the Lighthouse Program uses Mississippi Delta heritage and the arts to engage Bolivar County youth. The Delta Center's mission is to pro-

mote the history and culture of the Delta and its significance to the rest of the world, and the after-school program is one way the Center accomplishes that mission. The program is also designed to increase community involvement among Delta State students. College students in service-learning courses at Delta State volunteer as tutors and art interns in the program and also participate in some of the heritage workshops. The Lighthouse Program is funded through an ongoing grant from Learn & Serve America. Arts instruction is provided by Communities in Schools of Greenwood-Leflore.

The partners in this project would like to thank the photographers and scholars who served as jurors: Barbara Andrews, Director of Curatorial Services of the National Civil Rights Museum; David Darnell, Chief Photographer at the Memphis Commercial Appeal; Lynn Linnemeier, an Atlanta artist and graduate of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture; Greenville photographer Ralph Jones; Brooke White, DSU art professor in digital photography; and Jaman Matthews, a graduate student in folklore at UNC-Chapel Hill.

THE WALT FAMILY

The overwhelming majority of the photographs collected during the Delta Photo Roadshow come from three family collections. Dr. David Walt of Cleveland contributed images of his family ties to the steamboat business in Rosedale and the early days of the railroad in Cleveland. Milburn Crowe's photographs actually draw from three different Mound Bayou families—the Cooper family, the White family, and his own—and offer a glimpse of the upper- and middle-class lifestyle that residents there enjoyed in the town's heyday. Will and Nancy Tierce of Cleveland submitted two

collections. One tells the story of Nancy Tierce's family, the Armstrongs, who settled near Tunica and Gunnison around the turn of the century. The other contains a wealth of unidentified photographs that Will Tierce found years ago. The lives documented in these images represent for the most part a more affluent side of Delta life in the early 20th century. Photography, though not a rarity, was a tremendous expense especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s and was limited to people of means.

The photographs submitted by these participants appear again and again in each section. Many more, however, remain unpublished because of lack of space. All of these valuable images have been preserved in digital format in the Delta State University Archives.



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

David Walt's family story is deeply connected with the various modes of transportation that made the Delta accessible for settlers. His great-great-grandfather, Martin Walt, moved into the region with the steamboat business in the 1860s as the owner of a company based in Memphis and Higginsport, Kentucky, that ran mail boats to and from the White River, across the Mississippi from Rosedale. The family also has roots in Shaw, where David Walt's great-grandfather, Rufus Putnam Walt, Sr., worked at the railroad depot until his promotion to stationmaster in Cleveland. The patriarchal lineage of the Walt family is shown in the far right photograph of the two men, Martin Walt and Rufus Putnam Walt, Sr., holding baby Rufus Putnam Walt, Jr., who was David Walt's grandfather.

Many of the Walt photographs tell stories not only of the development of infrastructure in the early Delta but also the social life and leisure that business afforded. There



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

were tea parties and buggy rides for the children, dancing for the adults, and the teenagers often appear goofing around. Many of these images remain in their original photo album that, brittle and tattered as the pages are, still carry handwritten captions that match the charm of their subjects. The image at right, one of Walt's favorites, shows children at a "Walt Tacky Party" and is dated October 5, 1900. "October 5 was my grandfather's birthday, and none of the other children were born at that time," Walt explains. "The strange thing about the history of it is my sister came up to give a talk on antiques on October 5, 2000, and we pulled that picture out and it was 100 years old that day."

In the other large group photograph above, Rufus Putnam Walt is posing in front of a pony. The women standing in the back, from left to right, are his aunts and his mother, who moved from Winona to Cleveland under special circumstances after her mother died, according to David Walt. "Her mother died and there were eight children, so their father put them in a wagon and started west. He dropped three off in Carrollton, dropped some off in Greenwood, dropped some off here, and then went north to Memphis. He had to leave them with the family because he couldn't care for them."

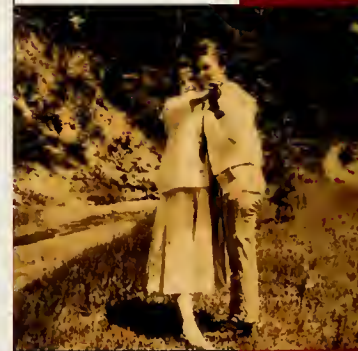


PROVIDED BY *David Walt*



David Walt

*Everybody wants to know
how to do the tinkle toe"*



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

THE CROWE FAMILY

Around the same time in Mound Bayou, the Crowes, like most of the African-American town's other families, enjoyed the good life. Many of the photographs submitted by Milburn Crowe show residents relaxing on the front porches of well-built homes. At the bottom of this page, Crowe and his sisters are playing on their family farm. The people of Mound Bayou traveled regularly, often to Chicago

to visit relatives who had moved there during the Great Migration. Like Walt's family, Milburn Crowe's was involved in the railroad business in Mound Bayou and owned land around town. These were two worlds, within the same county, with striking parallels and only race to set them apart.

Most of the photographs in the Crowe collection were taken by Milburn Crowe's aunt Mattie Thompson, who was better known as "Aunt Goldie." As Crowe explains, "One of her hobbies was to take pictures, and she had the habit of writing on the face of her photographs, which has helped me identify many of them. She would sign them on the side 'snapped by Goldie.'"

Aunt Goldie's handwriting explains what she and her sister are doing in the photograph below: "Watering plants on Grandmother's grave." But the image recalls an even starker story for Crowe. "This is at their grandmother's grave in Chicago in the Lincoln cemetery. Their grandmother was born into slavery. And when she was a baby, she was found nursing on her mother, who was found dead on a pallet one

morning after being beaten in the field the day before. So this lady in the grave as a baby was found nursing as her mother lay dead."



PROVIDED BY *Milburn Crowe*

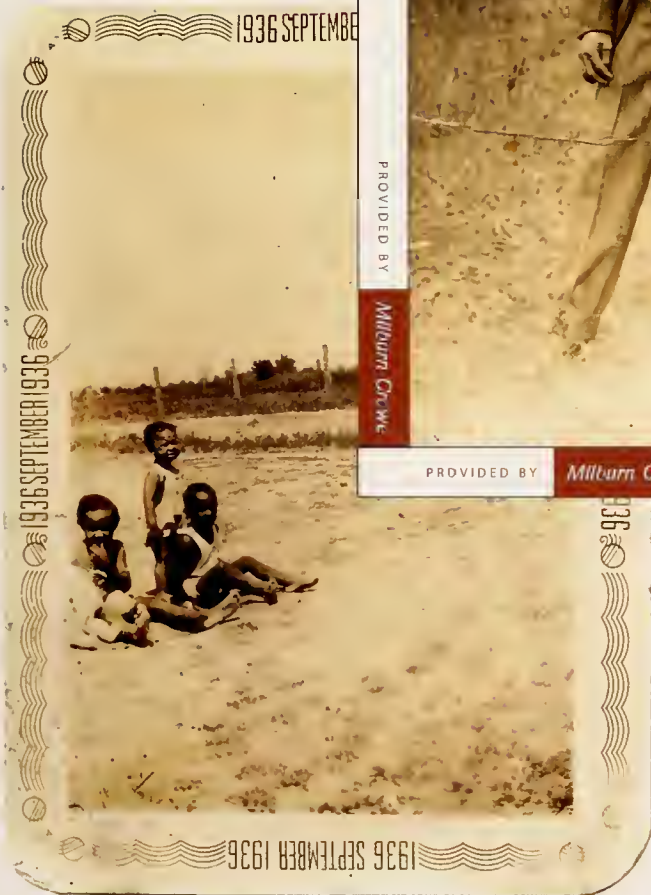


PROVIDED BY

Milburn Crowe

PROVIDED BY *Milburn Crowe*

*Watering plants on
grandmother's grave.
May 30, 1925.
Bernice & Halie.*



The two sides of Nancy Armstrong Tierce's family met in the Delta in the 1930s. The Buckels had been involved with the timber business in the region as early as the 1890s, and the Armstrongs left the boot heel of Missouri for Melvina, Mississippi, in the late 1920s. In the photograph at the far right, Tierce's paternal grandparents Fount Ray and Martha Armstrong pose in front of the car that carried them into the Delta. On the other side of the family, Tierce's mother Carolyn Buckels is shown at right in the arms of her nurse, Betty, in Benoit, Mississippi, 1939.



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

From
Mrs. W. D. Hender
304 E. Gilmore
Senatobia, M.



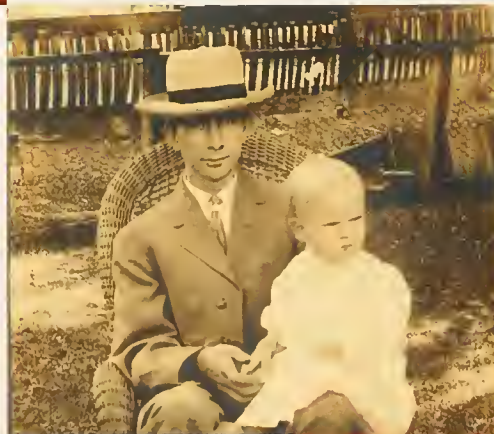
PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

◀ The image at left is of Martin Douglas Buckels, Jr., Nancy Armstrong Tierce's grandfather on the boardwalk in Tunica, circa 1915. Buckels grew up around Benoit, Mississippi, where his father, Martin Douglas Buckels, Sr., worked as a banker. The elder Buckels founded Cleveland Commercial Bank and is buried in the cemetery of the Burrus House, where the movie version of Tennessee Williams' play *Babydoll* was filmed.



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

▶ At right, Martin Douglas Buckels, Sr. is holding Martin Douglas Buckels, Jr., 10 months old in Benoit, 1910. They are the great-grandfather and grandfather of Nancy Armstrong Tierce.



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

▶▶ At far right, Martin Douglas Buckels, Jr. is pictured in his horseback riding clothes in Benoit, 1920.



Will & Nancy Tierce

LOST AND FOUND

PROVIDED BY Will & Nancy Tierce

*Kathryn H. Waldrop.
State Hospital - Cottage 5.
Whitfield, Miss.*



▼ Most of the subjects of these photographs are unknown, except for the ones of Kathryn, Bill, and Claire Waldrop. In the image below, Bill Waldrop is shown holding daughter Claire.

These forgotten photographs were collecting dust in the attic of a Merigold home in the early 1980s when Will Tierce, then a student at Delta State, moved in and found them there. Tierce adopted them and has taken them with him wherever he has moved since. Over the years, he and his wife, Nancy, have been able to piece together enough information from notes written in the margins, letters included in the collection, and conversations around Merigold to sketch out the strange and unsettling narrative thread that runs through these images.

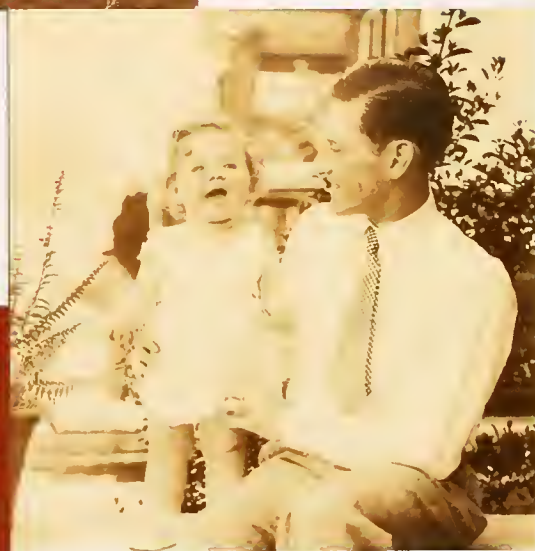
The central figure in them is Kathryn Henderson, who appears in the earlier photographs as a little girl growing up in Arcola, moves with her family to Shelby, and goes to college at Mississippi State College for Women (MUW) in the late 1920s. The portrait at top, taken when she was Kathryn Henderson, is from her college days. According to the notes on the back, she submitted it to George Butler to be included in an Ole Miss annual. Based on later photographs, Henderson married Bill Waldrop. The couple honeymooned in Miami and settled down in Merigold, where they had a daughter, Claire. From there, the story takes a dark turn. At some point, Kathryn's husband, Bill, admitted her to what was then called the Mississippi State Insane Hospital at Whitfield for reasons of insanity. "From the letters we got that she wrote to her mother, she seems to think that he liked another woman, that he just got tired of her, and back then during this time period when husbands got tired of their wives, if they had enough money, they could pay the doctor to say that she was crazy," Nancy Tierce explains. Still, the Tierces don't know what impelled Bill Waldrop to admit his wife to Whitfield or what became of her. Yet they keep these photographs as if they were their own, storing them in albums and plastic containers. "We feel like she's a part of our family," Nancy Tierce said.

Will & Nancy Tierce



PROVIDED BY

Will & Nancy Tierce



From a poem Kathryn Henderson sketched on scrap paper when she was living at the Mississippi State Insane Hospital at Whitfield:

"By road and river, countryside and town,
I roam forever with my fiddle brown,
creeping under barns so gladly
when outside the winter I was playing sadly,
playing madly, waking up the rats and owls.
Ah it was gay, night and day, fair and cloudy weather,
fiddle and I wandering by over the world together.
Down by the willows summer nights I lie,
flowers for my pillow, for roof the sky,
playing, oh my heart remembers,
old, old songs from far away,
golden Junes and bleak Decembers
writhe about me as I play,
on and on forever till the journey ends.
Who shall dis sever us two trusty friends?
Who can bring the past before me
and make it future. Jolly glow,
lift the clouds that darken over me
like my trusty fiddle bow"

Will & Nancy Tierce

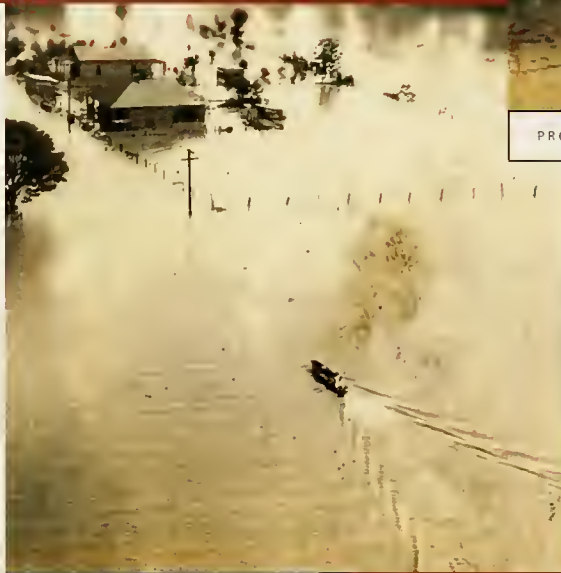
PROVIDED BY Will & Nancy Tierce



ISOLA DURING THE FLOOD OF '27

“...our first job was to get people out of trees and off of roofs, which, in addition to good will and heroism, of which we had plenty, required motor boats, of which we had none. We were desperate, but the Lord overlooking our lack of faith, performed one of His witty whimsical miracles: out of the White River poured a daring fleet of motor boats—the bootleggers! They shot the rapids of the break and scattered into the interior. No one had sent for them, no one was paying them, no one had a good word for them—but they came. Competent, devil-may-care pariahs, they scoured the back areas, the forgotten places, across fences, over railroad embankments, through woods and brush, and never rested until there was no one left clinging to a roof or a raft or the crotch of a tree.”

—William Alexander Percy of Greenville, Mississippi.
Excerpted from *Lanterns on the Levee*



PROVIDED BY *Melissa Townsend*



PROVIDED BY *Melissa Townsend*

All of the images of Isola, MS, during the 1927 Flood were submitted by Melissa Townsend of Belzoni, who has inherited the collection of photographs her family took of the event.



PROVIDED BY *Melissa Townsend*

On the morning of April 23, 1927, after months and months of heavy rainfall and high water, a portion of the levee at Mounds Landing near Scott collapsed, unleashing the swollen currents of the Mississippi River onto the Delta. The waters poured forth, flooding the southern half of the Delta.

The tiny town of Isola was at the eastern reach of the flood. The railroad played a major role in the relief effort there, providing higher ground along the tracks and refugee housing in boxcars. E.S. Bradley, who was the Isola depot agent for the Illinois Center Railroad at the time, captured on film the devastation and the local response to it. His photographs, some taken from the vantage of the town's water tower, show rescue boats motoring into town to reach residents stranded on their rooftops; "life in box cars," as the handwritten caption on one photo reads; and the struggles of a hamlet miles away from the Mississippi River but sud-

denly surrounded by its waters. The images were provided by Bradley's great-great-granddaughter Melissa Townsend of Belzoni.

"We found these along with a bunch of family photos in Memphis a couple of years ago when we were cleaning out a house," Townsend said. The images connected with at least one family story she had heard through the years about those times. The story goes: "My great-grandfather and some men went over to the levee at Friars Point literally looking for farmhands for labor. The steamship was coming downriver and a lot of people were coming up to see it. At about that time, they saw a mad dog coming down the levee. The men were standing around trying to protect the women and children. The dog actually bit my great-grandfather, and he died a couple of weeks later from rabies. This was before the flood actually came. His widow had to take care of four children by herself during the flood."

PROVIDED BY *Melissa Townsend*



LOGGING/COTTON/RICE



Before settlers could take advantage of the Mississippi Delta's rich bottomland soil, they had to clear the large swathes of cypress, sweet gum, and oaks that had grown out of it for centuries. Logging was the first big agricultural business in the region. These photographs of a logging operation were taken at Concordia Landing near Gunnison, Mississippi, around the turn of the 20th century. The business was owned by ancestors of Nancy Armstrong Tierce, who submitted the photographs along with her husband, Will Tierce of Cleveland, Mississippi.



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*



PROVIDED BY *Inez Stacy Sherwood*

Cotton was next. Planters found the Delta soil ideal for growing the cash crop and built an empire and a social hierarchy on King Cotton. Land, and in some cases equipment, was rented to small farmers in exchange for a portion of the crop and its proceeds come harvest time. This arrangement was called sharecropping, and it was often a system weighted in the landowner's favor, with the hard physical labor of farming left up to the sharecropper.

Inez Stacy Sherwood grew up in a sharecropping family on the Joe Smith plantation outside Shaw, Mississippi, where the cotton patch photograph was taken. Now a resident of Cleveland, she remembers those days well: "Everybody worked then. If you had cotton to pick, and your kinfolks, your neighbors, whoever—if their crop wasn't ready, they'd come help you pick. Nobody does that now. When it got cold, if there was any cotton left in the field, you wore socks on your hand and you picked that cotton. Eight dollars a month furnish, that's what we got to live on, and I had two kids, but we had milk and we had eggs and we had vegetables. You made your own corn meal. You drove a plow and then you went along and planted the cotton. They planted cotton by hand then. Then they got the little things you push that had a hole in bottom and that put the seeds out. And then when it came up, you had to chop it to get the weeds out. Then you'd just wait. We called that lay-by. In July it would be lay-by until you started picking it. We fished in the off-time. In the winter, you didn't do a whole lot. We read. I loved to read, I still like to read. We didn't have TVs. We got our first radio, and everybody would gather round it. My daddy put it out on the front porch—I guess, so the neighbors could come and listen to the Grand Ol' Opry on the radio. And there would be maybe 20 people listening to that radio."



PROVIDED BY *Clay Rayner*



PROVIDED BY

Cameron Faldin

Rice is much newer to the Delta soil than cotton. One of the first people to get into the rice business was R.M. Dakin. In 1954, Dakin built one of only three sack rice driers located in the Mississippi Delta. The Dakin Rice Drier was operated by brother Joe Dakin until early 1960s. One barrel of rice weighing

162 pounds was dumped into each sack, laid over holes in the floor for four hours, and then turned over. Hot air heated by propane gas blew up through the sacks, drying the rice from 19% moisture to the 13% required for storage.



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

TRANSPORTATION



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

Several different collections submitted during the Delta Photo Roadshow feature horses, as a means of getting around, as farming implements, and as a source of diversion. The image to the left is of David Walt's ancestors, possibly in Rosedale, catching a ride from their horse. From the Tierce collection, Martin Douglas Buckels, Jr. (above), poses in his riding clothes near Benoit in 1920. The other photograph is from the Henderson-Waldrop collection, submitted by the Tierces; the time, people, and places in them are unknown.



PROVIDED BY

Will & Nancy Tierce

► The U.S. R.P. Walt, owned and operated by David Walt's great-great-grandfather Martin Walt, shipped mail between Memphis and Rosedale. In 1893, during its regular run, the steamboat sank in an icy storm outside the port of Memphis. "The only thing saved was the china, which was custom-made for the boat," David Walt says. "Over a period of time it was dispersed among the family. I have eight pieces of it"



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

PROVIDED BY *Milburn Crowe*



PROVIDED BY

David Walt

The rise of the railroad industry was crucial to settling the Delta and emerged as a major theme in the images collected in the Delta Photo Roadshow. Tracks laid on the high ground allowed settlers to enter the once impenetrable bottomland wilderness that thrived in the alluvial soil and swampy heat. Soon, towns such as Cleveland, Boyle, Shaw, and Mound Bayou were built up around the Illinois Central Railroad, which owned much of the land in the Delta, and families made their living operating and managing the trains.

Rufus Putnam Walt served at different times as depot agent in Shaw and stationmaster for the Cleveland depot, where he is pictured beside a locomotive in one photograph (right) and holding his son, Rufus Putnam Walt, Jr., on the tracks in another (left).

Just to the north, Richard Jones, Milburn Crowe's uncle, was stationmaster for the Mound

Bayou depot during the 1920s and '30s. He is pictured here with his wife, Elila. "They got married in '22 and honeymooned at Niagara Falls," Crowe recalls. "This is a picture of those years."



Jones' expertise exceeded the railroad business to the lay of the land and even classical literature, according to Crowe. "Richard Jones was notorious because he knew like every square inch of Mound

Bayou. People would come to him to survey their land, their property. For some reason, the folks of Mound Bayou would joke and say, 'Richard, when you die, we're gonna have to come knocking at your grave.' Richard was really an authority. He surveyed the land for some of the farmers. He was city clerk and alderman. He was a gin manager in Mound Bayou. But he graduated from Fisk, and he would love to talk and tell these stories of Agamemnon and people enjoyed him running off his mouth with his cigar. He was quite a character."



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

In the early years of automation, cars were as much status symbols as they are now, enough to be a running theme of many of the photographs collected. The man posing with his Ford at left is Lefty Roe, a professional baseball player who lived in Cleveland. (See sports and recreation.) In the margin from top, Milburn Crowe's father Henry H. Crowe props his foot on his fashionable car; two unknown men sit in a roadster in Mound Bayou; a young Clay Rayner, recently back from serving in Europe after World War II, leans out the window of his Mercury in front of Merigold's old Midway Hotel during the summer of 1947; the Rosedale Motor Co. lights up Court Street during an evening in 1950; Bill Waldrop poses with his motorcycle in Merigold.

PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

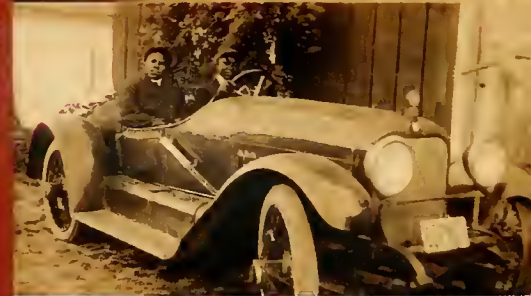


PROVIDED BY

Milburn Crowe



Milburn Crowe



Clay Rayner



Will & Nancy Thrace



Will & Nancy Thrace





PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*

In the early 20th century, as studio photography became more accessible and affordable, it was fashionable for the middle and upper class to have still portraits made of family members. Professional photographers operated out of local studios or traveled from town to town constructing temporary sets to take pictures. Local residents dressed up for the occasion, sometimes in elaborate costumes tailored after the royalty and aristocracy of the Old World. Props were often used, riding whips, scarves and hats, wicker chairs, and various backdrops. Animal fur and even live pets, like the kitten in the image at the lower right, were common accompaniments. Subjects generally took on quite deliberate poses.

The majority of the portraits collected during the Delta Photo Roadshow are from the Henderson-Waldrop collection, including most on this page. The subjects are unknown.



PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*



Will & Nancy Tierce

PROVIDED BY *Will & Nancy Tierce*



PROVIDED BY *Inez Sherwood*



◀ Inez Sherwood's collection of photographs span seven generations of her family, all the way back to her great-grandmother, Penelope Ann Edmonds. In this colorized photograph taken in the early 1900s, Edmonds' three-quarters Choctaw blood is evident. Edmonds lived with Sherwood's family in Shaw until she died, age 104.

"Her daddy was one of the first medical doctors that the Indians had," Sherwood recounts. "They were from Lyon originally. She had really pretty black hair. When she died she only had one little gray strip of hair right on her temple. The rest of her hair was coal black. She used to tell us all kinds of stories. Mostly, it was about the civil war. She remembered the Yankees coming. She had a hard life."

G.W. BURT, PHOTOGRAPHER

PROVIDED BY

Milburn Crowe



◀ G.W. Burt was a resident photographer from North Mississippi who moved to Mound Bayou in March of 1900 and opened up a portrait studio. His portraits are typical of the time, the subjects posed as sitting or standing, sometimes with various props or backdrops that depicted some kind of theme. Burt photographed “everybody who lived in Mound Bayou at the time,” Milburn. Crowe says. And people who lived in neighboring towns, black and white, would come to Burt’s studio to have their portrait made as well. A historical account of Mound Bayou written by A.P. Hood describes Burt as a “proficient representative in the domain of practical photography” and “the man behind the camera.” Hood goes on to say that Burt’s studio was “nicely arranged” with displays and exhibits of his photographs and that his fees were quite reasonable despite his monopoly.

PROVIDED BY

Alan LaMastus



This and the portrait to the right were taken by Burt. The first is of an unknown Mound Bayou resident. The second, taken around 1910, is of William Edward LaMastus, Sr., and is from the collection of his grandson, Alan LaMastus.



G. W. BURT, PHOTOGRAPHER.
MOUND BAYOU, MISS.

PROVIDED BY

Milburn Crowe

▼ The boy in three portraits below is Rufus Putnam Walt II, grandfather of David Walt. They were taken in the early 1900s, the far left one at a Memphis studio, and show the elder Walt in various sailor-theme outfits. The woman below is unknown

PROVIDED BY David Walt





PROVIDED BY *Clay Rayner*

◀ Broom Hall was one of the first buildings erected on the Delta State University campus. This photograph was provided by Clay Rayner.



PROVIDED BY *Jianking Zheng*

▲ The Chinese Mission School stood for years at its location, shown above, beside the Chinese Baptist Church in Cleveland. Before closing in the 1950s, the school served dozens of Chinese children from all over the central Delta at a time when they were not allowed to attend the all-white schools and chose not to attend the severely under-funded black schools. This photograph of the building, which was torn down in recent years, was taken in 1997 by Jianking Zheng, a more recent Chinese immigrant to the Delta.

Jianking, an English professor at Mississippi Valley State University, finds a connection between two generations of Delta Chinese far removed from each other. He came here in the 1990s, about 100 years removed from when the first Chinese immigrants arrived as journeyman laborers. "I'm Chinese. I also wish to know the history of Chinese immigrants in this country. In the 19th century the plantation owners wanted to bring those Chinese people to the Delta area to replace the sharecroppers, but they did not want to do that kind of work. So then the immigrants opened the grocery stores and the restaurants, and they raised their families here. They brought their wives from China, and then their kids needed to go to school. But unfortunately back then those Chinese kids could not go to a public school. They were not allowed to or didn't want to, so instead they established their own school and then the local education department sent some teachers to teach them. And then 8 years ago I came all the way here to shoot this picture."

▶ The first class of Cleveland High School graduated in 1914 and included David Walt's grandfather, Rufus Putnam Walt II. All five members of the Class of 1914 are pictured standing with a teacher on the front porch of the Best house, which was on College Street. Rufus Walt is at the top right. The size of the diplomas demonstrate how much education was valued in those days, according to Atlanta artist Lynn Linnemeier, one of the Delta Photo Roadshow jurors. It is also significant that the class featured more girls than boys in a time when education was perceived as a masculine endeavor.



PROVIDED BY *David Walt*

PROVIDED BY *Milburn Crowe*



◀ Milburn Crowe tells an interesting story about the cow pictured in this photograph taken in the backyard of his family's farm house near Mound Bayou. As Crowe recalls, the cow was more valuable than just the milk it produced. It funded part of his sister's education. "My mother was sending my older sister, Barbara, to take music lessons from Mrs. Henrietta Cleggs, and in payment for some of the lessons she sent her cow across so Mrs. Clay could gather milk. She would milk the cow for a period of time and then send it back over."

▶ The students at right are members of the graduating class of 1945 at the Bolivar County Training School in Mound Bayou. For many years, the training school was the only high school that African Americans could attend in Bolivar County. Some students came from as far away as Vicksburg to room and board in Mound Bayou in order to take advantage of the education offered there. The school opened in 1919 after the consolidation of dozens of small one-room school houses into a single all-black school district. "About 800 enrolled," says Crowe. "It went through 12th grade and had a normal term and it also included a curriculum. You think of a training school as not so academic, but I mean they taught the classics. They really stressed both academics and vocational."



PROVIDED BY *Milburn Crowe*

RECREATION



PROVIDED BY Alan LeMastus

▲ The Drew high football team practices above. This photograph, taken in the 1920s, was submitted by Alan LeMastus, whose grandfather, William Edward LaMastus, is pictured at top left.



PROVIDED BY Will & Nancy Tierce

▲ The baseball player in the above photo is Lefty Roe, who pitched for the Washington Senators before settling down in Cleveland with his wife, David Walt's great aunt. Roe was famous for traveling to towns around the Delta and hosting competitions challenging people to hit his pitches. Walt tells the story: "You could pay something like a dime and you had three chances to hit his pitches. And you would win money if you got a hit. They say no one every could hit him." Roe eventually died of consumption.



On a fishing drive Altee & Sadie 1924

PROVIDED BY Milburn Crowe

▲ The two women shown above "on a fishing drive" are Milburn Crowe's mother, Altee Thompson, and her friend, Sadie. This was taken in 1924, before my mother was married," Crowe says. "They were somewhere in the delta out from Mound Bayou. One of the places we used to go to is a place up in Coahoma county, Moon Lake."

◀ Clay Rayner also remembers fishing at Moon Lake. The photograph of him as a boy holding up his rod and his catch was likely taken there.



PROVIDED BY Clay Rayner

◀ These photographs show Clay Rayner and friends all decked out for a "womanless wedding" held for charity in 1949. Cross-dressing for theme parties was apparently a popular pastime in the Delta, according to historian Pete Daniel.

PROVIDED BY Clay Rayner



PROVIDED BY David Walt



▲ The photo of the Cleveland Soft Ball League team features two generations of the Walt family. David Walt's father, Rufus Putnam Walt III, is crouching to the right of his grandfather Rufus Putnam Walt, Sr., seated. Former DSU President Kent Wyatt is standing third from the left.



The Delta Center
for Culture & Learning

Delta State University



The Delta Center for Culture and Learning is an interdisciplinary program within Delta State University. Its mission is to promote the broad understanding of the history and culture of the Mississippi Delta and its significance to the rest of the world. Its activities include classes, field trips and tours, oral history projects, historic preservation efforts, and service learning and community outreach programs.

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